# THE INDOCHINESE EXPERIENCE

OF THE

FRENCH

AND THE

# **AMERICANS**

Nationalism and Communism in Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam

Arthur J. Dommen

NATIONALISM AND COMMUNISM IN CAMBODIA, LAOS, AND VIETNAM

Arthur J. Dommen

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### For Loan,

and for all those officers of the Foreign Service of the United States who over the years between 1939 and 1975 reported objectively, and sometimes brilliantly, on the affairs of the Indochinese and for whom there were no Pulitzer Prizes or Nobel Peace Prizes,

and for the archivists in whose custody their reports have ended up, to the lasting enlightenment of historians and readers.

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# INTRODUCTION

Twenty-five years have passed since the army of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam entered Saigon, putting a decisive end to the 30-year war between the nationalists and Communists that had been set off by the Communists' coup d'état in Hanoi on August 19, 1945. I have tried in this book to unravel the skein of these events and, like Thucydides, who chronicled the 27-year war in which his own Athens became embroiled during his lifetime, to distribute credit where credit is merited and to assign blame where blame is due. The Indochinese will forgive, I hope, a foreigner's presumption in writing a history of their countries. As a foreign correspondent, I had the good fortune to share their hospitality during some of the most critical times. For sources in the modern period, I have been able to rely for large parts on reports of their public statements and even their private thoughts contained in the archives of the American Foreign Service, a precious gift to historians of all countries. This book is the fruit of 40 years of reflecting on their struggle for self-determination and self-respect; in the final analysis, it is up to them to judge whether my attempt to match the balance and admirable lack of partisanship of Thucydides has succeeded. My book is intended to be a stimulus to students to do more research rather than the final word on the subject.

I have paid particular attention in chronicling events from the mid-nine-teenth century to sovereignty. Sovereignty is a concept of which the Indochinese without exception were enamoured, one that governed their actions on many occasions. When the king of Luang Prabang placed his kingdom under French protection it was because he had been evicted from his capital by enemies coming from the outside. Sovereignty resided in the monarchy in Laos for 600 years and in Cambodia for nearly 2,000 years. In Vietnam, the French placed sovereignty over Cochinchina (which the Khmer called Kampuchea Krom) in their own National Assembly and president, but this was an aberration. While the French allowed the court of Hue to retain sovereignty, it was often nominal, and the modern history of Annam and Tonkin is one of the struggle of the emperor to preserve as much sovereignty from encroachment as circumstances and the means at hand permitted.

#### X INTRODUCTION

With the abdication of the last of the Nguyên emperors, who had made a strong affirmation of sovereignty by unifying his country, sovereignty passed to republican forms of statehood, arrived at either by force or by constitutional procedures. President Ngô Dinh Diem of the Republic of Vietnam was acutely sensitive to the issue and he proceeded to evict the French Expeditionary Corps, the most visible embodiment of the exercise of foreign sovereignty in Vietnam. The generals who succeeded him in power were much less solicitous of sovereignty and allowed it to pass into foreign hands once more.

But it was without doubt the Vietnamese Communists who made sovereignty the keystone of their policy with their policy of armed diplomacy. In January 1973, they obtained the signature of the American secretary of state on a document that, in their view, recognized the sovereignty of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV) over all of Vietnam, including the right to station its troops in the southern zone that had been created by the 1954 partition. Months later, the DRV's army completed the process by obliterating the remnants of sovereignty that had been returned to the discredited nationalist leaders by the departing Americans. In July 1995, finally, the Socialist Republic of Vietnam received full diplomatic recognition from the Americans, thereby righting the slight of 50 years earlier when President Ho Chi Minh's appeal to the American secretary of state had gone unanswered and doing much to overcome among the Vietnamese the stigma attached to the regime's illegal and illegitimate origin. My chronicle of these events will bring, I hope, a beginning of understanding to those who did not live through them, as I did.

#### A Note on Punctuation

Vietnamese words and proper names have been rendered, as a matter of printing convenience, without their full complement of diacritical marks.

Although Pierre Mendès France spelled his name without a hyphen, this book adopts the usage in American diplomatic reporting, which hyphenated the last two names.

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Arthur J. Dommen Bethesda, Maryland August 2000

# ABBREVIATIONS

AFP Agence France-Presse
AGAS Air Ground Aid Section
ANL Armée Nationale Lao
AOM Archives d'Outre-Mer

ARVN Army of the Republic of Vietnam
ASEAN Association of Southeast Asian Nations
BBC British Broadcasting Corporation
BLDP Buddhist Liberal Democratic Party
BSM Bureau de Statistiques Militaires

CAT Civil Air Transport

CDNI Committee for the Defense of the National Interests

CIA Central Intelligence Agency
CIDG Civilian Irregular Defense Group
CINCPAC Commander in chief, Pacific
CMAG Chinese Military Advisory Group
COSVN Central Office for South Vietnam
CPK Communist Party of Kampuchea

CPP Cambodian People's Party

CPSU Communist Party of the Soviet Union

DAO Defense Attaché Office DEPTEL Departmental Telegram DMZ Demilitarized Zone

DNC Direction Nationale de la Coordination
DRV Democratic Republic of Vietnam
D.R.V.N. Democratic Republic of Viet Nam
EFEO Ecole Française d'Extrême-Orient

FAR Royal Lao Army

FBIS Foreign Broadcast Intelligence Service

FEC French Expeditionary Corps

FPJMC Four-Party Joint Military Commission FRUS Foreign Relations of the United States

#### XII ABBREVIATIONS

FULRO United Front for the Struggle of the Oppressed Races FUNCINPEC National United Front for an Independent, Neutral,

Peaceful, and Cooperative Cambodia

G.B.T. [Laurence] Gordon-[Harry] Bernard-[Frank] Tan network

GM Groupe Mobile

GVN Government of [South] Vietnam ICC International Control Commission

ICCS International Commission of Control and Supervision

ICP Indochinese Communist Party

ICRC International Committee of the Red Cross

ITP Indochinese Trotskyite Party

JCIA Joint Commission to Implement the Agreement

JCS Joint Chiefs of Staff IGS Joint General Staff

JUSMAG Joint United States Military Assistance Advisory Group

JUSPAO Joint U.S. Public Affairs Office

KKK Struggle Front of the Khmer of Kampuchea Krom

KNUFNS Kampuchean National United Front for National Salvation

KPNLF Khmer People's National Liberation Front KPRP Khmer People's Revolutionary Party

LPDR Lao People's Democratic Republic
LPRP Lao People's Revolutionary Party

LPF Lao Patriotic Front

MAAG Military Assistance Advisory Group
MACV Military Assistance Command Vietnam

MAP Military Assistance Program

MIA Missing in Action MPs military police

MRC Military Revolutionary Committee

MSU Michigan State University

NARA National Archives and Records Administration

NCNA New China News Agency NCOs non-commissioned officers

NLF National Liberation Front (South Vietnam)

NLHS Lao Patriotic Front

NPCC National Political Consultative Council NRM National Revolutionary Movement

NSC National Security Council

NUFK National United Front of Kampuchea

NVA North Vietnamese Army

NVN North Vietnam

OSS American Office of Strategic Services

PARU Police Aerial Reconnaissance (Resupply) Unit

PARU Royal Thai Police Aerial Resupply Unit

PAVN Peoples' Army of Vietnam
PDK Party of Democratic Kampuchea
PEC Provisional Executive Committee
PEO Programs Evaluation Office

PGNU Provisional Government of National Union

PL Pathet Lao

PLA People's Liberation Army

POWs prisoners of war

PRGSVN Provisional Revolutionary Government of the Republic of

South Vietnam

PRK People's Republic of Kampuchea PTT Poste, Télégraphe et Téléphone

RG Record Group

RGNU Royal Government of National Union

R. I. C. Régiment d'Infanterie Coloniale

RKG Royal Khmer Government

RLAF Royal Lao Air Force RLG Royal Lao Government RO Requirements Office

SA Service Action

SEATO Southeast Asia Treaty Organization SEPES Service des Etudes Politiques et Sociales

SIDASP Service Interministériel d'Action Sociale et Politique

SNC Supreme National Council SPA Supreme People's Assembly SRV Socialist Republic of Vietnam

SSPP Special Service for Political Propaganda
TPJMC Two-Party Joint Military Commission

SVN South Vietnam

U.B.K.C./H.C. Uy Ban Khang Chien/Hanh Chinh UBCV Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam

UN United Nations

UNF United National Front

UNICEF United Nations Children's Fund

UNTAC United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia

URAS Union des Républicains d'Action Sociale

USIS United States Information Service
USOM United States Operations Mission
VCP Vietnamese Communist Party

VML Viet Minh League

VNIP Vietnam National Independence Party

VNQDD Viet Nam Quoc Dan Dang (Vietnamese Nationalist Party)

VWP Vietnam Workers' Party

# 1. The Arrival of the French

1625-1893

#### A Warlike Tradition

From the Vietnamese war of independence from China in 930-939 to the first French military action in 1858 one counts no fewer than 62 significant wars and invasions on the territories of present-day Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam in Indochina. The warlike tradition of resistance against foreign oppressors has been claimed as its own by the Vietnamese Communist Party, for which the use of revolutionary violence is core doctrine. Yet many of the 62 wars were waged by one Indochinese ruler against another for motives of territorial expansion or by rivals of the ruler in attempts to enforce claims to the throne. In addition to major campaigns, there were countless police actions to suppress local revolts; in September 1858, at the very moment the French expeditionary force was setting up camp at Tourane, King Ang Duong of Cambodia was placing himself at the head of a posse to put down four Cham brothers who had raised the standard of revolt in Kompong Cham Province. They were not the first Chams in the province who hoped to re-create a state free of Khmer rule, but they were probably the last, as the king ordered the Cham population to resettle along the Mekong where they could be better controlled.

During this period of almost 900 years there was hardly a single year when some sort of military campaign was not going on somewhere on the territory of Indochina. Some of these wars lasted for long periods. Between 1599 and 1691 Cambodia was wracked by dynastic conflicts that repeatedly brought in foreign armies on one side or the other; Siamese and Vietnamese soldiers of the time could have been forgiven for joking, "Well, I'm off to Cambodia once again." In 1771, one of three brothers named for their village in the highlands of Annam, Tây Son, began recruiting an army of disaffected peasants, posing a serious threat to the established dynasty that was not dissipated until 1802. Gia Long and his successors proceeded to make use of French military engineering expertise to construct Vauban forts in the principal towns of their realm, some of which a later generation of French soldiers were obliged to storm in battle.

The purpose of all these wars and expeditions was, of course, to defeat the adversary and wrest from him the symbols of power. Thus, when the Vietnamese finally vanquished the empire of Champa in 1470 after successive invasions

of its shrinking territory over the preceding centuries, they took the capital Vijaya after a two-day siege and reportedly beheaded 40,000 of the defenders, captured the Cham king, and took another 30,000 prisoners. They also appropriated the silver box that represented Cham sovereignty and for good measure renamed the rivers and mountains so that no one would remember the defeated state.

Needless to say, the extreme violence associated with these campaigns on land and sea, which often mobilized entire populations, fell above all on the ordinary people. Captured towns were often burned, and the countryside was robbed of its wealth as the conquering army lived off the land. A Cham inscription describes the behavior of the Vietnamese during their invasion in 1069:

The enemies entered the Kingdom of Champa and, having installed themselves as masters, having taken all the royal possessions and all the riches of the gods; having looted temples, monasteries, palaces, cells, hermitages, villages and various buildings, with their horses, cattle, buffaloes and harvests; having ravaged everything in the provinces of Champa. . . <sup>1</sup>

The Chinese traveler Chou Ta-kuan, who lived at Angkor in 1296, records that in the war against the Siamese all the population was obliged to take up arms and the countryside was entirely devastated. Even after the formal war of infantry, cavalry, and elephant formations was over, it was often followed by guerrilla operations that could go on for years, and often did, inflicting no less harm on the people.

The Vietnamese, being a linguistically homogeneous people who called themselves Viêt, had a definite idea of their place in the world and, consequently, a name for their country as they expanded southward down the east coast of the Indochinese peninsula. This name was not constant, however, through different periods in their history. This has created confusion, for themselves as well as for others.

The independent state that emerged in the Red River Delta in the tenth century was known by the name Dai Viêt (The Greater State of Viêt). The name Viêt Nam (Yueh Nan in Chinese) only appeared in an official sense in the early nineteenth century. When the emperor Gia Long founded the Nguyên Dynasty in 1802, he broke with the Chinese tradition of referring to his country as An Nam (Pacified South) and, sending a delegation to Peking to gain recognition of his newly formed empire, referred to it as Nan-Yueh, which was pronounced by the Viêt as Nam-Viêt. The Chinese emperor reversed the word order, forming Viêt-Nam, and Gia Long accepted this in the seal symbolizing the tributary relationship between Hue and Peking, although the Chinese continued their usage of An Nam.

Gia Long's successors, curiously, did not maintain usage of Viêt-Nam, reverting at first to Dai Viêt and then to Dai Nam (The Imperial State of the South). The French brought their own variants, using the name Annam in the Treaty of Saigon in 1862 in the historic sense of the empire of Annam. Sowing

confusion, they also applied the name Annam to the central region of Dai Nam around Hue to distinguish it from Tonkin, the northern region. For indigenous purposes, they also borrowed from Minh Mang's administrative reforms the regional term ky to denote Nam Ky (the south, geographically corresponding to Cochinchina), Trung Ky (the center), and Bac Ky (the North). Gradually, usage of Dai Nam or Viêt-Nam ceased.

Through all this, the Vietnamese retained a strong sense of identity with their country, whichever of the three regions they lived in. Their country had been divided at previous stages of their history, but the sense of national identity was never entirely lost.

#### EARLY VISITORS

The first Europeans the Indochinese encountered were Portuguese, in the sixteenth century, and Dutch, in the seventeenth; both sought to establish trading posts along the coast. In the interior, the merchant Geritt Van Wuysthoff and a Dutch mission arrived in Vientiane in time for the That Luang festival at the end of 1641 and remained until 1647, publishing a journal with precious information about Laos. This took place during the beginning of the reign of King Souligna Vongsa, and the king received the mission in his pavilion, inquired about the health of the director of the Dutch East Indies Company, and expressed the hope for further commercial exchanges. Jesuit missionaries were also active. Father Jean-Marie Leria received a warm welcome from Souligna Vongsa and remained in Vientiane for five years. He was followed by Father Giovanni Marini. Others were not so fortunate; they died from malaria before even reaching Laos.

In 1625–1626, another Jesuit priest, Father Alexandre de Rhodes, spent 18 months in Cochinchina, the name given at that time to all of Vietnam south of Hue. He was particularly intrigued by the language of the autochthons, which he likened in his book, Divers Voyages et Missions, published in Paris in 1653, to the "twittering of a bird." He learned phrases by listening to coolies and children speaking. His superiors, impressed with this ability, sent him to Tonkin, where he stayed from 1627 until he was expelled in 1630. He completed the first version of a transcription of the language into the Roman alphabet and familiarized himself generally with the institutions and civilization of the Vietnamese. He gathered the elements of a history of Tonkin into a book published in French in 1651, recently reprinted.<sup>2</sup> In this book he described his success in converting Vietnamese to Christianity. His relations with the Trinh lord of the capital, Thang Long, were at first friendly, so much so that the latter placed a house at his disposal within the royal enclosure, which Father de Rhodes used as living quarters, keeping a room in which to say mass. His very success, however, aroused the enmity of the lord's courtiers, who were aggrieved to find their temples deserted and who prevailed on their master to expel Father de Rhodes, accusing him of propagating a religion of death and spreading subversive ideas such as the need to abolish polygamy. His devotion to missionary work resulted in a further sojourn in Cochinchina from 1640 to 1645. Due to

the diligence of the missionaries, there were by this time 82,000 Vietnamese Christians in Tonkin and 40,000 in Cochinchina.

The Christians remained a small minority of the Vietnamese population, however, and accounted for insignificant minorities in Cambodia and Laos. Accordingly, they were ever subject to repression over the next few centuries. Leading foreign missionaries were sometimes sentenced to death, and their death was not always painless. At the end of the eighteenth century, the French, largely through the efforts of another Catholic prelate, Pierre-Joseph-Georges Pigneau de Béhaine, bishop of Adran, participated in an event of great importance in Vietnamese history. Pigneau was sent to Ha Tien in 1767 to head a Catholic seminary. In 1772–1773, he compiled a Vietnamese dictionary, Vocabularium Anamitico-Latinum. During the war between the Tây Son brothers and the Nguyên lords, Pigneau befriended and spirited to safety on an island in the Gulf of Siam the 16-year-old nephew of the latter, Nguyên Anh. Pigneau went to Versailles and persuaded Louis XVI to sign a treaty of alliance with Nguyên Anh. By the terms of the treaty of November 28, 1787, in exchange for expected help in restoring him to his throne, Nguyên Anh ceded sovereignty to the French of the island of Poulo Condore (Article 5) and, "eventually," the port of Tourane (Article 3).3 Pigneau died of dysentery in 1799 and was given the equivalent of a state funeral at Gia Dinh; Nguyên Anh composed the funeral oration, in which he recalled Pigneau's invaluable services and said "The wisdom of his advice and the virtue that shone even in the cheerfulness of his conversation brought us closer and closer together." And Was restored to the throne of Hue in 1802 as the emperor Gia Long.

## The French Conquest

The attitude toward the missionaries of Gia Long's successors veered back and forth between outright opposition and conciliation. The mandarins saw the subversion of Confucian values, especially the absence in Christianity of any cult of the ancestors. While the emperor Tu Duc's particularly severe repression inflamed opinion in France, it is generally accepted that Napoleon III's intervention in Indochina was due to a mix of motives, including national pride and military prestige. But the main consideration was undoubtedly commerce. The report of the Commission on Cochinchina, issued in Paris on May 18, 1857, was persuasive about the advantages of securing a position in Cochinchina.<sup>5</sup> The commission concluded: "This project is therefore eminently honorable for our policy, useful for the religion, favorable for commerce and the general interests of the country. Circumstances render it opportune, its execution is easy and not costly, and it commends itself to the approval of the Emperor."

In 1857, Napoleon III, having decided that the actions of Tu Duc were not in conformity with the 1787 treaty, ordered Vice Admiral Rigault de Genouilly, commander of the French Far East fleet, to land at Tourane and establish himself firmly in that place without entering into any further negotiations. Napoleon was said to have been outraged at news of the decapitation at Nam Dinh

on July 20 of the apostolic vicar of Tonkin, the Spanish Dominican Monsignor Diaz, who had been a childhood friend of the empress. (A year later, Diaz's successor, Monsignor Melchior, would be drawn and quartered.) Genouilly was the first in a string of French admirals who were given wide latitude on what actions to take in coastal Indochina. His orders were to put an end to the persecution of Christians by Tu Duc and to assure the former of the efficacious aid of France by means of a "demonstration." He was told to establish a protectorate over Cochinchina, if that were possible without too many sacrifices. Otherwise, he should conclude a treaty of friendship, commerce, and navigation; ask compensation for the loss of life of the French missionaries; and seek guarantees for their future security.<sup>7</sup>

The expedition reached the Bay of Tourane on August 31, 1858, and the harbor defenses were attacked on September 1. There was no show of support for the French by the Vietnamese Christians. Most of the defenders simply disappeared. Heat and disease almost immobilized the troops within days. Four weeks later, the rains began and ruined all chances of reaching Hue overland; the French lacked the shallow-draft boats needed to reach Hue by the Perfume River.

Genouilly accused the missionaries of having misled the French government about the easy nature of the enterprise he had been charged with on several counts, including the feelings of the population, the power of the mandarins, the presence of regular armed forces, and the climate.8 Ignoring their pleas to make an attack in Tonkin, where they said the Christians could be counted on to rise against Tu Duc's mandarins as soon as the French fleet approached the Red River Delta, Genouilly instead decided to launch a campaign to seize Saigon, which he described in his reports as the center of a flourishing region and a future port city of importance. Leaving only a small garrison at Tourane, Genouilly sailed south and captured Saigon on February 17, 1859. Again, however, there was no support by the Vietnamese Christians, whether from their fear of the mandarins or other reasons. Although Spanish reinforcements increased his garrison, Genouilly soon had to return to Tourane, where he found his troops decimated by disease and harassed by Vietnamese attacks. The first steps to an orderly evacuation were taken in February 1860, and a few weeks later the last French soldiers left the harbor.

It was not until the spring of 1861 that the French again took up Genouilly's Saigon enterprise by sending a strong force to seize the strongpoints in three provinces around Saigon—Gia Dinh, My Tho, and Bien Hoa. These conquests were further consolidated in the following spring, inducing Tu Duc to sue for peace. On June 6, 1862, a treaty was signed between the French and Tu Duc's emissaries in Saigon that left the three provinces and Poulo Condore in French hands, opened three Vietnamese ports to trade with the west, granted the missionaries freedom of action and French warships the right of passage up the Mekong to the Cambodian border, and forbade Tu Duc from ceding any part of his territory to another power without the consent of France. Tu Duc also agreed to pay a war indemnity of 4 million dollars, payable over 10 years. The treaty was ratified by Hue in April 1863.

A noteworthy consequence of this occupation, as Milton Osborne has pointed out, was that the mandarins at the provincial level withdrew to Hue, leaving the French to find ways of administering these vast and populous territories. 10 Nevertheless, armed resistance to the French faded away. Tu Duc was a highly intelligent ruler and a hard worker in spite of a rather feeble physical constitution; he excelled in manipulation and intrigue, qualities highly valued in court circles. His main aim in dealing with the French was to preserve the monarchy, in whose absolute power he continued to believe. With this aim in mind, he in effect bargained away the southern provinces (temporarily, he hoped) in return for a free hand in the North, where a young convert named Lê Duy Phung had laid claim to Tonkin in the name of the Lê dynasty (1428–1788), whose legitimate heir he claimed to be. Lê Duy Phung's initial successes against the royal troops in Tonkin threatened to revive old regional loyalties to the defunct dynasty and enmity toward the court at Hue. (He was captured and executed in 1864.) The Hue court sought by subsequent negotiations to reduce the burden of the French presence it had accepted for reasons of expediency.

Tu Duc sent a mission to Paris in 1863 to seek better terms; the mission was led by Phan Thanh Gian, a respected elderly mandarin who had signed the 1862 treaty. A new treaty was signed in June 1864, incorporating some face-saving formulas for Tu Duc. One provision allowed the French to post a consul at Hue. In the summer of 1867, however, following the same pattern as before, taking advantage of the rainy season to deploy their flotillas on rivers and arroyos, the French occupied the strongpoints in the three remaining provinces in southern Cochinchina—Vinh Long, Chau Doc, and Ha Tien—as Phan Thanh Gian had feared. Phan Thanh Gian had served his emperor to the best of his ability. Seeing the French determined to take control of all of lower Cochinchina, however, he decided he could not live, and took poison, and after having embraced his two French friends Ansart, commander at My Tho, and Father Marc of the My Tho parish, he died in August. In a last message to his people, he wrote:

The Empire of our King is ancient. Our gratitude toward our Kings is whole and always bright; we cannot forget them. Now the French have come with their powerful means of war-making to sow trouble among us. We are weak compared with them; our leaders and our soldiers have been defeated. Each battle adds to our misery. . . . The French possess immense war junks full of soldiers and armed with very large cannon. No one can stop them. They penetrate wherever they want, the most solid ramparts fall before them.

I have listened to the voice of Reason. . . . It would be senseless to bring misfortune on the people. Therefore, I have written to all the mandarins and all the officers to break their lances and hand over the forts without fighting.

But, if I have followed the will of heaven in sparing the people great misfortune, I have become a traitor to our King in handing over without resistance the provinces that are his. . . . I deserve only to die. 12

#### THE FRENCH "DISCOVER" CAMBODIA

The French government proceeded to integrate Cochinchina as a directly governed colony. Next door, Cambodia was as little known to the French as any part of the world, but soon it would be a household word in France. A Creole priest from Mauritius, Father Langenois, mentioned in 1783 the existence of a "fortress in stone" hidden deep in the Cambodian jungle. A French priest who had fled persecution in Cochinchina, Father Bouillevaux, visited Angkor Wat and Angkor Thom in December 1850 and described the ruins in a book, Voyage en Indochine, published in 1857. The book did not attract much attention, but it found a reader in Henri Mouhot, a young naturalist who set out for Indochina in April 1858 with funding from a British scientific foundation in his pocket and a copy of Voyage en Indochine in his baggage. Mouhot stayed at Angkor in January and February 1860. He died on November 10, 1861, near Luang Prabang. His two servants brought his papers to Bangkok, and his notes, complete with illustrations, were published in Le Tour du Monde in 1863, and then in English translation in two volumes under the title Travels in the Central Parts of Indo-China. His reports were so sensational that Mouhot was credited by the European public with "discovering" the ruins of Angkor.

It was the Catholic Church that, once again, came to the rescue of French colonial interests in Cambodia. Monsignor Jean Claude Miche was a man of much the same temperament as Pigneau, anxious to be of service to rulers who lost their throne. Not afraid of hardship, Miche and a fellow missionary had gone into the Central Highlands to convert Montagnards when they were arrested on orders from the mandarins of Phu Yen in 1842. After languishing in various prisons, the two were sentenced to death, but they were finally pardoned by the emperor, Thieu Tri, who had received an appeal from King Louis-Philippe. In 1850, Monsignor Miche was appointed apostolic vicar of Cambodia. King Ang Duong died in 1860 and the Cambodian court elected his son Norodom to be his successor. The election displeased his brothers Sisowath and Soi Votha, and the latter went into open dissidence. Sisowath, without openly avowing his dissidence, did nothing to help Norodom. Norodom abandoned the capital of Oudong for the comparative safety of Battambang and then fled to Bangkok. At this point, Miche organized an army, with the help of five French soldiers, to put down Votha's revolt, forcing the prince to flee to Kratie. Now that it was safe, Miche asked the French consul in Bangkok to intervene with the Siamese, and King Norodom was returned to his capital in March 1862.

The new governor of Cochinchina, Admiral La Grandière, took an active interest in Cambodian affairs and gave instructions to his officers that the French conquest of the provinces bordering Cambodia implied the substitution of France for the Hue court in the exercise of suzerain rights in Cambodia. The basis of French policy was to be to prevent Siam from any intervention in that country. La Grandière signed with a grateful Norodom on August 11, 1863, a treaty whereby France undertook the protection of Cambodia. During the delay in French ratification of this treaty, the Siamese at Norodom's court induced the king to conclude a secret treaty that completely undermined the provisions agreed to three

months previously and which referred to Norodom as nothing more than a governor within the Siamese administration and compelled him to renounce his claims to Battambang and Siem Reap. 14 Norodom was finally crowned on June 3, 1864, thanks to French pressure, and the Siamese recognized France's protectorate over Cambodia by a Franco-Siamese treaty of July 15, 1867. 15

#### THE TONKIN "AFFAIR"

A new chapter in the French conquest was opened when a French arms merchant named Jean Dupuis demonstrated the navigability of the Red River for trade with China. A French expedition up the Mekong led by Ernest Doudart de Lagrée had conclusively proved the unsuitability of this river for the purpose. When the expedition passed through Hankow in June 1868 on its long way back to Saigon, Dupuis met its leaders. He determined to demonstrate the relatively easy access to Yunnan, where there was great demand for arms, by way of the Red River. He delivered one cargo but was not permitted by the Vietnamese to deliver a second. In a daring move, Dupuis, with a heavily armed company of 150 Asians and 25 Europeans, occupied a section of Hanoi and appealed for French military assistance.

The admiral governor of Cochinchina responded immediately to this opportunity to expand French control to Tonkin and seems to have done so without compunction about the need to deceive both the government in Paris and Tu Duc in order to carry out his purpose. He called on Captain Francis Garnier, who had just completed the report of the Mekong expedition, to move on Hanoi with a contingent of 56 soldiers and the crews of three small boats. As advised by Garnier, the governor obtained Tu Duc's hesitant blessing on the grounds that Garnier was to evict Dupuis. Once in Hanoi, however, Garnier joined forces with Dupuis. On November 15, Garnier issued a proclamation informing friend and foe that the Red River was henceforth open for international trade. He also ordered all Vietnamese customs tariffs to be suspended. On November 20, after receiving no response to an ultimatum to Tu Duc's military commander that he give a commitment in writing that force would not be used to prevent implementation of Garnier's proclamation, Garnier bombarded and stormed the Hanoi citadel. In the wake of the death of Garnier in an engagement near Hanoi, however, the small French force was obliged to withdraw from Hanoi and Tonkin, leaving the Vietnamese Christians to the vengeance of the mandarins.

Desultory negotiations with the court at Hue eventuated in a new treaty of March 15, 1874, by which Tu Duc was obliged to give up for good sovereignty over the six Cochinchinese provinces, leaving him ruler over a Dai Nam consisting of the 13 provinces of Tonkin and the 12 of Annam. While France was to regulate Dai Nam's foreign relations, Tu Duc continued to enjoy "internal sovereignty" over his diminished empire. In addition, Dai Nam was experiencing a demographic and economic crisis, which was to lead to various movements of protests against decisions that seemed to reflect the emperor's weakness in the face of the challenge from the foreigners. These protests manifested themselves particularly in the provinces of Thanh Hoa, Nghe An, Ha Tinh, and Quang

Binh, and were spurred by the articles in the 1874 treaty that granted Vietnamese Christians full civic rights and permission to take the examinations for the mandarinate.

Tu Duc continued to send his regular tribute to Peking in the years after 1874, and at the beginning of 1879, faced with disorders in Tonkin, he appealed to the Chinese for help in putting down bands of rebels, known as the Black Flags, who continued to obstruct navigation on the Red River. He decentralized his administration in Tonkin in 1880 by grouping the provinces on the China border into two marches ruled by military governors. He also tried to create trouble for the French in Cochinchina by enlisting the help of secret societies, Chinese for the most part, but these efforts were stymied by efficient French police work.

A new wave of imperialist sentiment in France led to the decision to intervene militarily in Tonkin, both to put down the Black Flag rebels and to discourage more open Chinese interference. Captain Henri Rivière and a force of 233 men reached Hanoi on April 3, 1882. The mandarins immediately began to fortify the citadel against an expected attack. Rivière wrote to the governor of Hanoi that his aim was to eliminate the threat to the security of his men represented by the citadel, but that once he had captured it he would return it to the government. He also promised that the provincial government would remain unchanged by the French presence in Hanoi. A bombardment from boats on the river opened the attack. By noon on April 25, the citadel was in French hands. Making good on his promise, Rivière soon ordered the French flag replaced by the flag of Dai Nam. Rivière's death on May 19, 1883, at the hands of the Black Flags further inflamed imperialist sentiment in France, and the expeditionary corps in Tonkin was ordered to be reinforced.

The governors of Cochinchina were at pains to avoid the impression that converting the Vietnamese to Christianity was the motive for their actions; nevertheless, the Church fully supported the imperialist cause. No one personified the symbiosis better than Monsignor Puginier, who arrived in Cochinchina in 1860. He founded the first French school there and eventually became the bishop of western Tonkin in 1862. Puginier rendered immense service to the French cause, both by providing invaluable information to the military about the country and by acting as an intermediary between the military and the Vietnamese authorities in the Dupuis, Garnier, and Rivière affairs. For these services he was decorated by the French commanding general and proudly wore a red ribbon in the buttonhole of his camail, modestly hidden by the cross suspended around his neck. He died in Hanoi in 1892. He was the moving force behind the French program of cathedral-building in Tonkin, and he sponsored a program for printing scholarly and religious books in French and Vietnamese; the seat of the future government general was named after him.

#### FATE STRIKES ONCE: TU DUC LEAVES NO DESCENDANTS

On July 19, 1883, Tu Duc died. Amid the disasters that had befallen Dai Nam, he had the courage to take responsibility for them by composing the epitaph on

his tomb. Being impotent, he left no natural sons, and on his deathbed chose the eldest of his three adopted sons to be his heir, a choice that was immediately opposed by the highest-ranking mandarins at court, who concocted a scheme to accuse the designated heir of going against the late emperor's wishes and arrest him even before he had been enthroned. There ensued a chaotic period in which one heir followed another in rapid succession.

Although Tu Duc had refrained from declaring war on the French, while the emperor lay dying, his commander in Tonkin issued proclamations that called on the population to take up arms against the French and placed bounties on French heads. The French were in a precarious position while they awaited reinforcements and thus might have been evicted by a strong central government. But the court was totally paralyzed by the succession struggle, and it hardly required the show of force the French put on before Hue (after the usual ultimatum saying "We have no wish to conquer you, but you have to accept our protectorate; this is, for your people, a guarantee of tranquility, of peace, and of prosperity" to soften up the emperor of the moment, Hiep Hoa, sufficiently to sign yet another convention of August 25, 1883, known as the Harmand Convention. <sup>19</sup>

The dynastic struggle in Hue also made it easier for the French in Tonkin to win over the mandarins, whose duties were reaffirmed in Article 5 of the Harmand Convention. The uncertainties about who was in power at the moment in Hue created great uncertainties for the mandarins in the provinces, who were theoretically to follow the orders of the court. A provincial official who obeyed one mandarin in effect declared his loyalty to someone who might be replaced tomorrow. The mandarins in Tonkin, distant from Hue, were relatively safe from the court's wrath, however. The governor (tong doc) of Hanoi in March 1884, Nguyên Huu Do, who was on friendly terms with the French and who had been summoned to Hue to account for his conduct, took the precaution of arranging to have an armed French guard posted outside his villa so he could argue that he was unable, much to his regret, to fulfill his duty to his sovereign by answering the summons. At the same time, he ingratiated himself with the French by filling their requests for coolies for their military campaigns against the Chinese, turning over to them hundreds of prisoners under his authority, thereby killing two birds with one stone. Such were the demands of the colonial experience on local officials.

The French intervention in Tonkin was thus due initially to commercial motivations, to which the perceived need to ward off the Chinese later attached itself. Significantly, the question of France's relations with Tu Duc, who was dismissed by the French as a weakling, played only a subsidiary role in these considerations. When the mandarins saw that their emperor could no longer defend Dai Nam's sovereignty except by calling in the Chinese, which went against the Confucian theory that the maintenance of the dynasty was synonymous with the safeguarding of the empire, they made the logical choice to support the French, who gave every sign of staying on and needed their benevolent cooperation in order to administer the country. The Frenchmen they were now

dealing with were no longer the missionaries who had been so obviously intent on subverting Confucian values; these were empire builders, military men for the most part, whose grasp of the use of power matched their own. Unlike the court at Hue, the mandarins accepted the need for modernizing the country with the technology France had to offer. Conversely, French officials in Saigon came to see the mandarins as valuable allies for governing a country in which they had few means themselves for implementing their new instructions from Paris, which blithely ordered them, once they had wound up military operations in the Tonkin delta, to proceed with the establishment of regular administrative services, including a tax collection system capable of defraying as large a part of the costs of the campaign as possible. When it came to tax collection, the mandarins were always eager to be involved. Thus, an alliance was formed.

#### CAMPAIGNING AND NEGOTIATING

Campaigning in the conditions existing in Tonkin in 1884 was not easy. The French military were at all times greatly outnumbered by the Chinese and had to resort to bluff and surprise attack to overcome Chinese resistance. The French relied on their gunboats, which were shipped dismantled aboard ocean vessels as far as Haiphong and then assembled locally. They were wide shallow-draft boats ideal for navigating the rivers in the rainy season. Each carried up to 500 men and their arms, which were then disembarked at the highest attainable reach of the river. Cannon mounted on the top deck came in useful for bombarding fortifications before a ground assault was launched. When one of these gunboats ran aground (the rivers were only starting to be mapped), it was necessary to mobilize several villages to organize a tow party to refloat the vessel.

The French commanders delighted in showing off their hot-air balloons (which they used for aerial reconnaissance) to crowds in Hanoi and other towns and taking terrified mandarins aloft on demonstration flights. But with all the new military hardware, there was no avoiding the long marches through the almost roadless Tonkin countryside preparatory to besieging a Chinese fort; it was often the lot of the common infantryman to slog in flooded paddy fields and cross rivers and canals on precarious bridges or ferries. The rain poured down, soaking everything, including food rations, and the heat was often unbearable and forced frequent rest stops until a fanfare signaled the order to move on. Rations included the soldiers' wine, which for particularly long marches like that from Hanoi to Lang Son was replaced with eau-de-vie "to lighten the load." The artillery was dragged along by coolies, with a soldier by each wheel to prevent the piece from slipping off the dike into the paddy field; everyone was covered in mud. There were also the first foreign correspondents, who were covering the campaign for "Anglo-Saxon" newspapers (a presumption, since they did not speak French and communicated by sign language), "very amiable companions" who rode small ponies and kept the surrounding hillsides under surveillance with their binoculars. The ambulance, consisting of several men carrying hammocks and medical supplies and a military doctor following on horseback, brought up the rear of the column, which for a large

operation stretched for four or five kilometers. It was a relief to leave the delta and start climbing into the mountains, where at least there was firm ground underfoot.

An encampment was a scene of animation—troopers bare to the waist having their morning wash in front of their tents, coolies running about fetching wood for campfires and water from the river bank, horses neighing in their bamboo enclosure, quartermaster officers inventorying stores in their notebooks. Mail and newspapers from France might arrive. When the column came in sight of the objective, everyone was exhausted before the fighting even began. The Chinese built their forts on hilltops and marked them with large banners. Assaulting them was a painful business of climbing the hillside, usually under fire, and grappling with the defenders. It was not the Chinese custom to take prisoners among the French. If forced to retreat, the Chinese would retire to the next mountain range in a sequence that appeared endless. Once the fighting was over and the column had retraced its steps, the task remained of establishing hundreds of small garrisons throughout the countryside whose patrolling would, it was hoped, prevent the Chinese from regrouping and attacking anew. Pacification had come to Tonkin.

In the eyes of an intelligent participant such as army doctor Charles-Edouard Hocquard, who recorded his observations in 1884, the French were restoring law and order by expelling the Chinese. They were making development possible, making orderly government possible, inspiring confidence in the wisdom and firmness of the French presence, setting up clinics and hospitals so that modern medicines (often donated by charitable societies in France) could reach the people to combat the diseases that had afflicted them, and raising the standard of living of ordinary peasants, who were very poor. If there was any oppression connected with the French enterprise, it was not out here in the countryside but in the capital. Hocquard was horrified one day by a scene in a village where the notables were awaiting the visit of the French general in command. An aged man fell to his knees, his hands clasped at his forehead, at the sight of the French party. Someone tried to lift him up, but he interpreted this as a sign of displeasure and prostrated himself, his white locks in the dust. Hocquard records that such demonstrations of servility to the French had been prescribed by the mandarins under threat of punishment.<sup>20</sup> In the cafés of Hanoi, a principal topic of debate was whether democracy could ever take root in such a country; the betting was that it could not, because the mandarins were incapable of imagining what a republic was.

The vigorous show of force by the French in northern Tonkin led to the conclusion on May 11, 1884, of a preliminary convention, signed at Tientsin, by which China agreed to withdraw its troops from Tonkin. The court tried to apply Tu Duc's strategy of re-negotiating the terms of previous agreements with the French, but they were not successful because the French government refused a mission from Hue. Instead, negotiations were conducted in Hue by a mission headed by the new French minister to China, Jules Patenôtre. The June 6, 1884, treaty of protectorate that eventuated was to remain the basis of Franco-Vietnamese relations until 1945.22

Article 1 formally defined the principle of the protectorate. The "protected nation," while abandoning its sovereignty, retained "a certain measure of governmental authority," as Nguyên The Anh points out.<sup>23</sup> The emperor continued to exercise administrative power, but only in certain domains. The treaty introduced a duality of regimes in Dai Nam: Tonkin was a largely fictitious protectorate ruled increasingly directly by France, while in Annam the terms were more closely respected; and France was represented by a *résident général* (later called a *résident supérieur*) who became the focal point of French action at Hue.

In a gesture full of meaning for the Vietnamese, before the treaty was signed, the silver seal that had been conferred by the Chinese on Emperor Gia Long in 1804 was melted down, symbolizing the court's relinquishing of its Chinese protection. The Chinese claimed this action violated Article 4 of the preliminary convention which forbade any act degrading the prestige of China. Events thereafter moved quickly. The Chinese troops in Tonkin, instead of withdrawing as the French thought they would, inflicted heavy losses on a French column making its way to occupy Lang Son and forced it to withdraw to Bac Le on the mandarin road between Hanoi and the China border. The incident was caused in part by ambiguity stemming from a poor translation of the terms of the preliminary convention. The French finally captured Lang Son on February 13, 1885, after hard fighting, and pushed on to Dong Dang, the site of the border post the French called the Porte de Chine. The Chinese counterattacked at the end of March, and the French column, its general badly wounded, retreated from Lang Son. News of the retreat had a huge impact in Paris and brought down the government; a fresh debate over France's involvement in Tonkin began. In Tonkin itself, morale remained high, and people were amazed to read accounts in the Saigon newspapers of the hysteria in Paris.<sup>24</sup> Negotiations were resumed that led to the signing of the Treaty of Tientsin on June 9, 1885, by which China implicitly renounced its tributary links with Dai Nam. The American chargé d'affaires in Peking, E. J. Smithers, forwarded the Chinese text of the treaty to the State Department.<sup>25</sup> Robert M. McLane, the American minister in Paris, also sent a translation to the Department, noting that the treaty preserved the fiction that China and France had not been at war and that China was not required to acknowledge explicitly France's protectorate over Dai Nam, although it did so implicitly by agreeing to respect all the treaties or arrangements made or to be made by France with Dai Nam.26

Meanwhile, in Hue the high mandarins at court had intrigued to raise the standard of rebellion by taking the young emperor Ham Nghi to the isolation of the Laos border, where they could exercise complete control over him. Ham Nghi issued a proclamation on July 13, 1885, calling on his people to rally to him. This proclamation was called Can Vuong ("coming to the aid of the king"). The French used the pretext of an armed attack on their garrison in Hue to occupy the citadel in force. They then proceeded to reorganize the central administration of Dai Nam and to further increase their own powers. They named one of the pretenders to the throne to be emperor, under the name Dong Khanh. But before he was enthroned, the new emperor was required to pay a visit, accompanied by his

ministers and mandarins, to the French legation to present his letter of investiture. To the Vietnamese, sensitive to every shade of meaning, this humiliating gesture was the equivalent of the court's ambassador presenting a letter of investiture to the emperor in Peking. It was the first time the French had put a Vietnamese emperor on the throne.

#### IN THE MOUNTAIN COUNTRY

The rivers had provided the French with access to the interior. The peoples of the mountains remained largely unknown to them. Two expeditions, one led by De Lagrée that visited the ruins of Vientiane in April 1867 and one led by Rheinhart and Mourin d'Arfeuille in 1869, had traveled up the Mekong; they did not penetrate overland into the Laos country. De Lagrée maintained correct relations with Siamese officials he encountered on the river (as at Stung Treng), and the Rheinhart and d'Arfeuille expedition had in fact been strictly warned to avoid entanglements with King Kham Souk of Champassak, who had made overtures to De Lagrée and inquired about protected status similar to the arrangements concluded by France with the ruler of Cambodia. Moreover, the French consulate in Bangkok in this period was inactive as a source of intelligence about Siamese actions in the Laos country. Thus the French remained ignorant of the geography and the history of the region between the Mekong and the Annamite Cordillera until 1882.

In that year Alsatian missionary Charles Blanck completed a grueling trip through the Tran Ninh and wrote an article (whose title itself revealed the hazy notions of geography prevailing at the time) that was calculated to draw the attention of the French government to the possibility that the court of Annam had historic territorial rights extending across the mountains all the way to the Mekong and even beyond. Charged by his apostolic vicar with the task of evangelizing all the "savages" of the uncharted lands lying between Nghe An and the Mekong, the indefatigable Father Blanck traversed the extremely mountainous region from Kam Keut in the south to Muong Ngan in the north during the dry season of 1881–1882.

At Muong Ngan, Blanck at last caught up with the ruler of the Phuan state, centered on present-day Xieng Khouang, Prince Khanti, who had taken refuge in the fort built at that spot by the Vietnamese in 1836 against the Siamese, the rest of his kingdom having been occupied by bandits called Hos. Blanck recorded the appalling destruction left by the marauders, who were still in the vicinity. The fertile valley of Tha Thom lay a wasteland, its terrorized inhabitants having fled their fields for the relative safety of the mountains or else taken canoes down the Nam Sane as far as the Mekong. Blanck had hoped to enlist Khanti's help for his mission, but he received a poor impression of the man, whom he described as mean though timid, ignorant of all but what he had been taught by the monks, emaciated and blackened from opium smoking, and having two wives. Despairing of fulfilling his mission, Blanck returned to Annam.<sup>27</sup> When he made a second voyage to Muong Ngan by canoe up the Nam Mo some months later, his party was forced to turn back by news that the Hos were

now laying siege to this place too. At Cua Rao, he met up once again with Khanti, who had been to Vinh to appeal, in vain, for Annamese men and arms to help rid his kingdom of the Hos. Blanck returned to the residence of his vicar in Annam, where he succumbed to fever the following year.

In an article published in Paris in 1884, Blanck wrote that the Phuan ruler had been a vassal of Vientiane, which made him a sub-vassal of Dai Nam (just as he was a sub-vassal of Bangkok through Luang Prabang). Khanti himself, continuing this relationship, had received the regalia of appointment as governor from an Annamese mission around June 1878. Blanck thus became the first French observer to report, on the basis of first-hand information, the relations of vassalage that bound a state on the left bank of the Mekong to Dai Nam, and accordingly may have served to alert the French government to the possibilities flowing therefrom, as some historians believe. <sup>28</sup> Under Article 15 of the Patenôtre treaty the French guaranteed the emperor of Dai Nam the integrity of his territorial domains. It was not until later, in May 1889, that the French were able to report the results of their research in the court archives at Hue, where the Vietnamese, with their typical sense of order, had for years catalogued the evidence of acknowledgement of Dai Nam's suzerainty over the territories between the mountains and the Mekong and the administrative arrangements that had been in place since Minh Mang's reorganization. The Siamese arrested Khanti in 1886 and took him to Bangkok, where he was prevented from contacting the French consulate lest the latter demand his release as a subject under French protection; he died in Bangkok in August 1893.

The Siamese conducted campaigns into northern Laos for five consecutive years beginning in 1882. The first three campaigns were half-hearted affairs, entrusted to armies made up of peasant recruits who had to be home again by rice-planting season each year. The campaigns of 1885 and 1886, however, reflecting the new forward policy adopted in Bangkok, were more serious. A Siamese force had advanced as far as Muong Thaeng the previous year virtually unopposed, and Siamese efforts were now bent on attaching the Sipsong Chuthai, the confederation of which Muong Thaeng was a part, to Luang Prabang. Luang Prabang was the rump of the ancient kingdom created by the Lao prince Fa Ngum in 1353. This kingdom, Lan Xang, the Kingdom of the Million Elephants, extended over a vast area from the border of China to that of Cambodia and incorporated parts of present-day Vietnam and Thailand. It was inhabited from the earliest times by people who spoke the same language, honored the same genii, cultivated the same religion, and shared the same usages and customs, as the Lao historian and prime minister Katay Don Sasorith has pointed out.<sup>29</sup>

Luang Prabang had regained some of its former influence over Muong Thaeng during the 1840s, and in the 1850s it had helped the ruling Deo family establish a new capital at Lai Chau, across the hills to the northeast at the opposite end of the confederation. In the Siamese scheme of things, Luang Prabang was supposed to exercise suzerainty over the entire area up to the south bank of the Black River. No sooner had the new capital been established, however, than the Deo family abandoned Muong Thaeng, where only a few miserable huts

remained, and paid tribute only to the mandarins of Tonkin. Siamese policy was now based solely on a relationship with an administrator who, while ambitious, was distrusted by the ruling family. Moreover, the Deo family, on the advice of a soothsayer, moved their capital from the south bank of the Black River to the north bank, putting it effectively out of reach of the Siamese.

Between January 1886 and April 1887, Siamese armies finally succeeded in ridding the Phuan state of the Hos. There was little fighting because the Hos, impressed by the size of the Siamese force, abandoned Chiang Kham and their other fortified camps and sped away toward Tonkin and China. Their mission accomplished, the Siamese commanders headed home to Bangkok, taking with them a number of officials from the area of the campaign in order to impress them with the splendors and might of Bangkok and to overawe them into accepting Siamese sovereignty. The Siamese posted a commissioner to reside permanently in Xieng Khouang in the last week of 1886.

In the midst of these Siamese campaigns in the Laos country, the French consul general in Bangkok notified the government in June 1885 that a viceconsul had been appointed and that a vice-consulate would be created at Luang Prabang in accordance with a most-favored-nation rights clause contained in a Franco-Siamese treaty of 1856 that gave France the same rights granted any other nation. The vice-consul, Auguste Pavie, an official of the Cambodian posts and telegraph service, was duly designated in December and entrusted with the mission of scouting out the lay of the land. A new Franco-Siamese convention of May 7, 1886, acknowledged the role of Siamese officials in Laos for purposes of administrative dealings without implying French recognition of Siamese claims to sovereignty. The Siamese insisted that no vice-consulate could be opened until after ratification of the convention by the French parliament. The convention was never even submitted to the French lower house, although it was unanimously approved without debate in the Senate early in 1887. After numerous frustrations and delays, Pavie arrived at Luang Prabang on February 10, 1887, accompanied by 10 Cambodians and a Siamese "minder," and installed himself in a bungalow on the right bank opposite the town.

The resident Siamese commissioners were instructed to provide Pavie with friendly assistance in collecting political and commercial information on the region but to treat him as a private citizen since the vice-consulate had not been officially opened. On February 15, nevertheless, the commissioners granted Pavie's request for an audience with King Oun Kham, who was 76 years old and in poor health and wondering what fresh complications the arrival of a French agent could cause him with his Siamese overlords. On March 13, the Siamese commander of the recent expedition to Sam Neua and the Sipsong Chuthai, Chamun Waiworanat, arrived from the north and paraded his army down the main street of Luang Prabang, receiving the thanks of the monks for having saved the country and returned peace to the borders. Waiworanat described to Pavie in glowing terms how the entire region was pacified and those Hos who had not fled had submitted to Siamese authority. As a guarantee against further troubles, he added, his army had taken with it a large number of hostages. He advised Pavie

that he would have no trouble continuing his route toward Tonkin, although the approaching rains threatened to make the trails treacherous and bring with them fevers which, he said, probably with no exaggeration, had claimed the lives of one-third of his men in the previous year. Seeing nothing further to be gained by staying on at Luang Prabang, Pavie set out with his small company, and by mid-April was well up the Nam Ou when he ran into people fleeing on rafts who told him that Muong Thaeng had been taken by many armed bands who had said they were going to march on Luang Prabang. He hurried back, only to find that Waiworanat and his army had left five days previously, taking with them all the hostages, including four sons of the ruler of Sipsong Chuthai, Cam Sinh.

Cam Sinh was furious upon receiving news of the kidnapping of his sons by the Siamese. The people of Luang Prabang feared revenge. On June 7, 1887, sure enough, his eldest son, Cam Oum (better known by his Vietnamese name Deo Van Tri) and 600 followers arrived at Luang Prabang and ransacked the town, killing the viceroy, Prince Souvanna Phouma, the son of Oun Keo. The Siamese commissioner fled downriver with the Siamese garrison, followed by Oun Kham (who had been plucked from his palace by one of Pavie's Cambodian interpreters) and by Pavie himself. Their canoes reached safety at Pak Lay. There, Oun Kham unburdened himself of his feelings to Pavie:

Our country is not a conquest of Siam. Luang Prabang, seeking protection against all attacks, voluntarily offered tribute to Siam. Now, thanks to its intervention, our ruin is complete. If my son agrees, we will offer ourselves as a gift to France, certain that she will save us from future misfortunes.<sup>30</sup>

These sentiments were not changed when Oun Kham was received with great pomp in Bangkok. Moreover, the thin pretense of Siamese suzerainty over the Sipsong Chuthai was removed for good. During the following dry season, Deo Van Tri, persuaded by Pavie, who had taken the initiative to have his brothers released, facilitated French troop movements by way of the Black River, and the French took possession of Muong Thaeng. At the end of 1888, a Siamese commissioner signed with French officials a status quo agreement under which the French retained control of the Sispong Chuthai and Siamese troops retained their existing positions in adjacent Sam Neua.

After participating in the settlement of the Sipsong Chuthai question, Pavie left Luang Prabang for Khammouane, where Siamese commissioners were attempting to impose capitation taxes and levy forced labor parties. In this period, border markers in wood or of more solid construction, post offices, and flags served as symbols of sovereignty, at least to the opposing side, if not to the bewildered local population. Village chiefs, indeed, sometimes found themselves holding Siamese ranks and titles and Vietnamese titles simultaneously. The danger of incidents between the Siamese and the French was increased by initiatives by both sides to establish military outposts in the mountains. On some occasions, the establishment of an outpost of the Indochinese Guard, usually manned by a French officer or noncom with a handful of Vietnamese militia,

provided sufficient security to Siamese-appointed officials and their families to ease their fears of having hostages seized by the Siamese. In February 1891, a member of the Phuan elite, just returned from Annam, took advantage of a dispute over authority at Chiang Kham to hoist a French flag. The Siamese hastily sent a Siamese flag to the spot. On June 26, the Nong Khai commissioner was authorized to arrest any left-bank official who took sides with the French and resisted Siamese authority. Pavie returned to Bangkok in June 1892 with the title of minister resident.

In March 1893, the French government, acceding to the colonial lobby's campaign to whip up enthusiasm, decided to send three French commissioners, each with a small armed force, to evict the Siamese from outposts they had established in central and southern Laos. P. Dufrénil, vice-résident at Dong Hoi, led the central column down the valley of the Se Banghiang to the Mekong without serious incident. The northern column was commanded by Captain Luce, French résident in Nghe An, and included an inspector of Vietnamese militia, Grosgurin. The column succeeded in peaceably evicting the Siamese commissioner from Khammouane, but the commissioner secretly obtained reinforcements and ambushed the French at the village of Keng Kiet, killing Grosgurin where he lay on his sickbed. Grosgurin's Cambodian interpreter, who survived the attack, preserved an eyewitness account.<sup>31</sup> The southern column, led by Bastard, vice-résident in Cambodia, occupied Stung Treng and Khong without firing a shot; the following month the Siamese attacked Khong and killed one Frenchman and captured another.

Reacting to an inflamed public opinion and angered by what it took to be renewed evidence of the bad faith of the Siamese, the French government dispatched two warships to the Gulf of Siam, and, in what became known as the Paknam incident, forced the passage of a fort at the mouth of the Menam on July 12 and anchored in the river with their guns trained on the royal palace in Bangkok. On July 20, the French served an ultimatum on the Siamese government demanding recognition of the rights of Annam to the left-bank territories and a list of other concessions. After further exchanges, the Siamese accepted, and on October 3, 1893, the plenipotentiaries of the French Republic and the King of Siam, Charles-Marie Le Myre de Vilers and Foreign Minister Devawongse Varoprakar, signed a treaty whereby Siam renounced all claims to territories on the left bank and to islands in the river. 32 Pavie was thus able to fulfill his promise to King Oun Kham and include Luang Prabang under French protection.

Muong Sing posed a particularly thorny problem in implementing the treaty. The British were in possession by virtue of their conquest of Burma, but not having any particular territorial aims on the left bank of the Mekong, they ceded it to Siam at the beginning of 1893. They changed their minds after the emergence of a French threat showed them the need for a buffer zone. The ruler of Muong Sing, the myoza, an astute man who ran a well-organized administration, confused the British by obstinately maintaining his allegiance to Siam, a position the French border commissioners who were dispatched to the spot supported. After an amusing series of flag-hoistings and lowerings, the

*myoza* was handed the tricolor by the British border commissioner, James George Scott, with instructions to give it back to Pavie, who headed the French commission. Instead, Pavie having declined to receive it, the *myoza* hoisted it atop a flagpole.<sup>33</sup> A convention was signed with the British on January 15, 1896, making the border the Mekong.

The Treaty of Tientsin had provided for a Sino-French commission to delimit the common border, which was done as far west as the Black River in 1887. Pavie was instrumental in negotiating a further convention on June 20, 1895, that left the predominantly Lu *muong* of Ou Neua in French hands. This border was duly marked by 50 pillars.

One of Pavie's last tasks was to oversee the organization of the new territories that had thus been added to the French empire in Indochina, and he was named commissioner general in Laos. The Kingdom of Luang Prabang became from the first a protectorate and was initially placed under the governor general of Indochina in Hanoi. Pavie himself saw to the officialization in Hanoi of the titles of King Oun Kham; his eldest son, who assumed the duties of king under the name Zakarine when his father's health declined; and the viceroy Boun Khong, the son of Prince Souvanna Phouma. Pavie also was present at the investiture of the new king and viceroy at Luang Prabang on April 19, 1895. Oun Kham died seven months later at the venerable age of 84.

The French originally divided central Laos into two administrative districts (Vietnamese: dao), Khammouane and Song Khone, and in accord with the regency council in Hue provided for joint participation in naming local administrators and sharing tax revenues on an equal basis, although not for sending Vietnamese mandarins. Sipsong Chuthai was integrated with Tonkin, an action that was to give rise to requests repeated in 1901 and 1944-1949 from the kings of Luang Prabang that it be reunited with that kingdom. The status of the six muongs of Sam Neua gave rise to a three-way argument almost from the beginning among local administrators in Tonkin and Annam and those who argued the claims of Luang Prabang; for the moment, they were reorganized into the circle of Muong Het and placed under Tonkin. Tran Ninh was given the status of dao and taken in charge by the résident supérieur of Annam, but its final disposition continued for some years to be a matter of debate within the French administration. Finally, the southern districts of Bassac (left bank), Khong, Attopeu, and Stung Treng were attached to Cochinchina. The French takeover of the left bank coincided with an interregnum in the dynasty of Champassak, King Kham Souk having died in 1891 and the Siamese having failed to invest a new ruler. Kham Souk's son, Prince Youi, was not recognized as a reigning monarch by the French, although he lived until 1946. Thus, at the end of 1893 the governor general, De Lanessan, was able to draw the attention of the minister of colonies to the fact that the fundamental aspect of the new organization was that it did not involve an extension of Vietnamese administration to Lao territory.<sup>34</sup>

As early as April and May 1894, however, the initial organization of Laos was being modified. It was evident that the *résident supérieur* of Annam was poorly placed to keep in touch with developments over the mountains. More-

#### 20 The Indochinese Experience of the French and the Americans

over, demands for administrative measures were already coming from the court in Hue. Finally, and perhaps most important, the initial plan created a permanent budget drain because the budget of Annam was insufficient to cover Laos. Accordingly, a new scheme was proposed on September 19, 1894, that deprived Annam of the oversight of Khammouane and Song Khone and gave them *résidence* status, placing them directly under the governor general. It also declared the previous attachment of the southern districts to Cochinchina a misunderstanding and attached them again, provisionally at least, to Laos. De Lanessan, however, objected to the new scheme and managed to hold it up until a new governor general, Rousseau, was named at the end of December.

With the arrival on mission in Laos of Léon Jules Boulloche as *résident su*périeur at the end of May 1895, the new plan was put into effect. The first step was to name two *commandants supérieurs* on June 1, 1895, one for Upper Laos (based in Luang Prabang) and one for Lower Laos (based in Khong). The dividing line between the two was the Nam Kading. Each corresponded directly with the governor general, but on matters of policy the latter deferred to the former. Tran Ninh (Xieng Khouang) was finally incorporated into Upper Laos by Rousseau's decree of November 22, 1895. The Kingdom of Luang Prabang continued to benefit from a relative autonomy in finances and administration under a convention of December 3, 1895.

# 2. Dealing with the French

1893- August 30, 1945

# The Creation of French Indochina

By 1893, the outlines of French Indochina had been defined. The game of bluff on the left bank of the Mekong in the summer of that year by a handful of French officers leading Vietnamese militiamen had resulted in the withdrawal by the Siamese from their scattered outposts and had added the final piece to the entity that was to remain on maps with barely a change for more than half a century. Laos became a part of French Indochina, joining Cambodia (from which the Siamese had been evicted earlier in the century), the colony of Cochinchina, and the protectorates of Tonkin and Annam (over which the Chinese had formally relinquished suzerainty by the Treaty of Tientsin in 1885) in a solidly integrated French imperial domain.

The borders were demarcated and fortified where it was deemed necessary against the threat of renewed foreign intervention. Tonkin's frontier with China (1,281 kilometers) had been demarcated by April 1896, and its extension across Laos (423 kilometers) was demarcated soon after. This mountainous frontier, peopled largely by minorities, was to be bolstered against the threat of renewed Chinese intervention in Indochinese affairs by the creation, beginning in 1916, of five contiguous military regions, numbered from east to west. Pavie saw to the frontier delimitation with British Burma (235 kilometers) in 1895. The Mekong served as the border of Laos as far south as Cambodia (1,754 kilometers), whose exposed, mostly lowland border with Siam (803 kilometers) was, for the moment at least, quiet.

In Tonkin, which from the start proved to be the bloodiest scene of their empire-building, the French had quelled the major movements of resistance growing out of patriotism, traditionalism, and attachment to the monarchy. The remaining incidents of resistance involved the De Tham movement, which harassed the French until 1913 in the provinces of Phu Tho, Phuc Yen, and Vinh Yen and combined elements of patriotism and defense of tradition with a Robin Hood type of redress of social grievances. But in 1897, not a single soldier was a casualty of hostile fire, as the governor general noted. In Annam, the revolt of Ham Nghi was finally put down with the capture of the latter in 1888, and the French could turn their attention to "perfecting" the relationship of

protection with the court of Hue that had been embodied in the Patenôtre treaty. A royal ordinance of October 3, 1888, ceded the towns of Hanoi, Haiphong, and Tourane (Da Nang) to the French as concessions on a legal par with Cochinchina.

#### **ADMINISTRATION**

The man who was to give form and substance to the new French Indochina was Paul Doumer, who was governor general from 1897 to 1902. Vigorous, authoritarian, and only 40 at the time, Doumer wanted to integrate the new Indochinese political structures with France and convert the indigenous structures into tools of political and economic control. Reversing the "liberal" tendencies of his predecessors to leave a share of power in the hands of the court mandarins and to oversee the nomination to the ruler's advisory council of individuals who represented "the Annamite nationality" and were "defenders of the empire," Doumer set about establishing a strong government general.<sup>3</sup>

Doumer's plan apparently had less to do with power-sharing within Indochina than with resolving in his favor the dualism in Paris which gave the ministry of colonies authority over the governor of Cochinchina and, subordinate to him, the general resident in Cambodia (as well as the directly administered provinces of Laos) and gave the ministry of foreign affairs the authority over the protectorates of Annam and Tonkin. This situation had created no end of problems for French merchants and industrialists subjected to varying rates of customs duties and had resulted in the blossoming of a French colonial society in Saigon numbering about 2,000 individuals with a strong sense of autonomy and self-importance. In addition, the lobbyists of the French Foreign Missions Society continued to agitate for greater autonomy of the Church's activities in Indochina. An initial attempt in 1887 to give coherence to the French administration of Indochina through creation of an Indochinese Union had already foundered on all these contradictory interests.

Doumer based his reorganization of the Indochinese Union on a decree of April 21, 1891, which had made the governor general "the depository of the powers of the Republic in French Indochina." Its main features were the power to promulgate laws and enforce decrees, authority over the military, authority to organize an Indochinese civil service, the power to carry on correspondence with other French diplomatic missions in the Far East, and the power to establish budgets. By virtue of these powers, the governor general was soon to acquire the status of the viceroy in British India.

Such a reorganization was greatly to the disadvantage of the protected states. In Annam, first of all, what political and administrative authority had remained in the hands of the court at Hue now passed into those of the governor general's direct representative there, the *résident supérieur*, who became in a sense the emperor's tutor and exercised a right of veto over the emperor's decisions, as well as a less well-defined right to propose measures. The Council of Regency (Phu Chinh Phu), which had functioned for 10 years during the minority of Emperor

Thanh Thai was abolished, the two regents becoming ministers. The old Privy Council (Co Mat Vien), which had been created by Minh Mang in 1834, was transformed into a Council of Ministers chaired by the *résident supérieur*. French officials were assigned to each of the seven ministers. Responsibility for tax collection, meanwhile, was given to French *résidents*. In Tonkin, theoretically part of the Hue court's territory, the post of imperial delegate (*kinh luoc*) was abolished by the decree of July 26, 1897, and its powers transferred to the *résident supérieur* in Hanoi, who in effect became the regional holder of the imperial power.

A similar transformation occurred in Cambodia, resulting in the stripping from the throne of many traditional prerogatives that had been preserved under the 1863 treaty, on grounds of modernization.<sup>4</sup> However, the French continued to view the monarchy as by far the most important institution in the country, considering the almost mystical awe in which it was held by the Cambodian population. As the leading French expert on the Cambodian monarchy put it, "The monarchy is the living incarnation, the august and supreme personification of nationality."5 In these circumstances, the succession to the throne became a matter of high policy. This was no simple matter because primogeniture did not exist, and in the case of every succession a new decision was required. The French résident supérieur was enabled to preside over meetings of the Great Council of the Kingdom, which had a large say in deciding the succession; in practice, this allowed the résident supérieur in Phnom Penh and the governor general in Hanoi to determine the succession to the throne. Although the succession was limited to the descendants of King Ang Duong, on the death of Norodom I in 1904 the French imposed the choice of his brother Sisowath instead of one of his sons, thereby creating two royal lines rather than one. <sup>6</sup> The résident supérieur also acquired the power to preside over the Council of Ministers and to countersign royal ordinances.

Laos presented the French with an administrative conundrum because of the hodgepodge of territories of which it was composed. King Oun Kham's successor was confirmed in 1895 in his protectorate, as promised by Pavie, but he only reigned over the kingdom of Luang Prabang; other Laotian territories were administered directly. In Doumer, however, proponents of the unification of Laos had a strong advocate. Listening to the appeals of Joseph Vacle, the commandant supérieur in Upper Laos, in October 1898, Doumer signed a decree on February 6, 1899, integrating Upper Laos with Lower Laos under a single administrator, who sat first in Savannakhet, then in Vientiane, thereby reversing an earlier trend toward dismemberment of the nine directly administered provinces. Doumer also obtained a presidential decree of April 19, 1899, making this administrator a résident supérieur. The first occupant of this position, Colonel Marie Auguste Armand Tournier, used his long field experience in southern Laos to ensure that Laotian territory was extended east to the watershed in southern Annam all the way to the northern border of Cochinchina, giving Laos a spread covering all the Kontum, Darlac, and Dalat plateaus and extending almost as far south as Saigon. Since early in the nineteenth century Lao had been filtering into these territories from the west, initially as elephant traders

but later as settlers. They had moved up the Poko and Bla (a tributary of the Se Sane) rivers to the area of present-day Kontum, establishing permanent settlements there. In reference to the "Lao fields" which had been cleared by Lao, French accounts spoke of the local Vietnamese people (who had themselves been filtering in from the east), of instances of tribal peoples having learned ironworking from the Lao, and of a surviving gold measure established by a Lao chief for use in the sale of buffalo.<sup>7</sup>

On June 15, 1903, Governor General Jean-Baptiste Beau reattached to Laos the *muongs* of Sam Neua that had been placed under Tonkin, after a delegation of elders visited him in Hanoi and appealed for this action; the population of these *muongs* in any case had been migrating to Laos. Further south, after the outbreak of revolts on the Bolovens Plateau (April 1901–October 1907) and in Savannakhet (April and May 1902), a fresh attempt to break up Laos was halted in the nick of time. Nevertheless, in 1904, decrees deprived Laos of the Darlac plateau and of Stung Treng, with its large Lao population living along the Sekong, Se Sane, and Se Srepok rivers<sup>8</sup> and of the Kontum plateau in 1905.

Farther north, the situation was much more difficult to sort out. Discussions between French administrators on the Lao and Vietnamese sides over the delimitation of the border between Annam and Laos in the Tchepone area began shortly after the turn of the century and were to continue, with decrees and cancellations of decrees, repeated border delimitation commissions, and arguments and counterarguments, until World War II. However, strong defense of the interests of Laos by able and dedicated administrators such as François Iché prevented much territorial loss in the compromises that were worked out.

Under a convention of February 13, 1904, Siam ceded to French control the right-bank province of Sayaboury and part of the right-bank territory of Bassac. By a decree of March 28, 1905, the French governor general fixed the border between Laos and Cambodia at the Tonle Repou River. Under a convention of March 23, 1907, the French retroceded the territory of Dan Sai, southwest of the "elbow" of the Mekong, to Siam.

Further outbreaks of revolt in Sam Neua and Muong Ou in 1914 led to another wave of proposals for breaking up Laos. Muong Ou was transformed into the Fifth Military Region in 1916, without actually removing it from Laos. The integrity of Laos was saved by the enlightened action of a new governor general, Roume, who was named in March 1915.

Thus it came about that events conspired to re-establish a sovereign entity in the middle Mekong valley extending from China to the reaches below the Khong falls. The French, who up to then had talked about Laos and the Lao without any clear idea of propriety, or sometimes even of geography, ended up attaching to this nineteenth-century entity much of the territory that had once formed part of Fa Ngum's vast domains, with the notable exception of the Khorat plateau. The French had "conquered" Laos without killing a single Laotian soldier. The central role was played by Pavie, who described it as a "conquest of hearts." His instructions to Vacle reveal a democratic spirit that made him an early advocate of the self-determination of the peoples of the region,

under French auspices, perhaps not a contradiction in the thinking of someone who had been entrusted with high responsibilities in the colonial service by proving himself able to work closely and cooperatively with these peoples. In this sense, the Laotians owe the existence of their country to the efforts of Pavie and others who felt that it was in their best interest that the left bank territories be annexed neither by Annam nor by Siam.

Thus, while Doumer's administrative reorganization provided strong centralized leadership in the person of the governor general in Hanoi and the *résidents supérieurs* in the provinces, it did not create an entirely homogeneous entity either politically or administratively. In the highlands, whether it was in Tonkin, Annam, Laos, or Cambodia, the French struck bargains with tribal leaders and potentates, created new provinces, and attempted to organize the peoples for tax collection and labor contribution purposes. In the main, however, on the local level the French were led to preserve existing structures, either because they did not have enough administrators to take them in hand, as in Laos where the traditional elective system of village government had existed as early as the seventh century and worked reasonably well, or because they resisted French efforts to reform them, as occurred in Vietnam with traditional systems of administration at the province level and below (*tinh*, *phu*, *huyen*, *xa*).

So French Indochina consisted of, on the east, a Vietnam divided into three parts consisting of a colony and two protectorates under the nominal suzerainty of the emperor, and on the west two protected kingdoms and a handful of directly administered provinces forming a bulwark against Siam. Even this scheme, a hodgepodge not much less heterogeneous than the British dominions in North America in the previous century, was to be further complicated by large-scale recruitment of Vietnamese cadres into the Indochinese civil service and by encouragement of Vietnamese migration into Laos and Cambodia. These developments led, in turn, to a lively debate about whether the inhabitants of these diverse territories owed an allegiance to "Indochina," or indeed whether there was such an entity at all.

#### THE DEBATE OVER "INDOCHINA"

The Vietnamese name for their country had changed over the course of history. Now, however, came a new term, one intimately associated with French colonial administration: Indochine Française. This term found translation as Dong Duong Thuoc Phap. As has happened in English, the French was dropped, and the Vietnamese became accustomed to thinking of Dong Duong tout court. Unlike previous terms, this term posed for the francophone Vietnamese, and eventually all Vietnamese, the concept of living in a wider geographical universe, one that included Laos and Cambodia as well. This development was disturbing to many, because it challenged the accepted national identity.

English missionaries and linguists had used the term Indo-China to refer to the Asia that lay beyond India as early as 1811, and the term found its way into French through its popularization by the geographer K. Malte-Brun. Now resurrected in official reports and statistical compendia of the government gen-

eral, the term Indochina found its way into education, transportation, communications (telegraph, postal services, telephones), and economic development plans. While French cartographers painstakingly drew the borders between Vietnam on the one hand and Laos and Cambodia on the other, it was not long before the notion of Indochina became the rule in cultural affairs as well. Although in Laos and Cambodia, Buddhist schools were maintained by the French, there were considerable cross-currents that neither side could ignore. Beginning soon after the turn of the century, Vietnamese immigration into Laos and Cambodia grew steadily, mainly into the towns or else specific economic sites such as the tin mines near the Mekong in Laos, as recorded in the *Bulletins Administratifs du Cambodge et du Laos* in the years 1930 to 1943. The administrative machinery favored this immigration with its recruitment of Vietnamese as civil servants of the government general, who were liable to be posted anywhere within the borders of French Indochina. The same could be said of the Garde Indigène, later renamed the Garde Indochinoise, a militia composed mainly of Vietnamese.

We have seen that for many years early in their colonial enterprise, the French shifted considerable pieces of territory back and forth between one *résidence su-périeure* and another for purely administrative convenience or due to budgetary imperatives, and without much consideration for the rulers and their traditional relations of commerce or suzerainty. This was possible because the inhabitants of what French geographers called the Annamite Cordillera were mainly ethnic minorities without strong ties to the majority lowlanders, and thus their territories could be attached to either side of the cartographic line with relative impunity.

Now, with roads crisscrossing the mountains, the old divide had lost much of its significance. Vietnamese could travel from Hanoi to the Mekong in two days easily, a trip that formerly had taken weeks on horse or muleback. As the cultural divide faded in practical importance, Vietnamese wondered what their relation to the rest of Indochina should properly be. Some, such as the writers Nguyên Van Van and Pham Quynh, editor of *Nam Phong*, recalled the past glories of the Hue court when Minh Mang had brought Cambodia under Vietnamese domination and extended Vietnamese claims to the banks of the Mekong. When they traveled across the mountains to report on these other parts of Indochina, they ended up associating mainly with the Vietnamese immigrants, many of whom held important posts and lived completely outside the laws of Laos and Cambodia.

The formation of the Indochinese Constitutionalist Party in Saigon in about 1917 was an early indicator that Doumer's vision of Indochina had found an echo among the Vietnamese, at least. In an editorial published in the party newspaper *La Tribune Indigène* (renamed in 1926 *La Tribune Indochinoise*) in 1919, the editor, Bui Quang Chieu, called on the French to give greater "autonomy, decentralization and freedom of action" to Indochina. In 1921 the newspaper returned to the question with an editorial suggesting an Indochinese state could be achieved through Annamese-French collaboration. The rival newspaper *Courrier Saigonais* took the position, however, that the Cambodians and Lao had as much right to determine the future of Indochina as the Vietnamese.

In a well-known series of articles published in early 1931 in quoc ngu in Nam Phong and in French in the daily France-Indochine (which had its counterpart in quoc ngu, the Dong Duong Tap Chi, founded in 1912 by Nguyên Van Vinh and François Henri Schneider, 11 and which encouraged modernization along French lines) perhaps influenced by French travel writers such as Roland Dorgelès, 12 Pham Quynh wrote of his experiences in Laos. Oun Sananikone criticized the writer's light-hearted description of a boun, a Lao festival. "We say that these bouns are real religious ceremonies and have nothing in common with the fairs and other distractions of Hanoi like the Chua Lim, Chua Bach Môn, Chua Lang, Chua Dông Quang, Chua Hai Ba and others."13 Quynh's articles argued for French encouragement of Vietnamese immigration, and elicited a response from Prince Phetsarath, a member of the viceregal branch of the royal family of Luang Prabang, who responded in an interview with France-Indochine by saying "The Annamese are already too prone to think only of Annam when they speak of Indochina."14 The prince was not against Vietnamese immigration, but it had to be regulated to avoid creating in Laos "a state within a state."

#### TRADE AND INVESTMENT

Merchant trade and capital investment went hand in hand with administrative reorganization, and here, too, Doumer's governor generalship proved to be a turning point in the economic development of French Indochina. Between 1888 and 1918, French capital invested in industry and mining in Indochina totaled 249 million gold francs, in transportation 128 million, in commerce 75 million, and in agriculture 40 million.<sup>15</sup>

Industrial and mining investments, with the exception of coal mining for export, were concentrated in labor-intensive, light manufacturing industries such as breweries, tobacco factories, textile mills, rice processing operations (in which the Chinese minority soon acquired a considerable interest), electrical works, cement factories, and match factories. They produced mainly for domestic consumption.

The biggest infrastructure challenge in Tonkin was controlling the Red River, which for centuries had silted its bed and, as a consequence, overflowed its banks whenever the river reached flood stage, inundating the delta and its villages. The imperial court had organized the construction and maintenance of a vast system of dikes through the use of village corvées. Occasional famines still occurred, however, when the river breached the dikes. The French seem to have taken up the problem tardily, perhaps in view of the immense work and expense required. It was not until the flooding and famine of 1927 that the colonial administration rearranged, extended, and reinforced the dike system by widening the earthen embankments and packing them with rock and tamped clay. Between 1927 and 1930 the dike system was extended from 20 million cubic meters to 72 million cubic meters. In all, the colonial administration built, using local labor, 40 times the number of dikes that had been built by the imperial court.<sup>16</sup>

The first mention of projects to link Hanoi and Saigon by road and to create a countrywide telegraph service had been in the various treaties of protectorates. These projects were represented as some of the benefits the French would bring in exchange for the emperor's acceptance of protection. Roads were obviously necessary to handle the traffic of heavy vehicles of all kinds the French were bringing in. The imperial postal service, established since the tenth century and operated by an extremely efficient system of locally recruited messengers (trams) who conveyed official correspondence and occasionally baggage over stages of some 40 kilometers, allowing the distance from Hue to Hanoi to be relayed in eight days, for example, was all well and good. But what was needed was a modern means of communication, and that was the telegraph. The first telegraph service by electric cable linked Saigon to Cholon and Bien Hoa in 1862. Over the next decade, 6,600 kilometers of lines were built in Cochinchina, which had 16 telegraph offices. Work on a Saigon-Hanoi telegraph line began in 1884 and was completed in 1888. In 1885 there were 21 telegraph offices in Annam and Tonkin, and by 1887 there were 65.

Doumer gave a strong impulse to railway construction, which had begun in a serious way with the decision in 1889–1890 to build the Hanoi–Lang Son line. Between 1898 and 1936, construction of a rail network connecting Hanoi with the Chinese border at two points (Lang Son and Lao Kay) and with Annam and Cochinchina in the south (the Trans-Indochina line) had been completed. The Cambodian section was constructed in 1928–1932, although not linked up with Saigon. Eventually there were also rail lines connecting Saigon with My Tho and Loc Ninh.<sup>17</sup>

The great railway bridge over the Red River at Hanoi, named after Doumer, was built between 1898 and 1901 by the Daydé and Pillé Company and seemed to be the colonials' answer to the Eiffel Tower, built 15 years previously. Doumer also gave a strong push to the outfitting of Hanoi with public buildings worthy of the capital's administrative role. The governor general's palace (named after Puginier), the new buildings of the *résidence supérieure*, the post office, the city hall, and the courthouse were all Doumer's creations, with the help of architect Auguste-Henri Vildieu.<sup>18</sup>

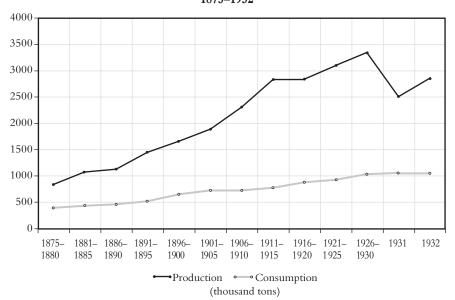
While French penetration of the countryside was accomplished through the combination of waterways, railways, and roads, overseas trade was facilitated through development of gigantic port and harbor complexes. The main investments concentrated on Haiphong and Saigon, both situated up rivers and at some distance from the sea. Phnom Penh was also accessible to small oceangoing vessels by means of the Bassac River. Only Laos remained completely landlocked, a state of affairs the French tried to change by linking its road network with the rest of Indochina. In 1937, coastal and ocean shipping at Haiphong totaled 3,315,000 tons. Haiphong handled coal from the Hon Gay mines, rice from the Red River Delta, commodities from northern Annam, and reexports from Yunnan, with which it was linked by rail. The port of Saigon, situated about 45 miles from the sea up the Saigon River, was Indochina's main port for rice exports, which totaled 2,140,000 tons in 1937. The port had the

advantage of being linked to the vast Mekong Delta by a web of smaller rivers and canals, along which barges and junks moved to Saigon.<sup>19</sup>

In Cochinchina, rice exports had already increased nearly fourfold between 1860 and 1880, while imports from France increased nearly fivefold between 1867 and 1885, <sup>20</sup> and they increased steadily every year until 1929. <sup>21</sup> The rice exports were due mainly to the heavy program of dredging, draining, and canal-building initiated under the rule of the admirals. These investments resulted in more than 4,000 kilometers of canals being built by the late 1930s, and nearly 2 million hectares of marshlands being transformed into areas suitable for rice cultivation. The area under rice cultivation showed a steady progression as a result—from 522,000 hectares in 1880 to 1,175,000 hectares in 1900 to 2,200,000 hectares in 1937. The canals also provided a valuable network for transportation of all kinds of goods. Between 1860 and 1937 rice exports fluctuated between 40 and 60 percent of Cochinchina's total exports. <sup>22</sup>

Another significant export was rubber. European planters introduced rubber cultivation to Indochina during the first decade of the twentieth century. Investments were heavy between 1915 and 1930. Rubber cultivation spread rapidly from the alluvial "gray lands" around Saigon to the more elevated "red lands" of northern Cochinchina, eastern Cambodia, and southwestern Annam. Production increased from 298 tons in 1915 to 3,159 tons in 1919, 6,796 tons in

GRAPH 1
Paddy Production and Consumption in Cochinchina
1875–1932



Source: Paul Bernard, Le Problèm Economique Indochinois (Paris: 1934), p. 94

1924, and 10,309 tons in 1929.<sup>23</sup> Thanks to these exports, after initial years of deficit, Indochina recorded a trade surplus in every year between 1907 and 1945, with the exceptions of 1922, 1930, and 1931.<sup>24</sup>

A branch of the Comptoir National d'Escompte of Paris, a French credit bank, opened in Saigon in 1862. However, it was only authorized to function as a bank of deposit, and something more ambitious was needed to serve the needs of the growing commercial class. Accordingly, a decree of January 21, 1875, created the Bank of Indochina and endowed it with the privilege of issuing currency for an initial period of 25 years. This bank was thus able to function both as a state bank and a private commercial bank.

#### THE OPENING UP OF THE INTERIOR

Under Doumer, French penetration of the interior of Indochina began in a systematic and large-scale way. Gerald Hickey, who from his study of the historical sources must be taken as the final authority on the subject, feels that tributary relations between the chiefs of the highland tribes and the court at Hue date no earlier than from the eighteenth century, in spite of some opinions for an earlier date.<sup>25</sup> In any event, it seems that contacts with the highlands and their peoples were first established by roving Vietnamese traders as a by-product of Vietnamese southward expansion. This was followed by establishment of the first tentative efforts at an administrative presence among these peoples (whom the Vietnamese viewed as foreigners), consisting of mandarins posted at scattered locations in this sparsely populated region.<sup>26</sup>

French missionaries were early on the scene, and some transcribed the local languages. French explorers followed, charting the varied topography and its principal rivers with their rich, brown-colored waters.<sup>27</sup> One of these explorers was the bacteriologist Alexandre Yersin (1863–1943), who had taught a course at the Pasteur Institute in Paris. For four years Yersin led a number of exploratory missions into the Central Highlands, noting down useful information and meeting the tribal chiefs, some of whom venerated him as a shaman figure. In 1895, he established a laboratory at Nha Trang, the departure point for some of his expeditions. Yersin was one of the discoverers of the plague bacillus, and at Nha Trang he introduced a source of quinine. So great has Yersin's reputation remained that in 1968 when a French researcher writing a book on Yersin visited Nha Trang and asked permission of the province chief to see Yersin's grave at a place called Suôi Dâu, which means spring of the eucalyptus or camphor trees, he was told that it was infested with Viet Cong. The Viet Cong heard about his request and gave the writer an escort to the place and back again, enabling him to see the grave. Meeting resistance from some of the highland tribes, in some instances fomented by the Vietnamese mandarins discontented at seeing their prerogatives, and the opportunity for pecuniary gain, taken away from them, the French established forts. In 1897, cinnamon, salt, and wood, important commodities in highland-lowland trade, were made subject to the levying of new taxes designed to increase revenues for colonial budgets.

Meanwhile, French private entrepreneurs were establishing small-scale estates for the growing of rice, sugar cane, coffee, tea, tobacco, and rubber,

encouraged by Doumer's legislation facilitating the granting of titles on public lands. The extension of French administration into the highlands proceeded gradually: friendly local chiefs were enlisted and given Vietnamese administrative titles that often made their first appearance in the region.

The Darlac region, known for its elephant trade, was made a province in 1899 and was originally attached to Laos, as has been noted; Ban Me Thuot, its capital, was a Lao name. Kontum province was created in 1913. Pleiku province was not created until 1932. Doumer had ambitious plans for establishing a hill station at Dalat on the model of the British Raj, but these did not materialize until much later. A Franco-Rhadé school was opened in 1915 in Ban Me Thuot with 30 Rhadé students; by 1926 there were 500 students, many of them boarders, and the curriculum included literacy in Rhadé.

The French relationship with the highlanders involved a mixture of assimilation to the new Indochina they were creating and a sentimental desire on the part of some officials on the spot who worked with the highlanders on a day-to-day basis to preserve the highlands free of Vietnamese and even French penetration. The French came to be seen as obstacles to progress by the new class of merchants and entrepreneurs and found themselves eliminated. Nevertheless, by official decree, the highlanders were to be referred to by their proper tribal names and the collective term "montagnard" was substituted for "moi" (savages), a measure of the respect in which they were held.<sup>28</sup> And the highlanders were eventually recruited and formed into their own military units, a measure of trust. The first battalion-sized unit composed exclusively of highlanders, the Bataillon de Tirailleurs Montagnard du Sud-Annam, was formed in October 1931.

Different tribes showed differing degrees of willingness to cooperate with the French. Indigenous resistance to the French penetration of the highlands did not completely cease until the 1930s, when the Mnong and Stieng in the region where the borders of Annam, Cochinchina, and Cambodia meet, known as the Trois Frontières, put up a resistance that held up completion of construction on Colonial Road 14 until 1939. A census taken by the government general in 1943 revealed that there were 1 million highland people in Cochinchina, Annam, and Tonkin.

#### THE EVOLUTION OF SOCIETY:

#### EDUCATION, LITERATURE, MEDIA, LANGUAGES, RELIGION

Doumer founded two major institutions: the University of Hanoi and the Ecole Française d'Extrême-Orient (EFEO) in 1901 in Saigon, moving it to its permanent quarters in Hanoi the following year. The founding of the EFEO was to be his longest-lasting achievement, since it still has a center in Hanoi. The work of this remarkable scientific enterprise encompassed archeological digs, inventories of ancient monuments, and studies in philology, ethnology, linguistics, and other subjects which served to bring to the attention of a much larger public the rich prehistorical and historical heritage of the Vietnamese, the Khmer, the Lao, and other inhabitants of the peninsula.<sup>29</sup>

Until the beginning of the twentieth century, the use of Chinese ideograms, especially by the ruling class, had conveyed, Chinese style, an entire philosophy, a system of morality and of social organization. Chinese writing implies a complex system based on figurative representation, symbolism, a logical combination of signs, and their merging phonetically or graphically. The Vietnamese lettrés (van than) had made a stab at inventing a form of writing that dispensed with Chinese ideograms, the  $n\hat{o}m$ , but this proved capable of transcribing only half of the 150 sounds of the Vietnamese language. The biggest change in education instituted by the French was the universalization of the Romanized form of writing Vietnamese invented by Father Alexandre de Rhodes (quoc ngu = national language, sometimes referred to as Viet ngu = Vietnamese language) in place of Chinese ideograms. Catholic missions had used quoc ngu before the advent of the French colonizers, but it was on a small scale. In contrast with the nôm, quoc ngu, which transcribes words using the Latin alphabet, has no limits to the number of sounds it can transcribe. Because quoc ngu is entirely phonetic, however, meaning must be found elsewhere than in graphics.

The substitution of *quoc ngu* for Chinese ideograms implied a profound change in mental outlook on the part of its users. Only little by little did the resistance of the *lettrés* in Vietnamese society give way grudgingly to acceptance of *quoc ngu*, initially seen as a way of neutralizing completely the past and with it their place in society, their cultural values, their system of values. As the advantages of the new writing became evident, a peculiar transformation occurred. *Quoc ngu* was adopted with a vengeance, as it were, and it became a tool of national modernization that came eventually to be used against the French themselves. An Association for the Dissemination of Quoc Ngu Study (Hoi Truyen Ba Quoc Ngu) flourished and became influential.

Still, it was difficult to give up the habit of learning lessons by heart. This explains the success of a school manual titled *Pronunciation of French Vocabulary* that made its appearance in about 1910. The author, Nguyên Ngoc Xuan, simply applied the method of learning Chinese characters embodied in the "Tam Thien Tu" ("The Three Thousand Words") to learning French. In this manual, the phonetic of each word was followed by its spelling in parentheses, followed by its meaning in *quoc ngu*. The whole formed nothing less than a verse in six or eight feet, the popular form of national poetry. This manual went through no less than four editions, with a special lot being distributed to Vietnamese unskilled laborers going to France in 1916. Generally speaking, what came to be known as *l'enseignement franco-indigène* was mocked in its time as "a pedagogical system roughly based on the French model and sprinkled with a bit of local color." But the fact remains that generations of Vietnamese students were brought up thinking in its terms until 1975, when the vocabulary of dialectical materialism imported from the Soviet Union spread over the entire country.

The change in writing at the beginning of the century led to a tremendous expansion of Vietnamese language capabilities. Some expressions were simply appropriated from the corresponding French words. Others were plastered together, more or less elegantly. Thus, *nha day thep* for post office, consisting of

*nha* meaning house, *day* meaning wire, and *thep* meaning steel. By 1920, new expressions had invaded the field of politics. Thus, politics itself was *chinh tri* from *chinh* meaning just or true and *tri* meaning to govern. Also, *cach mang* took on the meaning of revolution in the modern sense; *cach mang* had existed before the advent of the French, but only in the restricted sense of losing the mandate of heaven, in other words of one ruler replacing another.

From 1934, the newspaper *Phong Hoa* carried a regular column titled "Practical Vocabulary," in which the writer, Khai Hung, explained to readers the meanings of terms they might not be familiar with. This was part of the flourishing of the Vietnamese press generally in the 1930s, using a machine that had been introduced with colonial rule. The first newspaper published in *quoc ngu* was the *Gia Dinh Bao* ("Gia Dinh Journal"), which appeared in 1865. In 1930, 132 newspapers and periodicals obtained authorization to publish; in 1931, 137; in 1932, 219; in 1933, 219; in 1934, 227; in 1935, 267; and in 1936, 230.<sup>31</sup>

The record of the longest-sustained contribution to the debates about Vietnam's modernization under colonial rule would probably be held by the influential periodical Nam Phong ("Wind of the South"). Published for the first time in July 1917, Nam Phong published continuously until 1934. Discreetly subsidized by the French to the tune of 400 piasters per month as a way of maintaining a French point of view, Nam Phong was edited by two intellectuals, Pham Quynh and Nguyên Ba Trac, who remained loyal to France while maintaining their prerogative of criticizing the colonial regime. The former was the son of a family of Hai Duong and was born in Hanoi in 1892. The latter was born in Quang Nam in 1881, studied classical subjects and merited the lettré title of Cu nhan. From 1917 to 1922, Nam Phong was printed in both Chinese ideograms and quoc ngu. In 1922 and 1923 the part in Chinese ideograms diminished, and a French-language supplement was added. From 1923 to 1934, the Chinese ideograms disappeared completely and the French-language supplement became thicker. Articles consisted of editorial comments on current events, literary criticism, scientific and philosophical studies, and fiction.<sup>32</sup> In its later years, however, Nam Phong carried criticism of life under the French, broaching issues that exposed the seamier side of life such as the deficiencies of the educational system, poverty, and the unequal rights of women. In the context of the age, these forms of commentary, known as phong su ("to enlarge"), were relatively progressive; in the period of Communist historiography, Pham Quynh would be treated as a "reactionary."

Two journals that forsook the austere style of *Nam Phong* were *Phong Hoa* ("Customs") and *Ngay Nay* ("Current Affairs"). The success of the former was due mainly to the efforts of the dynamic Nguyên Tuong Tam, who wrote under the pseudonym Nhat Linh. Third of a family of seven children, he did his studies in French schools in Hanoi and continued them, after a career as a civil servant, in France, thanks to his wife's savings. On his return to Vietnam, imbued with democratic ideals, he took over the journal *Phong Hoa*, the first Vietnamese satirical journal illustrated with cartoons lampooning the francophile gentry of the time. He counted on the partnership of his three brothers and

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Khai Hung, a fervent nationalist who disappeared in the Communist repression of 1946. He also found the time to teach in the private Thang Long school, whose director was also managing editor of *Phong Hoa*. (On the teaching staff of the Thang Long school at this time was a young professor of history, Vo Nguyên Giap.) This circle of journalists led calm lives, enjoying games of belote or chess, or discussing the latest poems over a cup of coffee. Tam played the clarinet, and his favorite piece of music was Schumann's "Rêverie." When time permitted, they made excursions into the countryside, which gave them some impressions of the lives of ordinary peasants. In sum, these people created a miniature imitation of Parisian intellectual life under the Third Republic. Under Tam's able direction, *Phong Hoa* reached a circulation of 10,500 in 1935; unfortunately, it folded the following year.<sup>33</sup>

The fact that these intellectuals were going with the trend is proved by a public opinion survey made in February 1935 by *Ngay Nay*, which asked readers to answer the question: Do you consider yourself to be in favor of the new, or do you seek a compromise between the new and the traditional, or do you see yourself as remaining traditionalist? Of the respondents, 1,350 (59 percent) saw themselves as favoring the new, 936 (41 percent) saw themselves as compromisers, and only 6 (5 men and 1 woman) saw themselves as traditionalists.<sup>34</sup> By 1925, there were 33 movie theaters in Cochinchina, 18 in Annam, 28 in Tonkin, 9 in Cambodia, and 6 in Laos.

Politics and journalism went hand in hand, as demonstrated by the Constitutionalist Party, founded in 1917 by a small group of wealthy French-educated Vietnamese. Their newspaper, also established in 1917, was La Tribune Indigène, whose name was changed in 1926 to La Tribune Indochinoise. Journalism also served as a convenient entry point to the world of literature and the arts for Vietnamese writers. This was because editors refused to publish fiction that had not been serialized beforehand in a newspaper and enjoyed success. In spite of Vietnam's long and rich literary tradition, the modern novel only appeared on the scene in the twentieth century. While popular folklore did not hesitate to break all sorts of taboos, classical literature, observing the strict rules of composition of the Chinese Tang, only went so far as to repeat stories of sadness and tragedy inspired by Chinese themes, such as the classical poem of Kieu. Notably, poetry was one field into which Vietnamese women increasingly entered. The Cochinchinese contribution should not be ignored; Ho Bieu Chanh and his circle took the traditional verse narrative and transformed it into the modern Vietnamese novel with Ai lam duoc (Who Can Do It?), serialized in 1919–1920.35

By the 1930s, in the form of the newspaper *La Lutte*, Vietnamese journalism was serving as the entry point to politics. *La Lutte* concerned itself with international affairs and working-class issues and increasingly came to be a medium through which social and economic grievances were expressed and debated.

Although Buddhism had very early on entered Indochina through Cambodia and Laos and taken deep root there, the Vietnamese became known as Buddhists only more recently. In Vietnam, unlike in Laos and Cambodia, Confucianism profoundly influenced Vietnamese thinking and, indeed, took on the

role of a state religion under the imperial system of the fifteenth century and preserved much of its authority down to French times. As such, Confucianism was equated with political power. But confusion arose in Western minds by colonial soldiers who automatically called the Confucian temples (the *dinh* of Vietnamese village life) they saw Buddhist pagodas (*chua* in Vietnamese). In the Mekong Delta village studied by Hickey, the *dinh* was more than a century old, whereas the first Buddhist pagoda had barely 30 years' existence.<sup>36</sup>

Buddhism had a history of persecution in Vietnam at the hands of the court and the mandarinate, but this was not because of religious intolerance but rather because Buddhist doctrines of renunciation of the world were seen to be against the interest of the family and the state. The same Confucian-minded authorities persecuted the early Christians. The early part of the twentieth century saw the advent of organized Buddhism for the first time in Vietnam, partly in reaction to the spread of Cao Daiism and later in reaction to the influx into the south of well-organized Catholic communities following the 1954 partition and refugee exodus from the north.

The Cao Dai sectarian movement was founded in Cochinchina in 1925 by a small circle of Vietnamese civil servants. The movement attracted a mass following among the peasantry, particularly in the province of Cholon, attracting more adherents within a year of its founding than Catholicism had in 300 years of proselytization. In 1927 the founders transferred the headquarters of the sect to Tay Ninh, where a temple complex was constructed that became known as the Holy See. The sect numbered between 500,000 and 1 million converts by 1930, out of a total population of 4 to 4.5 million.<sup>37</sup>

The Cao Dai were from the beginning a highly structured sect. Cao Dai dignitaries (*chuc-sac*) were drawn from the upper strata of Cochinchinese society—landowners, traders, administrative officials, and office workers—whereas Cao Dai adherents, known simply as believers (*tin-do*), were mostly peasants. Believers could theoretically become dignitaries, but very few did so. Later when Cao Dai developed military forces, a few Caodaists of peasant background became Cao Dai military officers. At the summit of this structure was the Cao Dai "pope" (*Ho Phap*), Protector of the Law, a former civil servant from Tan An Province, Pham Cong Tac, who had been a secretary in the Customs and Monopolies Bureau.

Caodaism reaffirmed the traditional values of filial piety, hierarchical authority, duty and responsibility, loyalty to the throne, and ethical social behavior, including the practice of non-violence. The Confucianist appeal of Caodaism resembled that of the movement promoted by Pham Quynh in Tonkin. However, Caodaism had a unique religious content which in some ways resembled the salvationist doctrine of Christianity. The Cao Dai leaders described their movement as a synthesis of the world's religions and the path of union and reconciliation between East and West. Its religious doctrine was based on the belief that Caodaism was the beginning of the third and final cycle in history, that of renovation, the first cycle having been that of creation and the second that of destruction. The Vietnamese name for Caodaism follows this millenarian conception:

Dai Dao (Great Way or Religion) Tam Ky (of the Third Period) Phu Do (of Salvation).

In the view of Jayne Susan Werner, a student of the Cao Dai movement, for dignitaries the movement's appeal stemmed from the opportunity it offered them to restore their self-esteem vis-à-vis the small ruling circle of the French and to strengthen their personal and social identities in relation to their majority rural countrymen.<sup>38</sup> The French province chief of Tay Ninh in 1933 described Tac as "the indomitable driving force behind Caodaist occultism at the Holy See and the instinctive adversary to everything that is French." Tac became adept in his numerous sermons at phrasing poems in allegorical and elliptical terms with anti-French allusions (although one of the saints in the Cao Dai pantheon was Victor Hugo) and patriotic historical referents. These poems drew from popular folk-lore and legends and easily took the form of anti-French prophecies.<sup>39</sup>

As for believers, the movement offered a multiplicity of material benefits. Aside from creating feelings of solidarity among adherents to Caodaism, Cao Dai leaders promoted collective farming of maize, peanuts, and sugar cane and other communal forms of economic activity, including handicrafts and small-scale manufacturing, and tried to operate markets. Adherents were encouraged to donate tithes, in the form of rice, or offer free labor to the church. The Holy See organized schools for the children of Cao Dai believers and offered evening instruction for adults.

#### THE FATE OF THE HUE COURT

Under Doumer's successors, the Hue court continued to lose power and prerogative; the Vietnamese, reading the signs, were keenly aware of the shift. This evolution, however, did not occur in a straightforward manner, and after the suppression of Ham Nghi's revolt it did not involve the use of force. Rather, it emerged from the peculiar nature of the increasing mutual dependence shared by the emperor and the French in all things having to do with governance.

The key actors on the French side were a group of bright young men who began graduating from the newly established Ecole Coloniale in the 1890s. Grounded in administration, these men went to Indochina by choice to start their civil service careers and gradually worked their way up the hierarchy. Bound together by a desire to acquire knowledge of Vietnamese society and culture, they made themselves indispensable by their very expertise on Vietnamese language (which they spoke fluently), customs, history, and social discourse to the politicians and their appointees who ran the show at the top. It was their presence that accounts largely for the fact that much of the legislation applied in Indochina to the French colonial enterprise was evolved in Indochina rather than in Paris.

As secretaries to higher ranks, branch chiefs, provincial residents, and advisers to the governor general, they expanded their network of acquaintances among the Vietnamese ruling elite that had begun at the Ecole Coloniale and allowed them to deepen their knowledge. Official postings alternated with "sabbatticals" of research at the EFEO and appointments as teachers of various aspects of Annamite society in prestigious schools at home. Scholarly articles and

books followed in short order. A handful of this unique group eventually attained the post of governor general in the 1920s and 1930s.

In the eyes of these senior civil servants, the student radicals who engaged in opposition politics, conspired to overthrow the emperor, and who did not hesitate to advocate violence against the French were betraying the trust their parents had placed in them by sending them to the best schools and that of their teachers who had taught them the Confucian mores. These privileged young men, even though they might belong to the scholar-gentry class, it was evident, had nothing in common with the elite who ran the education system, administered the emperor's territory, or dedicated themselves to the economic development of French Indochina.

There was, to be sure, no lack of such oppositionist activities. A new generation was growing up who had had little or no direct experience of the French conquest, who studied in Franco-Annamese schools, spoke and wrote *quoc-ngu*, and through the rapid expansion of the media learned about and reflected on events in neighboring countries such as China and Japan. The godfathers of this new generation were Phan Boi Chau, born in 1867 in Nghe An, and Phan Chu Trinh, born in 1872 in Quang Nam. At different periods in their revolutionary careers, these two men traveled widely in Vietnam, resided abroad, wrote articles attacking the present state of affairs, and founded resistance organizations with high-sounding names, which had usually short lives due to the vigilance of the French police but landed their founders in prison for various amounts of time. Oddly enough, some of their pleas for reforms echoed the opinions of some of the more enlightened members of the French civil service.

An early focus of oppositionist politics was Prince Cuong De, a direct descendant of Gia Long who had been passed over in the succession to Tu Duc in 1883. He had gone into exile, lived in Japan until 1909, then in southern China, and eventually returned to Japan. He attracted a revolving côterie of young Vietnamese disaffected by the situation in their homeland. In January 1913, following the overthrow of the Manchus, Cuong De became converted to the idea of a Vietnamese republic and named himself the first president of a revolutionary council-in-exile. Ocuong De edited a manifesto sent to the peace conference at Versailles in 1918, and addressed a letter to President Wilson, using Japanese intermediaries.

Louis Marty, one of the group of enlightened high French civil servants, befriended Pham Quynh and was instrumental in helping him found the *Nam Phong*, which Marty saw as a tool to mobilize patriotic Vietnamese behind the government's efforts and also to counter the propaganda of Vietnamese exiles. Marty's hand was also to be seen behind efforts to persuade the government general to introduce a greater degree of representativity into Vietnamese structures with the aim of making them more modern. In 1920, Chambers of People's Representatives were established at the *résidence supérieure* of Tonkin and at the Hue court and soon became chaired by Vietnamese businesspeople and industrialists instead of *lettrés*. The same year a Colonial Council was established in Cochinchina, and the number of its elected Vietnamese representatives was increased two years later.<sup>42</sup>

It is ironic that in spite of their friendly sentiments toward the Vietnamese, and much to their chagrin, liberals such as Marty were compelled to spend more of their time on police work to repress the minority of agitators whose misdeeds continued to punctuate the scene. In 1908, French police traced the links of the revolutionary exiles to a mysterious affair centering on an attempt to poison soldiers in a barracks in Hanoi. In 1913, a bomb exploded in Hanoi, killing two officers, and eight unexploded bombs were found near administrative buildings in Saigon and Cholon; again, links with the exiles were uncovered. In January 1916, trouble broke out in Bien Hoa during a campaign to recruit volunteers for France's war effort; such troubles often were provoked by overzealous mandarins seeking to win favor with the French. The involvement of secret societies in these troubles, about which Marty compiled two reports on the basis of precious details brought to his attention by his Vietnamese collaborators, led the government to declare a state of siege, thereby involving the military.<sup>43</sup> In an effort to bring some order to the hodgepodge of civil and military police organizations, the French created the Sûreté Générale in 1917 to unify all the police services in Indochina.

In 1924 an anarchist attempted to assassinate Governor General Martial Merlin by hurling a bomb hidden in a camera at him as he sat down to a banquet in Canton; amazingly, Merlin escaped unharmed, although three others present were killed. The activities of the exiles led the French to follow the comings and goings of these men with particular attention and to infiltrate agents into their revolutionary organizations.

Nor did the emperors at Hue always help their cause with their constant examples of ineptitude, squabbling with their courtiers, and sometimes poor choices for successors. The death of an emperor became the occasion for court advisers and dowager empresses, who continued to live in the palace and exerted a great influence over the succession, to advance their favorite candidates. After the inglorious chapter written in 1883–1885 with the rapid passing of five pretenders to the throne, Dong Khanh, in whom great hopes had been placed, succumbed prematurely to fever in 1889; Thanh Thai was declared to be incapacitated and deposed in 1907; and Duy Tan was implicated in an abortive revolt against French rule in 1916 and sent into exile in Réunion. Thanh Thai had been a child of nine when he succeeded to the throne, and Duy Tan eight.

Try as they might, the advisers and dowager empresses were unable to prevent the seemingly inexorable reduction of the monarch to a mere figurehead. Had the emperors with whom the French had to deal been mature leaders, it might have been a different story. But the impressionable young men who received their advice on a daily basis proved to be all too pliable instruments at the hands of the French *résidents supérieurs* in Hue. Duy Tan's successor, Khai Dinh, was sent on an elaborate educational visit to France, which he had finally cut short to return home. The visit served mainly to impress on the emperor how backward his country was, and created the public impression of an interregnum, not the result hoped for by the French. It was two hours after Khai Dinh's death from illness on November 6, 1925, that the French took the final step to divest the

monarchy of its remaining secular powers. A convention previously drafted was presented to the Council of Regents for signature; it stated that "the multiplicity of current affairs did not permit the sovereign to intervene personally in the everyday administration of the country" and henceforth "only regulations concerning religious rites or the constitutional rules of the kingdom would constitute matters for royal ordinances."<sup>44</sup> It was a coup d'état heavy with consequences.

On his deathbed, Khai Dinh confided to the résident supérieur, Pierre Pasquier, who was himself a member of the enlightened civil servants' group, that he feared for the future and placed his hopes in the French to take all measures necessitated by the circumstances and to see to the conduct of the kingdom. A growing chorus of anti-monarchical sentiment had made its appearance in Cochinchina and even in Annam, where tracts were sent to the provinces by the post office in Tourane. As if a sign from heaven, a typhoon had struck the Hue region the previous year, barely a month after the end of celebrations marking Khai Dinh's fortieth birthday, causing much damage to the rice crop. Khai Dinh's death received far less attention in the Vietnamese press, however, than the return to Vietnam at about the same time of Phan Chu Trinh, who had become one of the severest critics of the monarchy. During his years of self-imposed exile in France, his application for French citizenship had been rejected, and it must have seemed to the Vietnamese that this rejection exposed for all to see the glaring contradiction between France's welcoming image of equality and reality. Phan Chu Trinh was welcomed as a prodigal son.

At Hue, the choice of a successor fell, once again, on a minor, Khai Dinh's son, Prince Vinh Thuy, who was to take the reign name Bao Dai. Bao Dai returned to Vietnam after receiving his education in France only in 1932, by which time the security of the kingdom had been badly shaken by open revolt in Yen Bay and Nghe An. On learning for the first time of the convention of November 6, 1925, however, Bao Dai resolved to use what influence the monarch had left to persuade the French to desist in their efforts to run the everyday affairs of the kingdom and return to a form of governance more in keeping with the letter of the 1884 treaty of protectorate.<sup>45</sup>

#### REVOLUTIONARY ORGANIZATIONS

The Sûreté, on the basis of its informer networks, was by now aware of the existence of a new set of political parties or organizations formed along revolutionary lines. These included the Tam Tam Xa (Society of Like Hearts) based in southern China, formed in 1923; the Viet Nam Thanh Nien Cach Mang Hoi (Vietnamese Revolutionary Youth Association), formed in June 1925 by Nguyên Ai Quoc ("Nguyên the Patriot"), the pseudonym of Nguyên Tat Thanh, who had been born in 1890 in the northern Annam province of Nghe An but who had lived abroad since 1911 and had also, like Cuong De, addressed a petition to the Versailles peace conference arguing the plight of colonized peoples; the Tan Viet based in Annam (formed in 1926); the Thanh Nien Cao Vong (The Hopes of Youth) group formed by Nguyên An Ninh in Cochinchina; and the Viet Nam Quoc Dan Dang (Vietnamese Nationalist Party, VNQDD), formed in December 1927.

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The mutiny of 40 tirailleurs at the barracks at Yen Bay in Tonkin in the early hours of February 10, 1930, and a simultaneous attack on the militia post at nearby Hung Hoa, however, caught the French by surprise. The actions showed how a party with an effective propaganda arm organized by clandestine cells, in this case the VNQDD, could mount a conspiratorial action under the noses of the Sûreté. For the French, the worst part was that this had happened within the military, which was meant to be the backbone of the colonial authority. An agent of military intelligence in the unit had learned of the plot five days beforehand and had tried to warn his superiors, but they did nothing. Investigators found that the unit had been the object of VNQDD subversion since the beginning of 1929 and that even cell meetings had gone completely undetected. 46 In all, 545 tirailleurs and indigenous non-commissioned officers, judged to be no longer trustworthy, were subjected to disciplinary action. The lapses revealed by the investigation called for an overhaul in French intelligence, giving the Sûreté an entry into the military that it had not had before Yen Bay. Conversely, military commanders now were enjoined to assume surveillance responsibilities that had heretofore been civilian in nature.<sup>47</sup>

As they were about to be guillotined, Nguyên Thai Hoc and his 12 followers shouted "Vietnam!" Befuddled by the extreme anti-French character of these incidents of violence, however, the Sûreté, echoing the French press, tended to attribute all revolutionary violence to Communist groups affiliated with the Third International and to underestimate the non-Communist groups. Such simple-minded explanations of the outbreak of revolutionary violence were firmly rejected by the Constitutionalist Party in Cochinchina. Even before Yen Bay, the Constitutionalists had warned the French that the population was gravely discontented and that instead of repressing the expression of this discontent the authorities should be seeking out and treating its causes. Yen Bay served to confirm the Constitutionalists in their analysis. Articles in *La Tribune Indochinoise* contrasted the natural riches of Indochina and its people with the moral repression imposed by the colonial authorities. The latter gave rise to an "exasperated nationalism" of the masses.<sup>48</sup>

The peasant and workers' uprising in Nghe An and Ha Tinh in Annam three months after the Yen Bay mutiny, however, was to prove to the Sûreté as well as to the moderate nationalists that the Communists were moving rapidly to take over the leadership of insurrectionary activities in Indochina and that the repressive measures taken by the French against the VNQDD, effective as they were, had not solved the problem.

The Society of Like Hearts served Nguyên Ai Quoc as a nucleus of what was to become a long list of front organizations. The Vietnamese Revolutionary Youth Association was intended to be a nursery for the training and education of committed Marxist-Leninists, but it was also to serve for propaganda and mass mobilization purposes. Its stated objectives were impeccably revolutionary and nationalist: the overthrow of the French and the restoration of independence through the organization of an anti-imperialist front of all progressive factions in Vietnam.

Behind these stated objectives, however, there was another, one that Nguyên Ai Quoc spelled out in a pamphlet he published at the beginning of 1926, "Duong Cach Menh" ("The Road to Revolution"), 49 in which he argued for the benefit of other Vietnamese revolutionaries the applicability of Marxism to Vietnam. He contended that reliance on reformism should be strongly opposed—the Russian revolution got rid not only of the tsar but also of capitalists and landlords; the making of revolution was not to be entrusted to a few isolated heroes engaged in a romantic but quixotic struggle against the forces of evil. Instead, revolutionary unity was to be stressed as all important, and the final stage of the revolution was to be led by a highly disciplined and united Marxist-Leninist party under the leadership of the Communist International (Comintern). Thus, while the programs announced by Quoc's front organizations throughout his long career often sounded like those of other nationalist organizations, the big and lasting difference that separated them was that Quoc's final objective was the imposition of a Marxist-Leninist dictatorship. But this was naturally kept a secret known only to the party faithful. Quoc had his recruits honor the sacrifice of the man who had hurled the bomb at Martial Merlin in Canton but did not recommend his methods to them: it was an important distinction.<sup>50</sup>

Nguyên Ai Quoc had come under the influence of Lenin while living in Paris; after being given a copy of Lenin's *Theses on the National and Colonial Questions* (1920), which was reprinted in *L'Humanité*, he was to accord, as he later wrote, total confidence in Lenin.<sup>51</sup> Quoc secretly left Paris, where he had been under police surveillance, and made his way to Moscow. His papers, made out in the pseudonym Tran Vang, were stamped by the border guards on arrival at Petrograd on June 30, 1923.<sup>52</sup> In Moscow, he was made a delegate for the Far East to the Third International. After the Vietnamese Communists came to power and tore down statues to the French and renamed French street names, they acknowledged their debt to Lenin by erecting a statue of Lenin in a square in Hanoi. Years later, Quoc, who had changed his name once again to Ho Chi Minh ("He Who Enlightens"), in telling foreign visitors about Lenin's death, shed tears, which led them to speculate about whether this reflected Ho's genuine emotion or was a display of a cheap trick.<sup>53</sup>

In Moscow, Quoc discovered an entirely new way to deal with the French in French Indochina—organizing a revolution on the pattern of the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917—an enterprise which he thought offered some prospect of success. He had sided with Lenin in the great debate which pitted Lenin against M. N. Roy over policy toward national liberation movements in the colonies and had become a lifelong Leninist. As his future lieutenant in the party, Le Duan, was to write:

President Ho's first great service was to associate the Vietnamese revolutionary movement with the international workers' movement and guide the Vietnamese in following the path that he himself had followed—the path leading from patriotism to Marxism-Leninism.

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That was the only liberation path, the path which the Russian October Revolution had opened for the workers and oppressed worldwide. Marxism-Leninism came to the Vietnamese "in the same way as water comes to a thirsty traveler or rice to a hungry one."<sup>54</sup>

In 1925, Quoc was sent to China by the Comintern; in succeeding years he traveled in Siam and Singapore. In 1930, he was back in Hong Kong, where he brought together three revolutionary groups to found the Vietnamese Communist Party, whose name was shortly changed to Indochinese Communist Party (ICP) at the behest of the Comintern. After a long stay in Moscow, Quoc returned to Kwangsi in 1938 and began organizing front groups capable of mobilizing resistance to the French.

The Sûreté in Indochina could be excused for its confusion concerning the role of Communists in insurrectionary activities. By the beginning of 1930, there were no fewer than three Communist organizations operating in Vietnam, each calling itself the legitimate representative of the Vietnamese working class and organizing working people into cells and each seeking formal recognition from the Comintern. That February, however, the Sûreté had the good luck to intercept another of Quoc's letters, this one sent from Hong Kong addressed to the central committee of the Revolutionary Youth Association seeking recognition of the Indochinese Communist Party as an autonomous section of the Comintern. Thus, the Sûreté learned for the first time that the Revolutionary Youth Association and the ICP were parts of the same organization.<sup>55</sup>

What had happened was that the members of the Revolutionary Youth Association, having fallen on hard times due to the constant repression exerted by the Chinese Kuomintang, had split up into two new and separate organizations. In Moscow the Sixth Comintern Congress held in the summer of 1928, drawing on the experience of the Kuomintang-Communist split in China, signaled a leftward shift in the direction for world Communist strategy. In Tonkin, 20 Youth Association delegates meeting in Hanoi in June 1929 declared the dissolution of the organization and the establishment of an Indochinese Communist Party (Dong Duong Cong San Dang) having statutes and regulations based on the Comintern's ready-made "Model Statutes for a Communist Party" and the Comintern's 1928 program. This party shortly absorbed virtually all former Youth Association members in Tonkin and began to make inroads into Annam. In Cochinchina, Youth Association members in the autumn of 1929 decided to dissolve and transform their organization into a Communist party, calling it Annamese Communism (An Nam Cong San). This party published a manifesto criticizing the ICP and made public its own political program and regulations. Finally, in January 1930 in Annam members of the Tan Viet, meeting a rebuff from the other two Communist organizations, formally transformed their organization into a League of Indochinese Communists (Dong Duong Cong San Lien Doan).

At a meeting of their representatives convoked by Quoc in the name of the Comintern in Hong Kong on February 3–7, 1930, the first two Communist

organizations (apparently unaware of the dissolution of the Tan Viet), after a few days of exchanging invective, recriminations, and mutual accusations, agreed to dissolve their organizations and establish a unified Communist party, to be called the Vietnamese Communist Party (Dang Cong San Viet Nam), a name that figures in a note Quoc wrote on January 6. The founding date of the party is today commemorated as February 3. After receiving subsequent criticism from the Comintern for promoting narrow national chauvinism while downplaying the importance of proletarian internationalism, a new conference was convened in October 1930 and the party's name changed to the Indochinese Communist Party. At this meeting, now referred to as the First Plenum of the party's central committee, Quoc presided in his capacity as representative of the Comintern along with the party's secretary-general designate, Tran Phu, a young Communist from Quang Ngai who had recently returned to South China after attending training sessions at the University for the Toilers of the East in Moscow.<sup>56</sup> One of the first steps taken by the new party was to create front organizations for all sections of Vietnamese society (workers, peasants, religious groups, women, etc.). As a party periodical later explained the name change:

Although the three countries are made up of different races, with different languages, different traditions, different behavior patterns, in reality they form only one country. . . . It is . . . not possible to make a revolution separately for Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos. In order to oppose the enemy of the revolution which has a united concentration of force in the entire Indochina, the Communist party will have to concentrate the forces of the Indochinese proletariat in a united front. . . . Although the party's name is only a form, since the form is important for the revolution, the change has to be made. <sup>57</sup>

The early months of 1930 saw an outbreak of strikes at the Phu Rieng rubber plantation in Cochinchina, at a match factory at Ben Thuy in Annam, and at a cotton factory in Nam Dinh in Tonkin. Workers' conditions were certainly poor in these establishments and had probably been made worse by the Great Depression. By mid-April, workers had left their jobs at several industrial centers in Hanoi and Haiphong. On May Day, peasants joined workers in marches in Thai Binh province. In Nghe An province, 3,000 peasants raided a plantation owned by a Cochinchinese, seized rice and tools, destroyed property, and planted the red hammer-and-sickle flag on the main administration building. This was the first of a series of jacqueries in the Song Ca valley west of the provincial capital of Vinh. Leading factors behind the unrest in the region were widespread hunger, anger over high taxes and the monopolies, and mandarin exactions and corruption. Many peasants had abandoned their land and moved into Vinh and its industrial suburbs in search of work. The protest movement was spread by many of these migrant workers returning to their villages to agitate.

The unrest was undoubtedly exploited by local Communist cadres, who saw themselves as doing no more than following the Comintern's directives for world proletarian revolution. However, the central leadership of the party ap-

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pears to have been caught unaware by the development and even seems to have opposed the resort to violence. Above all, the episode showed how poorly prepared the party was, with its Comintern-inspired focus on an urban proletariat, to take advantage of genuine grievances on the part of the majority rural population. Afterward, the party sought to claim credit for the uprising, mainly in the form of articles by the skilled propagandist Tran Huy Lieu.

When the French, who had few of their own troops in the area and relied mainly on Vietnamese militia, responded with force to a march by several thousand peasants from Yen Xuyen toward Vinh, soviets were established in many districts of the provinces. These were relatively simple organizations, resembling peasant associations. Villagers were summoned to a meeting by the drum of the *dinh* and the proposed regulations were then read. Those who assented automatically became members of the soviet, which formed an administrative committee composed of villagers and party cell members in attendance.

The Constitutionalists carried their analysis one step further. The "exasperated nationalism" of the masses evident in Cochinchina as elsewhere in Vietnam was fertile ground for agitators, who worked to transform what began as demonstrations to remedy legitimate grievances into irremediable conflict by provoking bloodshed. As *La Tribune Indochinoise* reported in 1930, "Actually, beneath the nationalist mask in which they were masquerading, they were working to provoke a class struggle." The description fit the Communist Party and its leader, Nguyên Ai Quoc, perfectly.

For the monarchy, which was momentarily in the custody of a regent, Ton That Hân, the protest movement in Nghe An and the neighboring province of Ha Tinh posed a dilemma. On the one hand, the French, going back on their seizure of power of November 6, 1925, compelled the court to countersign all proclamations emanating from the government general; on the other its mandarins, who in many cases had contributed to the popular discontent, had fled to the safety of the towns. Nguyên Huu Bai, the aged prime minister who had presided over the Co Mat for a quarter of a century, was given vice-regal powers to deal with the situation. He devised a plan to combine military and political measures to pacify the riot-torn areas. Local military forces would be reinforced by a system of military posts manned by loyal troops and locally recruited militia. Clan patriarchs would be made responsible for the behavior of all members of the kinship unit. Parent-teacher associations would be formed to control the behavior of students. Local political authority would be strengthened by the creation of a political organization to operate at the village level. Finally, to prevent the unrest from spreading elsewhere, natives of Nghe An and Ha Tinh residing elsewhere were told to return to their home villages.

French repression of the party was swift and efficient. The police arrested a central committee member, Ngô Duc Tri, who told the locations of many other party leaders and other secrets. During March and April 1931, almost the entire central committee in Vietnam was seized and its regional committees dispersed.<sup>59</sup> One member who escaped arrest was a young history student, Vo Nguyên Giap, whose application for the post of professor at the Thang Long

school in Hanoi was presented by the school's director to the *résident supérieur* in October 1934. Four months later, the director of education in Tonkin signed the authorization with the approval of the *résident supérieur* (and against the advice of the police, which had recommended it be rejected on grounds of findings of an investigation into Giap's background).<sup>60</sup> Another professor at the Thang Long school, who became a good friend of Giap's, was Hoang Minh Giam, who came from a village upriver from the capital known for producing intellectuals. Many of the ICP members arrested after the troubles of 1930 were released when the Popular Front came to power in France in 1936.

## BAO DAI AND NGÔ DINH DIEM

The coup d'état of November 6, 1925, had led the French into a political impasse: by depriving the monarch of all but his religious functions, they had assumed responsibility for putting down discontent, even when it stemmed from economic causes, as had been the case in Nghe-Tinh. Yet they had little power to correct the basic causes of popular grievances.

In response to reports from Indochina, left-wing members of the National Assembly in Paris argued unsuccessfully for the sending of a commission of inquiry to look into conditions. Minister of Colonies Paul Reynaud finally agreed in the summer of 1931 to make an inspection trip to Indochina. Upon his arrival in mid-October, Reynaud was met by a chorus of demands for reform in Annam and Cochinchina. The most eloquent were expressed by Pham Quynh, focusing, in a famous series of articles titled "Vers une Constitution," on the restoration of monarchical powers and the need to give the Vietnamese greater national identity under French rule. What Reynaud was willing to concede, however, was far short of this, and the reforms Reynaud actually put in motion on such matters as a reduction in the rice export tax, an extension of long-term agricultural credit arrangements, an abrogation of imprisonment for debt, and reforms in the mandarinate, were tentative at best. The one significant step Reynaud took was to accede to King Sisavang Vong's request that France formalize the protectorate over Luang Prabang by a treaty.

With the Vietnamese, the real action began not with Reynaud's visit but with the return to Hue of Emperor Bao Dai in September 1932. With the benign approval of Governor General Pierre Pasquier, the convention of November 6, 1925, was abolished and a royal decree issued listing the various reforms that Bao Dai would eventually initiate in the fields of justice, education, and the mandarinate, and a broadening of the powers of the Chamber of Representatives of the People, which had been provided for under that convention but which the French résident supérieur, Yves Chatel, had succeeded in depriving of any real power, on the model of the Colonial Council of Cochinchina.

By May 1933 Bao Dai was ready. In a series of surprising moves, he dismissed the old Council of Ministers and said he would take over as his own prime minister in place of the 72-year-old mandarin Nguyên Huu Bai, who had maneuvered behind the scenes to sabotage Chatel's projects for taking all power into French hands. He also appointed a new five-man cabinet. Before

resigning, Bai had obtained Bao Dai's agreement to name a Catholic mandarin to the post of minister of interior in order to safeguard the traditional influence of Catholicism in the Imperial Council. Bai's nomination of his son-in-law, Ngô Dinh Khoi, however, was turned down by Bao Dai, who named Khoi's brother, Ngô Dinh Diem, instead. The remainder of the cabinet was composed of Pham Quynh (director of cabinet and responsible for national education), Ho Dac Khai (finances and social welfare), Bui Bang Doan (justice), and Thai Van Toan (works, arts, and rites). At the same time, Bao Dai established a mixed commission of Vietnamese and French to watch over the reforms promised the previous September, of which Quynh was president and Diem was secretary. These moves had Pasquier's tacit approval, a fact that gave rise to grumbling on the part of many nationalists that Bao Dai and his young ministers were merely acting as French puppets. Diem and the others therefore faced the difficult choice between enacting some reforms from within and putting up with criticism, or staying on the sidelines and criticizing without being able to influence events.

Diem came from a family of Dai Phong village, near Giap's native village of Vo Xa in Le Thuy District, Quang Binh Province in Annam, that had converted to Catholicism in the seventeenth century and had been persecuted along with other Catholics by Minh Mang and Tu Duc. The family was nearly wiped out in 1870 when an anti-Catholic mob cornered nearly 100 members in a church and set fire to it. Diem had been born on January 3, 1901, in Hue, the son of Ngô Dinh Kha, a mandarin first class at the court of Thanh Thai. When Thanh Thai was deposed in 1908, Kha had resigned in protest, and his son Diem was taken in hand by Nguyên Huu Bai, who was to have a deep influence on him, and who persuaded him to embark on a career as an administrator. After his studies at the *lycée* in Hue, Diem declined the offer of a scholarship in France and studied at the School for Law and Administration in Hanoi, where he graduated in 1921 at the top of his class of 20. At the age of 28, Diem was appointed governor of Phan Thiet (Binh Thuan).

One of the reforms before the mixed commission was to legislate a separation of the executive and judicial powers of the mandarinate. The combination of these powers was the source of much of the well-known corruption in the mandarinate. The reform would establish a body of judges of the peace to take over administration of justice at the planned introduction into Annam of the Morché Code, named for the president of the court of appeal in Hanoi who had codified a modern version of the Gia Long Code. The reform was opposed by Bai, and Diem felt obliged to oppose it himself out of considerations of family and professional solidarity. This opposition brought him into conflict with Quynh, who was supported by Chatel. Diem fought back by leaking reports of meetings of the mixed commission to two French-language Saigon newspapers which were not subject to censorship. When one of his communications was intercepted by the French police, Diem had to resign his post in September. 61

Diem was replaced as minister by Quynh, and his name was stricken from the mandarinate by the Imperial Council. He had to earn a living teaching French in the family home in Hue. He felt he had not been supported by Bao Dai. From this time on, Diem became Vietnam's leading non-violent revolutionary. The National Revolutionary Movement which supported his government after 1954 claimed to date from the "clandestine struggle for the revolution of national independence and human emancipation" which Diem inaugurated in 1933.<sup>62</sup>

# The Decoux Regime

During the Popular Front in France, the Indochinese enjoyed a short-lived period of liberalism in the government general. With the approach of World War II, however, the governors general became military officers, and their preoccupation with dealing with the Japanese military gave them little leeway or incentive to enlarge the powers of the monarchies in Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos or to enact liberal reforms.

## INITIAL NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE JAPANESE

With Japan deeply involved in China, the Japanese military's main interest in Southeast Asia in the summer of 1940 was to close off the Hanoi-Yunnan railroad, over which goods for China transited, to the profit of the Indochina government general. This trade had already aroused the concern of the Japanese military in China, and the French were blaming the Chinese for allowing a backlog of goods to accumulate at Haiphong, as the American consul in Hanoi, Charles S. Reed II, reported. Reed quickly concluded that French policy in Indochina would be one of "understandable self-interest and political expediency." 63

On June 19, the French ambassador in Tokyo, Charles Arsène-Henry, notified the Japanese foreign ministry that the governor general in Indochina, General Georges Catroux, had taken action to close off the flow of supplies to China, acceding to Japanese demands. <sup>64</sup> By June 25, the flow of supplies had been reduced by more than half. <sup>65</sup> In Hanoi, Catroux next received a Japanese surveillance group headed by Major General Issaku Nishihara to observe the border closure. He also approved the turnover to Japan of large quantities of supplies warehoused at Haiphong that had been destined for China.

The home government to which Catroux was responsible had just sustained the worst defeat in France's history and was about to install itself in the hotels of the spa at Vichy under the umbrella of an armistice with Germany. Although the armistice instrument made no specific provisions respecting Indochina, it allowed the French the use of their fleet to protect their interests in the empire. The empire itself was an important asset in the eyes of the defeated (but surviving) Metropolitan government, and there was considerable determination not to let Indochina go.

Catroux's actions in cutting off the flow of supplies to China led to his being cashiered on June 25 for having acted without his government's authority. As Catroux was quick to point out, he had received not the slightest token of support from outside Indochina. Without this, the Indochina Army, which had been brought to a total strength of 90,000 men (of whom 14,500 were Europeans) through a mobilization campaign at the beginning of 1940,66 was in no

position to resist the Japanese demands; the Japanese enjoyed overwhelming superiority to the north in China and at sea off the Indochina coast, and the Indochina Army lacked enough officers and had ammunition for only a few weeks' fighting. A Japanese armed intervention would merely lead them to treat French Indochina as conquered territory. A weightier consideration may have been the fact that Catroux made no secret of the fact that he intended to honor the Franco-British alliance and was in touch with British officials in Singapore. In fact, after leaving Indochina, Catroux joined the Free French movement in London of General Charles de Gaulle, whom he had met for the first time in a German prisoner of war camp during World War I and who had been under his authority during de Gaulle's brief posting in Lebanon in the 1930s.

In Catroux's place the French government, still headed by President Albert Lebrun, appointed a new interim governor general, Vice Admiral Jean Decoux, commander of French naval forces in the Far East, whose headquarters were at Saigon. There ensued a period of overlap between Catroux and Decoux, during which the need to deal with the demands being made by the Nishihara mission dominated all else. The subsequently published memoirs of the two men<sup>67</sup> show that while both thought the change of leadership in this time of crisis unwise, they were equally determined to make no concessions on the sovereignty of French Indochina. Catroux writes that he thought Decoux repudiated the armistice and the government that had signed it.<sup>68</sup> Decoux, however, did not place much stock in help from the British, especially after the senior British admiral in the area stopped in Saigon on his way from Hong Kong to Singapore at the end of June and confided to Decoux that he might receive an order from the admiralty in London to sink Decoux's flagship. The difference in viewpoint between the two men also probably reflected the different services in which they had made their careers. In the words of one Frenchman who experienced both in the course of his wartime military service, "In the army, discipline is more formal and more military; in the navy, it is less apparent but applied more loyally."69 For Decoux, the idea of taking the warships under his command to Singapore was unthinkable.

Decoux was playing a subtle game of waiting for Catroux to conclude his negotiations with Nishihara; he sent back reassuring messages in response to impatient telegrams from Vichy that asked whether the transfer of authority had occurred. When he finally left Saigon for Hanoi to assume the governor generalship, he chose to take the train; he took over on July 20. During this interim, Catroux purposely dragged out the negotiations with Nishihara, while, taking advantage of Japan's interest in acquiring military bases in Indochina, he sent a mission to the United States to obtain badly needed arms, particularly aircraft, according to documents in the French archives. Catroux ordered his troops to remain vigilant but to avoid any provocations. He informed the ministry of colonies that native opinion in Indochina was relieved to learn that war with Japan had been averted. For many months the government at Vichy regarded the power of the United States as the bulwark protecting Indochina against Japanese aggression.<sup>70</sup>

Catroux appears to have been aided in this game by the personality of General Nishihara, who had served in Paris as a military attaché and spoke fluent French, and by the fact that Nishihara's mission was composed of representatives of different elements of the Japanese ruling circles who concealed information from each other and tried to advance the agendas of their agencies in Tokyo. In addition, Catroux shrewdly appointed Japanese-speaking officers as liaison officers to the checkpoints established by the Nishihara mission. The French military attaché in Tokyo, Major P. Thiébaut, had accompanied Nishihara to Hanoi, and his close relations with Nishihara further exacerbated the rivalries among Nishihara's subordinates.<sup>71</sup>

Apparently as part of his game plan, according to documents in the Japanese archives, Catroux on July 6 proposed to Nishihara that his government general enter into a "defense alliance" with Japan. The proposal was immediately accepted, although there apparently remained differences of interpretation about what such a "defense alliance" would imply. According to one existing version of the Japanese understanding, Japan and French Indochina would mount joint operations against the government of Chiang Kai-shek that would involve Japanese forces attacking Chinese territory from the direction of French Indochina, Japanese forces defending French Indochina's territory jointly with French Indochina forces, and French Indochina forces defending French Indochina's territory. In return, French Indochina would grant permission for Japanese troops and military supplies to transit French Indochina and would provide "other assistance necessary for joint operations." Finally, Japan would guarantee French Indochina's "independence."

From Catroux's point of view, the "defense alliance" proposal was mainly for the form. Its great advantage was that it preserved the status quo in French Indochina. Japanese troops in French Indochina would not be an occupying army, as the Germans were in the two-thirds of France that was occupied. Japanese troops were already fighting in China, and their opening a new front from bases in Indochina would not give them an advantage they did not already enjoy. As for the involvement of the Indochina Army, it was in no condition to undertake a campaign in China, which in any case the alliance would not require it to attempt.

Disaster at the hands of the Japanese was only narrowly averted, however. Major Thiébaut had warned Catroux that the slightest sign of dissidence from Vichy on his part would be interpreted as a change in the status quo in Asia and would precipitate a Japanese military takeover of Indochina, for which there was already great pressure being exerted by Japan's Canton Army in southern China. Catroux therefore kept his thoughts to himself, and continued to send his situation reports to Vichy as before, sure that the Japanese would read them. Vichy, however, had had enough of this game, and informed the Tokyo government directly that Catroux was no longer its governor general in Indochina. Whereupon, being convinced that his continuation in office "would inevitably expose the colony to the invasion that I had prevented," Catroux handed over his charge to Decoux.

#### THE "COMMON DEFENSE"

Mindful of Catroux's unhappy experience, Decoux refrained from making concessions to the Japanese that had not been approved by Vichy. He obtained confirmation of his position as governor general and moved into the Puginier Palace in Hanoi. He lost no time in throwing the ball into Vichy's hands. On August 30, Ambassador Arsène-Henry and Foreign Minister Matsuoka Yosuke exchanged letters in Tokyo whereby Japan agreed to respect the territorial integrity of Indochina in exchange for consideration of the "procurement of special military facilities" connected with Japan's operations against China that were to be further negotiated on the spot. This he needed the delivery of aircraft on order from the United States. The special methods are the

By September, however, Nishihara was pressing his demands for the stationing of large numbers of troops and the use of military facilities, including airfields. In the face of these demands, Decoux ordered his chief negotiator, General Maurice Martin, the general commanding in Indochina, to drag out the negotiations as long as possible. Every trick was used: the contents of the Tokyo agreement was gone over word by word, paragraph by paragraph; the French repeatedly suspended the negotiations to examine the Japanese demands and then pleaded for more time to consult their superiors. Several times the negotiations appeared to be on the verge of breakdown. The French even invented reasons for questioning Catroux's actions (and in the process, succeeded in getting the impatient Japanese to hand back much of the seized material, including 1,100 trucks and 17 light aircraft).

The State Department informed Reed on September 18 that it was holding conversations with the members of a purchasing mission from Indochina—the arms-purchasing mission Catroux had sent to the United States—and was "giving active consideration to the question of ways and means of assisting them toward attaining productive results." The Department asked Reed particularly to report on "the character and status of the relationship between the Government General and the French Government at Vichy." However, Decoux recalled the mission because it had not managed to acquire any arms. <sup>78</sup>

Meanwhile, the Japanese 5th Division of the South China Army conducted exercises near the Tonkin border, even sending a reconnaissance party to cross the border on September 5. Finally, the Japanese served an ultimatum: if no agreement was signed by midnight September 22, the 5th Division would cross the border in force. On receiving the ultimatum, Decoux immediately consulted Vichy, who told him to sign. Thus, on the afternoon of September 22, the military convention giving Japan the right to station 6,000 troops in Tonkin, to use three Tonkinese airfields, and to move other troops to embark at Haiphong was signed. The convention was temporary—until the satisfactory resolution of the "China incident," meaning Japan's war against China.

That evening, Japanese troops, on the initiative of a small group of officers disregarding the convention and in defiance of the emperor himself, attacked the border post of Dong Dang and laid siege to Lang Son. After four days of

sporadic and rather disorganized fighting, the garrison surrendered. The loss of 40 dead and 42 wounded, but above all the desertion of 1,096 men, including many members of the Tho ethnic minority as well as Tonkinese subverted by anti-French propaganda, caused consternation at Hanoi. Soon thereafter, a Japanese landing party of 4,500 men reached Haiphong; Decoux ordered that there be no resistance.

The French protested vigorously Japan's responsibility for these incidents in Hanoi and Tokyo. On October 5, in a public ceremony at Lang Son, the Japanese read a message from their emperor presenting his regrets, exalting Franco-Japanese friendship, and promising the liberation of prisoners. It was a small but badly needed psychological victory for the French, giving visible proof that the integrity of Indochina was to be preserved even at the cost of blood. Decoux, judging his army's intelligence of enemy forces to have been poor and its delivery of orders to the front line to have been confused, replaced all his top commanders. He also ordered that the deserters of Lang Son be hunted down and dealt with severely, a task which the new *résident*, Paul Chauvet, did efficiently. Similar harsh treatment was meted out to the survivors of a band of armed Vietnamese exiles belonging to the Viet Nam Phuc Quoc Dong Minh Hoi (National Restoration League of Vietnam), founded by Cuong De in Shanghai in March 1939, who had unwisely decided to seize the opportunity of Japan's action to re-enter Tonkin.

Meanwhile, a full-blown crisis had blown up with Thailand (the name for Siam since June 1939), where the government of Pibul Songkram was arousing public opinion with inflammatory speeches in Bangkok and radio broadcasts to those he called his brethren across the Mekong to rise up against the French, an endeavor in which he promised help (and for which he had secretly sought Japanese backing). After a series of increasingly serious incidents in which the Lao towns on the Mekong were bombed by the Thai, Thai ground troops occupied the right-bank territories of Pak Lay and Bassac in early January 1941 without difficulty.

On January 15, Thai ground troops attacked the outnumbered defenders at Poipet in Cambodia, forcing the Cambodian *tirailleurs* to fall back. <sup>79</sup> A French counterattack the following day failed. At sea, however, on January 17 the French fleet made a surprise attack off Koh Chang, sinking two Thai destroyers and three torpedo boats without sustaining a single shell hit, a feat that must have given considerable satisfaction to the admiral governor general. The Japanese imposed an armistice on January 31, and a convention negotiated in Tokyo and signed by the French and Thai on May 9 recognized the need to make certain readjustments of the border in order to prevent conflict in the area. The convention left the provinces of Battambang and Siem Reap and the right-bank portions of Laos to Thailand.

The territorial losses embittered the Cambodian and Lao royal families. King Monivong (r. 1927–1941) protested the convention, to no avail, and secluded himself at the hill station of Bokor, where he shortly expired. The reaction of the court at Luang Prabang to the French signing of a convention that gave away Sayaboury and right-bank Champassak and barely preserved the privilege of the

monarch of visiting the royal tombs on the opposite bank of the Mekong, was equally one of outrage. In response, Decoux flew up to Luang Prabang in a single-engine army plane to offer King Sisavang Vong (r. 1904–1959) a treaty regularizing the protectorate and enlarging his domains. Under the terms of the treaty of August 29, 1941, the territories of Vientiane, Xieng Khouang, and Luang Namtha were included within the sovereignty of the Kingdom of Luang Prabang. The position of viceroy, abolished by the French at the death of Boun Khong in 1920, was also reinstituted.

Laos now consisted of Luang Prabang, under French protection, and the provinces south of the Nam Kading, which were administered directly by the résident supérieur in Vientiane. The latter had direct authority over the résidents, who were on an equal footing with the Lao provincial governors (chao khouengs). He also acted as representative of the French state to the king of Luang Prabang. The affairs of the kingdom were conducted by a four-member Council headed by the viceroy. The résident supérieur also coordinated the activities of the public services of the government general, which operated in both the north and the south and employed French, Vietnamese, and Lao civil servants.

A final set of accords signed with Japan completed the legal aspect of the wartime relationship between French Indochina and Japan, which was not to change until March 9, 1945. Informed ahead of time of the import of the accord, President Roosevelt called in the Japanese ambassador on July 24 and made a last-minute effort to prevent the entry of Japanese troops into all of Indochina by proposing the neutralization of Indochina on the model of Switzerland;80 the offer was too late, and it was rejected by Tokyo.

The Protocol Concerning Joint Defense and Mutual Military Cooperation in French Indochina signed at Vichy on July 29, 1941, by Foreign Minister Admiral François Darlan and Ambassador Kato Sotomatsu provided that "the two governments undertake to cooperate militarily for the common defense of French Indochina," whose territorial integrity and French sovereignty was once again affirmed.81 An annex removed the restrictions on the Japanese military presence and specified eight airfields in Annam, Cochinchina, and Cambodia that the Japanese could use. 82 This was the result of a change in the strategic situation as seen by the Japanese military, who now had their eyes set on Southeast Asia and saw Indochina as a jumping-off place for the conquest of Burma, Malaya, and Indonesia. The annex also included financial provisions allowing the Japanese to draw piasters for the upkeep of their troops in return for setting aside yen in Tokyo in the form of gold. At war's end, the French insisted that the Japanese fulfill this part of the bargain by handing over the gold owed to the Bank of Indochina. A separate commercial accord, signed in Tokyo on May 6, 1941, obliged Indochina to furnish strategic materials, mainly rice, to Japan.

At the end of July, the Vietnamese, Chinese, and other inhabitants of the ports of Annam and Cochinchina watched Japanese troops disembarking and moving into buildings and barracks vacated by French troops for what Radio Saigon called the "common defense" of their country, without specifying against whom the defense was directed. Seeing the French flag still flying, they

must have felt that this peculiar arrangement stemmed from sheer expediency, and they may well have asked themselves how long it could possibly last. Indeed, the documentary record confirms its fragility from the very beginning. Fujio Minoda, Japan's consul general in Saigon, cabled his ministry that month:

The French Indochina authorities' retention of sovereignty, that is, control of government administration and the police, is the cancer of our policy measures vis-à-vis French Indochina. The same can be said with regard to economic negotiations, development of resources, and maneuvers concerning the Annamese and overseas Chinese. This time, therefore, we should take advantage of the slightest provocation by French Indochina to declare null and void the clauses guaranteeing respect for French Indochina's sovereignty and protection of its territorial integrity in the three agreements of August 30, September 4, and September 22 last year and in the peace treaty between Thailand and French Indochina, taking a totally different tack unbound by past [commitments].<sup>83</sup>

#### INTERNAL REPRESSION

Decoux's determined stand against those who contested French sovereignty applied internally as well as externally. It was not for nothing that the Vietnamese used the expression "Toan Quyen" to refer to the governor general, which means "all the power." The Indochinese who favored moves toward independence for their countries within the existing order were free to express their opinions in the newspapers, under the watchful eye of the authorities, in this case the governor general's inspector of political and administrative affairs. But troublemakers who broke the law and unleashed violence were to be pitilessly prosecuted and punished; the adherents of the VNQDD fell in this category.

The Constitutionalist Party and the small Democratic Party more recently founded by the wealthy Cochinchinese landowner Dr. Nguyên Van Thinh fell into the former category and posed no problem. Another party that eschewed violent means, at least for the moment, was the Dai Viet, founded in 1939 by the VNQDD renegade Truong Tu Anh and by Nguyên Tuong Tam (Nhat Linh). Composed mainly of intellectuals, especially writers and journalists, the Dai Viet party believed in using the political system to take over power by infiltration and subversion.

The adherents of the Cao Dai, on the other hand, although they foreswore violence, constituted the closest thing to a mass movement outside the government's own organizations, and thus were in a position to act autonomously. In a vast police operation on August 24, 1940, supported by the Garde Indochinoise and army units, 328 Cao Dai temples were entered and searched and 284 of them were closed. Cao Dai private schools and charity clinics were likewise closed. In all, using the tons of documents seized by the police to incriminate ever more of their membership, a total of more than 5,000 members of various Cao Dai sects were arrested, of which 1,983 members of the clergy, notables, and simple faithful were kept in prison until their liberation by the Japanese on March 9, 1945. "Pope" Tac was placed under house arrest at Go

Cong and then exiled to the Comoros as a precautionary measure under an order signed by Decoux on August 20, 1941. In his absence, the Cao Dai established a quasi-military Supreme Leadership Committee headed by Tran Quang Vinh. Cao Dai adherents were recruited by the Japanese as manual labor, especially for building wooden boats in the port of Saigon; they were paid for their work, which was represented to them as a way to serve their religion.

With the parties that advocated revolutionary violence, worked underground, and dabbled in conspiracies the story was otherwise. The jails were full of persons who had been convicted of sedition. Their sojourns there produced several of the leading figures of the ICP, such as Giap, who had been arrested in 1930 and imprisoned in Hue (his wife died in police custody). The conditions of detention instilled in them a rage to destroy the system of which the jails were a part. Conversely, Decoux's police repressed these rebels with a vengeance, a stand that accorded well, incidentally, with Vichy's anti-Bolshevism.

The ICP hoped to take advantage of the confusion in French ranks stemming from the threats to Lang Son and Haiphong. After failing to obtain the support for its plans of the Indochinese Trotskyite Party (ITP) (the history of enmity between the two parties was too long) and the southern branch of the VNQDD (holed up in the Plain of Reeds), the ICP finally launched an insurrection on the night of November 22. It was pitilessly crushed by Decoux's police, who had been tipped off by an informer. For a few days, insurrectionary activities flared at Cholon, Tay Ninh, My Tho, Can Tho, and elsewhere. Many Vietnamese accused of being servants of the colonialists (some of whom were members of nationalist parties opposed to the ICP) and a few Frenchmen were assassinated. Administrative buildings were burned, bridges and ferries were destroyed, and telegraph poles were knocked down. From the La Grandière Palace, the repression was directed by the governor of Cochinchina, Rivoal, and his inspector of political and administrative affairs, Brasey, whose chief aide was Nguyên Van Tam of later fame. Decoux ignored Vichy's recommendation of clemency. Some 50 people were guillotined, including Nguyên Thi Minh Khai, an ICP member and sister-in-law of Vo Nguyên Giap, and four to five hundred others were sentenced to prison terms. Giap's implacable hatred for the French may have stemmed in part from these personal experiences; in much the same way, Lenin's dedication as a revolutionary seems to have been hardened by his elder brother's having been hanged for an attempt on the life of the Tsar.84

Decoux visited some of the affected areas the following month: He stated:

I have visited the regions that recently were troubled by a criminal agitation. I particularly inspected points that had been the scene of incidents. Everywhere I found a population that was calm and resolved. This Communist-instigated movement was immediately repressed with all the energy that seemed called for. I have not tolerated, nor will I tolerate in the future, that a handful of rebels take it on themselves to disrupt this country the security of which has been entrusted to me. I propose to let all honest people know that they will be supported, protected, and defended.<sup>85</sup>

The ITP had enjoyed a brief moment of glory under the Popular Front in France, when relatively open elections were held for the Colonial Council of Cochinchina. But in 1939 it, like the ICP, was outlawed by the government general. The same fate had earlier struck the VNQDD, which had been behind the failed mutiny at Yen Bay in 1930.

Likewise, in Laos and Cambodia repression was the answer to the slightest sign of rebellion. When a group of intellectuals led by the professor of Pali Maha Sila Viravong, Tham Sayasithena, and the Sananikone brothers triggered a protest against the French *résident supérieur* at the Collège Pavie in Vientiane in July 1940, they escaped arrest only by fleeing across the Mekong. With covert support from the Bangkok government, they formed a clandestine party, the Lao Pen Lao (Laos for the Lao), and continued their anti-French agitation. The Japanese, however, who, on the pattern of French Indochina, had stationed their troops in the country as a springboard to invading British Burma, kept a watchful eye on the Lao Pen Lao, suspecting them of harboring irredentist designs to reunite Thailand's Lao-speaking northeast provinces with the left bank provinces as they had been in ancient Lan Xang.

In Cambodia, anti-French agitation built up at the end of 1941 and the beginning of 1942. The Buddhist clergy had a legitimate grievance in that a French ordinance had proscribed the use of the traditional Khmer script, a measure that affected instruction in Buddhist temple schools. The move offended the Buddhist clergy (sangha), which saw itself as the curator of Khmer culture, itself enshrined in part in the Khmer script and in the Buddhist calendar. Anti-French articles appeared in the newspaper Nagara Vatta ("Angkor Wat") founded by Son Ngoc Thanh, whose father was a Khmer landowner from Cochinchina (called by the Khmer Kampuchea Krom) and whose mother was Sino-Vietnamese.

The agitation was fed by sermons by the Venerable Hem Chieu, a professor of Pali, which led to his arrest. The manner of his arrest, which did not allow for the ritual of his leaving the monastic order of which he was a high-ranking dignitary, offended many Cambodians. On July 20, 1942, a march to the prison by 1,000 Buddhists, 100 nationalist supporters, and 50 Cambodian Cao Dai members was broken up. A special tribunal pronounced death sentences against two of the chief agitators, but this time Decoux listened to Vichy and commuted them to life imprisonment. After hiding in Phnom Penh and escaping to Battambang, Son Ngoc Thanh was removed to safety in Japan. He was to reappear on the Cambodian scene in 1945.

Following this wave of repression, a Buddhist monk, Achar Pres, and a young practitioner of traditional medicine from Battambang, Sieu Heng, cooperated with agents of the ICP and the Communist Party of Thailand in establishing a guerrilla base in the Cardamom Mountains of southern Battambang. Thus, unlike in Laos, where the ICP was compelled to infiltrate the nationalist Lao Issara movement that existed at the Japanese surrender, in Cambodia it had its agents already on the spot prior to the surrender.

Japanese propaganda, spread by innocuous-sounding bodies such as the Japanese Cultural Institute in Saigon, was rife. Japanese agents were also active,

spreading anti-French views and preparing a select few to step in and govern the Indochinese countries if and when the appropriate time came. These agents included businessmen such as Matsushita, head of the Dai Nan Koosi, who had been in Vietnam for decades and spoke fluent Vietnamese. As time went on, the Kempeitei, which had requisitioned the Franco-Chinese Chamber of Commerce building in Saigon's port area for its headquarters, became increasingly active and had its Vietnamese agents positioned everywhere.

An agreement between the Indochina government general and the Japanese reserved jurisdiction over all Indochinese to Indochina. But the Japanese on occasion disregarded this provision and extended protection to certain citizens who they thought could one day be useful to them and who were in imminent danger of arrest by the French police. Protection of these individuals was also a convenient way for the Japanese to keep a watchful eye on their contacts. In removing the most endangered people, especially after a sweep by the Sûreté of suspected pro-Japanese Vietnamese in August 1943, the Japanese created overseas colonies that soon included (in addition to the group surrounding Cuong De in Tokyo) the Cambodian Son Ngoc Thanh in Tokyo, the Vietnamese historian Tran Trong Kim and the Cao Dai cardinal Dang Trung Chu in Bangkok, and the Cochinchinese Phuc Quoc leader Tran Van An and Nguyên Van Sam in Singapore. All these persons were at least as patriotic as Sukarno in Indonesia, the difference being that in Indochina their agreement with Decoux prevented the Japanese from giving them free rein. Thus, the Indochinese did not have their own Sukarno.

Although Bao Dai reigned but did not rule, any thought of replacing him was considered to be seditious by the colonial authorities. Therefore, the Vietnamese supporters of Prince Cuong De, Bao Dai's uncle, who had gone to Japan with Phan Boi Chau and who had lived there since 1916, were themselves considered suspect by the ever-vigilant Sûreté. These consisted mainly of Caodaists, but also included the Catholic Ngô Dinh Diem.

When the French sent the Japanese a note at the end of June or beginning of July 1944 demanding they turn over Tran Quang Vinh, a Cao Dai bishop under Japanese protection, Diem became frightened that he would be arrested. Tipped off by Nguyên Ngoc Tho, first secretary at the résidence supérieure of Annam, that a French arrest order had been issued, Diem sought protection from a member of the Japanese consulate in Hue. Diem received a Kempeitai escort as far as Tourane, where he was placed aboard a Japanese plane for Saigon. At his request, the Japanese also gave protection to two sons of Cuong De in Hue, who were sent to safety in Bangkok. At about the same time, a retired Japanese general, Iwane Matsui, who was close to Cuong De, took the initiative of sending an emissary, Vu Dinh Dy, to Saigon. Through contacts in the Japanese headquarters in Saigon, Dy was put in touch with Diem. In September the two men invited Nguyên Xuan Chu, Le Toan and Vu Van An to join them in forming the Uy Ban Kien Quoc (Committee for National Reconstruction).86 In October this group agreed to work under Diem and informed the Japanese headquarters that they wished to form a government under Diem if the occasion arose.

Another aspect of the regime's repressive measures centered on French sympathizers of Free France. Having made up his mind to maintain Indochina's attachment to Vichy, Decoux revealed himself to be pitiless against any Frenchman who violated military discipline by supporting de Gaulle's movement in London. A handful of these would-be Gaullists were arrested as they tried to leave Indochina by way of China to return to Europe to fight against fascism and were thrown into prison under terrible conditions. In some cases, the treatment of these officers seared friendships that had been formed years earlier at Saint Cyr.

As a result of Decoux's prohibition on Radio Saigon from mentioning "the dissidence" or the "anti-France" movement, the only way left to people in Indochina to obtain news of the Allies or of the rare and inconsequential policy pronouncements on the future of Indochina by the Free French, was by covertly tuning in to the shortwave broadcasts of the BBC (and, later, the Free French broadcasting station in Madagascar) or through local contacts with one or more of the several clandestine intelligence networks operating in Indochina with links to the outside world. Decoux's measures against Jews and Freemasons, in implementation of laws passed by Vichy, were certainly among the less honorable of his actions as governor general.

### THE AMBIGUOUS SPONSORSHIP OF NATIONALISM

Decoux recognized the danger of leaving the masses to be facile recipients of Japanese propaganda on the theme "Asia for the Asians." He launched a vast program to enlist the support of the Indochinese. At the top level of Indochinese society, this program restored a measure of their traditional dignity to the three monarchs of Annam, Luang Prabang, and Cambodia, although it cautiously avoided ceding any of the authority over their affairs held by the *résidents supérieurs* in their capitals. Their royal palaces were refurbished and their allowances increased. They were encouraged to show themselves in public. Decoux prided himself in participating in their traditional rituals, such as the Nam Giao buffalo sacrifice in Annam.

The death on April 23, 1941, of Cambodia's monarch, King Monivong, allowed Decoux to exercise the power that his predecessors had wielded in determining the succession to the throne. Formally, the decision was taken by the Great Council of the Kingdom, but as the French *résident supérieur* in Phnom Penh presided over meetings of this august body, the French had the last say. In the case of the 1941 succession, at least, there were compelling reasons for Decoux's final determination and the decision seems to have been reached fairly easily and without the lengthy exchanges of correspondence with Paris that had occurred in previous instances.

Decoux put the case to the minister of colonies on March 3, 1941, for choosing Prince Norodom Sihanouk as the new king. In the succession of 1904, the French had influenced the choice of Prince Sisowath, a brother of King Norodom, over that of any of the late king's sons, thereby creating a dual line of succession. The choice of Sihanouk, who was a grandson of King Norodom by

his father and a grandson of King Sisowath by his mother, offered the chance to repair this breach by putting someone who represented both lineages on the Cambodian throne. This was Decoux's main line of argument, and it weighed in favor of the choice of an 18-year-old boy who was still attending a lycée in Saigon.

Decoux's decision was accepted by the minister on April 4 after some troublesome questions had been satisfactorily cleared up by Decoux. These had to do with ensuring that the throne had not been promised to any other member of the numerous royal family, ascertaining the reactions and their possible political repercussions of disappointed pretenders, seeking information about enlistment of members of the royal family in the French army, and, finally, seeking assurances "that Sihanouk will henceforth offer all guarantees for the future from the point of view of morality, judgment, character, devotion to France."87 Of course, there was disappointment in some quarters; the man considered to have been the principal pretender, Sihanouk's uncle, Prince Sisowath Monireth, "was notably discontent with the decision."88

Decoux's creation of consultative bodies such as the Federal Council (1941) and the Grand Federal Council (1943), in which Indochinese held a majority, was simply symbolic. The admiral reserved all powers of decision to himself. Nevertheless, in moves designed to lessen the distance separating the indigenous peoples from the French, Decoux forbade the use of the term "native" and prescribed "autochthonous" in its place. He forbade French civil servants to use the familiar "tu" in addressing their autochthonous counterparts. "The use of 'yous' and civility must become the general rule in relations with the local population," Decoux declared. He also raised the salaries that mandarins received with the aim of reducing corruption, which was a constant problem and alienated the common people from the French as well as from the mandarins. He opened public employment to Indochinese with French nationality and did away with differences in recruitment, promotion, and posting between civil servants of Indochinese and Metropolitan origin.

He saw to the opening of primary schools and colleges, as many as had been established since the beginning of the century, and encouraged the teaching of the history and literature of the Indochinese countries. He propagated instruction in quoc ngu in the schools. Appealing to youth, he encouraged the enrollment of hundreds of thousands in sports and youth brigades which marched in uniformed cadence along streets and in stadia singing "Maréchal, nous voilà!" in homage to Pétain. The cult of the old marshal, whose large portraits were displayed on public buildings, was seen to accord well with the veneration for age in Confucian culture.

Decoux's ambitious wartime public works program was dominated by road construction, especially roads that made Laos more accessible. In the effort to connect Saigon with Luang Prabang by way of the Mekong valley, a distance of 1,680 kilometers, Colonial Road 13 was extended from Pakse to Savannakhet (240 kilometers) in 1941; was extended 71 kilometers north of Vientiane in 1942; and was completed between Thakhek and Vientiane (130 kilometers) in 1943. Improvements were made to 135 kilometers of the road between Thakhek and Ban Naphao. Work progressed on Colonial Road 23 between Muong Phine and Saravane; 95 kilometers were filled and 70 kilometers covered with macadam and two cement bridges, of 280 meters and 160 meters, respectively, were completed. On Colonial Road 19 between Stung Treng and Pleiku, fill was completed on 230 kilometers and macadam on 105 kilometers. On Colonial Road 14 connecting Cochinchina with the Central Highlands, fill, macadam, and bridges were completed on 365 kilometers.

In public discourse, Decoux began using the name Vietnam and permitted the Vietnamese royal flag of yellow background with three horizontal red stripes to be flown alongside the tricolor. He often declared that the Vietnamese had two mother countries: France and Vietnam. In a real sense, however, Decoux was competing for the loyalty of the Vietnamese with Japan, which had its own motives for fostering nationalism in Indochina. Thus, for example, the General Students Association of the University of Hanoi was founded in 1940. On May 16, 1943, this association held a mass meeting of some 1,500 students at which, with Japanese approval, a resolution was adopted calling for the creation of a "Vietnam National United Movement." From this association emerged the Vietnam Democratic Party (Viet Nam Dan Chu Dang), founded in June 1944, which was to prove a valuable instrument of the Viet Minh in their takeover in Hanoi; the president of the association, Duong Duc Hien, was a leading organizer of the new party and joined Ho Chi Minh's first government in August 1945. 91

Decoux applied the same duality to Cambodians and Lao as he applied to the Vietnamese, encouraging them to take pride in their cultural heritage while at the same time looking to France as their protector. Here, the immediate need was to counter Thai irredentist propaganda from Radio Bangkok. The regime's Hanoi weekly, *Indochine*, directed by the colonial administrator Georges Pisier, was full of articles and photographs on the themes of the glories of Angkor and the ancient Lao kingdoms. The Wat Pra Keo was restored in Vientiane in 1942 and characterized as the national temple of Laos. In carrying out these policies, Decoux was helped by his being a busy traveler, like Doumer.

The Lao Renovation Movement (Lao Nhay) served Decoux as a suitable instrument for fostering Lao nationalism, or patriotism, as he preferred to call it. Its goals were to "provide Laos with its own personality with respect to its neighbors and to inculcate the sense of *patrie*." The first Lao-language publications in the style of the modern press resulted from this movement. When the Service de Propagande Lao published the first issue of *Lao Nhay* in January 1941 it was handwritten, but it soon acquired printed characters. In its pages, readers could read news of the country (marriages, births, deaths, appointments, etc.), both classical and modern poems, and practical information. A total of 97 issues were published through February 1945, and it achieved a circulation of about 5,000. Another effort was *Tin Lao*. In accordance with the deliberate attempt to identify France with the role of protector of the Lao country and people, the pages of *Lao Nhay* were sprinkled with references to Pavie, and the new (1941) Lao national anthem also praised France.

Early French missionaries in Laos had attempted, through their writings codifying it with respect to orthography and grammar, to establish the Lao language as being on a par with Thai, rather than subordinate to it. Prince Phetsarath opposed moves to reform the Lao language by writing it using Siamese letters. The problem of standardizing the Lao language occupied several committees for many years. What none of these committees was able to accomplish, however, was accomplished in 1935 with the publication of the first Lao language grammar by Maha Sila Viravong.

# FENDING OFF JAPANESE DEMANDS

On December 8, 1941, the head of the Japanese liaison staff, Major General Tyo, called on Decoux at the Puginier Palace in Hanoi. He read Decoux an imperial message demanding a declaration of neutrality as a result of Japan's declaration of war against Britain and the United States. Decoux and his diplomatic adviser, Claude de Boisanger, obtained agreement from Tyo that the contents of the note be discussed not with Tyo but with Japanese Ambassador Kenkichi Yoshizawa, who had arrived in September. Yoshizawa had been ambassador to France in the 1930s and spoke good French.

After listing the measures taken the previous night by the Japanese—cutting all external communications and some internal ones, arresting several French citizens and Consul Reed of the United States, and posting Japanese guards in many public buildings—Decoux affirmed to the ambassador that his government was prepared to honor all the commitments undertaken in the July 29, 1941, agreement, including a "common defense," but pointing out that this precluded any active participation in Japanese offensive operations.<sup>93</sup> French Indochina was not at war against Britain, the United States, or the Dutch East Indies. Therefore, it was neutral. Yoshizawa gave assurances Reed would not be harmed.

A set of local accords spelling out the foreseen cooperation between the French and Japanese military in certain key areas such as anti-aircraft defense were drafted on the same day. These accords represented a small concession, but fundamentally did not fill in the substance of the "common defense" agreement. The question that remained unasked, and to which no answer could be given, was: What would be the responsibilities of the government general, and notably of its armed forces, which included thousands of autochthonous recruits, in the event Indochina became a battleground in the war?

Decoux took care to give the Japanese no excuse to modify in any way, not to mention overturn, this delicate status quo. No one was more conscious of the situation than Boisanger, who had recently arrived from the consulate general in San Francisco. Before leaving the United States for his new post, he had been to Washington to see what aid and advice Stanley K. Hornbeck, assistant secretary of state for Far Eastern affairs, had to offer him. He could expect no aid, Hornbeck told him, but the United States hoped that the governor general would do everything possible to oppose Japanese encroachment in Indochina, in spite of the limited means at his disposal.<sup>94</sup>

Addressing a meeting of *résidents supérieurs* at Dalat in July 1942, he explained: "In sum, the policy of the government general tends to adopt to its particular mission in the Far East the international position of the French government, which is, on the one hand to maintain as friendly relations with Japan as possible, and on the other to avoid isolation in the face of Japan and consequently to maintain our contacts with China, to re-establish our relations with Siam, and to protect the interests of foreigners in Indochina, those of the powers in war against Japan as well as others." <sup>95</sup>

On the Japanese side, within the limits imposed by the military's overall policy of maintaining the government general's administration in place, a certain amount of anti-French political activity went on. This sort of political infiltration was made overtly through the Association for Greater East Asia, a harmless-sounding Japanese front organization with offices in major Indochinese cities. Covertly, the Japanese financed the Viet Nam Phuc Quoc Dong Minh Hoi.

The repressive measures against the Cao Dai, the closing of Cao Dai temples, the exiling of the Cao Dai "Pope" Pham Cong Tac to the Comores, and the imprisonment of thousands of Cao Dai faithful on the island of Poulo Condore or at Son La in Tonkin on suspicion of subversion had not made the government general popular among the 3 million Cao Dai faithful. Partly as a result of this, Matsushita was able to score considerable success in recruiting Cao Dai adepts who were favorably disposed toward Japan. By December 1942 the Japanese recruitment of Cao Dai had reached such proportions that a group of dissident Caodaists who felt that the struggle against the Japanese should take precedence over that against the French mobilized a corps of armed vigilantes to punish collaborators with the Japanese. This implied a suspension of the Cao Dai principle of non-violence. As a result, the atmosphere grew so tense between persons of opposing persuasions that innocent lives were put at risk of mistaken retribution.<sup>96</sup>

Among the adherents of another politico-religious sect in the Mekong Delta, the Hoa Hao, the situation was somewhat different. This sect had been founded by a failed candidate for the Cao Dai clergy, Huynh Phu So, a native of the village of Hoa Hao in Chau Doc Province, who had become a recluse and was nursed by a hermit Buddhist monk, who was reported to have endowed So with magical powers. From this emerged Phat Giao Hoa Hao, or purified Buddhism of Hoa Hao, a missionary sect. The French at first judged So to be more of a nuisance than a threat. But with Japanese support, which he used to increase the ranks of the Hoa Hao to 50,000 in a few years, So felt strong enough to enter into a pact with the Sureté director at Saigon, F. Moresco, to denounce the members of rival groups in exchange for his own immunity. For this the others never forgave him, and they eventually succeeded in luring him into a fatal ambush.

By the end of 1944, therefore, there were a number of Vietnamese nationalist groups who had contact with the Japanese and were ready to collaborate with them in the nationalist cause if given the opportunity. This did not necessarily make them "pro-Japanese." Moreover, these groups were not always in

Table 1. Consumer prices, Hanoi, 1939–1945 (In Piastres)

	1939	1941	1943	1944	1945
Rice (kg)	.20	.25	.60	1.80	4.00
Potato (kg)	.25	.30	.70	6.00	13.00
Egg (each)	.04	.06	.15	.50	1.00
Chicken (each)	.70	1.80	3.50	7.00	18.00
Pork (kg)	1.80	2.50	5.00	11.00	22.00
Cooking oil (l)	1.10	1.80	2.80	12.00	18.00
White sugar (kg)	.45	.55	1.00	8.00	17.00
Soap (kg)	.60	.90	1.50	10.00	20.00
Drill kaki (yard)	1.20	1.60	4.00	35.00	80.00
Charbon en boulets (100 kg)	1.00	1.00	4.00	6.00	13.00

Source: Unattributed document in French, LM-70, reel 1, frame 884, NARA.

harmony with one another. A similar situation prevailed with respect to the several Vietnamese nationalist groups in exile in southern China who collaborated with the Chinese Nationalist government in Chungking and its military governors in the provinces adjoining Vietnam and also with the American Office of Strategic Services (OSS).

On their radios and by word of mouth the Indochinese learned of the gradual reversal of the fortunes of the Axis powers and the rise of Allied success, first in Europe and then in Asia. Events so far away were bound to have only limited interest for them. They still saw Japanese troops on their streets, and they were able to form some idea of the cost being borne by the government general to maintain the neutrality of French Indochina. Although not privy to the details of Decoux's tension-filled meetings with Yoshizawa, they saw Cochinchinese rice being sent off in ships to feed Japan's armies and the state's investment budget being pinched by the ever-rising demands for payment of the upkeep of the Japanese troops under the "common defense" policy. As a result of the enforced economic autarky of Indochina and the ever-increasing Japanese demands, prices of everyday goods were rising.

Finally, and not least, the Indochinese felt the war coming much closer to their homes in the form of actions by the Allies against Japanese military assets in Indochina, especially ports, rail lines, and storage depots. The first air raid on Indochinese territory by Chinese aircraft, in the northern province of Bac Giang, occurred on January 22, 1942. Decoux immediately asked the Vichy government to lodge a protest with the Chinese Nationalist government in Chungking. The instructions to French representatives in Chungking insisted on the precautions taken by the authorities of French Indochina to avoid any provocative act on the Chinese border and stressed the gravity of the responsibility which the Chinese government was assuming at a time when France had decided to observe a neutral position in the Pacific war.<sup>97</sup>

The raids, however, continued. On August 9, 1942, a raid remarkable for its precision destroyed warehouses used by the Japanese at Haiphong and killed

about 60 Japanese. In another raid on Haiphong, however, on November 20, 1942, bombs fell on populous districts and almost 200 Vietnamese were killed, with hardly any Japanese casualties. Major General Claire Lee Chennault, commander of the Fourteenth Air Force in China, sent his regrets for the error. This was followed on April 12, 1943, by an even more devastating raid. While bombing Japanese installations in Hanoi, the American planes killed 492 Vietnamese and 6 Japanese and wounded 2,062 Vietnamese and 43 Japanese. American B-24 heavy bombers raided the docks area of Saigon on May 5, 1944, inflicting heavy loss of life, particularly on the Vietnamese inhabitants of the nearby slum area of Khanh Hoi. Some 200 civilians were killed, and more than 350 were wounded.

A January 12, 1945, raid by carrier-based planes of the U.S. Third Fleet off the Indochina coast was particularly effective, however. Using targeting information obtained by two underground networks in Indochina, the raid destroyed many vessels in coastal harbors, sent the oil tanks at Nha Be up in flames, damaged planes and hangars at Saigon's Tan Son Nhut airfield and at Bien Hoa, and damaged a railway bridge between Saigon and Bien Hoa and the railway station at Nha Trang. In 1945, new B-29 heavy bombers went into action, pounding military targets used by the Japanese. A B-29 raid on January 27, 1945, killed 130 and wounded a similar number, almost all civilians. The B-29s struck again on February 7, mistakenly hitting a hospital and a barracks and killing an estimated 30 Europeans and 150 Vietnamese without causing any Japanese casualties. One raid on Phnom Penh damaged the Unnalom monastery and so frightened a professor of Pali, Tou Samouth, that he fled to the countryside, eventually making his way to Vietnam where he joined the Viet Minh and became one of the founders of the Cambodian Communist Party in 1951.

Public opinion of several groups in Vietnam with respect to the French was changing, slowly and subtly, but changing nevertheless. As a French report of September 1944 put it: "The opinion of the rural masses stays what it was in the past, largely nonexistent insofar as problems of a general order are concerned. The working classes are much more evolved, much more open to the solicitations of the activists. One must expect them to express themselves vigorously, and quite rightly so, with the return of freedom of speech. The mandarinate, not liked by the population which it pressures more or less, detested by the bourgeoisie, is fully aware it exists only for us. The intellectual elite, extremist or moderate, desires immediate independence." 100

### New Dangers

As Decoux and his diplomatic adviser struggled to preserve French Indochina's neutrality in the turning tide of the war, the danger posed by their isolation was more than ever on their minds. While Gaullists within the reach of their police could be thrown into prison with impunity, they soon concluded that the only way of dealing with de Gaulle's presence in Algiers at the head of a French National Liberation Committee was through dialogue. They worried that they would be seen as collaborators with Japan. Diplomacy being the art of the possible, their past efforts needed some explaining to a leader of a liberation movement.

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Establishing such a dialogue under the wartime conditions of French Indochina was difficult, if not impossible. In an effort to break through the wall of silence, Decoux decided after some hesitation to accede to Boisanger's suggestion of sending a French banker, M. François, to contact the Committee with the object of informing its leaders of the situation in Indochina. Accordingly, François crossed the border into China in October 1943, and duly arrived in Algiers. There is no evidence anyone in Algiers paid any attention to him. No echo of the outcome of his information mission reached those anxiously waiting in the Puginier Palace in Hanoi. It was the first of what was to be a long series of French contretemps in the crucial two years from October 1943 to October 1945.

Moreover, there were officers in the Bureau de Statistiques Militaires (BSM), the army intelligence service in Hanoi, who were interested, for their own personal reasons, in secretly entering into contact with Algiers in spite of the great risks involved. Among these were Captain Marcel Levain, the China section leader of the BSM; Captain Philippe Milon; Captain Mingant, chief of the BSM at Lang Son; and Lieutenant Soclet, chief of the BSM at Lao Kay. Among them, they succeeded not only in smuggling a radio set, supplied by the British Intelligence Service, into the headquarters of the BSM, permitting them to communicate with the (Gaullist) Military Mission in Chungking, but also to send one of their number to contact the Committee in Algiers in June 1943. In this endeavor they received assistance from Laurence Gordon, a Canadian businessman who had been in charge of the Texaco office in Haiphong and who had set up a network of agents in Tonkin before moving to southern China in July 1942, and from Lieutenant Colonel Emblanc, who had escaped into China from his post at Lai Chau when his connections with the Freemasons came to the attention of Decoux's police.

In Algiers the envoy had an interview with General Catroux, who had succeeded in joining the Free French and who directed him to two colonels. The colonels proceeded to give the envoy oral instructions as follows: the French Indochina Army was to maintain the appearance of fulfilling its previous commitments under the governor general but was to secretly supply intelligence on Japanese troop dispositions and movements to the French Military Mission in Chungking, to organize an internal resistance movement, and to hold itself in readiness to take the offensive against the Japanese at the appropriate time. These instructions were to be passed on to the highest possible echelon in Indochina.

Returning by the same route to Hanoi in September 1943, the envoy communicated his instructions to General Eugène Mordant, who had succeeded General Martin as commanding general in January 1941. Mordant was stupefied to learn that members of his staff had had the audacity to enter into contact with Algiers. He hesitated, wondering if taking cognizance of the instructions he had been handed implied treason to Decoux, his superior. But not for long. Mordant, who personally detested Decoux, sent a message to Algiers requesting written confirmation of his instructions.

It was not until the following February, however, that de Gaulle himself took an initiative on Indochina. His written instructions, dated from Algiers

February 29, 1944, did not reach Mordant until June 13, after a long and circuitous trajectory by hand and radio. Mordant was even then skeptical about the authenticity of a typed text of a radio message bearing the notation "Signed: Charles de Gaulle," and remained wary of the certain consequences for himself if these secret and potentially treasonous communications were reported to Decoux. He demanded to see a handwritten note from de Gaulle himself. Meanwhile, he was careful not to commit himself to the messenger.

"The defeat of Germany," de Gaulle wrote, "will in all likelihood occur before that of Japan. Consequently, the Vichy government will have ceased to exist while Indochina will still be occupied. The Japanese will be able to declare null and void the agreements signed with Vichy and will seek to abolish, or at least subjugate, the French administration in the Union. They will be able to claim possession of Indochina, and take into their own hands its government and its defenses. It is possible they will proceed to disarm French troops, either step by step or all at once, as seems to be feared at present. Perhaps these troops will be placed in concentration camps, while the Japanese proceed to liberate Indochinese soldiers and get their hands on stores of food, ammunition, etc." There followed a listing of diplomatic and military measures "to be foreseen in order to assure ourselves the participation that is ours in the liberation of Indochina and the safeguarding of our rights in that part of the empire." A large French Expeditionary Corps was being mobilized with the objective of participating "with other Allied forces" in action in Indochina. De Gaulle enumerated plans for putting on a war footing other "significant" land, sea, and naval forces.

Then he came to a matter of central importance to Mordant: organization of the internal resistance. Addressing himself to Mordant as the senior army officer in Indochina, de Gaulle said he would have to determine whether the troops in Tonkin would be in a position to hold predetermined base areas which could be supplied by air, or whether they would have to fall back on the Chinese border, whence they could prepare for offensive operations. As for the forces in Annam, Cochinchina, and Cambodia, they would have to wage guerrilla operations from secure bases in the interior. De Gaulle called on Mordant to provide the Committee with detailed plans "foreseeing all eventualities." The measures taken up to then, de Gaulle observed, "have not been without their usefulness to hold the position." Now the time had come to do more. It was important for Indochina to fight for victory, even at the cost of sacrifice. "I add that if the enemy tried to disarm our troops," de Gaulle's instructions concluded, they would have to "put up the maximum resistance possible, even if there was no immediate hope of success." "101

Apart from a passing reference to the role of "the civil administration and the French and Indochinese populations," the instructions contained no mention of an autochthonous participation in the resistance. Moreover, Mordant, who knew very well that there was scant hope that Allied ground forces would intervene in Indochina— the only Allied forces on the Asian mainland at the moment were fighting for their survival in China and Burma—wondered how the Indochina Army, even at full strength and well supplied, could be expected

to hold secure bases against a Japanese army that was fresh and undefeated in combat. Also, he saw that the "significant forces" promised by de Gaulle were still largely on paper. Nevertheless, he set to work to prepare a set of plans "foreseeing all eventualities."

A few days after receiving these much-delayed instructions, Mordant learned in a telephone call from General Georges Aymé, commander of the Tonkin Division, that an emissary of de Gaulle, a former planter from Malaya named François de Langlade, would be arriving shortly by parachute. Mordant thereupon reversed his earlier insistence on receiving de Gaulle's signed orders and forbade his officers from giving any assistance to the Gaullist emissary. He was only days away from retirement, and he was not about to risk everything on some crackpot scheme. According to an eyewitness, Mordant was so agitated by the telephone call that the visitor gave up any thought of bringing up the subject he had come to discuss, namely certain demands that had been formulated to him by the secretive guerrilla organization known as the Viet Minh.

In any case, it was too late for Mordant to reverse course. After arriving in Tonkin by parachute on July 5, 1944, Langlade was conveyed to Mordant's office where, as a final precaution, Aymé was retained as a witness to the interview. Langlade allowed himself to be dissuaded by Mordant from carrying out his orders from de Gaulle to enter into contact with Decoux, "for reasons of security," as Langlade recalled some years later. 102 In fact, Mordant took Langlade's ordre de mission, signed by de Gaulle, and destroyed it. Before he left Indochina, by way of land across the China border, with assistance from Gordon and his friends, Langlade had had an earful of reasons why Mordant was a poor choice to lead the clandestine Gaullist resistance. According to his colleagues, Mordant had a defeatist attitude toward the Japanese and was deathly afraid of provoking them.

#### UNDER DUAL LEADERSHIP

The disappearance of the Vichy government in August 1944 and the establishment of the provisional government of the French Republic in Paris the following month posed in a more acute manner the question of Decoux's responsibility in dealing with the Japanese. An army that had been engaged in a "common defense" might now be seen by the Japanese in Indochina to be the army of a country whose present government had been at war with Japan since 1941, and thus as a potential threat to their security. Decoux had had the foresight to obtain from Marshal Pétain beforehand a signed decree vesting him with continued civilian and military authority in French Indochina in the event that communications between Hanoi and Vichy were cut off. This situation now applied, and on August 22, Decoux made this decree public, largely for the benefit of the Japanese.

That this step was not taken in any spirit of defiance of the new government in Paris is proved by the sending, a few days later, of what came to be named the "message à trois." On August 31, Decoux and the French ambassadors to Japan and China warned in a telegram of the very real dangers of plunging Indochina into war by ill-considered actions. They insisted on the fact that French sovereignty had been preserved in spite of the Japanese presence. The peoples of Indochina, whose loyalty to France was based on continued maintenance of peace, would not understand, and would not support, any policy other than neutrality. Any change in the governing authority, even temporary, would be sure to raise obstacles to the re-establishment of French sovereignty. Consequently, they urged the Paris government to dissuade the Allies from attacking Indochina, an action that would bring the common defense agreement into force. The authors believed that once the war in Europe was finished, Japan would seek to negotiate and this would render obsolete the common defense agreement, or at least open it to re-negotiation. <sup>103</sup>

The "message à trois" was addressed directly to de Gaulle, and by speaking of placing in the hands of the government the necessary facts to elaborate its Far Eastern policy, it constituted an acknowledgement of de Gaulle as the head of the government. De Gaulle did not deign to reply to this lucid and far-sighted message, in which Decoux placed his services at the disposal of the man who had attempted, and failed, to contact him two months earlier.

In a reshuffle in Hanoi, Mordant, having reached the mandatory retirement age of 60, turned over his post as commanding general to Aymé on July 23. Aymé was succeeded in command of the Tonkin Division by General Gabriel Sabattier, who had commanded the Indochina Army in its brief war with Thailand in 1941. A few weeks later, Mordant was confirmed in his secret designation of head of the Gaullist resistance and received the additional title of delegate general of the French provisional government. The message had come from René Pleven, commissioner for colonies in the French provisional government, via the secret radio link in the BSM. He immediately moved back into his old office, and, with Aymé next door, was not secretive about letting his colleagues know of his new status. He opened his doors wide to virtually anyone who proclaimed himself to be a Gaullist "resistant," setting off innumerable animosities within a command that should have been tightly united.

The Japanese did not miss any of this. Within days, the Kempeitai received information that "Mordant has been chosen by the new government in Paris to replace Decoux," and within two more days they learned Mordant's Gaullist code name. On instructions from Tokyo, the Japanese diplomatic mission in Indochina and the military high command were to act as if nothing had changed. They were to continue to treat Decoux as commander in chief, to consider the previous agreements still in effect, and to feign ignorance of Mordant's position as Gaullist resistance leader. They were to avoid giving any excuse to the Gaullists to abrogate the agreements. The Kempeitai was to increase its surveillance of Decoux, Mordant, and Aymé. The Japanese army commander was to preserve his troops' freedom of action with increased vigilance.

Learning that de Gaulle had ordered Langlade back to Indochina with specific instructions to see Decoux, Mordant now decided to inform the latter of the maneuvers that had been going on behind his back at army headquarters. Accordingly, on October 28, Aymé finally informed Decoux of the resistance network and asked him not to communicate with Paris except through Mordant. This Decoux took as an insult, as it properly was. On October 30, Decoux

sent de Gaulle a telegram, received in Paris on November 4, in which he warned of the risk of anarchy and catastrophe. The confusion of power took away the necessary weight to negotiate with the Japanese. He reaffirmed his determination to maintain the allegiance of Indochina to France. He wished to know whether he still had the confidence of his government. If he did not receive a reply within three weeks he intended to hand over his powers to Aymé without further ado.

On his second mission to Indochina, Langlade arrived in a British plane that made a night landing on the airfield at Dien Bien Phu. Again, there was a lively discussion of the choice of Mordant for the command of the resistance, and Langlade defended, rather weakly, Mordant's nomination. He saw Decoux at the Puginier Palace at 8 A.M. on November 19. No trace of Langlade's cabled report on this meeting has been found. However, in a report dated December 15 submitted after his return to Paris, Langlade devoted two pages to the meeting. Decoux sketched the main points of his policy and expressed regret that de Gaulle had not got in touch with him earlier. Langlade told Decoux he approved of his efforts to ward off the demands of the Japanese, but reproached him for the exemplary punishment he had meted out to Gaullists under his command. Finally, he reminded Decoux that his actions would be disavowed if they went too far in placating the Japanese, as the French government was in a state of war with Japan.

Decoux later told Boisanger that the conversation had been "brief and without any real consequence."104 In point of fact, Decoux did not need to be reminded of the fine line he was treading and, if we are to believe these contemporaneous accounts, the heart of the matter had not even been touched upon in the conversation. This was the dual leadership that was rapidly taking shape and which would make any coherent action difficult.

In a separate telegram from Pleven dated November 14 responding to his message of October 28, Decoux received assurance that his offer of resignation had been refused, and a formal order was given him to remain at his post. The telegram also contained the formal instructions of the government, approved by de Gaulle. All copies of this telegram have disappeared from the French archives. We only know the text, likewise dated November 14, which Langlade handed to Decoux on November 28, which Langlade had considerably altered to fit the circumstances as he saw them. Langlade later explained his actions by saying that the original text gave Decoux wide powers that the resistance would never have accepted. He claimed to have altered the text on his own authority and then given Paris eight days to notify its acceptance or refusal. He saw to it that no telegrams were received from Paris in those eight days.

In his report of December 15, Langlade gave the points on which the text had been modified: the Council, the inspection, the commander in chief, the paragraph concerning Aymé's clandestine communications, and finally the admiral's evacuation. When the original text of November 14 is reconstructed, we learn that Decoux was to remain as governor general with important powers, including that of commander in chief, and that Mordant was to come under his authority. In the altered text, however, while accepting the assurance that he was governed by the sole wish to keep Indochina for France, Decoux was obliged to pretend to ignore completely the existence of the resistance and to maintain, provisionally and for tactical reasons, a facade intended to protect the resistance. All real power was withdrawn from the admiral, to be given to Mordant. Finally, the admiral was to be evacuated on the day the resistance entered into action. <sup>105</sup> The double-headed nature of the French command in Indochina was complete.

Constrained by the limited powers left to him by Langlade's curtailed version of de Gaulle's instructions, Decoux tried to muddle along as best he could, never losing sight of his objective of preserving the sovereignty of French Indochina, while Japanese pressures on him were increasing. In the final months of 1944, the Japanese military, having sustained a serious defeat in the Philippines, carried out a reshuffle of their command structure for what they called the Southern Area. Marshal Hisaïchi Terauchi moved his headquarters from Manila to Saigon, taking over the Lycée Petrus Ky in the Saigon suburb of Chi Hoa for this purpose. The commander of the Japanese garrison army in Indochina was replaced in December 1944. At the same time the garrison command was given combat status and was renamed the 38th Army under its new commander, Lieutenant General Yuitsu Tsuchihashi. Ambassador Yoshizawa left Indochina at about the same time and was replaced by a new ambassador, Shunichi Matsumoto.

At the end of 1944, Decoux named Mordant vice president of a new French Indochina Council in order to give him some legal cover for his covert activities. <sup>106</sup> In January 1945, Decoux advised Ambassador Cosme in Tokyo that the Council had without publicity approved several measures, including dissolution of Pétain's Legion and the revocation of Vichy's anti-Jewish laws, "designed to adapt the internal situation of the colony to that of metropolitan France." <sup>107</sup>

In a broadcast New Year's message to the Indochinese, Decoux referred to 1944 as the year "so anxiously awaited when our country [France] recovered its unity and evinced the new purpose of its vitality and its cohesion." Decoux ignored Matsumoto's protest about this choice of words. He was hoping the war in the Pacific would end before the Japanese forces in Indochina were called into action.

Another sign of Decoux's confidence was his refusal to hand over to the Japanese any of the American airmen captured when their planes were shot down over Indochina, claiming they were the responsibility of his government unless the Japanese furnished him with dispositions to care for them under the Geneva Convention governing the treatment of prisoners of war, which of course they did not do. 109 In this he was supported by popular opinion, as reported to Tokyo by the Saigon office of the Greater East Asia Ministry on January 18. 110 The captured Americans were generally given medical treatment in secure places away from Japanese spies and then escorted on their way to safety in China. One, identified only as Henry in Vietnamese notes, was killed while fighting against Japanese troops between Pleiku and Kontum in the Central Highlands after March 9, 1945.

### PLANS FOR RESISTANCE: THE INDOCHINA ARMY

Meanwhile, Mordant had, in accordance with his instructions, sent a lengthy and rather gloomy report on the situation in Indochina to the French National Liberation Committee in Algiers. Recourse to force by the Japanese, he wrote, was to be expected the moment the Japanese high command saw the security of its troops in Indochina threatened. Such a threat could materialize either in the form of an external attack, especially an Allied landing on the coast of Indochina, or internally by anything that upset the status quo. In case of a Japanese recourse to force, the Indochina Army would be neutralized fairly rapidly without help from outside. Therefore, he wrote, to preserve intact the sovereignty of French Indochina it was essential to avoid giving the Japanese the impression their security was being threatened.

Having been requested to study "all eventualities," Mordant presented three hypotheses. Hypothesis A was the case where the Japanese attempted to disarm the Indochina Army prior to any Allied landing, even if the danger of a landing did not appear imminent. In this eventuality, the major part of the Indochina Army would withdraw to the hill country on the edges of the Red River Delta in order to protect lines of communication needed by an Allied landing and put up resistance with the help of American air support. The outnumbered forces of the Indochina Army in the South, on the other hand, could not be expected to survive long in the unhealthy interior and would succumb rapidly. However, in Mordant's opinion, Hypothesis A was extremely unlikely to occur.

Hypothesis B foresaw Allied intervention in Indochina prior to any attempt by the Japanese to disarm the Indochina Army. This intervention would most likely consist of an invasion from China coinciding with landings from the Gulf of Tonkin. Japanese forces would be trapped in a giant pincer movement, reinforced by parachute landings by the expeditionary corps de Gaulle's instructions had mentioned and eventual relief by the large body of French Metropolitan troops arriving from India. Mordant thought this hypothesis the most likely to materialize.

Hypothesis C foresaw the possibility of large-scale operations by Allied forces on the Malayan and south China coasts, which would allow the Indochina Army to attack Japanese forces on condition of receiving American air support and being reinforced by the French Expeditionary Corps.<sup>111</sup>

The response of the French National Liberation Committee was to instruct Mordant to fill in the operational details of Hypotheses A and B, indicating to him that Hypothesis A was much more likely than Hypothesis B, thereby removing what little grounds Mordant still had for optimism. Continuing to express his conviction that Hypothesis A was unlikely, Mordant nevertheless did as he was told, and on September 12, 1944, gave Aymé a general plan of operations, which became known as Plan A. This was transmitted to General Sabattier at the Citadel in Hanoi, to General Turquin in Hue, and to General Delsuc in Saigon on September 18 under the reference number 835/3.<sup>112</sup>

Aymé, however, added a covering memorandum, reference 834/3, cautioning the recipients that any Japanese action was likely to be sudden and entail the

cutting off of communications between the general commanding and his subordinate commanders. They were instructed to set up secret supply caches in secure regions, with the aim of preparing operational bases for Allied forces, reflecting Mordant's continued belief in the likelihood of Hypothesis B. Moreover, the overall objective of the Indochina Army had now become to maintain the sovereignty of French Indochina "by fighting to the end, all the while multiplying actions of harassment and destruction aimed at tying down the largest possible number of Japanese troops." The Tonkin Division, some 40,000 men strong, of which about 9,000 were Europeans, was given the specific mission of holding five military airfields in Tonkin, an indication of how much Mordant and Aymé counted on receiving French or Allied reinforcements.

After taking note of Plan A, some of the more enlightened staff officers of the Indochina Army raised questions almost immediately about the plan's implications. The withdrawal from all the cities into safe bases in the interior would leave the large population of French civilians, including women and children, at the mercy of the Japanese. Also, it was observed, the large autochthonous population, concentrated in and around the major cities, would be left defenseless by the withdrawal. Some went so far as to observe that the details of the plan made it appear the autochthonous members of the armed forces did not really figure in the plan at all, and perhaps the high command secretly intended to disarm and demobilize the autochthons before the withdrawal. Even more seriously, it was pointed out, the plan obviously violated the treaties that France had signed with the courts of Hue, Phnom Penh, and Luang Prabang promising to protect their peoples against external aggression, and the psychological and political consequences of such a massive violation would be serious and very possibly irreparable.

In the discussions that followed at the French military mission in Calcutta, where a staff had been assembled to oversee the constitution of the as-yet-nonexistent French Expeditionary Corps, Mordant's plans were criticized for their reliance on Allied support and the prompt arrival of the expeditionary corps itself. The corps would not be ready until mid-1945 at the earliest, Mordant was informed, while there were no signs yet of any plans for Allied action in Indochina. This was in spite of Free French broadcasts from Madagascar, based on policy pronouncements in Paris, informing the peoples of Indochina that they would soon be liberated by force of French arms. The absence from Mordant's plans of any provision for integrating autochthonous elements, however, does not seem to have troubled the Free French representatives (although Mordant and Aymé were by now beginning to show signs of concern on this matter). The Free French representatives proposed moving the "secure base areas" to which the Tonkin Division would withdraw as far west as Laos. Plan A was given the final touches in Paris and cabled to Mordant only at the end of January; he did not receive it until the afternoon of February 14.<sup>113</sup>

#### PLANS FOR RESISTANCE: IRREGULAR FORCES

In addition to regular forces, Mordant's resistance plans included irregular forces. These were the Service Action, composed of military men trained in

guerrilla warfare but including many civilian members of the administration, especially the public works department. According to two orders issued by Mordant in December 1944, the SA, as it was known, had the mission of carrying out hit-and-run raids on the Japanese in areas where the regular forces were not able to operate, thereby impeding Japanese troop movements and communications. The SA was placed under the command of Mordant's intelligence chief, Lieutenant Colonel Cavalin.

The organization of such a clandestine network over the whole of Indochina, where the Kempeitai had been extremely active in rooting out secret agents since 1941, posed enormous problems. As a result, the division of Indochina into six territorial resistance organizations, on the pattern of France, existed more on paper than in reality. Even with parachute drops from planes of the British Force 136, which flew from Jessore in India under difficult weather conditions and at risk of attack from Japanese planes, the SA was still in the stages of getting itself organized in March 1945. Aside from problems caused by rivalries within SA itself, radio equipment was in particularly short supply, and a dozen long-distance radios intended for distribution to SA operatives were still sitting at Séno in central Laos, where they had been parachuted in along with trained radiomen.<sup>114</sup>

The arguments made to Langlade about the need to include autochthonous elements in the plans for resistance had finally won the reluctant agreement of Paris, and a specialist on Vietnam, Professor Paul Mus, was parachuted in to see what could be done about enlisting "suitable" autochthonous elements.

Meanwhile, completely independently of French representatives in Hanoi and southern China, the U.S. Office of Strategic Services (OSS) was already deeply engaged in schemes for resistance against the Japanese in Indochina. Colonel William J. Donovan, director of the OSS, had discussed sending American guerrilla leadership teams into China, Mongolia, and Indochina with various agencies as early as the autumn of 1941. Donovan's base for OSS operations in Indochina was to be southern China. As Bradley F. Smith writes, "Eager for action, and with no other prospect on the horizon, Donovan ignored the danger signs [Chinese interference] and threw his main Asian effort into China. He developed a full S.I.-S.O. plan for the country in January 1942." Donovan was not the sort of man who would let considerations of political complications hold up action.

When it came to Indochina, Donovan was not concerned about placing the lives of French civilians or autochthonous civil servants in jeopardy. Viscerally opposed to the regime in Hanoi and its persecution of Jews and Freemasons, the details of which were broadcast for all to hear over Radio Saigon, of course, Donovan sought action and left it to his subordinates to plan and carry it out. He had plentiful unvouchered funds at his disposal. A number of Vietnamese nationalist parties and organizations were in southern China, where they were safe from Decoux's police and supported to varying degrees by the Chinese Nationalist government in Chungking and its generals in the provinces bordering Tonkin.

### NATIONALISTS AND COMMUNISTS IN SOUTHERN CHINA

At this time, unbeknown to the vast majority of his countrymen, Nguyên Ai Quoc was operating across the border in southern China with his tiny band of Marxist-Leninists. Quoc had founded the Viet Nam Doc Lap Dong Minh Hoi (Vietnam Independence League) to serve as a nationalist front for the ICP at the famous Eighth Plenum of the ICP Central Committee, which met either at Pac Bo in northern Cao Bang Province or just across the border in Tsin Si in Kwangsi on May 10-19, 1941.<sup>117</sup> For purposes of operating behind a front organization, the ICP temporarily put aside class struggle and agrarian reform in resolutions passed at the congress and proclaimed its program goals to be to fight the French and the Japanese fascists to gain independence for Vietnam and to ally with the great powers China and the United States to fight fascism and aggression. It considered the government general in Indochina an ally of Japanese and German fascism. Party members were instructed to prepare a "national liberation revolution" (cach mang giai phong dan toc) which would culminate in an armed uprising. To give himself room to maneuver as representative of this front, and eventually to form a government, however, Quoc followed Lenin's example of senior statesman and remained outside the ICP apparatus itself.

In the wake of this congress, Gordon and another oil man, Austin O. Glass, former director of the Haiphong office of Standard Oil Company, who with his Tonkinese wife had taken refuge in China, were in contact with the leaders of this new group, called Viet Minh for short, on three occasions between July and October 1941. In spite of Chinese intrigues against the Viet Minh, an agreement was worked out at a meeting in November 1941 among Gordon, Glass, Pham Van Dong (personally accredited by Quoc), Vo Nguyên Giap, and the Saigon architect Huynh Tan Phat, a recent recruit to the ICP. Under this agreement, 200 rifles and 6,000 cartridges were to be delivered to the Viet Minh within three months for anti-Japanese actions. The arms shipment was handed over at Loung Tcheou (60 kilometers from Lang Son) in Kwangsi on January 4, 1942. A second part of the agreement, to cooperate with other anti-Japanese groups, was not carried out in spite of protracted discussions with the groups concerned.

The Chungking government was interested in the Vietnamese exiles in its southern provinces mainly as potential allies to defend against any Japanese incursion from Tonkin. Moreover, it looked upon the Viet Minh as a Communist-dominated front organization. Therefore, it became more involved with the non-Communist Vietnamese after the formation of the Viet Minh. In Yunnan, Vu Hong Khanh, leader of the remnants of the VNQDD after the Yen Bay revolt, was taken in hand by Chungking. In Kwangsi, the military governor, General Chang Fa-kwei, regrouped the remnants of the Phuc Quoc party who had taken part in the Japanese attack on Lang Son and who were now under the command of Hoang Luong, as well as a group of VNQDD dissidents. Wishing to undercut the Viet Minh, the Chungking government ordered Chang to constitute a non-Communist front, the Viet Nam Cach Mang Dong Minh Hoi (Vietnam Revolutionary League), or Dong Minh Hoi for short. Also

included were seven small nationalist parties. This was formed in Liuchow in October 1942. The Chinese placed Nguyên Hai Than at the head of this front, a veteran nationalist who had lived in China for decades.

Quoc wanted to have the Viet Minh play a part in the Dong Minh Hoi, but his overtures to the Chinese were rebuffed. Chang imprisoned the pro-Japanese Hoang Luong, who had opposed the inclusion of his party in the Dong Minh Hoi, and the agitator Quoc, who was a rival to Nguyên Hai Than. In spite of Glass's démarches, Chang refused to release Quoc. The Chinese were soon looking for a replacement for the aged and ineffective Thanh at the head of the Dong Minh Hoi, however. In a ruse, Glass suggested to the Chinese he knew a Vietnamese who was capable of leading the Dong Minh Hoi. His name was Ho Chi Minh, and he was to be found somewhere in Kwangsi. After a bribe, Chang released Quoc from prison on September 16, 1943; he was henceforth known as Ho Chi Minh. In August 1944, after an absence from his country of 33 years, Ho crossed the Chinese border into Vietnam to direct the ICP in the coming seizure of power. Here again, he modeled himself on Lenin, who on April 3, 1917, had disembarked at the Finland Station in Petrograd a virtual stranger to Russia, having spent the previous 17 years in exile abroad, with the exception of a brief six-month stay in 1905–1906.

From October 1943 onward, the OSS, which wanted to take over Gordon's network in Indochina, paid a monthly subsidy of \$100,000 in unvouchered funds to the Dong Minh Hoi and furnished arms periodically in return for the latter's promise to the Chinese and Americans to fight against the Japanese. The subsidy was briefly suspended between February and May 1944 while complaints from other nationalist groups that the Dong Minh Hoi was doing nothing to keep its promises to use its supplies against the Japanese were investigated by a Chinese-American team. However, after four days of vigorous and often bitter debate at a congress organized by Chang at Liuchow in March 1944 that brought together the leaders of all major nationalist parties, including Nguyên Tuong Tam of the Dai Viet party as well as Ho and Pham Van Dong of the Viet Minh, a provisional republican government was constituted. It grouped together, at least on paper, Than, Vu Hong Khanh of the VNQDD, and Ho.<sup>118</sup> Not surprisingly, the French police were for a long time to confuse the Viet Minh with the Dong Minh Hoi. It was not until February 1945 that Decoux's police established conclusively for the first time that Ho Chi Minh, the patron of the Viet Minh, was none other than Nguyên Ai Quoc, the founder of the ICP, who had been believed dead but who had reappeared on the border at the beginning of 1941.119

Things still did not go altogether smoothly. In further discussions with Glass, Dong and Giap demanded that steps be taken with the government general in Hanoi "to cease all military operations that are terrorizing our people, . . . the immediate and definitive end to summary executions of Vietnamese patriots guilty only of revolting against the exactions of the colonialists . . . and an end to the brutal and scandalous requisitioning of rice for the Japanese fascists." Another delivery consisting of 500 rifles, 50 automatic pistols, 50,000 cartridges,

200 explosive charges, 300 pairs of boots, 5,000 survival rations, and 200 pounds of medicine was turned over to the Viet Minh in July 1944 at Loung Tcheou and Kouei Choun (50 kilometers north of the Viet Minh base area in Cao Bang).

The OSS did not intend to equip only the Viet Minh, known by the S.I. to be led by hard-core Communists (among the Vietnamese nationalists, of course). In a deal worked out by Glass with Cao Dai leaders in southern Vietnam that was carefully kept a secret from both the French and the British, the S.O. was to equip a brigade of 3,600 Cao Dai adherents to act as guerrillas against the Japanese in the south. This plan was spelled out in a 300-page document illustrated with 60 drawings and maps that was carefully microfilmed. Unfortunately, the OSS agent who was carrying this microfilm back to China was intercepted by the Japanese in Thailand and executed on February 27, 1945.

# JAPANESE PREPARATIONS FOR MEIGO

The temptation to overturn the sovereignty of French Indochina had been there from the very beginning. Since 1944, the Japanese had been preparing secret plans, to be implemented when deemed advisable, to forcibly disarm the Indochina Army, take over all its garrisons, and imprison the French. Paradoxically, the existence of these plans, even their target dates of implementation, were known to the highest French commanders in Indochina, to the French government, and to the Allies. In early 1945, a fresh demand from the Japanese for vastly increased currency contributions coincided with an influx of Japanese troops into Indochina. The coincidence of these developments heightened tension between Decoux and the Japanese.

On January 3, 1945, Matsumoto presented Decoux with a demand for piaster currency needed for Japanese military expenditures in Indochina during the first three months of 1945. The amount of this payment had been among the subjects of negotiation between the governor general and the Japanese ambassador in the past. But this time the amount requested was 330 million yen, or a monthly rate of 110 million yen. This rate was more than four times the monthly rate finally negotiated for the first five months of 1944 and almost three times the rate agreed upon for the last two months of 1944. Decoux informed Matsumoto that the issue of such a "staggering" amount of currency was "the direct road to inflation" and would bankrupt French Indochina. He later told Cosme, French ambassador in Tokyo, that the "exorbitant figure . . . is [either] not based on any sober estimate or it conceals unavowed purposes," and noted that the total annual budget of the government general did not reach 300 million yen. <sup>120</sup>

The Japanese 21st Division, which had been withdrawn from Indochina in 1944 to take part in the Ichigo offensive against Chinese and American positions, especially airfields, in southern China, re-entered Indochina in January 1945. At the same time, another whole division, the 37th, was transferred from China, and two brigades from Burma likewise entered Indochina. With these additions, by the end of January the Japanese had achieved numerical parity with the Indochina Army. Decoux took a hard line with Matsumoto, pointing

out that defense of the China border was the responsibility of the Indochina Army and warning that the Japanese troops would aggravate food shortages that had already become manifest in Tonkin.

The realization that the fresh demands on the government general for both currency contributions and the stationing of additional troops would provoke popular agitation was shared by the Japanese; Matsumoto reported on January 26 that "the people of Indo-China share with the government general an extremely defiant attitude on the question of [Japanese demands for currency to meet their] military expenditures."121 Matsumoto replied that the troop movements were within the limits of the Franco-Japanese accords and warned the foreign ministry: "I am impressing these facts on the officials here, but their shock at receiving the demand is great. We must watch their moves from now on."122

The plans for overturning the sovereignty of French Indochina on which the Japanese foreign ministry and the high command in Saigon had been working since the autumn of 1944 produced a split. Voices among the military had long argued that Indochina should, if necessary, be placed under direct Japanese military rule like other areas of Southeast Asia. The foreign ministry, on the other hand, opposed this scheme on political grounds. It saw granting independence to the states of Indochina under Japanese auspices as a diplomatic cover for a move dictated by military necessity, although it feared the reaction from the Soviet Union of overturning French sovereignty. 123 The operation by which the coup de force was to be executed carried the code name Meigo Sakusen.

A contingency plan prepared by a staff officer in Saigon, Lieutenant Colonel Hidezumi Hayashi, envisioned granting independence to Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos, but with the Japanese taking over the powers of the governor general, since it would be impossible to divide these powers in an orderly way in the aftermath of a coup de force. With respect to Vietnam, Hayashi was in favor of bringing back to Hue the aged Prince Cuong De, an uncle of Bao Dai who had lived in Japan since 1916 and who had his supporters among the Vietnamese nationalists. Among the supporters was Ngô Dinh Diem, whom Hayashi had helped protect from the French police and with whom he remained on friendly terms. However, fearing that the American air raids of January 12 presaged an Allied landing in Indochina, General Tsuchihashi decided he could not afford to risk the chaos a change of monarch on the throne of Hue might bring, and he therefore vetoed the idea of Cuong De. 124

Tsuchihashi's fears were groundless. President Franklin D. Roosevelt had ruled out American participation in any military effort toward the liberation of Indochina from the Japanese. 125 There were, in particular, no plans for Allied landings in Indochina, and the French government was informed of this on March 14.126 A later State Department memorandum explained it this way:

> The French Provisional Government should be informed, confidentially, that, owing to the need of concentrating all our resources in the Pacific on operations already planned, American military operations aimed directly at the liberation of Indochina cannot be contemplated

until after the defeat of Japan, nor will it be possible to make any commitments for the furnishing of military equipment or supplies to resistance groups in Indochina or to French military forces in the Asiatic theatres of war.<sup>127</sup>

The final Meigo plan contained the following objectives: (1) The existing administrative offices and their staffs would be ordered to continue to perform their duties, though officials holding the post of bureau director or higher would be subject to suspension of their duties, which would be taken over by officials of the Japanese embassy; (2) administrative offices and procedures would be kept intact; (3) Annam, Cambodia, and Luang Prabang would be guided to gain independence autonomously; (4) Bao Dai would not be dethroned. While having the Indochinese rulers renounce their treaties of protectorate with France was an integral part of the Japanese plan, absolutely no steps were taken to prepare the Laotians or others for "independence." How Japan would be viewed after the war also figured in the planning. On February 1, the Supreme War Plans Council in Tokyo confirmed that the coup de force was official policy, and on February 15 it approved the final version of the plan.

In Mordant's and Aymé's headquarters in Hanoi, as well as at the citadel, where Sabattier had his headquarters, there were many warnings of Meigo. Thanks to the breaking of the Japanese code, messages relating preparations for the operation were being read and forwarded to appropriate French authorities. Mordant and Aymé saw them as black propaganda spread by the OSS, which was regarded in Hanoi as the equivalent of an enemy organization determined to oust the French from Indochina and therefore one that was quite capable of trying to panic the French into ordering troop movements that would be taken by the Japanese as signs of preparations for a preemptive strike. (The Sûreté, with its customary thoroughness, must have picked up reports of the arms deliveries to the Viet Minh by the OSS.) The facts that the plans for the Meigo operation were subjected to last-minute changes on a number of occasions and that execution of the plan was postponed at least once also reduced the credibility of those who were giving the warnings. With the blindness of a man committed to a fixed idea, Mordant saw the buildup of Japanese forces in Indochina at the beginning of 1945 as evidence that the Japanese were preparing to defend against an Allied attack, just as he had seen the drawdown the previous year as evidence that Hypothesis A was unlikely.

Sabattier, however, had a more accurate reading of the frame of mind of the Japanese commanders and took the warnings he was receiving seriously. The outpouring of Gaullist propaganda from Radio Tananarive about the imminent liberation of Indochina may not be having much effect on the French, who knew better, or even the Indochinese, Sabattier figured, but it was sure to be alarming to the Japanese and make them trust Decoux that much less. Accordingly, he had taken the precaution of setting up an alternative command post outside Hanoi. He now issued a general order, referenced O.G.4, on February 26 to the Tonkin Division. The general order defined in specific terms the mission of each unit in

the planned withdrawal to the northwest in case of Japanese attack. Delayed by Mordant's caution and Aymé's numerous objections, O.G.4 did not reach its addressees until between March 4 and 8. But most important, Sabattier absented himself from Hanoi on the night of March 9.

# Indochina without the French

In Saigon at six o'clock on the evening of Friday, March 9, 1945, in accordance with previously made arrangements, Ambassador Matsumoto and his aides arrived at the Norodom Palace to sign with Decoux the routine documents for rice deliveries under the 1941 Franco-Japanese agreement, which Decoux had insisted upon honoring up to that point in spite of the worsening food situation. Matsumoto had previously requested a few words with Decoux privately on the subject of the financial accords, so after the signature by the two delegations the two men sat down together. A visibly nervous Matsumoto began the conversation, in his broken French, by arguing that the increase in Japanese troop strength "for the common defense" necessitated an increase in the government general's financial contribution. Decoux observed that he had requested no additional troops but said his services would study the demand, in spite of its unreasonable nature, and would make a counterproposal. Matsumoto then raised the subject of Decoux's relationship with his government. Decoux reaffirmed that the basis of his actions was the authority he had received from Pétain, which had not been taken away from him. Regarding de Gaulle's colonial policies compared with his own, Decoux stated emphatically that he had no desire to see France's colonies at the beck and call of the United States. 131

Matsumoto next brought up the war situation and stated that an American landing in French Indochina was becoming increasingly imminent. Decoux replied that, with the approach of the monsoon season, no immediate landing would be attempted. Matsumoto asked whether the governor general, who had full authority, would strengthen their common defenses and would fight against the American forces. Decoux replied that he did not feel he could do so yet. Matsumoto asked what sort of measures he planned to take in case American forces should land, and he replied that in that case the officials in charge of Japanese and French military affairs would have to take concerted action.

Unable to elicit any further commitment from Decoux on the "common defense," Matsumoto took from his briefcase the *aide-mémoire* he had been carrying and read it aloud. He requested an answer by 9 o'clock (it was then 7:50) expressing absolute and unconditional acceptance. In case of no reply of acceptance, Japanese forces would take the necessary prearranged steps. Decoux said he was overwhelmed by the note first because the unification of military command would represent a flagrant violation of French Indochinese sovereignty, and second because he was not given time enough to consult his commanding general. Decoux then requested the presence of Boisanger, who was waiting in the adjoining room. Boisanger took one look at the note and slipped into the adjoining room, where he had time to alert a colleague to contact the military

before returning to join the two main actors in the drama. Boisanger's plea for time to negotiate the Japanese demands was rejected. Decoux warned Matsumoto that if there were bloodshed as a result of the ultimatum, Japan would be held responsible.

In his hastily drafted written reply, Decoux stated (1) In the event of an American attack, the Japanese commander should assume all responsibility for the conduct of operations and that Decoux would support him fully; (2) he could make no statement concerning the Japanese demand for disarming of the Indochina Army without consulting his commanders; (3) he was prepared to continue conversations with the Japanese Embassy and the French commander was prepared to negotiate with the Japanese commander; and (4) he guaranteed that the French troops would not take any hostile action so long as the Japanese refrained from hostilities.

In concluding his report to the foreign ministry in Tokyo, Matsumoto stated that it was evident that the French, suspecting a Japanese move to disarm the Indochina Army, had been taking various countermeasures. However, he had the impression the French had not intended to strike the first blow, and it appeared they really did not believe the Japanese would take such a step. Matsumoto was struck by the atmosphere of complete surprise. The surprise in the Norodom Palace was genuine. That morning, Aymé had ordered that Decoux not be informed of the "alarmist" warnings that had been circulating in Hanoi.

#### FATE STRIKES TWICE: MEIGO

Taken unaware, the commanders of the Indochina Army reacted to the Japanese move as best they could. It now seemed, indeed, that the only hope of concerted resistance lay with Sabattier and his Tonkin Division. The Japanese high command had counted on arresting the French commanders in the expectation that they would order the Indochina Army troops under their command to surrender. However, it had also warned its commanders that fierce resistance could be expected in some places. General Delsuc and Admiral Bérenger, the French commanders in the south, were at the Norodom Palace conferring with Decoux and so were isolated with him when Japanese troops surrounded the palace grounds and prevented anyone from leaving. In Hanoi, at 8:10 P.M. a Japanese unit burst into Aymé's apartment and arrested him without resistance. Mordant was at his home in town having dinner with Professor Mus when he received a telephone call from the Puginier Palace alerting him to the fact Decoux had received an ultimatum in Saigon. Mus immediately departed on what would be a long journey to China. Mordant made for the secondary headquarters he had established at the citadel, but he sprained an ankle in falling from a wall. In spite of this, he managed to telephone his headquarters and was informed of Aymé's arrest and was advised to make for Tong, the camp west of Hanoi where most of the Tonkin Division was stationed. However, he spent the night with a medical officer of his staff and gave himself up the following morning; he arranged to be arrested by the Kempeitai out of sight of the Vietnamese.

The Japanese having failed to obtain a general order of surrender from the Indochina Army's top commanders, it was then up to the garrison commanders

in each location to make the decision of whether to surrender or fight. This was extremely difficult. Japanese officers were ordered to decapitate any French officer responsible for ordering his troops to fire on the Japanese.

In Saigon, following the order to begin Meigo, the arsenal, the port, customs offices, the Bank of Indochina, Radio Saigon, and all other key buildings were occupied. At the headquarters of the Sûreté the Kempeitai found all filing cabinets of documents, which Moresco had not had time to order destroyed, intact. Initially the Japanese kept Decoux and Boisanger prisoners in the Norodom Palace, but later they moved them to a more isolated confinement in Loc Ninh, north of Saigon. They were not otherwise harmed and were found there by the Free French in August. After moving the *résident supérieur* in Annam, Jean Haelewyn, and two associates about, bringing them finally to Kratié in Cambodia, the Japanese beheaded all three.

In Hanoi, where all officers and many men had been granted weekend leave at 6 P.M. on that Friday night, those who could make it back to the citadel through Japanese street barricades improvised a brave but futile resistance until the following morning, when Aymé sent a courier bearing an order to lay down their arms with honor. The casualty toll on the Indochina Army side was 292 dead (including 198 autochthons) and 379 wounded (including 222 autochthons) and 965 prisoners, while 212 Japanese soldiers were killed and 348 were wounded. Among the captured were Generals Massimi, who led the resistance at the citadel, Tavéra, and Chamagne and Gautier, Résident Supérieur Chauvet, and police chief Louis Arnoux. They were held as prisoners to the end of the war. All major public buildings, including the Puginier Palace, were occupied in short order.

Some of the fiercest fighting on the night of March 9 and on succeeding days took place at Lang Son, scene of the bloody 1940 fighting. The defenses at Lang Son consisted of a series of fort complexes, many built by the Indochina Army to defend against invasion from China. Once the Japanese had cut off communications, each of these forts had to defend itself against the full weight of attack pressed with artillery and tanks. As soon as the order to begin Meigo was issued, the Japanese ordered all French officers to be executed if they did not immediately order their troops to surrender. In the fighting, 544 European members of the Indochina Army were killed (of which 387 had been executed after capture, including the commanding officer, General Lemonnier) and 1,832 autochthons were killed (including 103 executed after capture and another 396 who were killed on March 12 when planes of the U.S. Fourteenth Air Force, in its only intervention in the fighting, mistakenly bombed and strafed a column of prisoners under the impression that they were Japanese). Prisoners taken by the Japanese totaled 1,021, almost all autochthons. Among the prisoners executed was one Corporal Jules Nguyên who insisted on being executed with his comrades, shouting "Vive la France!" to the end.

In Hue, the general commanding the region, Turquin, was away on a visit to Laos when Meigo came. There was sporadic but heavy fighting at the various military camps. The Indochina Army, again fighting completely without out-

side support, suffered heavy casualties but managed to inflict a toll of 247 dead and 253 wounded on the Japanese before resistance ceased. The Garde Indochinoise, which was responsible for the security of the *résidence supérieure*, put up a particularly valiant fight in which it defended its barracks for 19 hours before being overcome. A group of 300 men, about two-thirds of them autochthons, managed to elude the Japanese and reach the Ashau valley. But hunger, sickness, desertions, and betrayals took their toll. The advancing monsoon prevented airdrops of supplies. The main group split up; some returned to Vietnam and surrendered and others sought refuge in Laos. Only a handful survived.

The Japanese received their biggest surprise at Quang Ngai. The Vietnamese garrison there had been armed with automatic weapons parachuted near Kontum by the OSS, but they had led the Japanese into thinking there would be mass desertions. Before the fighting ended, 143 of the attacking force of 600 lay dead and another 205 had been wounded in return for three killed and 17 wounded.

Meanwhile, troops of the Tonkin Division that had left their camp at Tong, west of Hanoi, were retreating northwestward under constant heavy Japanese pressure. They were forced to abandon all their heavy equipment in crossing the Red River. Sabattier, having omitted to specify radio frequencies in his O.G.4, was soon out of touch with troops under General Alessandri, who had entered the mountains of northwest Tonkin, which were sparsely inhabited by tribesmen who were mostly hostile to the French.

At Thu Cuc on March 13, Alessandri ordered his officers to split into two columns. Then, having assembled all the men and taken the precaution of separating them from their weapons, he announced that, because of the critical shortage of rations for the march ahead, he was immediately demobilizing all his autochthonous tirailleurs. They were to hand over all their ammunition and return to their homes or else they would be considered deserters. In spite of protests by some of his officers against this treatment of the autochthons, most of whom were volunteers, they had to comply under the threat of Europeans of the Foreign Legion opening fire on them. Of some 1,200 autochthonous soldiers, barely 100 were permitted to continue on with the two columns. The others were allowed to keep their uniforms after tearing off all insignia of rank and unit, were given one day's rice ration, and were paid two to five piasters each as an advance on their pay for the month of March. Their weapons were destroyed. Needless to say, these men abandoned far from home without means of defending themselves constituted easy prey for the forces in the region hostile to the French. In the coming days, about 100 were captured by the Japanese, who shot seven of them and threw the remainder into prison. Between five and six hundred others joined the Viet Minh, while another hundred volunteered to join the VNQDD.

Between March 9 and May 2, the withdrawing remnants of the Tonkin Division suffered losses of 774 killed (of which 611 were autochthons), 283 wounded, and 303 missing, according to a compilation made by Chu Bac Khan, a member of the Tho minority who took part in the long march himself. The survivors—2,140 Europeans and 3,223 autochthons—took refuge in China, where, treated

virtually as prisoners by the Chinese and regarded as unreliable by the Free French, they ceased to play any role in the unfolding drama in Vietnam.

The adventures of Major Reul, commanding officer of the Second Military Region (Cao Bang), at this time provided startling evidence of the organization and determination of the Viet Minh in this bastion of their strength. Reul decided on his own to abandon his headquarters at Cao Bang, which was too vulnerable to Japanese siege, and take his men into the mountains. For almost three months, by keeping constantly on the move, Reul and his men managed to elude the Japanese. Before March 9, Reul had secretly been in contact with the Viet Minh, although an intense French ratissage in the region aimed at the Viet Minh just prior to March 9 made these contacts extremely difficult. Now he sought out the Viet Minh again for the valuable assistance they could provide against the Japanese. After several efforts, Reul succeeded in meeting a Viet Minh emissary on March 23. The emissary sharply criticized Reul for bringing in Chinese pirates and Vietnamese "renegades" from Kwangsi, referring to Gordon's Chinese and members of the VNQDD who had been sent him to help fight the Japanese.

On March 28, another Viet Minh emissary pressed Reul on the schedule of delivery of arms that had been promised by the OSS. In exchange for assurances that the emissary would obtain Giap's instructions to institute military cooperation, Reul would contact Gordon to speed up deliveries of arms by the OSS. Several incidents between Reul's men and the local population, which was under strong Viet Minh influence, however, showed that the Viet Minh were not cooperating. In fact, Reul heard reports of Viet Minh attacks on Indochina Army troops elsewhere, incitations to desert and join the Viet Minh, and removal of an arms cache to a secret location by the Viet Minh. Three days later a higher-level emissary violently criticized French colonial policies and gave only vague replies to Reul's questions about recent incidents. Reul broke off his contacts with the Viet Minh and withdrew to safety in Kwangsi, although Viet Minh troops did provide cover for his retreat. On arriving, he asked Gordon to suspend arms deliveries to the Viet Minh until they decided to fight the Japanese. 133 The episode is significant for the light it sheds on the different policies operated by the Viet Minh at various levels, with the top leadership proclaiming a policy of fighting the Japanese while refusing cooperation at the local level in order to take advantage of the precarious situation of the French.

Despite repeated orders from Calcutta to remain on Indochinese soil and defend French sovereignty at all costs, the last troops of the Indochina Army outside Japanese custody withdrew over the China border on May 2, leaving only the scattered Free French guerrillas and their partisans in the jungles of Laos as a continuing French presence in Indochina; for the moment, these bands had no prospect of being able to enter the towns.

The independent monarchies that emerged under Japanese trusteeship in the wake of the Meigo action were destined to follow divergent courses. In Laos, the monarch pretended to play the Japanese game so as to protect his people from upheaval, but in fact he secretly maintained his allegiance to France until the French could return, an attitude which brought him into conflict with his viceroy, Prince Phetsarath, and contributed to the establishment of an independence government, the Lao Issara, that defied the monarchy. In Cambodia, the young King Sihanouk embraced the Japanese with an enthusiasm that got him into difficulties (only temporarily, however) with the returning French. The Vietnamese, partly because they were better prepared to take advantage of the situation and partly because they felt less inhibited in making demands on the Japanese, benefited most from the disappearance of the French; their emperor gave his support to an independence government that called itself for the first time the government of the Empire of Vietnam. With this government, the French never had any relations. It is notable that the independence regimes instituted by the Japanese brought to the fore relatively progressive political leaders such as Tran Trong Kim in Vietnam, Prince Phetsarath in Laos, and Son Ngoc Thanh in Cambodia.

The Japanese, having acted with decisiveness, rapidly lost control of succeeding events. The depth of nationalist feeling in Vietnam, especially, surprised and disconcerted them, judging from the messages they exchanged. However, they felt obliged to honor the new demands being made by the people they had so recently invited to take power. As it became clear to them, especially after the beginning of the battle for Okinawa at the end of March, that there was to be no Allied landing in Indochina, the military argument for stability at any price gradually lost weight and the diplomatic argument that it was in Japan's interest to give the regimes a true semblance of independence gained weight.

# THE TRAN TRONG KIM GOVERNMENT TAKES CHARGE IN VIETNAM

Emperor Bao Dai, reportedly forewarned of the Meigo action by his minister of interior, Pham Quynh, <sup>134</sup> was away at his hunting reserve in western Quang Tri Province on the night of March 9. Conveniently for the Japanese, he was accompanied by the French *résident supérieur*, who was arrested when the party returned to Hue the next morning. On the morning of March 11, Masayuki Yokoyama, head of the Japanese Cultural Institute in Saigon, who had been given the title of supreme adviser, went to the Kien Trung Palace accompanied by Consul General Akira Konagaya and Consul Taizo Watanabe. Bao Dai fully expected to be deposed by the Japanese in favor of Cuong De. <sup>135</sup> He was thus surprised and overjoyed to hear Yokoyama's plea that he declare independence from France. Bao Dai accepted.

Cuong De's exclusion had been among the last-minute changes made to the plans for Meigo on February 15. This decision, so important to the history of Indochina, was apparently brought about by the prince's obstinate refusal to agree to the conditions posed by the Japanese for his ascending the throne. According to a reliable Vietnamese source, Cuong De had told Japanese officials in Tokyo that he must have a free hand in choosing his ministers, that he would not grant Japan special rights and privileges in Vietnam, and that he would refuse to make Vietnam part of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere. Bringing Cuong De back to Vietnam in this frame of mind would obviously

invite trouble for the Japanese and perhaps make General Tsuchihashi's plans for the defense of Indochina against Allied invasion unworkable. The decision came as a blow to the Cao Dai, who had pinned their hopes on Cuong De's return and now felt betrayed by the Japanese.<sup>136</sup>

Bao Dai convened a cabinet meeting on the afternoon of March 11, at which the text of the proclamation of independence was agreed upon and countersigned by all six members of the Co Mat, or council of ministers. Using the term Vietnam, it declared that "the Government of Vietnam publicly proclaims that from today the protectorate treaty with France is abrogated and that the country resumes its rights to independence." The proclamation thus abrogated the 1884 Patenôtre treaty but said nothing about the Franco-Vietnamese treaties governing the cession of Cochinchina and the cities of Hanoi, Haiphong, and Tourane. In fact, no mention was made of the territorial unity of Vietnam, apparently in order to allow the Japanese to replace the French governor of Cochinchina with a Japanese governor, another part of the Meigo plan. Finally, the use of the phrase "resumes its rights to independence" conveyed the Japanese conception of the limited independence being granted to the Indochinese states. It remained now for Bao Dai to give substance to this claim to rights.

On March 17, Bao Dai handed his private secretary, Pham Khac Hoe, a written note instructing him that he was to assume direct control of state affairs, based on the principle of *dan vi qui* (the most precious thing is the people; a teaching of Mencius). Two days later, the members of the Co Mat resigned, leaving the way open for Bao Dai to search for new men of talent and virtue (*tai duc*). <sup>138</sup> The Japanese were slightly confused by Bao Dai's rapid moves and worried about public reaction; a message on March 21 spoke of the feeling of "great disappointment" occasioned by the continuation of some French and pro-French Vietnamese civil servants, and a report on March 23 noted the popular perception that Japanese high officials were merely replacing the French and said that hurried arrangements had been made to have Bao Dai formally request Yokoyama's appointment. <sup>139</sup>

The putting in place of Bao Dai's new cabinet took several weeks. It was not until April 17 that the cabinet was constituted and May 4 that it convened its first meeting. The leading candidate for the prime ministership had been, up to that point, Ngô Dinh Diem. However, the Japanese military, perhaps owing to their change of mind about the suitability of Cuong De for their purposes, decided to advance Tran Trong Kim, a respected scholar, educator, and historian, for the post. Kim was brought back from exile in Bangkok, reaching Saigon on March 30. A complicated series of moves followed between Kim and Diem, who met each other at Matsushita's house. Diem was upset that his friend Hayashi had not tipped him off about Japanese plans for the Meigo action and Bao Dai's proclamation of independence, and he must have deduced from Hayashi's behavior that the Japanese military was set against his candidacy. After a series of undelivered messages from Bao Dai to Diem, the latter wrote a long letter to the emperor explaining his reluctance to go to Hue on the grounds that his acceptance would lead to unhappiness. In a final mortifying twist, Diem was

made to write another letter declining the invitation on grounds of ill health. He then left Saigon for Vinh Long to be with his brother, Ngô Dinh Thuc. Kim, after once declining the invitation in favor of Diem, accepted. 140

There are times when the events of public life conspire to determine an individual's actions and relegate all prior opinions about what that individual stands for to the background. This was such a time for Tran Trong Kim. Kim was born in 1887 at Dan Pho in Ha Tinh and received the education in Hanoi and France reserved for the most favored members of the Vietnamese bourgeoisie of the time. After he completed his studies, he was drawn to the advancement of education, and rose to the post of inspector of Franco-Annamite private schools. He was the author of many works, including a pedagogical review which he founded. He was a former staff member of the *Dong Duong Tap* Chi, was widely known as a scholar for a series of textbooks published in quoc ngu, and was known in particular for his works on Confucianism and Buddhism and as the author of a popular two-volume outline history of Vietnam up to 1893 that was first published in 1920 and is still in print today (2000). These contributions to Vietnamese nationalism the French considered within the bounds of what was acceptable. He was a chevalier of the Legion of Honor and was listed in a French who's who of Indochina in 1943.<sup>141</sup> Placed under Japanese police protection in 1943, he had lived in Singapore and Bangkok. It would therefore be erroneous to characterize the thoroughly francophile Kim as a puppet of the Japanese on the sole evidence of his having been chosen by the Japanese to lead an independent Vietnamese government.

Kim left Saigon on April 2 and arrived in Hue three days later. He had his first meeting with Bao Dai on April 7 and to his surprise was favorably impressed. On April 16, he agreed to form a new government. The team Kim assembled consisted of modern professionals, like himself, with little or no prior political experience. A majority of them had been educated in France and were younger than Kim's 62 years, ranging in age from 33 to 49. They included four lawyers, four physicians, two high school teachers, and one engineer. Several of them had contributed to the journal *Thanh Nghi*, which had been founded in 1941 and became the focus of intellectual life in Hanoi between 1941 and 1945. The ministers were well distributed geographically, including two from Cochinchina.

The government promised to honor past patriotic heroes, standardize the tax system, and encourage young people to "protect the independence that is being constructed." On constitutional matters, aside from using Gia Long's name Vietnam, the cabinet adopted the yellow banner with three horizontal stripes as the national flag and a national anthem, the old hymn "The King Mounts His Throne." In popular moves, the government replaced French toponyms with Vietnamese ones and ordered the civil service to use *quoc ngu* in place of French in official correspondence. In a step manifesting the government's wish to see Vietnam united territorially, it adopted the name Vietnam on June 4 and the names Bac Bo in place of Tonkin, Trung Bo in place of Annam, and Nam Bo in place of Cochinchina. At the urging of its minister of justice,

lawyer Trinh Dinh Thao, the government ordered province chiefs and prison officials to release all political prisoners jailed by the French.<sup>144</sup>

An innovation was the inclusion of a foreign minister in the cabinet for the first time since France had assumed responsibility for Hue's foreign affairs in 1884. The man appointed to this post, Tran Van Chuong, whose wife was known to be close to the Japanese, apparently had dealings only with Japan. In this respect, he served his emperor badly. Bao Dai always wanted to *chercher les Américains*, which in the circumstances would have been difficult but not altogether impossible. Whenever the possibility of a Japanese defeat was raised, Bao Dai would say "On va tuer le porc!," a reference to the traditional form of celebrating an event. 146

The cabinet included no defense minister because the Japanese intended to manage all security forces themselves, even the police, and it was not until mid-summer that Kim was allowed to organize a Civil Guard (Bao An). In its first policy statement, the government emphasized that Vietnam "could not think of conducting war with anyone," making it clear that the government general's "common defense" commitment no longer applied. The absence of the government's own security forces became a liability, however, when banditry, assassination, and revolution spread through the country in the autumn and Kim was obliged to reject Japanese offers of help for fear of seeming unpatriotic.

As a man without a party, Kim's best hope for governing efficiently was to improve the existing bureaucracy by appealing to a sense of morality and patriotism rather than embark on any thoroughgoing reforms. He had several unpopular mandarins fired and even brought to trial on various charges. He organized the civil servants into the Cong Chuc Tong Hoi (General Association of Civil Servants). At first, they responded with enthusiasm. As the problems facing the government grew more serious, however, this initial enthusiasm faded.

Foremost among these problems was the worsening food situation in northern Trung Bo and Bac Bo. A series of natural disasters in the summer of 1944 destroyed the main-season rice harvest in the small, heavily populated coastal provinces of Thai Binh, Nam Dinh, Hung Yen, Ha Nam, and Ninh Binh. Unusual cold in the following winter ruined a large quantity of secondary crops. Famine spread through the deltas of the Red and Ma rivers. Children, adults, and whole families died of starvation. Villagers flocked to market towns in search of food. The relatively small amount of private charity assistance could not cope with a crisis of this magnitude. The government passed regulations to punish hoarding and ensure minimum rations for the neediest. Kim asked for and obtained approval of the Japanese to abandon the requisitioning of rice from farmers in Trung Bo and an exemption for those who owned less than three mou of rice land in Bac Bo; the requisitioning had been instituted by the Decoux administration when it agreed to export rice to Japan in an effort to constitute reserve stocks for future shortages and to dampen speculation and price rises. Kim also canceled much of the regulation of rice marketing that had been put in place by Decoux. He encouraged the formation of fund-raising associations to help famine victims, and on May 23 Bao Dai decreed a moratorium on agricultural loans.

The minister of supplies, Nguyên Huu Thi, was sent to Saigon in the first fortnight of June to arrange for the transport of rice to the north and the emigration of 1 million people from Bac Bo and Trung Bo to Nam Bo. The Allied air raids, however, had seriously disrupted transport of all kinds. In 1945, railway links between Saigon and Hanoi were practically broken, while 50 percent of the road network was destroyed and some 90 percent of motor vehicles were out of commission. American aircraft had sown mines in the river approaches to Haiphong. The coastal shipping that normally brought rice to Tonkin from Cochinchina was first restricted to Tourane (Da Nang), then to Qui Nhon, finally to Nha Trang. In fact, the export of rice to Japan had declined sharply and virtually ceased by 1945; rice stocks in Saigon were sold off cheaply before they rotted, and 55,000 tons were offered to distilleries for less than the purchase price. In the end, Kim's government resorted to using oxcarts and small junks to try to get rice through to Tonkin.

The fact that Kim's government did not control the federal services of Indochina, such as posts and telegraphs, railways, and radio stations, which were still in the hands of the governor general in Hanoi, now in the person of General Tsuchihashi, made things that much more difficult. Finally, the Viet Minh obstructed the government's famine relief projects by inciting peasants to attack public rice stocks and discrediting officials of the famine relief associations. The great famine of the year At Dau left an indelible mark on people's memories; estimates of the number of deaths between the autumn of 1944 and the winter of 1945 vary from 700,000 to 2 million.

Another serious problem Kim's government had to contend with was inflation. Inflation was spurred by the Japanese decision to print currency, since they controlled the Bank of Indochina and the printing presses. Between March and August 1945 the Japanese put 770 million piasters at the disposal of the imperial armed forces, more than the government general had supplied during the previous 53 months. Kim's government granted tax relief or exemption to those in the lowest tax brackets in Bac Bo and Trung Bo.<sup>147</sup>

#### THE UNIFICATION OF VIETNAM

No issue, however, was deemed more important than unifying the country. The Japanese soon discovered that their choice of Bao Dai to preside over independence had alienated a large section of Vietnamese nationalist opinion. As early as the end of March, Japanese reports from Hanoi warned that members of the "independence party" who felt they had been ignored in the new setup after years of anti-French agitation were questioning Japan's "real motives" and declaring they could not cooperate with the new government. According to an April 14 circular, the Japanese were particularly worried about the frequent meetings the members of the "independence party" were holding in Hanoi and their stirring up of opposition to the government. Perhaps in an effort to defuse this agitation, Tsuchihashi gave his assent to bring back Cuong De. In a meeting with Bao Dai on June 11, he obtained the emperor's approval for Cuong De's return to Vietnam as president of the Privy Council. On July 20, General

Matsui declared in Tokyo that the prince was to return to Vietnam to assist his nephew in state affairs. Five days later, the prince issued a statement expressing gratitude to Japan and pledging sincere collaboration with Japan following his return home. This tentative plan, however, was never carried out.

The anti-Japanese agitation, in which the Viet Minh were starting to vie with the non-Viet Minh nationalists in the virulence of their anti-French, anti-Japanese propaganda, may have played into the hands of the Tran Trong Kim government in its efforts to reunify the country territorially. Tsuchihashi in his capacity as governor general had named Kumao Nishimura as résident supérieur of Tonkin. On April 27, wishing to put an end to the autonomy of Tonkin under French occupants of this post, and undoubtedly after consultation with Tsuchihashi, the government announced that a kham sai (imperial delegate) for Bac Bo would take over the functions of the résident supérieur, minus responsibility for Hanoi and Haiphong. Kim promoted Phan Ke Toai, the provincial governor of Thai Binh, to this office.

When Toai paid a formal call on Tsuchihashi (who had moved his headquarters from Saigon to Hanoi) on May 23, Tsuchihashi referred to his prior conversation with Bao Dai and said it was his understanding that the prime minister governed not under the supervision of the emperor but under that of the governor general. Toai argued that his instructions from Hue were to the contrary and that it was the wish of the Vietnamese people to unite Bac Bo with Trung Bo. Feeling that governing under the orders of the governor general would be disloyal to the emperor, Toai observed that his position was a very difficult one. The next day Toai asked Nishimura to transmit his resignation to Hue. Nishimura secretly held back the resignation, but Kim received word of it through private channels, whereupon he said that if the imperial delegate quit the whole cabinet would have to resign. The Japanese report on this affair speculated that although Toai's proffered resignation had been prompted by his conversation with Tsuchihashi, the real cause was the agitation from the independence advocates and the fact that Toai had held office under the French. 150 Nishimura, however, giving further proof of his understanding of Toai's dilemma and wishing to neutralize the independence advocates, gradually transferred to Toai such of the responsibilities of the résident supérieur as did not impinge upon Japanese security. This move, however, led to a conflict between loyalty to the Hue court and loyalty to the government general.

In Cochinchina, Tsuchihashi, hoping to change the status quo as little as possible, had named Fujio Minoda to take the place of Governor Hoeffel in the La Grandière Palace. Minoda made it clear in the following days that Japan had no intention of granting independence to Nam Bo, dashing hopes of southern nationalists to be included in independent Vietnam. 151 He appointed Vietnamese to administrative positions vacated by the French, brought Tran Van An back from Singapore to head a quasi-legislative Council of Nam Bo (Hoi Nghi Nam Bo), and encouraged his assistant Iida to convert the Vichyist youth and sports brigades into a Vanguard Youth Organization (Thanh Nien Tien Phong). This organization first attracted public attention in the wake of the American

B-29 raid on Saigon on June 12 which killed 22 Europeans and at least 200 Vietnamese. Hundreds of young men in dark shorts and white shirts marched to the ruins and helped dig out survivors and transport bodies to the mortuary. The operation was led by Dr. Pham Ngoc Thach, who was to play a key role on behalf of the Viet Minh in the events of August and September.

At first, Tsuchihashi, seeking to delay things, argued that the Cambodian government's claims on Nam Bo (Kampuchea Krom) should be resolved prior to any consideration of unifying Nam Bo with the rest of Vietnam. Kim himself went to Hanoi on July 13 to negotiate with Tsuchihashi, where he flatly rejected Tsuchihashi's argument. After further lengthy negotiations, it was also agreed that Nam Bo would be returned to Vietnam and that Kim would go to Saigon to attend the reunification ceremonies, set for August 8, with Tsuchihashi present.<sup>153</sup>

The government had started negotiations with the Japanese for return of sovereignty over the cities of Hanoi, Haiphong, and Tourane almost as soon as it took office. On June 11, the same day, probably not coincidentally, that a large unification rally was held in Hanoi presided over by Minister of Youth Phan Anh, Tsuchihashi discussed the matter with Bao Dai. He tried to play for time, suggesting that the cities be handed back one after the other, beginning with Tourane. Bao Dai insisted they be handed back at one stroke by revoking the decree of 1888. 154 The negotiations in Chuong's hands dragged on, and it was not until Kim himself took a hand that Tsuchihashi agreed to turn over the three cities effective July 20. A Vietnamese mayor, Tran Van Lai, took over from the Japanese in Hanoi on July 20, and similar transfers occurred in the other cities. Kim had also authorized the convening of a National Consultative Conference (Hoi Nghi Tu Van Quoc Gia) in an edict of May 8. But it was not until July 30 that he approved the list of 59 individuals to be invited to attend the northern branch meeting, which was scheduled to deliberate for five days from August 17 on. 155 This meeting was to be overtaken by events. The membership of this conference, it should be noted, was no less representative than that of the National People's Congress convened by the Viet Minh in Tan Trao on August 16.

All in all, the Tran Trong Kim government succeeded in reuniting Tonkin and Cochinchina for the first time in nearly a century, making Vietnam one country under that name. This was, by any standard, a tremendous achievement. The government had given substance to Bao Dai's claim to the rights of independence and proved a capable custodian of Vietnam's sovereignty during the relatively short period it held power.

#### SIHANOUK DECLARES INDEPENDENCE

The Meigo operation was effective in Cambodia, as it was elsewhere. Not finding the acting *résident supérieur*, Berjoan, at home (as had been planned in such a contingency), a disguised King Sihanouk took temporary refuge in a monastery in Phnom Penh. The following day, a cousin of his mother, Buor Horng, accompanied by the Japanese owner of a grocery store near the royal palace, in reality a secret agent, came to fetch him and return him to his palace, where he found his parents safe and sound. At the request of Kubota, a career diplomat

who took the place of the résident supérieur, and General Manaki, commander of Japanese troops, he proclaimed, after consulting his astrologers for a favorable day, independence and promulgated a kram (law) abrogating the French treaty of protectorate of 1863 and the convention of 1884. 156

Sihanouk expressed his support for the Japanese and took advantage of the situation to enact a number of measures dear to his heart. He declared that the kingdom would now be known in French as "Kampuchea," the Khmer pronunciation of the word, instead of "Cambodge." On March 14, even before a new government had taken office, he rescinded a decree passed in 1943 at the initiative of the French to replace Cambodia's 47-letter alphabet, derived from medieval Indian models, with the Roman alphabet. Although the decree did not apply to religious texts, the reform was pushed vigorously by the French in 1944–1945, especially in secular schools and government publications. The decree abrogating the reform mentioned that for Cambodia to adopt the Roman alphabet would mean the society would become "a society without history, without value, without mores, and without traditions."157

A new cabinet took office, composed of colorless personalities without strong political persuasions except for their loyalty to Sihanouk. This was not out of keeping with sentiment in the country at large. No violent actions were recorded by Cambodians against either the French or the Japanese during this period. Son Ngoc Thanh returned from Japan in May and was made foreign minister by Sihanouk, who noted Thanh's proclivity for placing his anti-French supporters in high government positions and his willingness to tolerate Japanese requisitions in the countryside. 158 Thanh's irredentist demand for return to Cambodia of the Mekong Delta provinces vexed the Japanese considerably, especially in view of the fact, as they pointed out in their messages, the Cambodians had not forgiven them for having presided over the handing over of Battambang and Siem Reap to Thailand. 159 It is noteworthy that Sihanouk himself shortly took up the irredentist demand (as he also later adopted Thanh's use of the referendum as a device to seek popular backing for his policies.)

On the night of August 9 (a propitious number in Asia), members of a Japanese-formed paramilitary group entered the royal palace and demanded that the king dismiss the cabinet. At 3 A.M. they rounded up the entire cabinet, with the exception of Prince Sisowath Monireth and Thanh. Sihanouk's private secretary, Nong Kimny, received a gunshot wound. When Thanh heard of this, he fetched Prince Monireth and the two of them ordered the hostages released. Sihanouk was saved from possible harm because his mother, Queen Kossamak, had sent him to safety in a nearby temple (wat). Kossamak and Prince Monireth parlayed with the intruders. The Japanese appear not to have been behind these events. Four days later, Sihanouk accepted the cabinet's resignation and announced that Thanh would become Kampuchea's first prime minister. In his investiture speech, Thanh, who had retained the portfolio of foreign minister, proclaimed the importance of a continuing alliance with Japan, as well as of new alliances with other Asian nations, and suggested a further alliance with the Vietnamese. He was worried about the return of the French. After Japan's surrender, he sent emissaries to China and Thailand and visited Vietnam himself. 160

### THE FREE FRENCH RESISTANCE IN LAOS

The one country in which the Free French were able to organize effective resistance to the Japanese was Laos. Such resistance had begun even before Japanese troops moved into Pakse, Savannakhet, and Thakhek on the evening of March 9. Beginning in December 1944, British B-24s based at airfields in Bengal had been air-dropping French agents into Indochina who had been trained in India by the British Force 136 with the aim of recruiting and training guerrilla forces to harass the Japanese and maintain a French presence. By the spring of 1945, Franco-Laotian guerrilla groups were operating from jungle camps scattered from Luang Namtha Province in the north all the way south to Champassak.

The contrast with the failure of guerrilla resistance in Vietnam is striking and was due in no small part to the difference in attitude of the two rulers. The Franco-Laotian guerrillas were fighting for a cause widely perceived to be legitimate and one that had the tacit support of the king. In Vietnam, on the other hand, any Frenchman was perceived to be fighting to restore French rule in opposition to the wishes of the Hue court and its government, and therefore could not count on the local population. A consequence of the experience gained in fighting the Japanese on their home soil was that future general officers such as Amkha Soukhavong served their country well in the 1950s and 1960s, whereas in Vietnam those who became generals had no experience of fighting a highly trained professional army such as the Japanese before they found themselves face to face with the Viet Minh and the Viet Cong.

The numbers of the Franco-Laotian guerrillas were not large: some 200 Frenchmen and 300 autochthons, both Lao and highlanders. The presence they made felt was out of all proportion to their small numbers, showing what well-trained men fighting a combined political and military action in pursuance of a well-defined and attainable objective—in this case the restoration of the authority of the king and his wish for a resumption of the French protectorate over his kingdom—are able to achieve with a modicum of popular support, even in extremely difficult conditions.

Hearing that the arrival of the Japanese was imminent, the viceroy of Luang Prabang and prime minister, Prince Phetsarath, the son of Boun Khong by his second wife, ordered Laotian civil servants to continue their duties as usual and left the town by car for Luang Prabang to be with King Sisavang Vong. The Japanese moved into Vientiane and Xieng Khouang on March 10. At Thakhek on March 14 the Japanese met with a show of resistance by the Garde Indochinoise, for which they retaliated by executing French civilians. Tchepone, Saravane, and Attopeu were all occupied in the following days. The Japanese quickly imprisoned French officials and their families caught in the towns and confiscated their property. Among their other actions, they sold a confiscated truckload of opium to Chinese merchants, saying the proceeds would contribute to the costs of their operations. Laotian civil servants, who were not affected by these punitive measures, continued their work under Japanese guidance. In Vientiane, the *chao khoueng*, Xieng Mao, became the de facto head of government, since there was no contact yet with Luang Prabang. <sup>161</sup>

Two battalions of Japanese troops finally arrived in Luang Prabang on April 7 and found the French gone. In an audience with the king, Taizo Watanabe suggested to him, as he and Yokoyama had done to Bao Dai, that he proclaim independence and send a representative to discuss the modalities of Lao-Japanese cooperation. Sisavang Vong replied that he had already made his position clear to the French representatives to whom he had granted an audience two days previously. "We will stay with our people," he said. "Our attitude toward the French will not change. Laos is too small to be independent. If we are obliged to accept independence, we will accept it without having sought it or hoped for it. Do whatever you think best. We understand your position." <sup>162</sup>

It was in these circumstances that the king reluctantly issued a proclamation on April 8 ending the French protectorate. But at the same time he secretly entrusted Prince Kindavong, a younger half-brother of Phetsarath, with the mission of representing him in the Allied councils, while he himself maintained clandestine contact with the Franco-Laotian guerrillas. He also sent Crown Prince Savang Vatthana to accompany Watanabe to Japanese headquarters in Saigon, where he vigorously protested the Japanese actions.

Some civil servants who joined the Franco-Laotian guerrillas, such as Phoui Sananikone at Luang Namtha; and officials such as Kou Voravong, district chief (chao muong) of Paksane; and Leuam Insisiengmay, chao khoueng of Savannakhet had to make a difficult choice, leaving behind their colleagues and sometimes their families. There were divided loyalties among the Lao officials, often due to family considerations, as in the case of Phetsarath's son Souriya, who was widely believed to have collaborated with the Japanese. On the other hand, the respected teacher Nhouy Abhay was arrested by the Japanese police in Pakse and tortured on suspicion of anti-Japanese activities. Leuam narrowly escaped with his life from Japanese imprisonment after he was denounced by Vietnamese for ordering villagers not to sell rice to them. The guerrillas rapidly found support among some of the leading Lao and tribal figures, including Kou Abhay, Nouphat Chounramany, Chao Saykham, and Touby Lyfoung of the Lee clan of the Meo, who from their mountain fastnesses around the Plain of Jars had watched the ammunition stored by the French for the day of reckoning with the Japanese go on exploding for a half a day. 163

The Japanese repaid this resistance to their takeover by selling or giving their arms to those willing to oppose the French following their surrender. These last were mainly the Viet Minh; if it had not been for the support of the Viet Minh, the Laotians who fought for immediate independence would have amounted to very little. OSS operatives on the scene were also making promises of support to local leaders who presented themselves as being anti-French, often without recognizing they were secret members of the ICP, such as Vu Huu Binh. 164

### THE VIET MINH TAKE OVER

By the end of June, both the Japanese and Kim's government were having to pay increasing attention to the subversive activities of a clandestine organization variously styled as the Vietnam Independence League (Viet Minh) or the Indochina Independence League, the front organization that had been envisaged at the Eighth Plenum to be formed after constitution of similar front groups in Laos and Cambodia. A Japanese report on July 7 described how the army decided in view of the worsening situation to mobilize a large force and carry out a sweep against this organization in the Thai Nguyên and Bac Kan areas. This began on June 20. About 200 people were rounded up in Hanoi and another 80 in Haiphong and Nam Dinh. "The operation was carried out with considerable thoroughness," the report noted, "but because of the crafty organization of the Communist Party it is thought that the greater part of the leaders may have fled." The report noted a decrease in distribution of handbills and terrorism in Hanoi, but in rural areas the movement against shipment of rice to the army and payment of farm taxes was becoming increasingly acute. Minh activities in Laos and Cambodia did not rate any mention of Japanese concern.

The Viet Minh had been organizing in Thai Nguyên and Bac Kan for months. Vo Nguyên Giap, the ICP's point man in northern Bac Bo, had succeeded in recruiting Chu Van Tan, a young leader of the Tho minority, a people who had already been Vietnamized for a long period of time. With Tan's help, Giap was able to create in this mountainous, sparsely populated area a network of villages extending through Cao Bang, Thai Nguyên, and Bac Kan all the way to Lang Son, whose inhabitants could be counted on to defend this "liberated zone." After March 9, 1945, the Japanese paid almost no attention to this mountainous zone, which for them had no strategic value because it had no main lines of communication. This was to prove yet another advantage for Giap.

### THE OSS AND THE VIET MINH

In Washington, the U.S. government had only a vague idea of what was occurring in Vietnam in 1945. OSS reports, when they mentioned it at all, spoke of a Japanese "puppet government" led by Bao Dai. The OSS headquarters in southern China does not seem to have taken any steps toward obtaining precise information about this government. Yet it could have done so by recruiting a reliable Vietnamese from the thousands living in southern China at the time, who would have been able to travel unobtrusively to Hue and ascertain the situation. An agent of some stature might even have been able to contact people at Bao Dai's court.

The OSS and the Viet Minh, on the other hand, were drawn together by very practical interests in each other: the need of the OSS for intelligence about the Japanese and the need of the Viet Minh for arms. Giap's fledgling army faced a major problem in that it lacked an assured source of arms. Unlike Russia in 1917, where during the February revolution crowds had looted the arsenals of the czarist government of tens of thousands of guns, many of which had then been concealed in factories and were available to the Bolsheviks' workers' militia (later incorporated into the Bolshevik Red Guard) for the asking, Indochina lacked a ready supply of arms available to the insurrectionists. The Japanese had disarmed the French and were not about to turn over the seized arms to the Viet Minh, and they certainly had no orders to turn over their own arms

to the Viet Minh. The members of the Indochina Army who escaped held on to their weapons where they could; they certainly did not have any surplus to give the Viet Minh. Kim's government lacked an army, and therefore arms of its own, which might have been shared with the Viet Minh in a gesture of solidarity against the French. In China, the Chinese Nationalist government in Chungking, having discovered the true nature of the Viet Minh, favored rival Vietnamese factions and so could be ruled out as a source of arms. The Chinese Communists, holed up in Yenan, were in no position to supply arms to the Viet Minh. This left the OSS as the only likely source.

The OSS was close at hand in the southern China sanctuary shared by the Viet Minh with the other Vietnamese revolutionary exiles. Moreover, the OSS was favorably disposed toward Ho's organization because of the businesslike way in which it was run, in contrast with the other Vietnamese exile organizations. Also, Ho must have been informed through his contacts among the French Communists of the OSS willingness to arm resistance forces in France. Hence, Ho sought to exploit the OSS largesse for his own benefit, supporting his requests for arms with vast exaggerations of the numbers of the Viet Minh followers inside Indochina and "historical" examples proving what guerrillas could accomplish in defeating regular armies. <sup>167</sup> To do this, he needed to persuade the OSS that the arms would be used against the Japanese in a "behind-the-lines" resistance in the event of an Allied landing. Hence, the elaborate show of preparation subsequently put on for the benefit of the Deer Mission at Kimlung (Tan Trao).

The first arms deliveries to the Viet Minh in southern China had already been made in 1942 and 1943, although there was some confusion in the minds of the OSS about whether they were going to the Viet Minh or the Dong Minh Hoi. 168 The arms were put to good use by the Viet Minh; Ho's lieutenant Giap had formed the first armed propaganda teams by December 22, 1944, which is taken as the founding date of the Vietnam People's Army. Gordon's network, now renamed G.B.T. for [Laurence] Gordon-[Harry] Bernard-[Frank] Tan, using its French contacts, provided the OSS with valuable intelligence about the effectiveness (or ineffectiveness) of Allied air raids, about POWs, and about enemy force dispositions, thereby permitting extraction of downed American fliers who had received protection from Decoux's government general. 169 G.B.T. was receiving support from the Chinese, the British, and the U.S. Fourteenth Air Force, and later from the OSS and from the Air Ground Aid Section (AGAS), whose work was divided among the rescue of downed pilots, liaison with prisoners of war, and collection of intelligence. In the aftermath of the Meigo action, however, intelligence from French sources virtually dried up. Desperate for an alternative source of intelligence about the Japanese, the OSS turned increasingly to the Viet Minh, who were quite willing to provide it.

The American liaison with G.B.T. was provided by Lieutenant Charles Fenn, who had been working for OSS in China for more than a year. Fenn, hearing that Ho had not only helped a downed pilot escape but was also connected with a large political group, arranged to meet Ho, who was in Kunming.

At a meeting on March 17, Ho discussed with Fenn, in French, problems of intelligence-gathering in Indochina, while at Ho's side Pham Van Dong made notes. Fenn had vaguely heard about the Viet Minh's being Communist and asked Ho about it. Fenn noted in his diary that Ho replied that the French called all Annamites Communists. Fenn told Ho about the work of the OSS and asked him whether he would like to help. Ho said they might be able to help, but that they had no radio operators or equipment. They agreed to meet again. On the basis of this initial contact, Fenn asked Bernard and Tan if something could be worked out to send Ho into Vietnam accompanied by a Chinese radio operator. It was suggested Tan might accompany him also.

At a meeting three days later they again discussed the possibility of Ho's going into Vietnam with a radio operator, and Ho asked to meet General Chennault. Fenn agreed to arrange this on condition Ho did not ask for anything. Fenn did some checking on the background of the Viet Minh and learned that the French did classify it as Communist. He asked AGAS to check with headquarters in Chungking to get the appropriate clearance. The instructions came back "to get a net regardless." Fenn introduced Tan, who "hit it off well" with Ho.<sup>170</sup>

A few days later, on March 29, 1945, Fenn and Bernard escorted Ho to Chennault's office. Fenn recorded that they made an incongruous assemblage, with Chennault in his smart uniform complete with medals, Bernard in khaki shorts and shirt, Fenn in gabardine bush jacket and Marine Corps cap, Ho in cotton tunic and sandals, and Chennault's secretary in her tailored khaki attire. Chennault thanked Ho for the rescue by the Viet Minh of an American flier who had been downed in Cao Bang Province, Lieutenant William Shaw, and his safe return to China. Ho impressed Chennault with his knowledge of the Flying Tigers, gleaned from perusing American magazines in the Office of War Information library in town. There was no mention of the French or politics in Indochina. As the visitors rose to leave, Ho startled Fenn by saying he had a request to make: Would the famed general do him the honor of giving him a photograph of himself? Chennault obliged Ho, and presented him with an eight-by-ten glossy which he inscribed "Yours Sincerely, Claire L. Chennault." This Ho would later display on appropriate occasions.<sup>171</sup>

Shortly thereafter, Colonel Paul Helliwell, head of the OSS in China, authorized his newly arrived deputy for Indochina, Captain Archimedes L. A. Patti, to establish a Viet Minh–based intelligence network. Patti managed to catch up with Ho near Tsing Si before Ho started the difficult walk back to Pac Bo. He emerged from the meeting deeply impressed and thereafter became Ho's staunch supporter.<sup>172</sup> Although it did not take Patti long to discover Ho's Communist affiliation, Ho and his followers were never properly vetted by the OSS at the time, as proper counterintelligence procedures dictated they should have been.<sup>173</sup> The Viet Minh commended themselves to the Fourteenth Air Force in China by their rescue of downed American fliers, but they did not have a monopoly on such actions. Years later in Saigon the names of two Vietnamese who had rescued downed American fliers in 1943 and 1944 were brought to the attention of the Americans. One of them was working for the

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government general at the time, and in August 1945 he was captured by the Viet Minh and later executed. Neither received any recognition of his help to the Allied cause. The OSS men in southern China seem to have been under the impression that only the Viet Minh provided support to the Allies. However, on April 3, the leaders of the Dai Viet party and the Chinese-supported VNQDD met with General Albert Wedemeyer, the U.S. China Theater commander, and General Philip E. Gallagher, who would later serve as the chief American liaison with Chinese troops in Vietnam. The Americans who dealt with independence-minded Vietnamese groups in southern China were blissfully ignorant of Washington's diplomacy; at the San Francisco Conference, which met from April 25 to June 26, Secretary of State Edward R. Stettinius, Jr., informed French Foreign Minister Georges Bidault and Ambassador to the United States Henri Bonnet that the United States recognized French sovereignty over Indochina.

By the end of April, Frank Tan was at Pac Bo, representing AGAS. In May, Tan accompanied Ho on the trek from Pac Bo to Tan Trao, 27 kilometers east of Tuyen Quang, accompanied by a 44-man armed escort and about 25 porter loads of Sten guns, Thompson submachine guns, carbines, ammunition, medicine, and communications gear. In late May, Lieutenant Dan Phelan of AGAS parachuted in and began sending back glowing reports of the Viet Minh. Finally, on July 16, a 6-man team from OSS Special Operations (S.O.) Branch, called the Deer Mission, led by Major Allison K. Thomas parachuted in to the tiny hamlet of Kimlung, later renamed for propaganda purposes Tan Trao (New Tide). One of the team members, Lieutenant René Défourneaux, recalled how astounded he was to be greeted upon landing by parachute in the middle of the Tonkin wilderness by a man, who called himself Van, who was impeccably dressed in a white European-style suit, striped tie, black shoes, and a homburg. He was in actual fact Vo Nguyên Giap, and Défourneaux quickly concluded he was the man in charge of operations at Tan Trao. <sup>176</sup> On reaching their quarters nearby, a group of bamboo and palm-leaf huts, the team was greeted by a banner reading "Welcome to our American Friends!" The Deer Team set up to train and equip Viet Minh recruits to use American arms. The team's activities at Tan Trao were faithfully recorded by Sergeant Aaron Squires, the team photographer, and by Défourneaux, who kept a diary.

In 1972, Senator William Fulbright obtained the declassification of the Deer Mission's reports, which had been secret up to that time, and published them in a Senate Foreign Relations Committee publication.<sup>177</sup> These contemporary documents reveal with unequaled clarity the astounding naiveté of their authors. The Americans were obviously impressed by these gentlemen with their insatiable curiosity about the United States and their penchant for writing letters to high American officials, including President Truman. They viewed them as reliable partners in an independence-forging enterprise highly charged with emotional symbolism. Thomas quickly allowed himself to be persuaded by their hosts to give up his assigned objective of interdicting the road and railway between Hanoi and Lang Son in favor of training Viet Minh recruits in the Cao Bang region, which was more central to Viet Minh preoccupations.<sup>178</sup>

On his second day at Tan Trao, Thomas included the following among the recommendations contained in a report of his arrival: "Forget the Communist Bogy [sic]. VML is not Communist. Stands for freedom and reforms from French harshness."<sup>179</sup> The record of this snap judgment, which conveniently ignored 15 years of party history and Ho's 22 years in the service of the Comintern, heads a bulky file of many such judgments made by American military men, diplomats, and journalists concerning Vietnam. Ho and Giap put off all questions from the Americans regarding their political stance, saying only that "politics would have to wait until after the liberation of the country." It is doubtful that Thomas even knew of the existence of the ICP and its political program. Thomas seems to have been completely unaware that on August 13 at a meeting in Tan Trao presided over by its general secretary, Truong Chinh, the ICP established a five-man Uprising Committee comprising Truong Chinh, Tran Dang Ninh, Giap, Le Thanh Nghi, and Chu Van Tan. Ho told Thomas that his party (meaning the ICP, although of course Ho did not use the name) had 3,000 members in Tonkin, which was about accurate. 180

Ho also spent a great deal of time impressing on Thomas the undesirability of bringing in French military men with the OSS personnel, a request that Thomas radioed back to Kunming, and personally questioned Défourneaux, Thomas's second in command, who spoke fluent French and was using a non-French cover name, in detail about his family background. Défourneaux also observed that in writing Ho used the old Chinese script rather than the Romanized alphabet. Indeed, at about the same time a team led by a French officer was wiped out in an ambush except for a single survivor who made it back into China. The OSS was seeking to take over the G.B.T. network, whose French sources had dried up. Gordon was so disturbed by this development he made a trip to Washington to argue for G.B.T.'s continued independence.

In contrast with their refusal to accept French visitors into their headquarters, the Viet Minh leaders expressed the hope for future good relations with France, which surprised the OSS men, and Ho specifically asked to meet with a high-level representative of the new French authorities. At the time, the highest-ranking French representative in the area was Jean Roger, who went by the name Jean Sainteny. <sup>183</sup> Ho obviously wanted to have the French engaged in official dealings with his movement even before it had established a government. This duality was later explained by Le Duan as the application of "a very clear-sighted political line which was rigid in principle and flexible in strategy." <sup>184</sup>

In the absence for nearly three decades of available documentation, the myth grew that the OSS had furnished only insignificant quantities of arms to the Viet Minh. Colonel Helliwell allowed himself to be quoted referring jokingly to the six Colt .38 pistols he had given Ho. 185 In actual fact, Ho had requested from Fenn before leaving Kunming aboard a small Fourteenth Air Force plane six new Colt .45 automatic pistols in their original wrappings, and since AGAS had none in stock they were obtained from the OSS. Ho took these to Tan Trao where he made presents of them to the leaders of nationalist factions, who drew the intended conclusion that Ho had obtained access to stocks of fresh American arms. 186

But the Colts were small potatoes. Patti subsequently stated that the Deer Mission, with Giap's assistance, had selected 200 Viet Minh guerrillas for training in the use of automatic weapons and demolition equipment. 187 These weapons were certainly supplied by the OSS; aside from a few Sten guns and Bren light machine guns that the British had air-dropped to the retreating French after March 9, which had fallen into Viet Minh hands, the latter were armed with an assortment of old weapons, some of them primitive in the extreme. However, a radioed request by Thomas that the Viet Minh be permitted to disarm the Japanese was rejected by his OSS superiors in China. 188

A large part of the Deer Mission's time at Tan Trao was spent training the Viet Minh in the use of Americans arms. Indeed, as Défourneaux observes, there was little the Americans could teach the Viet Minh about guerrilla tactics that they did not know already, especially as only two members of the Deer Mission, Défourneaux himself and Sergeant William Zielski, had seen action with guerrillas. Thomas had brought along a barracks bag full of U.S. Army field manuals covering every conceivable type of weapon and military circumstance except guerrilla warfare. 189 The arms furnished by the OSS enabled Giap's "armed propaganda teams" to gain control of the mass rally in Hanoi on August 17 and to turn it into a demonstration of support for the Viet Minh, and they also enabled them in short order to assassinate the leaders of the nationalist parties.

Although the Deer Mission's orders were "to interdict Jap lines of Communication in the Hanoi-Ningming area,"190 Ho adroitly steered the mission away from taking as its target the Hanoi-Lang Son road, which was heavily defended by the Japanese, in favor of remaining in the Thai Nguyên area, which had no strategic importance and where the Japanese presence was sparse. This was an area that the Viet Minh controlled to the exclusion of other nationalist groups. 191

Although party documents dated from March to August 1945 contained in a collection published in Hanoi in 1960 are full of references to the Japanese fascists being the main enemy of the Indochinese peoples, the only definitely established offensive action by the Viet Minh against the Japanese prior to the surrender was an attack against a prisoner camp at the hill station of Tam Dao in Cao Bang Province in which 180 French civilians were liberated and enabled to make their way to safety in China. This attack took place on July 15, the day before the Deer Team's arrival at Tan Trao. Two or three hundred Viet Minh guerrillas, armed with their OSS-supplied weapons, killed eight Japanese gendarmes. The Viet Minh suffered three or four wounded in the encounter. 192 The Viet Minh claim to have issued "Military Order No. 1" at Tan Trao at 11 P.M. on August 13, the eve of the Japanese surrender, for attacking the Japanese army, cutting off its routes of retreat, and seizing its weapons. 193

Thomas's reports to his headquarters at Kunming, written to satisfy the need of higher echelons to know the effectiveness of the guerrillas they had armed and trained, obfuscated the issue of Viet Minh actions against the Japanese. They state that "reports were constantly coming in of small clashes with Vietminh troops against Jap convoys. To list all these clashes is impossible since many are not known and what is known the intelligence on it was not always too clear due to the extreme difficulties of communication." The notable failure of the Viet Minh to capture any Japanese material in these "clashes" was explained by their "hit-and-run" nature, which seldom resulted in "wiping out a whole Jap column." <sup>194</sup>

Thomas described in great detail the siege by the Viet Minh of the town of Thai Nguyên from August 20 to 26, after the Japanese surrender. This action resulted from a decision taken at a conference between the Deer Mission and the Viet Minh on August 15 "that in view of Jap surrender it was now the opportune time to wind up the training and hit the road in the general direction of Thai Nguyên and see what could be done in the way of 'action.'"195 In spite of Thomas's attempt to put a serious face on this action, it has more the aspect of a Gilbert and Sullivan operetta, with much firing off of ammunition, exchanges of messages between the assailants and defenders, and scenes of celebration as the surrendered Japanese and the seven Americans present went on a shopping and picture-taking excursion in the town. 196 The OSS men noted that the Viet Minh were more anxious to impress the Vietnamese soldiers serving with the Japanese than with killing Japanese; they feared that the Japanese would turn their arms over to them.<sup>197</sup> In fact, the OSS was receiving reports by the end of August from both French and Vietnamese sources that the Viet Minh were negotiating with the Japanese for the purchase of arms and ammunition. 198 The OSS also received a report from a Thai minister of state that the Japanese were turning over large amounts of weapons to the Vietnamese. 199

While the Americans were training the Viet Minh at a camp situated about three kilometers away, Ho convened an All-Country Conference of the ICP at Tan Trao on August 13–15 to prepare party members for the seizure of power. Delegates from Laos and Thailand also attended. Analyzing the world situation in Marxist-Leninist terms, the resolution passed at the end of this conference farsightedly pointed out that contradictions among Britain, the United States, and France on the one hand, and the Soviet Union on the other, "might lead the British and Americans to make concessions to the French and allow them to come back to Indochina." The situation therefore posed a complex problem of presenting the party line to the masses; but the ICP had a delegate who was up to this task—Tran Huy Lieu, a veteran of French prisons (1929–1934 and September 1939–March 1945) who was active in journalism and politics in the 1930s; in coming days he was to prove a master at propaganda that portrayed who should be regarded as friend and who as enemy.

The ICP had also convened a National People's Congress (Quoc Dan Dai Hoi) immediately following the party meeting at Tan Trao, where a number of invited non-Communist sympathizers were wined (with champagne and Dubonnet hauled up from French stocks in Hanoi) and dined. Ho, although remaining behind the scenes for most of the proceedings, masterminded this affair, which elected a National Liberation Committee to serve as the nucleus of a provisional government. Ho, who was addressed as Ong Cu (Honorable Elder) by the small numbers of ICP members in the know, as much a measure of affection as one of respect, was elected chairman, and Lieu was elected vice chairman.

Pham Van Dong, Nguyên Luong Bang, and Duong Duc Hien joined them as members of the standing committee. The congress also declared the banner of the Viet Minh to be the national flag. Van Cao's march "Tien Quang Ca" ("Advancing Army") became the national anthem.<sup>201</sup>

### GOVERNMENT MOVES

The stage was now set for the final confrontation between the Viet Minh and the Empire of Vietnam and its government. In this, the Japanese surrender was incidental and only hastened the completion of the transfer of remaining powers from the Japanese to the Tran Trong Kim government. The Japanese delayed public broadcast of the news that their emperor had ordered all Japanese troops to surrender over Radio Saigon and Radio Hanoi (Radio Bach Mai). But the Viet Minh at Tuyen Quang learned of it almost immediately through OSS messages and probably from other sources. They were thus in a good position to prepare immediately for the main action, a show of force between themselves and the representatives in Hanoi of Emperor Bao Dai and Prime Minister Tran Trong Kim.

The relationship between the Viet Minh and the Tran Trong Kim government as the action approached its climax was peculiar. In their propaganda the Viet Minh exploited the government's weaknesses and did their best to ensure the failure of the government's programs. However, fearing its popularity, the Viet Minh did not initially call for its overthrow, focusing instead on anti-French and anti-Japanese themes under the general slogan "Doc Lap!" ("Independence!") No one could oppose the idea of independence in the often heady atmosphere of the summer of 1945, and with the Japanese army still very much in evidence and the French threatening to return at any moment, questioning who was responsible for independence seemed like so much nitpicking to many. The idea itself was greeted with joy even in the smallest hamlet. Spontaneous demonstrations occurred in regions that had been most affected by colonial repression, and organized ones were held elsewhere. In the oratory of these demonstrations liberty often became confused with anarchy, and recovery of political, administrative, and economic powers often was mistaken for looting and assassination. For the simplest folk, "Doc Lap!" meant the suppression of taxes, an end to the requisitioning of rice and police interrogations, and the elimination of corrupt mandarins in the pay of the colonial regime. But the confrontation between the Viet Minh and the government could not be long in coming.

All this time, much of the government's activity was of a pedestrian nature and had little to do with the great issues of the day. Decrees were being prepared, correspondence was being exchanged, measures for this and that were being decided upon. By the beginning of August, however, information coming in to Hue indicated a pattern of growing unrest and challenges to existing authority in many parts of the country. Local officials were reporting illegal meetings and demonstrations, refusals to pay taxes, detentions of government employees, and armed assaults.

Kim returned to Hue from his negotiations with Tsuchihashi in Hanoi believing that the situation was well in hand. However, in the recollections of those present, things began to go wrong at a cabinet session that opened on August 5 when a dispute arose with Chuong over the concessions wrested from the Japanese. As has been shown, Chuong had allowed the negotiations over territorial unification to drag on. Kim writes in his memoirs that he revealed a letter from a senior Japanese officer expressing no confidence in Chuong, causing Chuong to leave the room and Kim to adjourn the meeting briefly.

The next topic to produce controversy was the government's representation at the ceremony turning back Nam Bo to the Vietnamese. Kim insisted on a delegation of four ministers headed by himself. Interior Minister Tran Dinh Nam, however, objected that the reports coming in of the breakdown of law and order elsewhere made Kim's journey to Saigon unwise. Nam was in receipt of requests for instructions from provincial mandarins about whether to order Civil Guard units to open fire on Viet Minh bands who were disarming other guardsmen and tying up village chiefs. Then Economics Minister Ho Ta Khanh demanded that the cabinet discuss immediately the popular unrest and make contact with the Viet Minh. When this discussion did not occur, Khanh tendered his resignation. He was followed on August 7 by Nam and Supply Minister Thi. Youth Minister Phan An and Finance Minister Vu Van Hien then moved for resignation of the entire cabinet, a resolution apparently approved over Kim's objections.

Kim then moved decisively to obtain Bao Dai's authorization to form a new cabinet, cabled Tsuchihashi that he would not be able to travel to Saigon, and designated Nguyên Van Sam, former president of the Journalists' Syndicate, as imperial delegate for Nam Bo. (In the event, Sam did not arrive in Saigon until August 19.) Kim also sought a replacement for Phan Ke Toai as imperial delegate in Bac Bo, a move that jeopardized Toai's continued loyalty to his emperor, for Toai had been in secret contact with the Viet Minh through a member of the Vietnam Democratic Party.<sup>202</sup>

On August 12, Kim, at Bao Dai's instruction, asked the old cabinet to continue on a caretaker basis; the ministers all agreed to do so. Two days later, the cabinet issued a statement saying: "Responding to the confidence of His Majesty the Emperor, our entire cabinet is firmly resolved not to retire no matter what difficulties confront us, in order that we may carry out our mission of prosecuting the labor of national reconstruction and the consolidation of the independence of our country." <sup>203</sup> Kim asked Bao Dai to issue an imperial order abrogating the treaties of 1862 and 1874 with France.

On Wednesday morning, August 15, the Domei press agency authorized Radio Saigon and Radio Bach Mai, as well as the Vietnamese press, to announce Emperor Hirohito's rescript ordering all Japanese troops to lay down their arms. Shortly before noon, Résident Supérieur Nishimura handed over to Phan Ke Toai the last attributes of sovereignty of Vietnam in the form of the general services, including control of the Civil Guard, the police, and the radio, which until then had been in the hands of Governor General Tsuchihashi. At the same

time, in Hue, Ambassador Yokoyama announced the reattachment of Nam Bo to the crown of His Majesty Bao Dai. In Saigon, Minoda told journalists he was ready to hand over his powers as governor to the delegate of His Majesty Bao Dai. Radio Saigon broadcast an unusually conciliatory appeal in Vietnamese calling for all Vietnamese patriots to reassure their French friends that a newly independent Vietnam, under Bao Dai, would be generous toward them. The speaker hoped that Bao Dai would install a constitutional monarchy and preside over a government of national union. Tsuchihashi also ordered the Japanese representatives in Phnom Penh and Vientiane to hand over all their powers to the rulers of Cambodia and Laos.

On August 14, Kim's government issued a declaration formally integrating Nam Ky with the rest of Vietnam and unilaterally abrogating the existing treaties by which the Hue court recognized French sovereignty over Cochinchina. On the same day, in an obviously coordinated action, a number of independent political groups met in Saigon in the presence of Japanese officials to establish the United National Front (Mat Tran Quoc Gia Thong Nhut; UNF), designed to bring together all groups opposed to return of the French. The members of the front included the Vanguard Youth, led by Dr. Pham Ngoc Thach; Professor Ho Van Nga's Vietnam National Independence Party (Viet Nam Quoc Gia Doc Lap Dang), which had been founded in the early days of 1945; the Cao Dai; the Hoa Hao; the Phuc Quoc; the Trotskyists; and several unions of workers and civil servants. The object of the meeting and of the UNF was to form a government for Cochinchina under the administration of Hue.

The mass character of the Vanguard Youth, in particular, was demonstrated by an impressive ceremony in Saigon where up to 50,000 young men knelt to swear loyalty to the nation, sing patriotic songs, and march around the field in the view of Japanese officials. On August 16, the Japanese began to transfer power to the executive body of the United National Front. These developments gave Kim's government, for the first time since March, the assurance of political backing from organizations with demonstrated political support. <sup>207</sup> On August 16, Kim issued another statement asserting the intention of Vietnam to defend its independence and calling for national unity.

The same day (August 16), a Japanese officer drove from Saigon to Loc Ninh to inform Decoux of the war's end, and even offered the admiral two bottles of champagne. Decoux declined the champagne but gave the captain a letter addressed to Tsuchihashi proposing his immediate return to authority at the Norodom Palace and the release of all other French personnel to assist him in maintaining order pending arrival of Allied forces. He also enclosed a message for transmission to the French government that informed Paris of these planned actions. The Japanese complied with Decoux's request, who received a reply on August 23 to await the arrival of new chiefs. Marshal Terauchi was soon on notice from Lord Mountbatten, who was responsible for receiving the Japanese surrender in southern Indochina, to maintain the status quo, a provision that would have made any further Japanese initiative unlawful. Decoux remained a prisoner until the arrival of the Allies.

### THE COUP D'ETAT OF AUGUST 19, 1945

With the pressure from the Viet Minh growing hourly in the north, however, Kim announced plans for regional "committees of national salvation." Then he and Bao Dai's office director, Pham Khac Hoe, informed the *kham sai* in Bac Bo by cable that he was to be assisted by a four-person political committee. Later on August 18, by imperial edict, Phan Ke Toai was replaced as *kham sai* by Nguyên Xuan Chu, one of the members of the political committee. Toai, however, had already resigned the previous evening following the takeover by the Viet Minh of a mass meeting of the General Association of Civil Servants (Cong Chuc Tong Hoi).

This association had originally been formed with the aim of celebrating independence and territorial unification. An eyewitness remembers going to the opera house that day to attend a meeting of city officials: "Suddenly, in the midst of this meeting, the microphone was seized by a group of men toting pistols. They took turns making speeches announcing the end of the reign of Emperor Bao Dai and the establishment of a new regime. They were in fact cadres of the Viet Minh." <sup>209</sup> The whole show had been carefully planned the previous day by the Viet Minh's Hanoi Revolutionary Military Committee. <sup>210</sup> Viet Minh self-defense teams had smuggled Viet Minh flags into the meeting hall and they now unfurled them and waved them. The police did not intervene. Association leaders called in vain for order to be restored. A Viet Minh armed team seized the podium and cut down the government flag. Immediately thereafter, another team high on the balustrade of the opera house unrolled a large Viet Minh flag down the front of the building.

The Japanese-authorized demonstration in the square facing the opera house on August 17 was attended by about 20,000 persons. An orator from the Vietnam Democratic Party urged the crowd to participate in the "general insurrection," but carefully avoided any call for violence against either the Japanese or Kim's government. Other speeches were read and Van Cao's "Tien Quan Ca" ("Advancing Army"), soon to become the national anthem of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV), was sung. The crowd then began a peaceful march through the streets of Hanoi, led by Viet Minh cadres shouting slogans and waving flags.

Meanwhile, meeting across the Lake of the Returned Sword for the first time, a long-planned National Consultative Congress, Northern Branch (Hoi Nghi Tu Van Quoc Gia, Bac Chi Bo), heard a keynote address by Phan Ke Toai, after which he dropped out of sight until his resignation that same evening was made known. <sup>211</sup> It appears that he had maintained close touch with the Viet Minh all along, and following his resignation he appeared under Viet Minh escort at meetings between the Viet Minh and the Japanese to arrange for Japanese passivity in the events of their takeover. It must have been Viet Minh agents who suggested to him the device of the National Consultative Congress, a device that became one of the party's stock devices to prepare the way for the naming of a new government. (The device was used in June 1969 to form the Provisional Revolutionary Government of South Vietnam, and again in De-

cember 1975 to form the government of the Lao People's Democratic Republic.) In the minds of the Confucianists at Hue, however, Toai's surrender of power, not to the emperor who had appointed him, but to an armed political party, was a political sin, as was a resignation completed without first obtaining the consent of the court.

With this success under its belt, the ICP's Northern Regional Committee met at Ha Dong, 10 kilometers from Hanoi, and decided that same evening to stage the final takeover of power on Sunday, August 19, thereby allowing one day for last-minute preparations. On August 18, the Viet Minh's Revolutionary Military Committee sent an ultimatum to the main Civil Guard base ordering it to "surrender to the revolution." Meeting for its second day, the National Consultative Congress summoned the Civil Guard commander, Captain Vu Van Thu, for urgent consultations, only to be told that he was "too busy." <sup>212</sup>

Seeking an accommodation with the Viet Minh, minister of education Han and two other senior government officials went to the Revolutionary Military Committee's new headquarters in downtown Hanoi and proposed that the Viet Minh take control outside Hanoi; the royal government would retain control inside the city, and together they would meet incoming Allied representatives. The Viet Minh flatly rejected this coalition offer.<sup>213</sup> Several hours later, 3,000 workers from the Stai factory, the Aviat auto repair facility, and other enterprises arrived to demonstrate in front of the *kham sai*'s palace, loudly denouncing the "puppet regime." That same day, the Kempetai released all remaining political prisoners.

The critical confrontation in Hanoi occurred on Sunday, August 19. The opposing sides were nearly equally matched. The Viet Minh counted nearly 800 self-defense unit members under their direct control, which were formed into 10 companies with a motley assortment of weapons. Every day brought new arrivals from the countryside. Moreover, the Viet Minh also controlled all radio and most press organs, a major advantage. The most significant advantage on the Viet Minh side, however, was the ICP's tight control over developments and its will to order them put to good use by a highly disciplined organization. On the government side were 1,500 members of the Civil Guard with better armament. However, the Civil Guards, taking their cue from the royal government's attempts to seek an accommodation, were unwilling to use force against the Viet Minh.

On August 19, Giap's People's Liberation Army troops began arriving in the city, and they turned the balance of forces decisively in the Viet Minh's favor should there be any need for armed force. Dang Duc Khoi, a member of the Viet Minh at the time, recalls that the soldiers collected empty American cigarette packs and distributed them with instructions to refill them with Vietnamese cigarettes and flaunt them in public when they got to Hanoi. It was all part of the game.<sup>214</sup> Watched by American members of the OSS mission in Hanoi in the following days, Giap's troops staged a massive show of force by marching six abreast on a circular route through the city by which they repeatedly passed the same fixed point.

August 19 dawned sunny and breezy, unlike the heavy clouds and torpid humidity of the preceding few days. In the early hours tens of thousands of villagers began marching toward the city to the sound of drums, cymbals, and horns. A number of self-defense units formed up at their work sites or schools and marched toward the opera house shouting slogans like "Down with the puppet Tran Trong Kim regime!" and "Long live Viet Nam!" Following a mass meeting in front of the opera house that gathered an estimated 200,000 persons, bands of demonstrators well guided by armed Viet Minh militia occupied all major public buildings. At the kham sai's palace, the crowd confronted some 200 Civil Guards behind the fence and intimidated them into laying down their rifles. An ICP leader then used the palace's telephone switchboard to call mandarins in a number of provinces to inform them of the Viet Minh takeover and order them to surrender. As a Japanese report put it, "From noon on, the streets were crowded with moving automobiles bedecked with party flags. Moreover, party members split into several groups, occupied the principal government offices and hoisted their party flags over them. Thus . . . they carried out a sudden coup d'état. The army at first felt that we should strike a blow against them. . . . The situation is such that we entertain doubts about the future of the Empire of Annam."215 The Japanese, however, made it clear to the Viet Minh that they were not to try to take over the Bank of Indochina.

The following day, Kim abandoned his efforts to reconstitute a cabinet. Issuing a statement actually drafted four days earlier, he claimed success in unifying the country and sustaining its administrative capabilities. "Before history, the mission of our cabinet is now complete," he said. He then pleaded for political unity, pointing out that the enemy was "looking for divisions." <sup>216</sup>

The southern nationalists were thwarted in an attempt to consult Hue directly on the events unfolding in the south as well as elsewhere in Vietnam. A delegation consisting of Ngô Dinh Diem, Tran Van An, and Vu Dinh Dy left Saigon on August 19 bound for Hue but were turned back at a barricade in Nha Trang. Falling into the hands of the Viet Minh in Tuy Hoa, Diem was manhandled and dragged north to Tuyen Quang, where he was exposed to the perils of hunger and illness in the mountains.

The Viet Minh, who had been excluded from the UNF, however, were much less well organized in Saigon than they were in Hanoi, and the balance of power remained in doubt for longer. When negotiations were opened between the UNF and the Viet Minh, the latter adroitly used their dominance in the north to argue that only a unified nationalist movement under their direction was capable of dealing with the Allies and thereby securing Vietnamese independence. The argument that the UNF, with its Japanese connections, was tarnished and would be disregarded by the Allies proved particularly effective in neutralizing the Cao Dai, who had been deeply involved in collaboration with the Japanese. The Viet Minh also sought, unsuccessfully, to persuade the other groups to disarm. At that time, the Vietnamese had learned that the British would be arriving in Vietnam to receive the Japanese surrender south of the 16th parallel, as the Chinese were to do in the north.

Behind the British, however, hovered the French. At a time when they sensed the need to demonstrate solidarity in the face of an external threat, the Vietnamese on the morning of August 21 thronged to the Boulevard Norodom, which they filled from the Botanic Garden to the Norodom Palace, and then marched peacefully through Saigon. It was the first time since 1926 that the city, which had witnessed the performances carefully orchestrated by the commissioner of youth and sports under Decoux, had seen anything so spontaneous. Contingents from the Cao Dai, the VNIP, and the Vanguard Youth all marched under the imperial flag, while the Hoa Hao held their own purple banners and the Trotskyists their revolutionary flags. They chanted: "Long Live Vietnamese Independence!" and "Down with French Imperialism!" 217

The Viet Minh made its appearance in Saigon that same evening. Cars with loudspeakers toured the city: "All behind the Viet Minh!" ("Ung ho Viet Minh!") On August 22, all the member groups of the UNF came to a meeting except Pham Ngoc Thach. Thach and Tran Van Giau had gone to see Terauchi and told him that his group intended to seize power. It is unclear whether he was speaking on behalf of the Vanguard Youth or the Viet Minh, but later that day Thach announced that the Vanguard Youth was withdrawing from the UNF and joining the Viet Minh. According to Giau's account, he asked Terauchi to order his troops to stay calm. "You have been defeated by the whites, now we shall continue your struggle. Please hand over to us the arms you have taken from the French." In return, Giau promised that no harm would come to the Japanese. 218

The defection of its largest mass organization was sorely felt by the UNF. The following day, Ho Van Nga opened discussions with the Viet Minh at the Vanguard Youth headquarters at 14 Boulevard Charner. The newspaper Hung Viet of August 24 published a communiqué stating that following negotiations between the UNF and Viet Minh representatives it had been decided to cooperate with three objectives in view: total independence of Vietnam, establishment of a democratic republic, and all power to the Viet Minh. The UNF adhered to the Viet Minh and would participate in a mass rally on Saturday, August 25, it added. After having tested for any adverse action by the Japanese by taking over the provincial headquarters at Tan An from the Japanese-appointed officials on the night of August 22, Viet Minh supporters proceeded to take over government buildings in Saigon on the night of August 24, following the same tactic that had been followed in Hanoi on August 19. The Norodom Palace, the Banque de l'Indochine, the port, the airport, and the arsenal were left temporarily under Japanese control. When civil servants went to work on the morning of August 25, they found their offices under the direction of new masters. When the former Japanese governor, Minoda, paid a visit to the La Grandière Palace that morning, he found himself in the presence of armed Vanguard Youth leaders who informed him that the kham sai was being held in custody. During the coup d'état, Nguyên Van Sam had simply been escorted to his room, and the door was locked from the outside. 219 In a matter of two days, the traditional authorities in the countryside were also replaced by people's committees; in most places, this was the work of the Vanguard Youth, now calling itself Viet Minh.

In the predawn darkness of August 25, Vietnamese from Saigon and from the suburbs of Gia Dinh, Go Vap, Thi Nghe, and Khanh Hoi and from places farther away such as Ba Diem, Hoc Mon, Duc Hoa, and Cho Dem gathered in front of the city hall, where a rostrum designed by the architect and ICP member Huynh Tan Phat stood bearing the names of the new provisional, de facto government, called the Provisional Executive Committee of Nam Bo (Uy Ban Hanh Chanh Lam Thoi Nam Bo, PEC). Here, Tran Van Giau gave the main speech, a speech that appealed to nationalist sentiment and sounded much like the rhetoric of the UNF. Police powers were held by Duong Bach Mai, who was to lose no time in organizing the repression of nationalist leaders to follow shortly afterward. That evening, the PEC moved into the La Grandière Palace. On August 26, Sam submitted his resignation as *kham sai* to Hue in response to the announcement that Bao Dai would abdicate. Thereafter, the UNF was left to its own devices.

### BAO DAI'S ABDICATION

Bao Dai, for his part, showed considerable decisiveness at this critical juncture, taking initiatives on both foreign and domestic fronts. No doubt stung, as were many of his compatriots, by the arrogance of de Gaulle's announcement on August 17 of nominations of new men for the posts of commander of the French Expeditionary Corps and high commissioner for Indochina, and at long last freed of Japanese tutelage, Bao Dai on August 18 sent an eloquent message to the French people and de Gaulle in which he pointed to the latter's failure to understand the situation in Indochina and warned that the Vietnamese were prepared to fight to defend their newly acquired independence.

I address myself to the people of France, to the country of my youth. I address myself as well to its chief and liberator, and I wish to speak as a friend rather than as Chief of State.

You have suffered too much during four deadly years not to understand that the Vietnamese people, who have a history of 20 centuries and an often glorious past, no longer desire and can no longer endure any foreign domination or government.

You would understand still better if you could see what is happening here, if you could feel the will for independence which has been smoldering in the hearts of all and which no human force can hold in check any longer. Even if you were to come to re-establish French government here it would not be obeyed: each village would be a nest of resistance, each former collaborator an enemy, and your officials and your colonists themselves would ask to leave that unbreathable atmosphere.

I beg you to understand that the only means of safeguarding French interests and the spiritual influence of France in Indochina is to recognize unreservedly the independence of Vietnam and to renounce any idea of re-establishing French sovereignty or French administration here in any form.<sup>220</sup>

Authorship of this message, which was in a real sense a reaffirmation of the break in relations of March 11, was later claimed by Bao Dai's foreign minister,

Tran Van Chuong.<sup>221</sup> If so, it was Chuong's signal and only known contribution to Bao Dai's position as ruler of an independent empire. Bao Dai was saying, in effect, that nothing could be expected from France and that Vietnam would have to work out its own salvation. De Gaulle never answered the message, which only increases its significance in throwing light on the situation. Bao Dai also addressed messages to President Truman and named other recipients to be Britain, China, and the Soviet Union.

Without mentioning any political party by name, the emperor now put himself on the side of all those who were organizing to preserve Vietnam's independence. In a proclamation issued on August 20 (but actually drafted three days earlier), he acknowledged Japan's help to Vietnam in regaining its independence, indicated his desire for a new cabinet, and, most important, stated a personal willingness if necessary to sacrifice his position. The statement expressed a readiness to attract Viet Minh ministers and a determination to place national defense above all. It was a statement reflecting the Confucianist concept: let the people be appropriately instructed, let the ruler set the proper example, and the desired orderly result should be forthcoming.<sup>222</sup>

Bao Dai's proclamation of August 20 was broadcast on the afternoon of the following day by the radio station in Hue. On August 22, however, the proclamation was re-broadcast and telegraphed to subordinate government echelons, this time containing an additional specific invitation to the Viet Minh to form a new cabinet.<sup>223</sup> The Viet Minh, in fact, were already present in Hue, if not in large numbers, at least at the key positions of power in the city.

The Viet Minh had established the usual revolutionary committees in the region. The ICP committee for Thua Thien Province established an uprising committee on August 15.<sup>224</sup> Pham Khac Hoe, Bao Dai's private secretary, urged on by Viet Minh adherents, was attempting to convince the emperor to abdicate in early August, and on the morning of August 19 briefed Bao Dai about the increasingly evident unrest in and around Hue.<sup>225</sup> By August 17, Bao Dai's minister of youth, Phan Anh, had reached an understanding with the Viet Minh about avoiding youth group confrontations.<sup>226</sup> Three representatives of the ICP central committee, the veteran hard-liner Hô Tung Mau, Nguyên Duy Trinh, and To Huu, arrived in Thua Thien on the morning of August 20 with orders to guide the takeover of Hue.<sup>227</sup> Nguyên Chi Thanh also arrived in Hue about this time from Tan Trao with responsibility for rebuilding the ICP's Trung Bo committee.<sup>228</sup> By August 22, groups of demonstrators, some of them armed, had taken control of several government installations, raised the Viet Minh flag, and were attempting to share guard responsibilities with the Japanese.<sup>229</sup>

On August 22, after rejecting offers from local Japanese garrison commanders to defend the Kien Trung Palace as likely to lead to the spilling of blood, Bao Dai received the Poste, Télégraphe et Téléphone (PTT) director who had come to deliver a telegram from a "committee of patriots" in Hanoi respectfully urging the emperor to remit his powers as a historic act in support of national independence. The telegram contained the text of a resolution passed the previous day at a meeting of the General Association of Students at the University of Hanoi. The resolution proclaimed the Viet Minh takeover in

Bac Bo as an accomplished fact, and said "all parties" hope the Viet Minh will take over in Trung Bo and Nam Bo. It requested the abdication of "the Emperor of Annam," the establishment of a republican regime, and the transfer of power to "a provisional government formed by the Viet Minh."<sup>230</sup>

On the following morning, Bao Dai, feeling very isolated, unable to locate any ministers in the palace and upset that some youths had replaced the royal banner on the main flagpole with the Viet Minh flag unopposed by the palace guards nearby, accepted the fact that his government was no longer effective. He thereupon decided to cable the "committee of patriots" his willingness to transfer power to someone in authority if they came to Hue.<sup>231</sup> His main concern at this juncture was to avoid the violence that he saw following any show of resistance on his part to the will of the people. His cable crossed one sent by the Northern Region Revolutionary People's Committee (Viet Minh) that had a distinctly threatening tone:

A provisional revolutionary people's government has been established with Ho Chi Minh as chairman. Request Your Majesty abdicate immediately in order to consolidate and unify the independence of Vietnam.<sup>232</sup>

Tran Trong Kim, on realizing there were few left in Hue to defend the royal palace, advised Bao Dai to abdicate quickly, citing the examples of Louis XVI and Czar Nicholas II. "We lack strength, the Viet Minh possess popular support, let them take responsibility for protecting national independence."

At 12:25 P.M. on August 23, Bao Dai presided over his last cabinet meeting, convened hastily to respond to an ultimatum received from the Viet Minh and discuss the abdication edict. The participants (Kim, Chuong, Nam, Trinh Dinh Thao, Vu Van Hien and Nguyên Huu Thi—their earlier collective resignation being ignored) agreed to accept the Viet Minh terms, which included the relinquishing of all weapons and ammunition in the palace, notification to the Japanese that all powers had been transferred to the revolutionaries, and orders to all provincial mandarins to turn over their responsibilities to local representatives of the Viet Minh.<sup>234</sup>

Bao Dai's rescript of abdication was dated August 25.<sup>235</sup> The next day it was posted outside the palace, as well as cabled to Hanoi, Saigon, and every province of central Vietnam.

At a public ceremony on August 30, Bao Dai turned over the symbols of empire, consisting of a golden seal and a golden sword with a ruby-encrusted handle, to a delegation comprising Tran Huy Lieu and Nguyên Luong Bang of the ICP and Cu Huy Can of the Vietnam Democratic Party, who had come from Hanoi to receive them. Lieu, in a collective work consisting mainly of speeches published by the government shortly after the events, records only the most pedestrian exchanges with Bao Dai but notes the deep emotion of many who witnessed the ceremony.<sup>236</sup>

The atmosphere leading up to the abdication was sufficiently intimidating that Kim, who as a professor of history had no personal ambition other than to

serve his country and who would have been amenable to an orderly, legitimate transfer of power,<sup>237</sup> sought out Yokoyama for temporary protection. However, no member of Kim's government came to harm in the immediate aftermath of Bao Dai's abdication. One, Phan Anh, went on to serve in the DRV government. The reason for this leniency, which contrasts so markedly with that meted out to opposition figures in the north, may lie in the fact that Lieu had been released from prison at Son La under the Kim government's amnesty orders.

### **Looking Back**

The sudden Japanese sweep of the French Indochina administration in the Meigo operation was one of those blows of fate, like Emperor Tu Duc's failure to leave any children, the consequence of which was to plunge the imperial court in Hue into a period of chaos and weakness before the French. In the case of the Meigo operation, the consequence was to deprive the G.B.T. network of its French informants, who had been relied upon by the Americans in China, and lead to the Americans' dealing with the Viet Minh, an unknown quantity. The isolation of the imperial government in Hue from the French and, more important, from the Americans created a fault line. The Viet Minh, using their newly acquired American connection, marched into Hanoi and in short order swept aside the empire and the non-Communist nationalists.

The transition from Bao Dai to the DRV poses a historiographic problem of fundamental importance. The alteration of Bao Dai's proclamation so as to add the specific invitation to the Viet Minh to form a cabinet draws attention to this problem. How should this transition be interpreted?

The sequence of events, the fact that the Viet Minh (and behind them the ICP) were well organized ahead of the abdication, and the selective documentation available all suggest that the Viet Minh may have been something less than the beneficiaries of legality bestowed by an emperor entirely acting as a free agent. In his own memoirs, Bao Dai makes a point of his having abdicated on his own initiative but does not mention specifically having chosen the Viet Minh as his successors as the holders of power, as mentioned in his abdication rescript. Admittedly, all memoirs are self-serving and should not be relied upon to the exclusion of other sources.

Given the fact that the Viet Minh had already infiltrated Hue, set up the usual revolutionary committees manned by their armed supporters, and were in every sense a presence to be dealt with (Stein Tønnesson writes of "a sort of siege" in Hue<sup>238</sup>), Bao Dai's words and intentions must be treated with the circumspection demanded by serious historical research. The interpretation of the transition by historians ranges from Bernard B. Fall's statement that the Viet Minh sent a mission to Hue "to demand Bao-Dai's abdication and the surrender of the imperial seal"<sup>239</sup> to Marr's detailed account of events, based on contemporaneous newspaper accounts, some Vietnamese documents in the French archives, and later memoirs, which makes it seem that Bao Dai welcomed the Viet Minh delegation with the intention aforethought of surrendering power to them.<sup>240</sup> Marr writes that "Bao Dai explicitly conceded authority to the government of the

Democratic Republic of Vietnam without any negotiation of terms, and asserted that he would be happy to 'be a free citizen in an independent country.'"<sup>241</sup>

Philippe Devillers, who was in Vietnam in 1945 and 1946 and was in a position to talk with the principal actors shortly after the events, including those in Hue, makes the statement that "on August 22 Bao Dai decided to charge the Viet Minh with forming a new government to replace the cabinet of Tran Trong Kim, which had resigned *en bloc.*"<sup>242</sup> He then goes on to say that upon receipt of the telegram from Hanoi, Bao Dai "asked the Viet Minh leaders to come to Hue as soon as possible for the ceremony of transfer of power."<sup>243</sup> He then says that the transfer of power to the Viet Minh delegation consisting of Tran Huy Lieu and Cu Huy Can took place on the same day as his abdication, August 25. In other words, Devillers makes no mention of the five-day gap between Bao Dai's abdication and the actual ceremonial transfer of power. It is likely that Devillers's version derives from contacts with the Viet Minh that he claims to have had in Hue in March and April 1946.<sup>244</sup>

Ellen J. Hammer, whose account was published in 1954, concludes that "with the Emperor ready to resign of his own free will, the continuity between the old regime and the new seemed assured," and cites at length Tran Huy Lieu's published account.<sup>245</sup> Tønnesson gives much the same account.<sup>246</sup> Finally, two Vietnamese historians are equally categoric. Le Thanh Khoi treats the passage of sovereignty as having occurred naturally, by linking Bao Dai's abdication to his acceptance of the position of supreme adviser to the new regime.<sup>247</sup> Huynh Kim Khanh, who later published a scholarly history of the Vietnamese Communist Party, wrote in 1971 that Bao Dai "abdicated formally in favor of the revolutionary Provisional Government."248 What emerges from all the above accounts, foreign and Vietnamese, is that Bao Dai's abdication was followed seamlessly by the transition to the DRV regime. As the old adage holds that history is written by the victors, it is not surprising that the version of the losers, the nationalists, has been largely forgotten. The VNQDD historian Nguyên Tuong Bach writes that the events in Hanoi in August 1945 constituted a coup d'état rather than a revolution.249

That Bao Dai stated in his abdication rescript he was relinquishing authority to a or the democratic republic seems to be established. Bruce Lockhart translates the version of the rescript in Kim's memoir as follows: "We are determined to abdicate to give up the power of governing the citizens *to a democratic republic*." But the historian is bound to ask, What did these words mean? To a republic, so much was known; the dynasty was at an end, and its successor would be a republic, not another monarchy. To a democratic republic, likewise; the widespread enthusiasm for independence and a new "people's" government was undeniable.

On August 25, the composition of the new republican and democratic government of the Viet Minh slogans had not yet been decided, a fact that can easily be forgotten looking back on these events half a century later and knowing that the DRV came into existence on September 2, 1945. Bao Dai can have had only the vaguest notion of what the republican and democratic government

would look like. A number of competing nationalist groups, including members of the Dai Viet Quoc Gia Lien Minh (Greater Vietnam National Alliance), were attempting to establish a government in Hanoi, after all.<sup>251</sup> But Bao Dai, reflecting the widespread impression among his fellow citizens that the Americans were backing the Viet Minh, was inclined to be favorably disposed toward the Viet Minh claim to govern at a moment when he was looking for foreign support against a threatened French return. The fact remains that even when informed that the leader of the Viet Minh was someone who went by the pseudonym Ho Chi Minh, he did not know the identity of that person.<sup>252</sup>

Five days after his abdication was announced, Bao Dai handed the imperial seal and golden sword to the delegation sent from Hanoi to accept them. This was done at a public ceremony in front of the Zenith gate with the attendance of thousands, a re-enactment of the lowering of the imperial flag and the raising of the Viet Minh flag, and a 21-gun salute. Bao Dai read his abdication rescript. The only accounts of this stage-managed event that we have are partisan ones.

Thus, the question of whether Bao Dai knowingly and of his own free will transferred his undisputed authority as emperor to Ho Chi Minh's government of the DRV, or whether the latter stage-managed events to make it seem to those who followed that such a voluntary transfer had occurred, would seem to be an open one. Huynh Kim Khanh, in the provocative title of his 1971 article on the August Revolution, did not, after all, provide a reinterpretation but merely followed the prevailing interpretation of events uncritically. Yet, in view of the numerous questions remaining, a reinterpretation is surely in order.

In my view, due weight must be given to Bao Dai's lifelong insistence that in abdicating and becoming a private citizen he acted of his own free will. By doing so, was it his intention to ensure that later interpreters of these events understood that in the public ceremony of August 30 in Hue arranged by the Viet Minh to display the transition, he, as a private citizen, had no longer any power to transfer to the new government? He had acted in a manner so as neither to allow himself to be coerced into sanctioning the legality of the new regime nor to appear to refuse its request for his participation, which would have been unpatriotic and played into the hands of the French. As will appear evident elsewhere in this book, it is a mistake for historians to dismiss Bao Dai as a fun-loving playboy; he was, in his own way, an extremely shrewd politician. And in these events he was dealing with another shrewd politician. Ho in his capacity as foreign minister lost little time in sending the text of Bao Dai's abdication rescript to American Secretary of State James Byrnes, asking for recognition of his government.<sup>253</sup>

The fact that several of the individuals who are known to have had a key role in the events in Hue in August later received ministerial appointments in DRV governments should also be accorded due significance. These include Phan Anh, Tran Huy Lieu, and Cu Huy Can of the delegation present at the August 30 ceremony, and Nguyên Duy Trinh. Another individual who was on the scene, Nguyên Chi Thanh, one of the Viet Minh leaders Devillers interviewed in Hue in March and April 1946, rose to a position of trust in the party. Throughout its history, the party has used offices of this kind to reward those who have rendered it meritorious service.

# 3. The Rise of Nationalist Feeling and the Suppression of the Nationalists

August 30, 1945-December 1946

## The August Revolution in Vietnam and Its Repercussions

Although the declaration of independence of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam read by Ho Chi Minh on September 2, 1945, with its peculiar opening plagiarisms from Thomas Jefferson's words of 1776, contained numerous references to "French imperialism," it did not once mention either Bao Dai or Tran Trong Kim. The substance of the new relationship between Vietnam and France outlined by Ho was merely a repetition of what Bao Dai had declared several weeks earlier, as David Marr has noted.¹ In fact, Ho's text offers a telling example of the ability of the Vietnamese Communists to rewrite history almost as soon as it happens for the advancement of their political purposes, an ability they have not lost today.

Ho's declaration did no more than reflect the popular mood that had been building up since March 9. Contemporary accounts show that all Vietnamese had been genuinely shocked by the action of the Japanese in reducing the French to powerlessness. They had then seen Vietnamese rise to the highest positions in the Tran Trong Kim government. Socially as well as politically, the Vietnamese elite and notables reached the apex of society, where the French had been used to sitting for eight decades. Culturally, the government's projects stimulated a break from the French-patronized set of values. The outward manifestation of these changes came in the destruction of statues of Frenchmen in the parks; the renaming of regions, cities, and streets; and the ardent anti-French tone in publications and newspapers and on the radio. This seemed to be a true revolution.

The reality on August 19 was that there were no French officials or soldiers to contest the entry of armed Viet Minh agents into Hanoi and the takeover of public buildings on that day. They were locked up in the citadel, guarded by Japanese soldiers; or if they were technicians, they were kept on in the service of the Japanese, under equally tight surveillance. Those few still at liberty in the

countryside, mainly priests and missionaries, often met with violent ends at the hands of armed gangs in this period.<sup>2</sup> Nor were there any French officials or soldiers in a position to oppose the takeovers by the Viet Minh from the nationalists in authority in Hue or Saigon. During the August Revolution the French imperialists were mainly present in the propaganda of the revolutionaries.

On the eve of the Viet Minh seizure of power, the French government had sent no instructions to its chief French representative in China, the banker Jean Roger, known by the code name Sainteny. As his government also maintained a complete reticence with respect to Bao Dai and Kim's government, Sainteny was at a loss as to how to deal with the overtures from the Viet Minh, and made up his own policy as he went along—which was "in short, manage on your own"3—which consisted of dealing with the people with whom he had been in contact in China and who seemed to him to be the best organized and most effective, the Viet Minh.<sup>4</sup> In a message dated August 13, he suggested to his superiors in Calcutta that the French government issue a statement "affirming the desire to emancipate Indochina on the basis of the details we have been discussing in the last few days. This statement should imply that an agreement has been reached with a Vietnamese government having our approval, and this prior to August 9.5 If you agree [with this plan], I think I can get the Vietnamese delegate to accept this subterfuge." On August 13, there was only one Vietnamese government that could claim sovereignty over Vietnam. In the statement he drafted with his colleagues (still without instructions from Paris) to this end, Sainteny took note of the Viet Minh proposals but did not speak of a Vietnamese government and limited himself to general principles of French policy (intention to hold elections for an Assembly, etc.).<sup>7</sup>

Ho continued to manifest his interest in dealing with Sainteny when the latter finally arrived in Hanoi from Kunming on August 22 in an American plane. By then, of course, the rules of the game had changed. Ho's actions throughout were those of a man who sought to avoid a confrontation with the French, while his movement whipped up mass feeling against the French through adroit propaganda. Were these actions dictated by Stalin's expectations that the French Communist Party would soon be governing France? Or were they simply the logical path chosen by someone who wanted above all to achieve legitimacy and was willing to deal with anyone who could prove useful toward that end, in the best Leninist tradition of seizing power?

The main actions by the Viet Minh in the days of August were directed against the representatives of the emperor and his imperial government. During the time when Bao Dai and Tran Trong Kim were consolidating independence and unifying Vietnam, the Viet Minh had kept secret their contacts with the representatives of the imperial government, such as the *kham sai* in Hanoi. The seizure of power pitted Vietnamese against Vietnamese, not Vietnamese against any foreigner. When rival nationalist groups tried to claim credit for actions to consolidate independence during the days of August, the ICP was quick to use its control over the media to denounce them as "puppets" of one or more of the foreign groups in presence. At the local level, Viet Minh–controlled

liberation committees replaced imperial authorities wherever the Viet Minh were in sufficient strength.

It was the Japanese who overthrew the French central colonial administration and imprisoned its governor general. In August, after some token gestures of continued support for Kim's government, the Japanese remained for the most part passive in the face of the Viet Minh takeover in Hanoi, which involved a small number of incidents in which Japanese fell victims to extremist elements, including the death of one soldier. After their seizure of power, the Viet Minh turned their attention to the major nationalist parties such as the VNQDD and the Dong Minh Hoi, neutralizing them by selectively offering their leaders posts that actually carried little or no power while launching mopping-up operations against their rank and file.

One must be logically consistent on this point. Either everything the Japanese did was illegal, in which case French sovereignty over Indochina resumed with the Emperor's broadcast order to his troops to lay down their arms wherever they were, and the Tran Trong Kim government itself had no legal standing as from that moment forward; or the Japanese occupation is to be considered a case of *force majeure*, entailing the loss of French sovereignty over Indochina at least by March 9, 1945, if not as early as 1940; the rejection of the French protectorate by Bao Dai on March 11; and the advent of the Tran Trong Kim government as the legal government of a unified, independent Vietnam. One cannot simply select a few convenient facts from the first interpretation and a few from the second to make a composite history.

By declaring on September 2 that "the truth is that we have wrested our independence from the Japanese and not from the French," Ho showed that the Viet Minh public stance accorded with the second interpretation (while the French, needless to say, accorded with the first). But the truth was that the Viet Minh had not wrested independence from the Japanese. They had usurped it from the imperial government, the legal representative of the Vietnamese people from north to south in the absence of French sovereignty. If the events since March 9 constituted a revolution, the Viet Minh seizure of power on August 19 would more properly be called a coup d'état.

Some Vietnamese writers at the time referred to the Viet Minh action as *cuop chinh quyen* (stealing the authority) or *dao chinh* (coup de force).<sup>10</sup> A coup d'état involves the seizure of power from a legitimate government by a small group of conspirators using the threat of or actual armed force. The action of the perpetrators of a coup d'état may be subsequently legitimized by higher constitutional authority. We have become accustomed to witnessing coups d'état by the military in Thailand periodically during the 1980s and 1990s; the king's appointment of the coup leader as prime minister has usually followed the action, and the government retains legitimacy. In the case of the August 9, 1960, coup d'état in Laos, the overthrown government formally submitted its resignation to the king, thereby preserving legitimacy. In Vietnam, Bao Dai abdicated even before the new regime was formed and so did not give it his sanction in his capacity as head of state. Ho continued to be troubled by the lack of

legitimacy this sequence implied and confided on occasion he wished he had kept Bao Dai on as emperor.

There appears to be a logical inconsistency in calling the events of August 1945 the "August Revolution," as a half-century of Communist propaganda, beginning with Truong Chinh's seminal article of September 12, 1945, has done. <sup>11</sup> The business of Marxist-Leninist parties is the making of revolution, and that is a process that continued in Vietnam after the events of August, as Truong Chinh admitted, and continues to the present time under the guidance of the Vietnamese Communist Party.

### Ho Chi Minh Reappears

Ho Chi Minh entered Hanoi for the first time in his life on August 24, dressed in peasant's garb and crossing the Doumer bridge in a car arranged for him by his personal secretary, Vu Dinh Huynh. As he stared out at the Red River, raised by torrential rains to a level of 12.68 meters, the highest ever recorded, he exclaimed: "What a spate!" Ho continued to work in private, as was his habit, putting up for a week at the house of a trusted bourgeois friend of the revolutionaries, Trinh Van Bô. One of the first things his personal secretary had to attend to was to have an outfit tailored for Ho so that when it was safe for him to come out of hiding and appear in public he would be presentable on the world stage. (In this, too, he imitated Lenin, who made his first public appearance only when the success of the coup d'état had been assured.<sup>12</sup>)

A tunic modeled after one of Stalin's was tailored in 48 hours out of material purchased for the purpose by Mrs. Bô. Ho rejected Dinh's suggestions that he wear a tie, saying "I have never tied one of those around my neck," although a photograph of the shy young Nguyên Ai Quoc addressing delegates to the congress of the French Communist Party in Tours in 1920 shows him wearing a suit and necktie. Ho's Stalin-style tunic was the outfit he is shown wearing in photographs of him right up until his death. Its appearance in 1945 marked the first step in the transformation of Nguyên Ai Quoc the patriot into Ho Chi Minh the icon, the indispensable sign of legitimacy of the ICP in its struggles against its rivals.

Ho had around him a team of faithful lieutenants, made up of three groups. First, the Communist old guard who, like himself, had spent long years in Russia or China or in the clandestine struggle within Indochina, passing in and out of French prisons, which had made them fiercely anti-French; this group included Tran Huy Lieu (imprisoned on Poulo Condore in 1929–1934, and again from September 1939 to March 1945), Hô Tung Mau, and Ha Ba Cang (later known as Hoang Quoc Viet). In the second group were the intellectuals of the Thanh Long private school (Giap, Hoang Minh Giam, Huynh Thuc Khang, Dang Thai Mai) and the cadres of the Communist party of the time of the Popular Front (Pham Van Dong, Dang Xuan Khu). These were Marxists who had been influenced by French culture, who were nonetheless fiercely anticolonialist, and who were above all realists. The third group was composed of younger French-educated technicians, students from the University of Hanoi brought over by Duong Duc Hien, and Catholics such as Nguyên Manh Ha.

The first two groups dominated the nerve center of the Viet Minh, the Tong Bo, and of the party itself. <sup>14</sup> In the months to follow, a constant tension between the first and second groups manifested itself; the first group dominated the propaganda organs and the army and the second group dominated the government and the administration. <sup>15</sup>

Ho himself stood above these three groups and knew how to call on his lieutenants as needed to guide the course of the "revolution" in the direction he thought best. However, for the next 50 years and more, every pronouncement made in the name of the DRV government, whether published in a newspaper, broadcast on Radio Hanoi, or issued by an embassy abroad, was to bear the prior stamp of approval from the party center under the rule of unanimity that goes by the Marxist-Leninist term of "democratic centralism."

The provisional government that had been "requested" on August 21 by the meeting of the General Association of Students at the University of Hanoi was now ready to be announced. In fact, Ho had been giving serious thought for several weeks to the composition of his government. <sup>16</sup> The first Hanoi edition of the main newspaper of the Viet Minh, *Cuu Quoc* (National Salvation), announced the formation on August 24 of a provisional people's government. It listed 10 individuals, headed by Ho, but indicated that this was not a complete roster. Four days later, an official circular released five additional names. Further modifications of the list were made when it was announced to the press. <sup>17</sup>

In this, the first provisional government, Giap held the interior ministry; Pham Van Dong finance; Chu Van Tan national defense; Tran Huy Lieu propaganda; Dr. Pham Ngoc Thach health; Le Van Hien labor; Duong Duc Hien youth; Nguyên Manh Ha economy. Lieu's ministry oversaw the rapid takeover of Bach Mai radio, the requisitioning of printing shops and of stocks of paper and ink, and the issue of the newspapers of the government and its supporters, namely *Cuu Quoc*, one of whose editors was Xuan Thuy, and *Doc Lap* (Independence) in Hanoi and *Quyet Chien* in Hue—in short, the monopolization of the media.

The cabinet also comprised a number of non-Communists. Nguyên Van To (1889–1947), who was the president of the Hoi Truyen Ba Quoc Ngu, a member of the EFEO, and a writer about history, culture, ethnography, language and literature who contributed to the moderate journal *Tri Tan*, became minister of social action. To belonged to the old school of intellectuals who still wore the black turban and black gown in 1945 and gave Ho's government a tie to tradition. Vu Dinh Hoe, editor of the journal *Thanh Nghi*, to which several of Kim's ministers had contributed, became education minister. Vu Trong Khanh held justice, and Dao Trong Kim held public works. There were two ministers without portfolio, Cu Huy Can and Nguyên Van Xuan. President Ho held the foreign minister's portfolio.

Ho convened the first cabinet meeting on August 27, at which time it was decided to fix the following Sunday, September 2, as National Independence Day. Giap sent a letter to Japanese consul general Tsukamoto informing him of these decisions and of Bao Dai's abdication in Hue. The provisional government also issued a statement linking its formation to the National People's Con-

gress at Tan Trao on August 16–17, the August 19 seizure of power in Hanoi, and the "willing abdication of the king." One of the last major installations in Hanoi to be turned over to the Viet Minh by the Japanese was Radio Bach Mai, which was to give Lieu, the new minister of propaganda, a powerful voice for infusing the population with Viet Minh slogans.

A government runs on more than a cabinet, however. The provisional government instructed civil servants to remain at their posts until further notice, and most complied. They included not only office workers but also teachers, doctors, nurses, engineers, agronomists, technicians, skilled laborers, and car, bus, train and trolley drivers. Without their services, it would have been impossible to keep the railroads, ferries, post and telegraph services, electric power, and water pumping stations operating. Thus it was ironic that when the French attempted to negotiate with the provisional government, its revolutionary interlocutors were able to communicate with one another with perfect ease from Hanoi to Saigon and beyond. Some government personnel were also assigned to help reopen private French companies, for example, mines, sawmills and plantations, the output of which was appropriated by the government.<sup>19</sup>

Among the first actions of the provisional government was the abolition of certain unpopular taxes. The marketing tax, levied on all products sold in public markets, had been abolished on August 29. The individual income tax was abolished on September 8, and professional taxes were eliminated the following week. These moves placed the government in financial straits, but it would probably have been impossible to enforce tax collection and so it was best to take the popular course.

On the evening before the declaration of independence, Ho hosted a dinner at the palace for two Americans who were in town at the Hotel Metropole, Perkins and Paleski. Perkins had met Ho in Kunming. Ho expressed gratitude to his guests for the valuable assistance the United States had given to the Viet Minh during the war. He expressed the hope that this spirit of friendly cooperation would continue to develop in the future. Another participant, Giap, regaled the guests with stories of the battle against the Japanese at Thai Nguyên.<sup>20</sup>

On September 2, masses were celebrated at Catholic churches and people visited their Confucian temples to make offerings and say prayers. The main event was Ho's reading of the declaration of independence from a rostrum that had been set up in Puginier Square, which Kim's government had renamed Ba Dinh Square, not far from the former governor general's palace. Ho, adopting a popular Vietnamese rhetorical device, asked his audience to take an "oath of four nos," to pledge "not to serve in the French army, not to collaborate with the French administration, not to sell foodstuffs to the French, and not to act as scouts for the French" if the French came back. The Viet Minh established a nighttime curfew, allowing it to further consolidate its hold on power.

### CITIZEN VINH THUY

In abdicating his throne and accepting the invitation to journey to Hanoi to meet the leaders of the Viet Minh, Bao Dai, now calling himself by the name Citizen Nguyên Vinh Thuy, was acting as a nationalist; that is, he now chose to

see Vietnam not as his realm but as a nation belonging to the whole Vietnamese people. He left Hue on September 4 by car. All along the road he met crowds of people who had come to have a look at the former emperor, whom most had never seen. In Quang Tri, Dong Ha, Dong Hoi, Vinh, and Thanh Hoa the crowds were particularly dense, but respectful. At Vinh the local people's committee introduced him to Prince Souphanouvong; the two had never met. Arriving in Hanoi on the afternoon of September 6, Bao Dai was offered a dinner at the former *résidence supérieure*, where he was greeted by Giap and presented to Ho.<sup>21</sup>

This first meeting of the two men was one of the most extraordinary in history. On the one hand was the former emperor, who during his reign had incarnated the sovereignty of the Vietnamese nation. On the other, the revolutionary leader who had spent most of his life in exile; who had met Lenin; who had been tracked by the French police, the protectors of Bao Dai; and who had now come home to become the symbol of the sovereignty that appeared to have passed so smoothly from Bao Dai to him a few days previously.

As the current holder of power, Ho adopted a conciliatory attitude toward his guest. "We are all going to work together for the independence of the country," Ho said when he first shook Bao Dai's hand. In a private meeting the following day, Ho verged on the deferential, using the traditional *Ngai*, meaning Sire. He disclaimed any knowledge of the message demanding Bao Dai's abdication, saying he would have preferred to have Bao Dai remain as head of state with himself as head of government. He disapproved of any pressures that had been applied against the emperor to force him to abdicate. In these sentiments, he was probably sincere. Bao Dai responded in kind, addressing Ho as "Venerable" and saying he expected to take part as a simple citizen in the building of a unified and independent Vietnam. Ho seemed to be relieved, Bao Dai recalls. Then Ho offered Bao Dai the position of "adviser" to his provisional government. The latter, surprised, accepted.<sup>22</sup> David Marr, however, says that the offer of the position as "supreme adviser" was presented to Bao Dai in Hue as early as the morning of August 31 by Ton Quang Phiet in the form of a cable from Hanoi.<sup>23</sup>

The first cabinet meeting was held on September 8. Giap did the introductions. Aside from Giap, the only one around the table whom Bao Dai knew was Tran Huy Lieu, the ICP member to whom he had surrendered the royal seal, who now held the post of minister of propaganda. At one cabinet meeting, Bao Dai found himself sitting next to Vu Trong Khanh, minister of justice, who was not an ICP member. Here, this will allow you to know him better. And Khanh handed Bao Dai. Here, this will allow you to know him better. And Khanh handed Bao Dai a small brochure titled The Life of Nguyên Ai Quoc" by André Marty, division chief of the Sûreté. This was one of many reports the Japanese had found in the French police files on March 9 and had subsequently distributed for information to pro-Japanese parties and groups. Who is he?" Bao Dai asked. Khanh gestured toward Ho, then passing behind them on his way out of the room. In passing, Ho glanced at the brochure in Bao Dai's hand, shrugged his shoulders, and with a little smile left the room without saying a word. In the brochure, Bao Dai learned for the first time with whom he had to deal.

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This knowledge placed the dealings between the two men on a firm foundation and, curiously, allowed their personal relationship of mutual respect to continue even after they had come to symbolize two different ideologies in the eyes of their countrymen and those of the world. After that, the two men were often seen walking together in animated conversation, the rather corpulent, dapper young man in a European suit and the frail, bearded old man in shorts and a white shirt.

The Japanese and Chinese continued to display deference to Bao Dai. One day, having heard that some American P-38s had landed at Gia Lam, Bao Dai expressed an interest in seeing them. He drove to the airfield in the company of his Viet Minh escorts but was stopped at the gate by a Japanese guard. On learning who was in the car, the guard notified his superiors. A lieutenant colonel, a captain, and a lieutenant arrived. After saluting Bao Dai, they got into the car and gave the party a tour of the entire airfield, hangars and all, and allowed the visitors to inspect the P-38s, two C-47s, a C-46 with Chinese markings, a Japanese reconnaissance plane, and two French Potez 63 aircraft, looking "frail as dragonflies." <sup>26</sup>

### THE FIRST LIQUIDATIONS

Although many questions remain unanswered, and some may remain unanswered until the party archives are opened to historical research, what is obvious and has always been obvious is that the Viet Minh, and behind it the ICP, had taken over in Hanoi on August 19 with barely a shot fired in anger. We should not let the drama of this takeover and the brilliance of the party's success lead us to a romanticized view or a view of these events as a "jolly affair," however. For many in Vietnamese politics, these events were far from jolly.

Even before their seizure of power, the Viet Minh had begun to acquire a reputation for the use of terror against their countrymen. During the Deer Team's march from Thai Nguyên into Hanoi, Défourneaux found villagers utterly terrified of the Viet Minh when he left the beaten path, and he found an area of mass graves in each village where the Viet Minh had rounded up suspected collaborators and summarily shot them.<sup>27</sup> The Viet Minh use of terror was systematic, not random. To the ICP, eliminating "traitors" (*viet gian*) and "reactionaries" was a matter of policy in the areas that came under Viet Minh control. The party had drawn up a list of those to be liquidated without delay. The list included all exploiters (French colonial administrators and their Vietnamese lackeys, mainly the mandarin administrators); collaborators with the Japanese fascists (members of the Phuc Quoc, Trotskyists, ultras of the VNQDD, but also members of the Constitutionalist Party, the Democratic Party, Cao Dai notables, and the Hoa Hao sect).

In the countryside of northern Bac Bo there was no lack of such enemies. The Dai Viet party was a particularly targeted group. Among those recorded by Marr were a Dai Viet leader in Bac Giang and three adherents in Hung Yen. Lower-ranking nationalist party members were simply subjected to terror; in Ha Dong in June, a Viet Minh assault team seized the rostrum at a Dai Viet—

sponsored meeting of some 700 persons and substituted the Viet Minh flag for the Dai Viet flag with its three red stars on a yellow field. Dai Viet youth training camps were broken up in at least four provinces of Bac Bo.<sup>28</sup> As the liquidations began, it became obvious that the Viet Minh had no intention of heeding appeals from many quarters for a conciliation of all Vietnamese nationalists in order to "consolidate independence."

Showing his principal concern of avoiding violence, Bao Dai raised with Ho at their meetings in Hanoi reports he had heard of loyal supporters having been arrested. Chief of these was Pham Quynh, his old interior minister. A Viet Minh squad, acting on orders from the local revolutionary committee, had arrested him in Hue on August 22. Unknown to Bao Dai, the next day, after being condemned by a people's court for "crimes against the people's cause," the patriot Pham Quynh had been executed. Bao Dai also inquired about Ngô Dinh Khoi, elder brother of Ngô Dinh Diem, who had been arrested on an accusation of collaboration with the Japanese fascists and who had suffered the same fate along with his eldest son, Ngô Dinh Huan, who had worked for Ambassador Yokoyama. When Bao Dai asked him to free such prisoners, Ho replied, "Sire, it is not possible, the people would not understand." However, Ho promised to make inquiries. Bao Dai felt that Ho was ignorant of these cases.<sup>29</sup>

The number of disappearances of leading nationalists in the immediate aftermath of the August 19 seizure of power in Hanoi assumed the character of an organized campaign. Prominent leaders who were assassinated included Ta Thu Thau, the veteran Trotskyist leader, writer, and orator, who was killed in Quang Ngai on August 31 while returning to Saigon from Hanoi, reportedly on Giau's orders;<sup>30</sup> and Bui Quang Chieu, the veteran leader of the Constitutionalist Party which espoused a non-violent struggle for Vietnam's independence, who was kidnapped at Phu Nhuan in the suburbs of Saigon with his four sons and executed for collaboration with French colonialism. The liquidations by the party in the south reached their apogee in October. This is when Ho Van Nga (a professor of mathematics who had headed the pro-Japanese Viet Nam Quoc Gia Doc Lap Party and was accused of betraying about 30 Viet Minh members to the Kempeitei) and the lawyer Hinh Thai Thong disappeared; their bodies were discovered in 1951 in a mass grave in My Tho. Marr places the total number of alleged enemies of the revolution who "failed to survive abductions" at several thousand and of those who were detained from a few weeks to many months at tens of thousands.31

From his examination of Communist sources, Marr writes that he found no evidence to suggest that the ICP killed prominent individuals according to a predetermined hit list.<sup>32</sup> However, the timing of the killings and their specificity about those to be liquidated suggests at the very least careful planning, and the fact that many of them were carried out by well-armed and highly trained death squads appears to link them to the Viet Minh.<sup>33</sup> Whether Ho himself was kept in the dark about instances of summary executions of important rival nationalist leaders or, like Lenin, he made a practice of letting his subordinates sign the execution orders,<sup>34</sup> in the final analysis, Ho cannot escape responsibility for these deeds.

### THE OSS IN HANOI

Personnel of the OSS were not authorized to operate in Indochina,<sup>35</sup> but the OSS station in Kunming took advantage of a mandate for OSS teams to perform POW recovery work to enter Indochina. As one of them has written: "For the OSS the teams would also provide opportunities to cover intelligence objectives and postsurrender political warfare activities."<sup>36</sup>

The Deer Mission had been operating with the Viet Minh guerrillas in northern Tonkin since July. The presence of OSS men at the side of Viet Minh leaders such as Ho and Giap created the impression in the eyes of the Vietnamese population that the United States was supporting the revolution, an impression the Viet Minh leaders were happy to promote. The OSS men were no political experts, and their notions of sovereignty were hazy in the extreme. They had not received any briefings about the political situation prior to their departure for Indochina. Some of them, taken in by the adroit propaganda of their hosts, actively adopted a stance in favor of the Viet Minh, disregarding their orders to remain neutral. The personality of the OSS director, Colonel William J. Donovan, who regarded his men engaged in field operations far from home as a law unto themselves, contributed to this.<sup>37</sup> This may have misled the Viet Minh leaders about what support they could expect from the United States in the future.

The official position, which was communicated to the French government during the summer, was that the United States had raised no question concerning French sovereignty over Indochina, even by implication. There was an important condition attached to this policy. As a telegram drafted by Kenneth P. Landon of the Southeast Asia desk of the State Department put it, "However, it is not the policy of this Government to assist the French to reestablish their control over Indochina by force and the willingness of the U.S. to see French control reestablished assumes that [the] French claim to have the support of the population of Indochina [will be] borne out by future events." 38

Insofar as French intentions were concerned, President Harry S. Truman held two conversations with de Gaulle at the White House on August 22. Truman was able to inform Madame Chiang Kai-shek a few days later that "he had received a satisfactory response from the General when he gave us his opinion that Indo-China should receive its independence and that steps should be taken immediately with a view to arriving at that state." Truman's lack of opposition in these conversations to a return of French authority is confirmed by de Gaulle's biographer. 40

Major Archimedes L. A. Patti arrived in Hanoi by plane on August 22. He faced a difficult task. Although his team's mission was to look after the POWs and internees of the Japanese, he also apparently had orders for other, unspecified, tasks. He lodged in the Hotel Metropole, while Sainteny, who had accompanied the Americans, stayed in the governor general's palace by arrangement with the Japanese.

Patti's first meeting with Tsuchihashi on the morning after his arrival was stiff but correct; he received assurances of full Japanese cooperation.<sup>41</sup> He had

his hands full: he had to deal with the Japanese on maintaining law and order and arranging for surrender formalities; with Sainteny's numerous demands and making sure no harm came to the 5,000 men, women and children incarcerated in the citadel; and with Ho's government. Patti had a difficult time obeying his orders to maintain strict neutrality and not get involved in politics: he relayed messages from Tsuchihashi to Chungking to head off any clashes between the Japanese and Chinese troops when they arrived, from the Soviet representative to his embassy in Chungking concerning operational matters involving Russian nationals in the citadel, from Sainteny to the French government (and arranged meetings between Sainteny and Ho), and from Ho to President Truman and Secretary of State Byrnes seeking diplomatic recognition. He also relayed messages from all parts of Vietnam to Ho reporting the alleged machinations of the British occupation force in southern Vietnam.

Patti's task was considerably complicated by the arrival of other Americans. A mission from Air Ground Aid Section (AGAS) and a Civil Affairs Section team commanded by Colonel S. L. Nordlinger arrived from China. Lines of communication soon became tangled when Helliwell informed Nordlinger that "OSS however is also charged with other missions by higher authority and Nordlinger will *not* concern himself in any way with these activities unless same interfere with POW work." Finally, General Philip Gallagher, who was to act as the American liaison with the Chinese army of occupation, arrived; Patti recorded good relations with Gallagher.

But Patti encountered the most difficulty with his fellow OSS officers. Thomas's Deer Mission, after completing its training exercises at Tan Trao and apparently disregarding orders from Kunming to stay away from Hanoi, 43 arrived there on September 9 and was lodged in requisitioned French villas complete with servants; the ever-amiable Ho sent them prostitutes to keep them company. A worse case for Patti than Thomas was the behavior of Captain Aaron Bank, who conducted himself like a one-man Nuremberg tribunal, accusing one of Decoux's military intelligence officers of doing Gestapo work and asking indiscreet questions about war crimes. Bank's disregard of orders, Patti reported, was "unhealthy to discipline," and Patti requested his immediate recall to Kunming because he was "wholly unsuitable" for the Hanoi assignment.44 Bank, however, not to be repressed, got himself assigned as leader of the Raven Mission in Laos, where he left a trail of nasty altercations with the officers of the Franco-Laotian guerrillas. He and his deputy, Major Mike Holland, showed up in Hanoi again after driving from Savannakhet. These adventurers were impressed by the rapidity with which promotions followed such exploits of derring-do and did not want to miss the action. Not all the OSS officers shared the political bias of Thomas and Bank. One man who apparently did not give Patti any trouble was Captain Lucien E. Conein.

Patti was on the whole more objective in his view of events than his OSS colleagues, avoiding the categorical rejection of the Communist label as applied to the Viet Minh leaders and the open sympathy that characterized the reports of the Deer and Raven Missions. Patti fully appreciated the fact that Ho was a

convinced Marxist-Leninist, and he discussed Ho's background with the Soviet representative in Hanoi. His telegrams of the time speak of "Soviet methods" in evidence in Hanoi and of "fifth column activities" carried out by the Viet Minh, which Patti, certainly mistakenly, ascribed to the Japanese. In one of his reports to his superiors in Kunming, Patti wrote: "After a series of talks with the leaders of the provisional government I am convinced that they are not politically mature and being misled by Japanese agent provocateur and Red elements. They have no knowledge of meaning of terms such as nationalization, congressional assembly, liberalism, democracy, etc.—words which they use quite freely, but during the course of the conversation they planned the exact opposite." This message was passed on to President Truman by Donovan.

The relations of Americans with Bao Dai, when they met him in Hanoi, were also respectful. Gallagher habitually addressed him as "Your Majesty." Patti had the impression that Bao Dai had been forced to abdicate.<sup>47</sup> In a memoir written years later, Patti is surprisingly generous toward Bao Dai, crediting him with being a shrewd politician and a devoted nationalist.<sup>48</sup>

In Saigon, where events had moved rapidly since the formation of the United National Front to a conclusion of their own, the OSS team became involved at the end of September in a bloody incident as a result of its contacts with the Viet Minh. The behavior of the OSS teams led General Leclerc, commander of French forces in the Far East, to send a telegram to the Quai d'Orsay seeking an "energetic protest" against their activities. <sup>49</sup> The Quai did call Washington's attention to the activities of the OSS men in Laos. <sup>50</sup>

### EVENTS IN NAM BO

In Saigon, in order to consolidate his power, which numerous skeptics among the nationalists believed was tenuous, Tran Van Giau planned an even bigger demonstration than the one on August 25 to be held on September 2 to coincide with Ho's declaration of independence. <sup>51</sup> All went well until the afternoon, when shots rang out. In reprisal, a well-known French priest was killed on the square before the cathedral, which led to a series of counter-reprisals and further killings, including those of five French. Duong Bach Mai's police were conspicuous by their absence. Giau, fearing the worst, denied responsibility and urged calm. But the Cao Dai and Trotskyists accused him of collaboration with the Japanese, with the arriving British, and with the French.

Giau was therefore forced to step down from the leadership of the PEC in favor of a non-party figure, Pham Van Bach. The PEC was broadened at the same time from its original membership of nine, of whom six were Communists, to 13, of whom only four were Communists. The new members included one Cao Dai, one Hoa Hao, one Trotskyist, and three non-party figures. However, anti-French feeling in the city continued to rise, and the principal Free French representative in Saigon, Jean Cédile, who had parachuted in, was compelled to provide security for those Vietnamese openly known to be pro-French. The party center, acting in secrecy as always, appointed Le Duan to the position of secretary of the Central Commission for Nam Bo. Efforts by the

DRV government in Hanoi to reinforce the Viet Minh in the south came to little or nothing, however; a unit of 200 men who were sent south allowed themselves to be disarmed by the Japanese and returned home.<sup>53</sup>

On their arrival at Tan Son Nhut from Rangoon on September 12, the first 1,091 men of the British occupation force found Saigon to be quiet. On a drive around the city on September 14, Brigadier General M. S. K. Maunsell, the chief of staff of the Allied Control Commission, found shops open, particularly the "absolutely marvelous" flower market. Major General Douglas D. Gracey, the officer in charge of the British occupation forces, operated under the following general order:

The primary task of army forces will be to secure the Saigon area, including control of Japanese Southern Army Headquarters. Other tasks which should be undertaken as soon as sufficient forces are available include: (a) disarming and concentration of all Japanese surrendered personnel; (b) collection and evacuation of Allied Prisoners of War and Internees; (c) maintenance of law and order and protection of vital installations; (d) apprehension of war criminals.<sup>55</sup>

On September 15, the population of Saigon and Cholon found leaflets informing them that the British-Indian troops had certain tasks to perform and that the populace must maintain "the strictest order and discipline" throughout. Gracey maintained correct relations with Terauchi, although he suspected that the field marshal did not have complete control over the Kempeitai, who continued to encourage the Vietnamese nationalists, including by secretly furnishing them arms. Gracey's initial contacts with Cédile led him to believe, however, that there might be trouble ahead and that it would likely come from the French residents.

In the view of the British southern occupation force, French sovereignty was categorically accepted. Whatever personal sympathies they may have shared with the Vietnamese nationalists, the Gurkha troops of Gracey's force were filling a transitional role until the arrival of French forces adequate to take over. In contrast, the Chinese occupation force openly encouraged nationalist elements such as the VNQDD.<sup>56</sup>

Gracey was therefore in no position to turn over responsibility for maintaining law and order to the Vietnamese, any Vietnamese, even if he had seen this as a possible solution to his problem of maintaining law and order with his under-strength force. The alternatives were to turn over this responsibility to the Japanese still under arms or to arm the soldiers of the French Indochina Army who were still being detained, as they were in Hanoi and elsewhere. Gracey's only contact with the PEC, which was flying the Viet Minh flag and those of Allied countries from the city hall, whence it had moved after Gracey had "kicked it out" of the La Grandière Palace (in his own words), was when he sent Maunsell to deliver a proclamation on September 19.

The major constituent groups of the United National Front (UNF), the Cao Dai and the Hoa Hao, dissatisfied with their representation in the PEC and

aware that the Viet Minh were under orders from Ho's government in Hanoi to be conciliatory toward the French, withdrew to their base areas in the countryside to await developments, leaving only a few visible representatives in Saigon. These sects had formed paramilitary formations and so were forces to be reckoned with. A rudimentary Cao Dai military organization had been developed by Tran Quang Vinh in the shipyards of Saigon during the war. The Cao Dai troops, numbering between seven and eight thousand, were organized into companies (chi doi) and maintained their autonomy from the Viet Minh while avoiding clashes. Large-scale fighting soon broke out between the Viet Minh and Hoa Hao at Can Tho, however. While the Cao Dai and the Hoa Hao were in a position to defend themselves, the other smaller constituents of the former UNF, such as the Vietnam National Independence Party and the Trotskyites, whose leader had already been assassinated by the Viet Minh, eclipsed themselves on receiving word of the Viet Minh campaign in the north to liquidate rival nationalist groups; they feared the same fate. The PEC, for its part, seeing itself unable to fulfill its promises to the UNF parties of negotiating with the Allies for recognition, was unwilling to sit on its hands until the French troops arrived, when any chance of securing Vietnam's independence would be lost. On September 16, a small flotilla of junks landed at Poulo Condore; it brought back to Saigon a number of political prisoners who had spent the entire war in what they called the lion cages (chuong su tu) of that island, which were later to be rediscovered as the tiger cages (*chuong cop*). Among them were four leaders of the ICP, Ton Duc Thang, Pham Hung, Nguyên Van Linh, and a smallish man by the name of Le Duan.<sup>57</sup>

How to force the British to deal with the Vietnamese? Provocation there undoubtedly was. The inflammatory propaganda broadcast over Saigon Radio was one reason Gracey took notice of the Vietnamese. He ordered the radio occupied. Then the PEC called a general strike, which threatened to shut down the port and impede supplies to the British force. The British, seeking accommodation rather than confrontation, formed a port subcommittee on which two Viet Minh officials sat; this solution worked well. More serious, the PEC's call for all Vietnamese to stop serving the French was sure to provoke the latter.

Gracey's own troops had unobtrusively disarmed the greater part of the Viet Minh police and taken over installations during the days leading up to the climactic action against the city hall. As the PEC was evicted from police posts, the post office, and the city hall, these installations were taken over by French personnel. Terauchi remained for the moment undisturbed in the Norodom Palace. As Dunn has reconstructed events from documentary evidence and interviews, Gracey, made overconfident by the smoothness of the takeover operations, allowed himself to be persuaded by his French friends that a quick strike at the city hall would suffice to complete the takeover process that had already begun.<sup>58</sup>

Gracey's decision entailed what turned out to be a major mistake.<sup>59</sup> In response to a request from Cédile, he allowed the re-arming of the 11th R.I.C. The 11th R.I.C. had been the main unit of the French Indochina Army stationed in Saigon, at the Martin de Pallières Barracks, and on the night of March 9 it had been surrounded and disarmed by the Japanese with scarcely a shot fired after its commanding officer, Lieutenant Colonel Moreau, had been arrested at his house. Cédile's change of opinion about the likelihood of trouble from the French residents may have been due to the influence on him of a Colonel Rivier, who had arrived with an advance detachment of the 5th R.I.C. that accompanied Gracey on September 12. Rivier now was concerned about releasing some of his men who had been imprisoned by the Japanese after incidents in the previous few days.

The only casualties in the actual takeover operations had been two French. There were no Vietnamese casualties. The PEC itself, forewarned, had evacuated the city hall and retreated to safe quarters in the Cholon suburb of Cho Dem. But the wave of provocations launched by the undisciplined soldiers of the 11th R.I.C. and the resident French population of Saigon against the Vietnamese on September 23 triggered large-scale rioting in the city. Soldiers fired into empty buildings in a show of strength. They also made mass arrests, taking all the Vietnamese, including women, found in the course of searches for arms caches. All were bound, and the men were roughed up. On the night of September 24, swift retaliation occurred when a mob of Vietnamese miscreants, reportedly belonging to the Binh Xuyen and recruited by the Viet Minh, invaded the Cité Heyraud and murdered about 150 French civilians, many of them women and children. An equal number were taken away and some of them were later tortured, mutilated, and killed. Such acts against unarmed civilians had little in common with the struggle against "French imperialism" evoked by Ho a few days earlier.

An eyewitness to the events of September in Saigon described her visit to the barracks of the 11th R.I.C. on September 21, shortly before the re-arming of the soldiers:

The corridors of the long buildings were filled with men of all ages, most of them older than the average soldier and most of them affecting the Foreign Legion style of beard. They were dressed in shabby, unassorted [sic] shirts and shorts. Some wore officer's hats, others dirty caps, and still others just a handkerchief tied around their head or a beret. They were all unshaven, sloppy and unkempt. No two of them were dressed alike. At the time of the occupation, the Japanese had taken everything away from them except for what they had on their backs. 60

Arson, sabotage, and killing were still occurring in Saigon on Wednesday, September 26, a fateful day for the OSS mission in town. Major Albert Peter Dewey was chief of the Embankment Mission, whose advance party of four had arrived in Saigon from its base at Kandy on September 2; he and four others, including Captain Herbert J. Bluechel, had arrived on September 4, followed on September 5 by Captain Frank M. White, Jr. and two other officers. They arrived with eight aircraft that evacuated 214 American POWs on September 6. The OSS headquarters were established in a villa on Rue Paul Blanchy near Tan Son Nhut airport, across from the Saigon golf course. The

villa flew the American flag, and a sign written in English, Vietnamese, and Japanese identified it as the headquarters of the "U.S. Delegation to the Allied Control Commission."

According to OSS reports, Dewey was planning to depart that morning from Tan Son Nhut in accordance with previous arrangements, but his plane was late in landing. As it returned to the villa from the airfield, Dewey's jeep, with Dewey at the wheel and Bluechel beside him, was slowed down along Rue Macmahon Prolongée by one of the roadblocks which had been set up on nearby roads. Dewey and his men were used to negotiating these, and in fact had done so on several occasions on the morning of the attack. This time, however, the jeep was fired on by a machine gun concealed in a roadside ditch. Dewey was struck in the head and died instantly. Immediately, Bluechel was taken under fire as he crawled away from the jeep behind a nearby hedgerow. The firing continued as Bluechel reached the villa. The attacking force of Vietnamese were finally driven off by the OSS men and the Japanese guards; ten were killed.<sup>61</sup>

Gracey, who had told Dewey he disapproved of his numerous contacts with the PEC, which were widely known in Saigon, had warned him about driving without an armed escort. After the shooting, Gracey expressed condolences. There was no doubt that the ambush had been premeditated, and Gracey stressed this in the report he wrote. The question was, What was the affiliation of the attackers? Some 20 of them escaped, taking their dead and wounded and Dewey's body with them in Japanese trucks.

In his memoirs Patti conjectures that responsibility for the ambush lies with the Viet Minh, who allegedly mistook Dewey for a Frenchman.<sup>62</sup> This makes no sense. Only British and Americans were driving jeeps in Saigon at that time. Moreover, it leaves unexplained the subsequent attack on the clearly identified OSS villa in broad daylight, for which the Viet Minh could have had no possible motive. A party of Gurkhas despatched to the scene on Gracey's orders were approaching up Rue Paul Blanchy firing as they came, and this fire may have been returned by Viet Minh in the vicinity, creating at a stretch an impression of Viet Minh responsibility for the ambush. The attackers, however, after parleying with Captain White under a truce flag about recovery of their dead and wounded in exchange for returning Dewey's body, took advantage of the approach of the Gurkhas to make good their escape and were never seen again. The situation was further complicated by an ongoing altercation between two American correspondents who had been visiting the OSS villa, Bill Downs and Jim McGlinty, and the officer commanding the Gurkhas.<sup>63</sup>

Dewey's assassination may have been one occasion of violence where Ho and the Viet Minh were genuinely not involved. News dispatches of the incident described the attackers as "Annamites" rather than specifically Viet Minh, which was not surprising in view of the odd mixture of uniforms being worn by all, or the absence thereof. Ho personally expressed his profound regret to General Gallagher two days later and said he would write a letter to the State Department deploring the occurrence and give it to Patti for forwarding. Gallagher reported that Ho "admitted that it might have been the action of unruly elements of the Annamese."<sup>64</sup> It is highly likely that those responsible knew only too well the identity of the man in American uniform behind the wheel of the American jeep whom they targeted at close range as he drove slowly past and that afterward they deliberately attacked the OSS headquarters flying the American flag. A British officer had passed through the same roadblock without incident half an hour beforehand.

The only thesis that satisfactorily explains all the seemingly conflicting evidence surrounding Dewey's assassination and also provides a motive is that it was carried out by an armed squad belonging to one of the nationalist factions operating in Saigon, most probably the Cao Dai. At the Japanese surrender, the Cao Dai military leader, Tran Quang Vinh, had sought unsuccessfully to persuade the Japanese to provide weapons to his followers. <sup>65</sup> The leader of a fanatical faction of the Cao Dai, Trinh Minh The, was responsible for the assassination of General Chanson, who commanded French troops in the south, on July 31, 1951, reportedly because Chanson had failed to make good on promised arms deliveries; here again the act was initially blamed on the Viet Minh. <sup>66</sup>

Dewey had reportedly been discussing with Dr. Pham Ngoc Thach, the PEC's commissioner for foreign relations, American support for the Viet Minh cause. An OSS officer who returned to Washington in early December stated that "Colonel Dewey had a plan to get Dr. Thach to Washington incognito and that this plan may have played a role in causing Colonel Dewey's death."67 Other reports speak of Dewey's promises of arms to the Viet Minh. Either of these projects could have occasioned Dewey's planned trip to his headquarters. News of either would have been interpreted by the nationalists as a plot against themselves, sufficiently alarming to warrant taking action to foil the plot in the surest way, by killing its author. Some three weeks after the assassination, Thach wrote a letter of condolence to Dewey's brother, who had visited Saigon in a fruitless effort to recover the body, and said how sorry he was to have missed him. Thach also said that prior to the ambush he had given orders to all his men that they were on no account to fire on Americans, and he promised that the street on which the OSS villa stood would be renamed in Dewey's honor and a monument would be erected on the spot of the killing.68

Happening so soon after the tragic events of September 23 in the city, Dewey's assassination added to the tension. Dewey, caught up in events of which he had only a faint grasp, became a target of the hatred that was rife at the time, and today he is mourned as the first American casualty in Vietnam. Then, as quickly as they had appeared, the OSS men disappeared from the Indochinese scene, leaving the Japanese, French, Chinese, Vietnamese, and Laotians to settle their differences as best they could by negotiation or force of arms.

#### THE FRENCH

The government of Charles de Gaulle continued to demonstrate during the crucial final months of 1945 the same insouciance for the Indochinese and incompetence with respect to the preservation of French interests in Indochina that it had demonstrated prior to March 9. Its response to the Meigo operation

was to issue a statement on March 24. This declaration had spoken of five constituent countries (French: *pays*), these being Annam, Tonkin, Cochinchina, Cambodia, and Laos, which were to make up an Indochinese federation. At the top would sit a governor general, who would exercise authority over the "local governments."<sup>69</sup> There was no provision for any consultation with the peoples of Indochina, as pointed out by Vietnamese living in France, who might be expected to be the most pro-French of all. This was, indeed, as Devillers has observed, a proposal that came 15 years too late.<sup>70</sup> Even its principal author, Henri Laurentie, the head of the political affairs section of the colonial ministry, was by the summer of 1945 speaking in terms of the need to grant independence, not rearrange the government general.<sup>71</sup>

Two Vietnamese legal experts residing in France, Nguyên Quoc Dinh and Nguyên Dac Khe, had pointed out the contradiction in the March 24 statement between the hints at a liberal policy and the almost unlimited powers that would be concentrated in the hands of the governor general as the head of the Indochinese federation in the almost total absence of autonomous or even representative bodies in the five "countries" constituting the federation.<sup>72</sup>

De Gaulle's government was not represented at the Potsdam Conference, where, ceteris paribus, it would seem to have had a right to participation in Allied decisions with respect to Japan, a country with which it had been at war since 1941. At Potsdam, the combined chiefs of staff on July 26 decided to have Chinese troops receive the Japanese surrender in Indochina north of the 16th parallel and British troops south of it. The French government was not officially notified of this decision until noon on August 15.<sup>73</sup> It was the start of many deficiencies of decision and action that were to frustrate France's friends among the Indochinese and undercut de Gaulle's own agents on the spot. An attempt by the French government to reverse the Potsdam decision met with no success.<sup>74</sup>

Next, de Gaulle had not bothered to receive Sainteny when he arrived in Paris from southern China in July seeking instructions. Here was the man who, better than anyone else, could have informed his government about the situation it was facing. De Gaulle then turned a deaf ear to Emperor Bao Dai's personal message of August 18.<sup>75</sup> The message was the plea of a desperate patriot to a friend who was about to bring disaster on himself; in reality, the emperor, fully conversant with the strong attachment of his fellow citizens to their newly won independence, had become citizen Vinh Thuy before he formally adopted the name.

Moreover, de Gaulle ignored the advice of his wartime allies. On September 24, Mountbatten, speaking officially, had requested that General Leclerc suggest to his government that a "precise and detailed declaration" be made promising independence and dominion status to Indochina. Leclerc wrote that in Mountbatten's view this declaration would have beneficial effects on British and American opinion. This advice was rejected out of hand by de Gaulle. At various critical moments Mountbatten also urged Cédile to negotiate with the PEC.

From the start, planning delays plagued the process of getting into Indochina the authorities that would be in a position, by the symbolism by which the Indochinese set such great store, to reassert French sovereignty. The main contingent of the first unit of French troops did not arrive in Saigon until October 3, a full month after the proclamation of the DRV, and Leclerc himself did not arrive not until two days later. He immediately began a campaign of pacification in Cochinchina; as far as improvisations go, it was a remarkable success, for Leclerc was a man who knew how to get the best out of his men. Harold R. Isaacs, an American newspaper correspondent who watched the French disembarking at Saigon with their American lend-lease equipment, saw no contradiction in condemning such American aid to the colonial power while speaking in glowing terms of the "arms and training and direction from American officers" received by the Viet Minh. He is a factor of the "arms and training and direction from American officers" received by the Viet Minh.

Other delays on the French side were caused by the most unimaginable snafus. When Sainteny arrived in Hanoi on August 22 from Kunming, he did not have accreditation papers with him; they were with Pierre Messmer, who had been captured by the Viet Minh when he landed from his base at Calcutta. When Jean Cédile's party from Calcutta landed in the south on August 24, it had been quickly rounded up by the Japanese and detained in a Saigon schoolroom.81 It was not until August 28, in a belated effort to make contact with Bao Dai, that a team, the Lambda Mission, was parachuted 20 kilometers from Hue. Its six men were immediately surrounded by the Viet Minh; four were killed, the others captured. Its orders were limited to preventing Bao Dai from taking any decisions, 82 which were hardly adequate in the circumstances; in his then state of mind, Bao Dai would have given them a cool reception and very likely would have had them placed under arrest. In Cambodia, Major Gallois, who had parachuted in, was brought to Phnom Penh where he simply waited until Leclerc's troops showed up to restore French sovereignty. Only in Laos, where Hans Imfeld, representing the French Republic, was able to make contact on August 30 with the king and ascertain his unbroken loyalty to France, was there any success in these endeavors.

De Gaulle had picked Vice Admiral Georges Thierry d'Argenlieu, a man who shared his anti-democratic views, to be his representative in Indochina. D'Argenlieu's claim on de Gaulle's patronage was based on the fact that, captured at Cherbourg on June 19, 1940, he had escaped three days later and crossed the English Channel. At the time, he held the rank of lieutenant commander (capitaine de corvette), although he was already no longer a young man, having spent 20 years between the wars in a Carmelite monastery. He thus gained entry to that small circle of Frenchmen who later claimed to have heeded the call of June 18 to go on fighting after the debacle of 1940. He rose rapidly and was promoted to rear admiral in 1943 and vice admiral in 1944. For a time, he held the position of governor general of French New Caledonia, where he gained a reputation for enforcing strict law and order among the large Vietnamese expatriate community, which helps to explain the emotion that greeted the radio announcement of his appointment among the Vietnamese who were getting their first taste of independence in peacetime during the heady days of August.

De Gaulle's instructions to d'Argenlieu, consisting of one and a half typewritten pages dated August 15, were to re-establish French sovereignty over all

of Indochina whatever the circumstances. The admiral was to have the commander of French forces (Leclerc) under his command. Finally, if for reasons of inter-Allied tactics it proved impossible to exercise power in one or more zones, the admiral was allowed to delegate these powers to subordinates. The instructions contained not a word about policy and not a word about the attitude to take with respect to the DRV.

Following announcement of his appointment, d'Argenlieu embarked on a tiring series of protocol calls in Paris that included the ambassadors of countries that had more or less interest in Indochina, and then set out for Asia, stopping at Chandernagor, where he again spent his time consulting with various people, who were more or less informed on the subject, and constituting a large staff to run things once he arrived in Saigon. De Gaulle had instructed him to leave as soon as possible for his assignment,83 but all in all, d'Argenlieu wasted two and a half precious months before finally debarking at Tan Son Nhut on October 30.

D'Argenlieu proceeded to fulfill the worst fears of the moderate members of the Vietnamese intelligentsia such as Dinh and Khe by issuing on November 1, as his first official act, federal ordinance number 1, which gave him full powers, both executive and legislative, to deal with the situation as he saw it. Although he decided to take the title high commissioner instead of governor general, the Vietnamese who looked toward the Norodom Palace in Saigon for some sign of hope for the future saw only the French flag flying.

When it came to the subject of Indochina, d'Argenlieu had a closed mind. In an address to the Indochinese broadcast over All-India Radio prior to his arrival, the admiral had lectured his listeners about the plots of the "enemy Japanese" and had compared the violence in Saigon following September 23 to the crimes of the Nazis, saying it proved the political immaturity of the Vietnamese.<sup>84</sup> Now, ensconced with his large staff of advisers in the imperial splendor of the Norodom Palace finally vacated by the departing Japanese, d'Argenlieu devoted himself to his pet project, defining the structures of the Indochinese federation.

D'Argenlieu gave priority to a dialogue with a handful of French rubber planters who had been members of the Free French resistance, such as it was, and with members of the French community who claimed, sometimes truthfully, to have been victims of Decoux's police. These individuals caused d'Argenlieu to see himself increasingly as the defender of the French business interests, and it was but one step from there to entrenching Cochinchina as the French territory it had been since 1862. His position denied completely the unity of Vietnam; he feared that any concessions made to the government in Hanoi would lead to France's total eviction from Indochina. If any conjunction of circumstances could produce a blind alley, this was certainly it.

In fact, it soon became clear that d'Argenlieu attached primary importance to purging the ranks of French military and civil servants in Indochina of all those whom he castigated as Vichyists. In this, he was reflecting the purge that swept Metropolitan France and that has been described by one French historian as a sort of exorcism of the defeat of 1940 and all its consequences. 85 Thousands of dedicated servants of the state, many extremely knowledgeable about Indochina and its peoples, were summarily dismissed from their posts and shipped home in great discomfort and humiliation. Among these was Decoux himself, who was dismissed without pension in May 1946. After a preliminary hearing at which evidence was presented, the judge refused to hold to answer, and Decoux was reintegrated with his rank and prerogatives in February 1949.

In these circumstances, lacking any constitutional link to any Vietnamese party or government, and faced with the refusal of the provisional government in Hanoi, the de facto holders of power, to acknowledge the maintenance (much less the reimposition) of French sovereignty over Indochina, the only wherewithal at the disposal of the French was armed force. But this entailed other dangers, as Léon Pignon, a relatively enlightened French political expert, foresaw. "It is essential, both from the military viewpoint and from the viewpoint of international opinion, to succeed in constituting a pro-French party which will appeal for the assistance of our arms, and will support them," Pignon wrote in a report on October 28.

Elements of such a pro-French party already existed, Pignon wrote. But they dared not appear openly because of the terror inspired by the revolutionary committees, whose leaders had been especially successful in recruiting the young men and women and who were working single-mindedly to eradicate all French influence. The objective should be to splinter the government, or, more precisely, the Viet Minh party. It was against the diehards of the party that French force could be brought to bear with profit, Pignon thought, but only after they had been recognized as rebels by the mass of the population itself.<sup>86</sup>

#### COALITION POLITICS

With the French seeking a way to reduce his government to an intransigent hard core of diehards, Ho adroitly responded by expanding the provisional government without losing control in so doing. For the Viet Minh by this time was mainly the ICP. From at least June 1945 to the end of 1946 the focal point of decision-making was the General Committee (Tong Bo) of the Viet Minh, whose members were Ho, Giap, Dong, Khu, Tran Huy Lieu, Nguyên Luong Bang, Ha Ba Cang (alias Hoang Quoc Viet), and Ho Tung Mau. 87 All were ICP leaders. Giap, Dong, and Khu had been with Ho in Cao Bang since 1941. Nguyên Luong Bang had worked for Ho in Shanghai in 1929–1931 before being arrested and spending the years 1931-1943 in prison. Ho Tung Mau had been a leading figure in the Revolutionary Youth League at Canton and Hong Kong in the late 1920s but had subsequently been working in the Chinese Communist Party. The names of these men appear and disappear in the official literature of the period September to November 1945. On the other hand, the name of the ICP's secretary-general Dang Xuan Khu (later known by his pseudonym Truong Chinh) figures hardly at all in the official literature of this period.

The kind of behind-the-scenes control exercised by the Tong Bo allowed the Viet Minh to take the risk of arranging for the holding of elections. Ho had been impressed by his OSS friends at Tan Trao with the importance of elections in the American political system; he believed holding early elections would favor his government's chances of obtaining American recognition.

Steps were now taken in that direction. As early as September 8, a decree had laid down that an election for a national assembly should be held within two months. 88 All Vietnamese over the age of 18 would be entitled to vote, with the exception of people who had been deprived of their civil rights and those deemed to be of unsound mind. The national assembly, which would consist of 300 representatives in a single chamber, would have authority to decide upon the constitution of the DRV. In the meantime, committees were to be set up to draft a constitution and to devise regulations for holding the election. The members of the constitutional committee were named in a decree of September 20: four of its seven members were ICP members (although not so identified). Citizen Vinh Thuy also became a member. 89 The committee to draw up regulations for the election was set up by a further decree on September 26. 90

The actual regulations for the election were embodied in a decree dated October 17, by which time it had been decided that election day would be December 23. Shortly before the latter date it was postponed again;<sup>91</sup> it was finally held on January 6, 1946.

The provisional government had to tailor its constitutional arrangements to fit the situation. Thousands of Chinese troops had begun crossing the Vietnam border at three points on August 27 to take up the occupation duties assigned to them by the Big Three at Potsdam. The Chinese brought in their train the leaders of the Vietnamese nationalist parties in exile, mainly the VNQDD and the Dong Minh Hoi, and began appointing them in the place of the Viet Minh appointees, who were ignored. In this manner, the two parties assumed control over Lao Kay, Vinh Yen, Viet Tri, Pho Tho, Yen Bay, and Lang Son.

Ho responded adroitly to this challenge to his authority; instead of protesting, he used a collection of gold from the population (officially to purchase arms for the government) during the second week of September to buy the neutrality of the Chinese generals; some 800 kilograms of gold were collected. Ho also opened negotiations directly with the nationalist parties, which controlled large areas of the countryside. No sooner had he arrived at an agreement on October 23, however, than it was denounced on November 2 by Nguyên Hai Than, leader of the Dong Minh Hoi, as being too favorable to the Viet Minh. On November 8, Than demanded that the Viet Minh make way for the "real nationalists."

It was after the threat by Than that Ho, perhaps fearing a move by the Chinese to arrest the ICP leaders, decided to sacrifice the ICP, at least temporarily. On November 11, the ICP Central Committee issued a communiqué stating that because "in order to complete the Party's task in this immense movement of the Vietnamese people's emancipation, a national union conceived without distinction of class and parties is an indispensable factor," it had decided to voluntarily dissolve the ICP.<sup>93</sup> This may simply have meant that meetings of the Politburo, which in normal times were convened in secret and announced after they had been held, were no longer announced publicly at all, for there is evidence that the party's central decision-making apparatus continued to function.<sup>94</sup>

Even after this concession, the Dong Minh Hoi insisted on the execution of the Liuchow agreement of March 1944, which had provided, on paper at

least, for a coalition government under nationalist leadership. <sup>95</sup> A new agreement was signed on November 18, which was broken again on December 8. This time, however, using their united front tactics, the Viet Minh were able to split off a large section of the Dong Minh Hoi from the main body of the party. On December 22, under a new agreement among the Dong Minh Hoi, the VNQDD, and the Viet Minh (all the other splinter parties having more or less fallen by the wayside), the nationalist parties pledged not to sabotage the election, in return for which the VNQDD would receive 50 and the Dong Minh Hoi 20 seats in the future national assembly. Neither party would participate in the election campaign. This was a solution modeled on the identical arrangement made by the Communists in Poland with the minority opposition Peasants' Party.

The Viet Minh also agreed to create a largely honorific post of vice president, which would go to Than, and to allocate two ministries to the two parties. A promise to neutralize (i.e., make neutral) the posts of ministers of interior and defense was effectively circumvented by transferring their real powers to other offices within the government organization. This was perhaps an extreme example of the party's use of the United Front tactics vis-à-vis its rivals which were to stand it in good stead later in its seizure of a monopoly of power: by selectively offering positions in the coalition government the party managed to neutralize certain elements of the opposition who were judged to have little more than nuisance value, while it did not rule out more drastic methods against its more dangerous rivals.

The government had established a security service, the famed Cong An, whose activities on behalf of the Viet Minh were now backed by legislation in the form of a series of decrees promulgated on September 13; one of these gave the security service "the right to arrest any individual dangerous to the security of the Vietnam Republic."

The broad coalition aspect of the provisional government and its laudatory aims allowed it to attract many qualified and well-meaning individuals. For example, Ngô Dinh Nhu, a younger brother of Diem, was offered the post of director of the Archives and National (formerly Central) Library in Hanoi by Ho. He had first worked in the archives in Hanoi under Paul Boudet from 1938 to 1942, when he went to Hué to reorganize the imperial archives at Bao Dai's request. In 1946, Nhu fled to Phat Diem with his wife, eventually settling at Dalat; they were very poor.<sup>97</sup>

Behind the masquerade of United Front activities at the top, however, the Viet Minh consolidated its administrative control at the local and regional levels both in its capital, Hanoi, and in the countryside in a process in which revolutionary orders and government decrees formed a continuum. In areas under its control, the Viet Minh had ordered its cadres to constitute liberation committees in factories, mines, plantations, schools, garrisons, public offices, private enterprises, villages, and hamlets as early as March. The liberation committee was described as "a pre-governmental form which will train the people to take revolutionary power in their hands." In the village, this involved the holding of a mass meeting at which former notables were obliged to hand over their seals

of office and village archives to representatives of the new committee. The process by which the local "Viet Minh group" controlled the proceedings and ensured the implementation of orders from higher levels was described in a set of written instructions.<sup>98</sup> However, to the uninitiated, such as members of the OSS, these well-organized and generally peaceful gatherings appeared to be nothing less than an admirable exercise of spontaneous democracy, albeit one that demanded that much time and effort be spent on meetings.

The process of constituting primary liberation committees was repeated at higher levels of administration, culminating in the formation of a national liberation committee at the Tan Trao conference of August 16. The coup d'état in Hanoi on August 19, of course, gave the Viet Minh greatly enlarged scope for extending the process nationwide and speeding it up. Whereas the national liberation committee of August 16 could only have effectively represented a relatively small area of Bac Bo under the direct control of Viet Minh political cadres and Giap's Liberation Army, now liberation committees could be formed over a much wider area. By the beginning of September, the Viet Minh had established their presence in the vast majority of province centers throughout Vietnam. Such committees, as we have seen, were responsible for issuing the orders permitting the arrest and execution of prominent opposition nationalists on charges of collaboration with the enemy. They also undoubtedly played a part in the conduct of the January 6, 1946, election for the National Assembly. According to Smith, the provincial committees were responsible for nominations of candidates and the village committees were responsible for drawing up lists of voters and the actual conduct of the balloting.<sup>99</sup>

On September 5, the provisional government decreed the abolition of the imperial government's councils of notables and replaced them with people's committees, who were composed of Viet Minh supporters, in many cases the same ones who had been members of the liberation committees, which thereby completed their coup d'état. At one brilliant stroke, this decree mobilized the have-nots against the haves, landless peasants against landowners, and instituted a state of struggle and class warfare that allowed the Viet Minh to assume effective control of the countryside. A whole series of structural changes followed. A decree of September 13 abolished the mandarinate and put in its place a hierarchy of people's committees going from the territory (bo) to the province (tinh) to the district (huyen). These changes replaced the traditional village autonomy, which had been respected by the French for want of being able to reform it, with a system of "democratic centralism" that carried the unity and authority of the state down to the lowest level.

Decree 63 of November 22 heralded the setting up of a parallel structure of administration called the administrative committee at each level from the village to the region. This parallel structure was to emerge, over time, as the real wielder of power at the grassroots level, as George Ginsburgs has shown. 100 By far the most distinctive trait of this structure, which represented a sharp break with Vietnam's traditional and historical precedent, was its extreme emphasis on highly centralized administrative processes. Moreover, this parallel structure, as opposed to the people's committees, served to concentrate power in the hands of a select corps of trusted party cadres; the one requirement for membership in the administrative committees, aside from having participated in the revolution, was the ability to read and write *quoc ngu*. At the top level, the administrative committee of Bac Bo, the party apparently felt sufficiently secure to entrust the leadership of this grassroots administrative structure to a relatively unknown figure, Nguyên Xien, who later became a leader of the Vietnam Socialist Party, which was founded in 1946.<sup>101</sup>

# Son Ngoc Thanh and Pan-Indochina Nationalism in Cambodia

In Kampuchea, Prime Minister Son Ngoc Thanh recognized the DRV at its founding, and, in the hope of obtaining support, allowed it to open a mission in Phnom Penh. Over the next month, Thanh's government made several calls for Khmers to cooperate "sincerely and fraternally" with the Vietnamese. Leaders of the Viet Minh in Nam Bo contacted Thanh through a brother in hopes of coordinating resistance to the French. According to the Viet Minh military commander Nguyên Thanh Son, Thanh accepted their proposal and sent a return delegation for talks; however, this delegation made itself unpopular by raising the issue of Kampuchea's irredentist demands over the Mekong Delta, and the talks broke down. 102 There was an outbreak of fighting in Tra Vinh Province, Thanh's birthplace, at about this time, probably involving the Hoa Hao. (The Viet Minh, although obviously not supporting Kampuchea's territorial claims, would probably not have engaged in fighting against Thanh's government in view of their own troubles and in view of the historic ICP long-term interest in Cambodia.)

The French were determined to act decisively against Thanh's government, and this they did as soon as Leclerc could spare the troops from his Saigon contingent. (Significantly, Gracey appears not to have made any suggestion of using his Gurkhas to restore French power against the Buddhist and sectarian nationalists in Cambodia, in spite of the fact that Cambodian rice was vital to Saigon because of the Viet Minh blockade of the city.) Choosing a day when he knew Sihanouk would be out of harm's way on a Buddhist pilgrimage, Leclerc flew to Phnom Penh and, in a ruse orchestrated by the British representative in Phnom Penh, had his noncommissioned officer aide seize Thanh, who was thrown into prison when he arrived back in Saigon. Thanh's chauffeur escaped to warn the other cabinet ministers, several of whom fled to Vietnam. Exiled to France, Thanh did not return to Cambodia until 1951. 103

Sihanouk could only accept this turn of fate. He had already muted his previous declared support for the Japanese, and in a ceremony on October 28 canceled his proclamation ending the French protectorate, reading aloud from a message prepared for the occasion by the reinstated *résident supérieur*. <sup>104</sup> Sihanouk's unprincipled behavior in this period embittered Crown Prince Savang Vatthana of Laos toward him two decades before Sihanouk embraced the Pathet Lao. D'Argenlieu

consented to travel to Phnom Penh to shake Sihanouk's hand.

chose simply to ignore Sihanouk and dealt instead with Sihanouk's uncle, Prince Monireth, with whom as the head of a new government he signed a modus vivendi on January 7, 1946. In the negotiations, the Cambodian delegation headed by Monireth and Nhiek Tioulong put forth the following demands: adherence to the French Union but not to an Indochinese federation dominated by a unified Vietnam, dissolution of many federal services, replacement of Vietnamese in the Cambodian civil service by Cambodians, and strict con-

trol of Vietnamese immigration. 105 Some weeks later, however, d'Argenlieu

# Defiance of the Royal Authority in Laos

It took the French longer to reassert their authority in Laos than in Cambodia. The news of Bao Dai's declaration of independence had been received with satisfaction by the large Vietnamese community in Laos. In Savannakhet, the entire Vietnamese community staged a procession through the town. On display was a Rising Sun flag, a Vietnamese flag, and a placard bearing the inscription "Annam Doc Lap" ("Independence for Annam"). Within days, members of a Vietnamese youth association were acting as if they were officers of the administration, usurping control over the import and export of commodities as well as police powers, which were heightened by their close relationship with the Japanese, and the implicit threat that they could denounce "unpatriotic" people. They were also in contact with similar organizations in Vietnam, and there was some sentiment that southern Laos should be attached to Annam. 106

For Prince Phetsarath, the prime minister, the agitation by Vietnamese residents in Vientiane and other towns was ominous. It served to reinforce the anti-Vietnamese views he had held since the 1930s when he had attempted to replace Vietnamese in the civil service with Lao. After the coup d'état in Hanoi, ICP agents began spreading anti-French propaganda and preparing to resist the French. Phetsarath had no illusions about the ICP's motives. The party was on record as severely criticizing his views about Vietnamese immigration in Laos, and it regarded his followers as standing for the protection of capitalism and counter-revolution. The party had established cells in Laos since the early 1930s, all constituted by Vietnamese, and had even published a newspaper in Vietnamese. By the time of the Tan Trao congress in August 1945, where the party had adopted a pan-Indochina "liberation" program, these cells had been formally constituted in a Laotian branch. Immediately after this congress, a "special representative," Tran Duc Vinh, was sent to Laos to establish closer collaboration with the Lao independence movement. 109

The Vietnamese agitation came to a head with a large demonstration in Vientiane on August 23, and Phetsarath had to restrain the agitators. At the same time, he favored taking advantage of the French difficulties. As head of government, however, he was limited in his autonomy not only by the wishes of the king but also by virtue of the fact that the 1941 arrangement with the French had made the crown prince the chairman of the King's Council. The French design had, perhaps intentionally, created an ambiguity that made for conflict.

Keeping the French administrators and their families for the moment, at least, in the prisons where the Japanese had put them in March, and acting on the premise that the king's independence proclamation was still in force, on August 28 Prince Phetsarath sent from Vientiane a telegram to all *chao khouengs* informing them that the Japanese surrender did not affect the independence proclamation and warning them to avoid any foreign intervention in their administration.

Two days later, Major Hans Imfeld, empowered as commissioner of the French Republic, entered Luang Prabang and received written assurances from the king that the protectorate was still in force. Imfeld was of Swiss origin and had been an artillery officer in the Indochina Army. With considerable experience in Indochina in the 1930s, he had escaped to China on October 3, 1943, an act for which he was condemned to death by the Hanoi military tribunal of Decoux's government general. Parachuted into Indochina on February 26, 1945, he had escaped the Meigo action and had assumed command of the Franco-Laotian guerrillas in northern Laos, from whose base northwest of the town he entered Luang Prabang.

The Japanese troops having departed to the south, a party of Franco-Laotian guerrillas under the command of Major Fabre, who had been parachuted in near Paksane on January 21, peacefully entered Vientiane on September 3 and sat down to await developments, while French civilians released from internment were evacuated across the river. Phetsarath, however, refused to recognize the authority of the French *résident supérieur* upon his release from prison. A standoff was developing between Luang Prabang and Vientiane.

Phetsarath received an unsolicited message on September 3 from another of his half-brothers, Prince Souphanouvong, by Boun Khong's sixth wife, who had spent the previous 16 years working as an engineer in Vietnam and was now in Hanoi. Souphanouvong said in his message he was in a position to represent the interests of Laos and asked for instructions. On September 5 he sent a further message telling Phetsarath he had begun negotiations with the Vietnamese for aid in the independence struggle and to form "an Indochinese bloc opposing the return of colonialism." Phetsarath cabled back rejecting Souphanouvong's offer.<sup>110</sup>

#### THE UNIFICATION OF LAOS

On September 2, Phetsarath sent a message to the king requesting a royal proclamation of the unity of Laos, a project that had been dear to his heart for years. On September 7, Phetsarath received a telegram from the king's minister of interior informing him that by virtue of a royal proclamation the French protectorate over the Kingdom of Luang Prabang continued. On September 15, Phetsarath issued a proclamation that unified the Kingdom of Luang Prabang with the four southern provinces—Khammouane, Savannakhet, Bassac, and Saravane—the *chao khouengs* of these last provinces having expressed their wish in this matter. Vientiane was to be the capital. The same day, he announced that a Congress of People's Representatives would soon meet to decide all political, economic and social questions.

This was the moment when an OSS team, the Raven Mission under the command of Major Aaron Bank, landed at Vientiane from Kunming. The mis-

sion was to search for Japanese POW camps and to report and observe conditions in Laos and on important personalities. Bank had received no briefing on the political situation in Laos before his departure from Kunming and was left to "play it by ear." The team was taken in hand by members of the Lao Pen Lao who had returned from Thailand. In an interview with Phetsarath attended by Fabre, Bank assured the prime minister that the French would not be allowed to return and advised him to await the arrival of an inter-allied commission, which Phetsarath spoke of in a proclamation to French residents and which he said would decide about the future of his country. 113

Across the river at Nong Khai, members of the Raven Mission had meetings with a number of Vietnamese who described themselves as "the Annamite faction." They were, in reality, members of the ICP. One of them, Vu Huu Binh, a former master sergeant in the Garde Indochinoise, was an important Viet Minh liaison officer with the Thai. <sup>114</sup> The OSS team went on to Thakhek, where it engaged in several arguments with French officers of the Franco-Laotian guerrillas. In one of these incidents, a member of the team declined to intervene in a confrontation between a French officer and a Viet Minh team in which the French officer was killed. Meanwhile, Bank and his executive officer, Major Charles Holland, drove overland by way of Savannakhet and Vinh to Hanoi, where they had meetings with other members of the OSS and with Ho Chi Minh.

On September 21, Major Fabre demanded the dismissal of the *chao khoueng* since 1941, Xieng Mao (Xieng Mao had received the honorific title Phaya Khammao<sup>115</sup> for anti-French activities and for his replacement by Kou Voravong). The next day, an advance guard of the Chinese Nationalist troops responsible for receiving the surrender of the Japanese arrived by boat on the Mekong: they appeared more interested in buying up the opium crop (harvested from late December to early February) than in disarming the departed Japanese.<sup>116</sup>

On October 7, Souphanouvong and his Vietnamese escort arrived in Savannakhet to find that Oun and his partisans, who included Phoumi Nosavan, had crossed the river from Thailand, were already in control of the town, and had entered a loose alliance with the large Vietnamese population who had armed themselves from looted armories of the Garde Indochinoise and with arms left behind by the withdrawing Japanese. Negotiations ensued, resulting in a merger of the forces of both men; Souphanouvong was commander in chief and Oun was second in command. Souphanouvong and his escort then proceeded by motor launch upriver to Thakhek, where he was joined by his wife and two young sons, Ariya and Anou. After a skirmish with Franco-Laotian guerrillas in the vicinity, Souphanouvong continued upriver to Vientiane, arriving on October 29 to find that the situation had evolved rapidly.

Bolstered by fresh assurances of support from the French, Sisavang Vong acted; on October 10, he sent messages to Vientiane accusing Phetsarath of exceeding his authority and stripping him of his position as prime minister and his title of viceroy. Although Phetsarath protested these decisions as an abuse of power, he accepted them and, after thanking the Laotian civil servants for their support for his actions, immediately announced his withdrawal from public

life. His position was made delicate by virtue of the fact he was married to a sister of Sisavang Vong. In fact, Phetsarath's main quarrel appears to have been with Savang Vatthana. In the short life of the Lao Issara government on Lao soil, he served as an ex officio adviser to the prime minister. He does not seem to have wished harm to the king. In a revealing comment in a letter to his half-brother Kindavong in Calcutta on September 6, Phetsarath referred to the abdication of Bao Dai in Vietnam and said "These difficulties exist also to some extent in Vientiane, but there is nothing to fear." 118

## ESTABLISHMENT OF THE LAO ISSARA GOVERNMENT

Also on October 10, a Committee of Independence, strongly influenced by the Lao Pen Lao representatives led by Oudone Sananikone, Tham Sayasithsena, and Bong Souvannavong, took the situation in Vientiane in hand. A provisional revolutionary government was proclaimed on October 12, taking the name Lao Issara. This government had Xieng Mao as prime minister, Chao Somsanith as minister of interior and justice, Katay Don Sasorith as minister of finance, Sing Ratanassamay as minister of defense, Nhouy Abhay as minister of education, Souvanna Phouma as minister of public works, and Oun Sananikone as minister of economy. All were moderate nationalists. On his arrival, Souphanouvong was made minister of foreign affairs in addition to his position as commander in chief. The government signed a military cooperation convention with the Viet Minh, but, significantly, did not recognize the DRV government.

The Lao Issara leaders viewed Phetsarath's actions prior to his destitution in a favorable light, and they now turned against the monarchy, which they saw as hopelessly compromised with the French. On October 12, Xieng Mao sent a telegram to the royal palace giving the king 48 hours in which to meet its "respectful" demand that he abdicate forthwith of his own free will and accept a position as monarch without effective powers pending a decision by the Chamber of People's Representatives. The king not having replied, a telegram on October 20 notified him that that Chamber had voted his "total destitution."

In an effort to give their government some semblance of legitimacy, the Lao Issara leaders had hastily named a People's Committee consisting of 34 members, many of them Lao Pen Lao activists, including the governors of several provinces who were not even in Vientiane. The Chamber of People's Representatives had been elected by the members of this committee. This was done in accordance with a provisional constitution adopted on the morning of October 12 in a ceremony at the French *résident supérieur*'s office, now renamed the Présidence du Conseil, carefully stage-managed by the Lao Pen Lao. <sup>120</sup> Under the circumstances, any sort of popular election was out of the question. Those elected were simply notified, and they were even more heavily dominated by the Lao Pen Lao. <sup>121</sup>

At the news of the king's destitution and the report that the Lao Issara government had dispatched an armed contingent to Luang Prabang under the command of Sing as defense minister, the agitation in the royal capital grew rapidly. With Imfeld and his men disarmed and held under house arrest by the Chinese

troops in the town, the governor, Boungnavath, had freedom of action. His men spread the news and had royalist supporters, including his deputy, Tiao Souk Vongsak, arrested. On November 10, hours before the entry into the town of Sing's force, a mob surrounded the royal palace and, firing shots in the air, escaladed the walls and forced entry. Sing and his men had an audience with the king that afternoon, politely requesting him to hand over any documents he may have signed with the French. In a telegram addressed to provincial civil servants, Xieng Mao said that the king had declared himself to be a simple citizen and was prepared to vacate the royal palace when the government thought it appropriate. Later in the month, the government decreed that no member of the government was henceforth to have any contact with the French.

Outside Vientiane and Luang Prabang, the authority of the Lao Issara government in fact was extremely limited. In Luang Namtha and Phong Saly, the Chinese had occupied the towns, removing Lao officials, and held a plebiscite that reported in favor of Chinese administration. The Franco-Laotian guerrillas had taken control of the main towns of the province of Xieng Khouang at the beginning of September, receiving precious support from Touby's Meo. Their hold on Sam Neua was much less solid, in spite of efforts on the part of the chao khoueng, Phoumi Vongvichit, to prevent the Chinese from entering the province. Here, because of its proximity to Vietnam, the revolutionary propaganda spread by the Viet Minh was strong, but also pro-Viet Minh rather than pro-Lao Issara. In the center and south, the Lao Issara government controlled the towns of Thakhek and Savannakhet. Moreover, the main roads leading east were denied to the Franco-Laotian guerrillas by Viet Minh detachments coming from Vietnam that had occupied Tchepone, Muong Phine, and Napé. Immediately after the Japanese surrender, the Viet Minh had occupied the principal passes over the Annamite Cordillera; on September 7–8 in a sharp exchange with a Franco-Laotian force at Napé, Viet Minh accompanied by Japanese secured control of the Keo Neua pass. But most of the remainder of the provinces of Khammouan and Savannakhet was controlled by the Franco-Laotian guerrillas, as were the southernmost provinces of Pakse and Saravane, which fell largely in the British zone of operation decided upon at the Potsdam Conference. In the south, Prince Boun Oum, the son of Prince Youi of Champassak, had 15,000 men under his command. 122

At the end of November, however, their position having become untenable due to repeated Viet Minh attacks from the east, the Franco-Laotian guerrillas evacuated Xieng Khouang rather than give battle in the town to Sing's force, which was coming from Luang Prabang. The Franco-Laotians were heavily dependent in this region on the support they received from the Meo, who were better able to operate in the mountains than in the towns. Meanwhile, the Viet Minh, aside from trying to exploit in their propaganda differences between the Lao and Phuan on the one hand and the Meo on the other, were themselves putting together a Meo guerrilla force under Faydang Lobliayao of the Lor clan, a rival of Touby who had fought on the side of the Japanese and who had betrayed many Frenchmen. The rivalry between Touby and Faydang went back

many years. The party was able to exploit personal differences between the two to enlist Faydang as head of the "patriotic" Meo, as it also exploited personal differences between the T'ai chieftain Deo Van Long and his subordinate Ho Van Loc to enlist the latter.

Likewise, in Vientiane itself the situation was becoming unfavorable; there were demonstrations outside the house where Fabre and his small band had barricaded themselves. On November 20, Fabre evacuated his band by truck to Tha Deua under an escort provided by the Chinese, from there crossing the river into Thailand. The Franco-Laotian guerrillas were also forced to abandon Luang Namtha. Finally, in Luang Prabang, Imfeld and his men were subjected to all kinds of pressure, culminating in a cutoff of food supplies. They therefore evacuated across the river on January 4, also under Chinese escort.

In Vientiane, the Lao Issara government wrestled with a growing list of problems. The most serious was probably finances, since the treasury was empty and there were no funds to pay civil servants. An attempt was made to tax opium exports, but this proved unenforceable, since the opium trade routes were not controlled by the government. Nor was there internal harmony. The government accused Phoumi Vongvichit, *chao khoueng* of Sam Neua, of cheating the Meo of a large sum of money for their opium crop. The Lao Issara government took steps to abolish the Indochinese state-owned company (*régie*) administering the opium trade, which had always been to the financial disadvantage of Laos, and make it a Laos monopoly. In desperation, the government appealed to the Thai government for a press on which to print money. Other problems were procurement of military equipment and foreign relations generally.

Not wealthy enough to afford posting diplomats abroad, or even to send them on missions, the government depended on aide-mémoires circulated to diplomats in Bangkok. One such aide-mémoire delivered to the American legation in January listed a set of grievances against the French. These included the French actions in "arbitrarily dividing" Laos by the Franco-Siamese treaty of 1893, in "disposing of the borders of Laos and of Laotians" by giving away parts of Sam Neua and the southernmost provinces between 1895 and 1905, and in surrendering Sayaboury and Bassac in 1941. The aide-mémoire also charged the French with wishing to create "an autonomous Meo district." The threat of a Meo secession was a constant with the Lao; they remembered the great uprising of 1919-1921 led by the messianic leader Pa Chai in which he claimed to have been called upon to establish an independent Meo kingdom, which had been put down by the French only with great difficulty. The aide-mémoire betrayed the urban-centered outlook of the government itself, describing with glee how the French "fled" from the towns in 1945. In response to an inquiry about whether it was in a position to facilitate travel for members of a Lao Issara delegation to the United Nations to present their case, the legation replied that as they were French citizens they would need French passports to travel to the United States. 123

Beginning in January, with the loss anew of Xieng Khouang, the fortunes of the Lao Issara government, such as they were, began to decline across Laos.

The Franco-Laotian guerrillas were now beginning to receive reinforcements and supplies by air and by road from French headquarters in Saigon, which made entry into the towns possible for the first time. They once again were positioned astride the main roads leading from Vietnam. They made their entry into Savannakhet against token resistance that was camouflaged by the Chinese withdrawal from that town. At Thakhek, on the other hand, the last point in central Laos still held by the Lao Issara in March 1946, Souphanouvong and his Viet Minh advisers were determined to make the French pay dearly. The defenders were mainly Vietnamese residents who had been encadred by Viet Minh agents. The Viet Minh flag flew over the town. In a day-long battle against the French reoccupation forces on March 21, 700 of the defenders were killed and 300 civilians lost their lives. 124 Prince Souphanouvong, escaping across the river in a sampan, was wounded by a strafing Spitfire of the French forces. He recovered on the Thai side at Nakhorn Phanom. With the French menacing Vientiane, the first thought of the Lao Issara government was to regularize its relations with the monarchy.

#### INTO EXILE

On March 23, Xieng Mao, having abandoned Vientiane for Luang Prabang, sent the king a letter imploring his clemency and asking him to resume his throne. Sisavang Vong was in no hurry. In mid-April, a joint council of the government and the members of the royal family met to work out the details. On April 23, with great ceremony at the royal palace, the king signified his acceptance of the constitution and reaffirmed the unity of Laos. A royal ordinance sanctioned this. A strong French column was already making its way up the road from Vientiane to Luang Prabang. At the same time, Meo guerrillas moved west to harass Chinese troops still in the vicinity of the royal capital and encourage them to decamp. Phetsarath and the Lao Issara ministers fled across the river. After an arduous trip, the French column entered Luang Prabang on May 13. Freed from being a virtual prisoner in his palace, the king welcomed them as liberators and proclaimed his attachment to France. 125 He signed an ordinance declaring null and void all acts to which he had given his sanction under pressure from the Japanese, the Chinese, and the Lao Issara since April 4, 1945. In an address to his people, the king said it was his desire to see the people of the Kingdom of Laos take their place among modern nations; he would grant them a constitution and they would elect their representatives to participate in government. 126

The flight of the Lao Issara government left scattered groups of armed partisans who mounted raids into Lao territory from bases on the right bank of the Mekong. Souphanouvong set up headquarters at Chiang Rai with a view to operating in Luang Namtha. Chao Somsanith's area of operations was Luang Prabang, so he set up his base in Sayaboury together with Sing and Ouan Ratikoun. Oun Sananikone, whose area was Vientiane, was headquartered at Nong Khai. Katay and Nhouy Abhay were responsible for southern Laos.

In eastern Laos, another group was under the command of Thao O Anourack, the Phouthai son of two generations of district chiefs of Tchepone. At the

Japanese takeover, Thao O had refused an appeal from the Franco-Laotian guerrillas to join them, pleading family responsibilities, and had remained in Tchepone. When the Lao Issara took over Savannakhet, the *chao khoueng* appointed him commander of liberation forces in Tchepone. When the Franco-Laotians reoccupied the town in March 1946, he made his way east with the 200 to 300 men under his command to the safety of Lao Bao just across the border of Vietnam. Finally he was constrained to abandon Laos and make his way to Hanoi. The Viet Minh put him in touch with Kaysone Phomvihane, a Vietnamese-Lao métis from Savannakhet who had been sent to direct Lao Issara radio broadcasts over Radio Hanoi, and Nouhak Phoumsavan, a Vietnamese<sup>127</sup> from Mukdahan. Neither had played any significant role in the Lao Issara, but both were in the confidence of Ho Chi Minh, and saw in the latter's government the salvation of an independent Laos.

The Vietnamese proposed to Thao O that he form a committee for the liberation of Laos, and this was done, with Nouhak as president. The enlistment of other small groups from Xieng Khouang and Sam Neua brought the effective strength under Thao O's command to 500. Faydang also participated in these meetings. The force was large enough to dispatch one company each to Sam Neua, Xieng Khouang, Muong Mo, Napé, and Muong Sen. Thao O soon received secret codes from Phetsarath and Souvanna Phouma in Thailand that allowed him to communicate with the Lao Issara in exile. In addition to the resistance leaders Thao O met at this time, he also heard about a leader among the Lao Theung of the Bolovens plateau, Sithon Kommadan, the son of a famous rebel leader who had been killed by the French.

# The Vietnam Imbroglio

Ho's position was greatly complicated toward the end of 1945 by the presence of the Chinese in the north and their manipulations of the nationalist parties and by Leclerc's lightning campaign in the south, which put the French in a much stronger position. Sainteny had had to hand over the Puginier Palace to Lu Han, the Chinese commander. Tran Van Giau and Pham Ngoc Thach arrived in Hanoi on November 10 with first-hand reports of the Viet Minh failure in the south. The only course left open was a prolonged guerrilla war, they said, but for that the base in the north had to be solidified. This factor no doubt contributed to the party central committee's decision to dissolve the party, a decision that placed reliance on a united front strategy.

To make matters worse for the Viet Minh, Alessandri's reorganized force was preparing to re-enter Tonkin from China (which they finally did during January 1946, although their forward movement was delayed by constant palavers with Chinese commanders). This was thought by Ho to represent a potential threat to his government, as was the French reoccupation of Laos and Cambodia. Lacking pledges of support from any outside power, Ho knew that negotiations with the French were inevitable. But he did not want to shoulder the sole responsibility for a deal that would subject him to widespread criticism from his followers.

At Viet Minh initiative, a new series of contacts between Ho, Secretary-General Hoang Minh Giam of the provisional government, and Giap, on the one hand, and the French, in the persons of Sainteny, Pignon and Secretary Louis Caput of the Tonkin section of the French Socialist Party, on the other hand, began in the early days of December. Ho was angling for French recognition of the DRV and showed a conciliatory attitude, even expressing his willingness to meet with d'Argenlieu. On the basis of these contacts, Caput wrote to d'Argenlieu on December 8 that Ho's government and the Viet Minh were the only qualified representatives of the Annamite people, that they were the most likely people to carry out any Franco-Vietnamese agreement, and therefore that France had an interest in helping the DRV to resist the pressures it was facing from the Chinese. 129

These resumed secret contacts resulted on December 7 in a French government note advancing the idea for the first time that France was prepared "to confer on the Annamite people all the independence that is compatible with its membership, on the one hand, in the Indochinese federation, and, on the other, in the French Union." Although this still did not amount to a French willingness to recognize the provisional government, as men belonging to the liberal wing of the French establishment such as Caput and Max André, whose party was in the ruling coalition in Paris, were urging, it marked the first time that the idea of shared sovereignty was officially pronounced. From the end of December, the French noticed a more moderate stance on the part of the provisional government, a toning down of the inflammatory anti-French broadcasts of Radio Bach Mai, and a moderation in press commentary.

One factor may have been the presence in Hanoi since December 20 of a Soviet mission. This mission had no dealings with the government but entertained frequent and cordial relations with the Viet Minh. From other sources it seems clear that Stalin was counting on the French Communist Party's becoming the governing party of France and therefore did not wish to see a confrontation between the Vietnamese Communists and the French. Ho, being a disciplined Comintern graduate, obeyed. In party documents of the time that have become public, the change was explained in terms of the need to make a distinction between imperialist, colonialist, reactionary Frenchmen and those having good faith in Vietnam.

The necessity for placating the Chinese and the French was later described by the ideologue Le Duan as a demonstration of how the party decided on strategy, "now reaching a temporary compromise with Chiang Kai-shek to have free hands to cope with French colonialism, now adopting a conciliatory attitude toward the French in order to oust the Chiang Kai-shek and sweep away his reactionary henchmen."<sup>131</sup>

Ho saw the election of a National Assembly as a way to force the other parties to share responsibility for any deal with the French and at the same time to give the provisional government the appearance of greater representativity. In order to satisfy the demands of the other parties, Ho had had to promise that the provisional government would resign after the National Assembly met for

the first time. Ho's main objective at this time became to rid himself of the Chinese, which would leave the nationalist parties, violently anti-French, without any protection.

Ho's efforts to bring independent nationalists into his fold to share responsibility were generally unavailing, however. For instance, he brought Ngô Dinh Diem down from the mountain prison where he had been kept since being seized by members of a Viet Minh squad and tried to persuade him to join a government of union and resistance. Diem, whose brother had been assassinated by the Viet Minh, refused Ho's offer without being given more information on Viet Minh activities and plans. Ho let him go home to Hue. 132

The French were also making overtures to the nationalists. Faced with the absence of any autochthonous political authority in Vietnam not controlled by the Communists, de Gaulle conceived the idea of bringing out of his enforced exile the ex-emperor Duy Tan, who had been deposed in 1916. It was a project typical of the Third Republic, which had removed inconvenient occupants of the throne and saw itself within its rights in taking ex-rulers off the shelf when deemed convenient and bringing them back to political life. Prince Vinh San, as the former emperor was known, was brought to Paris for a meeting with de Gaulle on December 14, which was most cordial. Unfortunately, Vinh San was killed a few days later in a plane crash. The episode accentuated Bao Dai's visceral hatred for French officialdom; a program of action issued under Vinh San's name promised the unification of the three kys under a central imperial government established in Hue, the convocation of a provisional consultative chamber for drafting a monarchical constitution, reform of the mandarinate, and other steps that, if anything, represented a step back from what Bao Dai's imperial government had already accomplished prior to the Viet Minh takeover. 133 The whole scheme was predicated on the principles announced on March 24, 1945.

Early in 1946, after de Gaulle had retired from the French political scene, d'Argenlieu toyed with rather similar schemes to fill the constitutional vacuum. One of the candidates considered suitable was Bao Dai's son Bao Long. His age would require the appointment of a regent, preferably his mother, the former empress Nam Phuong, who was a Catholic from Cochinchina. At the insistence of the apostolic delegate, she received d'Argenlieu's envoys but did not deign to answer their questions; instead, she went over to the piano and played the new national anthem.<sup>134</sup>

# THE JANUARY 1946 ELECTION

Voting on January 6 was held in a peaceful atmosphere. It was, after all, a solemn occasion, an affirmation by the Vietnamese of a popular suffrage for the first time in at least 80 years, and the Vietnamese did their part honorably. Certainly there were many districts with only one candidate on the ballot. Needless to say, Ho and the other Viet Minh candidates polled the largest number of votes. Ho's face was everywhere, and it was enough for a candidate to say he or she was a friend of the president to be elected. Ho received 169,222 votes out of 172,765 votes cast (98 percent) and 187,880 eligible voters in Hanoi. Giap was

elected in Nghe An by a similar 97 percent. Pham Van Dong was elected in Quang Ngai, Vinh Thuy (Bao Dai) in Thanh Hoa. 135

While vote-casting was generally fair, given the conditions, the election results could hardly be said to be representative of the Vietnamese people. The northern districts under the domination of the VNQDD and DMH, such as Vinh Yen, Viet Tri, Yen Bay, and Lang Son (where there was simply no voting) were nevertheless represented in the National Assembly by members who belonged to the Viet Minh or their affiliates. Finally, while the 17 million inhabitants of Bac Bo and Trung Bo were represented by 356 members, the 6 million inhabitants of Nam Bo, where the ongoing guerrilla war prevented voting, were represented by 18 members, according to the official results published by the government. The published results by party label were largely meaningless, given the obfuscation surrounding the members belonging to the ICP, except that this first National Assembly was more diverse, in terms of parties, than any the DRV has seen since. But it was not an election to choose one party among many alternatives so much as to endorse the authority of the provisional government, and in this sense the verdict of the voters defending independence could not be denied.

Rumors had started to circulate in Hanoi, however, regarding the secret negotiations with the French. Vice President Than, not wishing to be associated with any negotiations with the French, resigned his post. Moves were afoot to replace Ho's government with one headed by Bao Dai, who had on two occasions not shown up for scheduled meetings with French representatives. In a moment of despair in late February, Ho even asked Bao Dai to take over the government. Bao Dai asked for time to consider and to consult his American and Chinese contacts. That afternoon, however, Ho had a change of mind, perhaps because he had received assurances from the Chinese that they would put pressure on the nationalist parties to participate in the new government. 136

On February 24, a new agreement was signed in pomp and circumstance among the Viet Minh, the VNQDD, the Dong Minh Hoi, and the Vietnam Democratic Party that allowed the convening of the National Assembly. The seating of 70 delegates from the VNQDD and the Dong Minh Hoi, "recently returned from abroad and who were not able to contest the election," was approved when the Assembly opened at 8 A.M. on March 2. Ho then read a report on the government's work and handed in the resignation of his government. Ngô Tu Ha, the Assembly's president and a Catholic, then proposed that Ho be entrusted with forming a new government, as agreed on February 24. This proposal was adopted unanimously. The National Assembly adjourned at 1 P.M. 137

Before adjourning, however, the Assembly established a number of committees with innocuous-sounding names. A National Resistance Committee absorbed most of the tasks of the Ministry of Defense so that the latter was reduced to the role of a supply and procurement agency, with Giap as chairman and Vu Hong Khanh of the VNQDD as vice chairman. A Select Committee for the Constitution was established with responsibility for drafting a constitution. Most important, a Permanent Committee of the Assembly assumed certain

powers of decision on behalf of the Assembly while the latter was not in session. This committee of 15 members under Nguyên Van To as chairman was effectively controlled by the Viet Minh. Finally, Bao Dai's role as supreme adviser was reaffirmed as head of a Consultative High Council. In the evening, the new Government of Union and Resistance was constituted. To placate the Chinese, Ho dropped from the cabinet two leading Communists, Giap and Tran Huy Lieu, the minister of propaganda. Ignoring Than's absence, Ho named him to be vice president again; he would be valuable as one who shared the blame for the agreement with the French, which was about to be signed.

#### SHARED SOVEREIGNTY

A Franco-Chinese agreement signed in Chungking on February 28 at last gave the French negotiators the assurance that French troops would be able to enter Bac Bo without Chinese opposition. Even so, lengthy and inconclusive discussions with the local Chinese commanders went on in which Sainteny and Pignon sought assurances they would abide by the Chungking agreement while they tried to get Ho's assent to an accord at the same time. During this time, the French fleet transporting troops from Nam Bo approached the port of Haiphong, gambling on taking advantage of favorable tides. Even so, an exchange of gunfire between the French and Chinese could not be avoided as the French warships approached the docks; for a moment on the morning of March 6 the exchange threatened to escalate uncontrollably.

The preliminary convention signed in Hanoi at 4 P.M. on March 6 by Sainteny, Ho, and Vu Hong Khanh was the fruit of negotiations that had gone on intensively since the previous month. It was deceptively short and simple, betraying no hint of the arduous discussions back and forth, often in long night sessions.<sup>138</sup>

Ho's negotiators, Giap and Giam, had succeeded in slipping into Article 1 the name Vietnam for a government that Admiral d'Argenlieu was still referring to as "the Hanoi government." France recognized the [Democratic] Republic of Vietnam "as a free State having its own government, parliament, army, and finances." This represented a tremendous step forward for Ho's government, which until then had not been recognized by its official name by any senior French official. The attributes of this state were circumscribed by its membership in the projected Indochinese federation and in the French Union. These represented, for the future, potentially important constraints. The trouble was that the Indochinese federation had not yet been established and the French Union, which had been written into the postwar French constitution as an association of France's overseas territories to replace the Empire, was equally untested. At Sainteny's insistence, in order to square the preliminary convention with the French position in Cochinchina, a sentence was added to Article 1 providing for consultation of the population by referendum insofar as the territorial unity of Vietnam was concerned, a sentence as ambiguous as it was binding.

Article 3 engaged the signatories to "take all necessary measures to bring about an immediate cessation of hostilities," a reference introduced by Giap

and Giam in a maneuver intended to extend the authority of the DRV to Nam Bo, which was the only region where hostilities were taking place "immediately." Ho lost no time in proposing to the French that his government send a commission to Nam Bo to oversee the implementation of this article of the preliminary convention.

In military terms, which were mainly spelled out in an annex to the agreement that Sainteny and Pignon also negotiated on behalf of the French, the DRV was welcoming the French army purely for purposes of relieving the departing Chinese, a task to be shared by the Vietnamese, both in specified numbers. Moreover, the missions undertaken by the French were limited in time, ten months for the guarding of Japanese POWs, five years for "ensuring the maintenance of public order and the security of Vietnamese territory," and a time limit that was yet to be negotiated for those units charged with the defense of naval and air bases. The working out of operational problems was to be entrusted to mixed commissions at all levels.

The negotiations had moved so rapidly in the last hours that Sainteny had not had time to inform d'Argenlieu of the text of the military annex before it was signed by the Vietnamese. The admiral's first reaction was to minimize its importance. Nevertheless, he tried to avoid publishing it (a useless gesture, since the Viet Minh published it immediately) and delayed forwarding the text to Paris until he had received satisfactory reassurances from both Sainteny and Leclerc about its origins. In Paris, however, the reaction was one of stupefaction and anger. How could the government's agents on the spot have agreed to impose a five-year limit on France's military presence in Vietnam, the government wanted to know?139

No doubt Sainteny and Pignon, neophyte negotiators, tired out by the long night sessions imposed by their Viet Minh interlocutors and anxious to conclude an accord which had been under discussion for the better part of five months and which would allow the French military to take advantage of the favorable tides in the approaches to Haiphong, had finally let all this pass. It is unlikely that they were unaware what trouble these concessions would cause when their superiors learned of them. On the other hand, their superiors had given their negotiators precious little backup; the admiral was away in Paris during the crucial final period of the negotiations. His instructions to Sainteny and Pignon<sup>140</sup> show a marked failure to grasp the political significance of what was being agreed to.

The practical import of the texts signed on March 6 was that France and the DRV accepted a kind of shared sovereignty. But the extent of this sovereignty was left vague in important aspects of space and time. Most important, the territorial extent of the DRV was not specified. Indeed, from the point of view of the Vietnamese nationalists the preliminary convention was a major step backward to before August 1945, when the territorial extent of the Empire of Vietnam had been precisely defined. Unification of the three Vietnamese regions was no longer an accomplished fact, but required some sort of popular referendum (the organization of which posed many problems and which would be a

source of constant delay) to restore the unification of the country which had been achieved in August.

In Cochinchina, in particular, sovereignty was not so much shared as contested. The clause of the agreement concerning Cochinchina, indeed, seems to have come as a disagreeable surprise to d'Argenlieu, who afterward claimed, correctly, in justification of his acceptance that it had been slipped in at the last minute by the alert Viet Minh negotiators, like so much else. 141 Leclerc's pacification campaign carried out against the Viet Minh since October 1945 raised questions that went beyond the scope of the immediate problem in the north. Accordingly, the whole subject of the status of the French army in Nam Bo was carefully avoided in the preliminary convention and its military annex. This would not have been the case had a Vietnamese government exercising sovereignty over a unified Vietnam, including Nam Bo, negotiated with the returning French. As the nationalists had foreseen, such a government would have been in a position of strength vis-à-vis the French that would have enabled them to arrive at, if necessary, some sort of agreement to share sovereignty. But Ho's government, because of the illegal nature of the Viet Minh seizure of power, decided not to base its claim to speak for all Vietnam on the basis of its being the successor to the independent government of the Empire of Vietnam. Instead, it chose the much more dubious route of relying on military force.

Clearly, the March 6 documents did not constitute a basis for stable relations in future; they left a wide gap whose bridging would demand a Herculean effort even with good will on both sides. Meanwhile, the ambiguities they had built into the accords provided the Viet Minh with a weapon against their adversaries, forcing the latter to constantly deny that they had been the ones to violate the accords. Good will was lacking on both sides; the DRV was not willing to wait the five years when the French, under their agreement, would be obliged to withdraw their military presence, which would make what sovereignty could be exercised in its absence a moot point.

In foreign relations, the DRV negotiators had achieved next to nothing. If the DRV had not been recognized by other governments before March 6 (except by the short-lived Thanh government in Kampuchea), there was little hope that now, in the amorphous state which it had accepted at the hands of the French, without clear sovereignty or territorial boundaries, the DRV would be recognized by other countries, although Ho in his capacity as foreign minister wrote to Prime Minister Attlee in this sense<sup>143</sup> and sent a delegation to Chungking seeking Chinese recognition.

The news of the imminent landing of French troops at Haiphong struck the Vietnamese (who had of course been kept in the dark for six months about their government's dealings with the French while listening to virulent anti-French radio broadcasts) with the force of a thunderclap. For the southerners, particularly, it was a shock; here were the Viet Minh, who had swept aside the southern nationalists with their assurances they would safeguard independence by negotiating for recognition by the Allies, making a deal with the former colonialists to share power. Coming after the September 23 takeover by the

French in Saigon, the news from Hanoi was not calculated to persuade people of the wisdom of their government. Ho lost no time in explaining the turn of events to his people. At a mass meeting in front of the theater in Hanoi on the afternoon of March 7, Giap was the principal speaker.

Predictably, it was a speech that played down the negative and accentuated the positive. Giap reported that as always, the government was far-sighted and that the people should have confidence in its leaders. In just this manner, in February 1918, Lenin had argued for accepting the German terms for peace, Draconian as they were, amounting in effect to the loss to Russia of the Ukraine and most of the Baltic. "It is a question," Lenin had warned, "of signing the peace terms now or signing the death sentence of the Soviet Government three weeks later." In presenting the peace proposals to the Soviet Executive, Lenin had faced heckling by many on the left wing of his own party. 144 Giap made the comparison explicit, asking in one of his rhetorical questions whether Russia had not emerged stronger after the Brest-Litovsk agreement. Giap warned that a war against the French in the present circumstances "would have been heroic, but our people would have endured terrible suffering."<sup>145</sup> Barely nine months later, when the "objective conditions" were right, namely the army had been strengthened, the party would not hesitate to declare a war to the finish against the French.

With the advance party of his troops Leclerc entered Hanoi, where he was greeted with joy by the French population, which had been living in mortal fear all these months. He had a friendly meeting with Ho. He then liberated the prisoners of the French Indochina Army from the citadel and passed them in review, a generous gesture in view of the humiliation inflicted on their generals, who had been shipped home almost as war criminals. "The siege is over," Leclerc told the men. To make the point that the two governments were on an equal footing, he had his vehicles fly both the French and DRV flags and had his villa guarded by 15 French soldiers and 15 Viet Minh soldiers. On March 22, with Giap, he laid wreaths at the monuments to the war dead of both the French and Vietnamese, and then presided, again with Giap, at a parade of French and Vietnamese troops.

A few days later, Bao Dai, who had served Ho's government loyally but wanted nothing to do with the March 6 agreement, departed for China aboard the plane carrying the Vietnamese delegation. Although he was to keep in touch with Ho indirectly by intermediaries, he was not to set foot on Vietnamese soil again for three years. A few days later, he was followed by Tran Trong Kim, who reached the border traveling incognito by car through Lang Son.

The State Department, meanwhile, acted to fill the information void in Washington about Indochina by reopening its vice consulate in Hanoi, closed since 1941, and opening a consulate in Saigon. (A foreign service officer had paid a brief visit to Hanoi in October 1945.<sup>146</sup>) The first occupant of the Saigon post, Charles S. Reed II, began reporting in March 1946,<sup>147</sup> while the occupant of the reactivated Hanoi post, James L. O'Sullivan, began reporting in April. The consulate in Saigon was made a consulate general on May 20, 1946.

#### THE VIET MINH TERROR

On the internal political front, Ho had succeeded in gaining public acceptance of his deal with the French. There now remained only to break the rival structures of the nationalist parties to give the Viet Minh a free hand. Significantly, the preliminary convention contained no restrictions on future action against these parties; Vu Hong Khanh appears not to have thought of writing into the convention guarantees of a multi-party political system within or outside the Viet Minh. There is some doubt about whether he even took part in the negotiations. He was not to have the opportunity again.

The move of the Communists to crush what remained of the nationalist parties was concealed behind a mask of reconciliation donned by Ho on May 27 on the eve of his departure for France in the form of a large National Popular Front of Vietnam (Hoi Lien Hiep Quoc Dan Viet Nam). Beneath the banner of independence and democracy all Vietnamese of all races, religions, and classes were invited to join the Lien Viet, as it became known. Among its constituents were the Viet Minh, together with all its own front organizations, the dissident faction of the Dong Minh Hoi, the Vietnam Democratic Party, labor unions, and Catholic and Buddhist associations. The VNQDD was subjected to the same subversive tactics as were used against the Dong Minh Hoi; following a further mopping-up campaign by Giap as acting minister of interior on July 11–18, Nguyên Van Xuan, who had been in the first cabinet, called for a "renovated" VNQDD which would integrate itself into the Lien Viet.

The Lien Viet was entirely under Viet Minh control. Ho was honorary president. Huynh Thuc Khang, the officially non-party minister of interior but actually a Viet Minh supporter, was president; Ton Duc Thang, Viet Minh, was vice president; Cu Huy Can, of the Democratic Party (which followed the Viet Minh), was secretary-general; other members of the governing board were Tran Huy Lieu, Viet Minh; Pham Ngoc Thach, Viet Minh; Ngô Tu Ha, pro–Viet Minh Catholic; and Nguyên Tuong Long, VNQDD. 148 It was still the period of the facade of multiple parties; the time for a one-party regime had not yet arrived.

The Chinese occupation troops departed in June, their mission uncompleted. Several hundred Japanese soldiers disappeared with their arms into the bush to join the Viet Minh, the Dai Viet, the Cao Dai, the Lao Issara, or the Khmer Issarak, either from fear of returning home or else due to their sympathy with the cause of Indochinese independence. In the summer of 1946, while Ho was away, Giap used the expanded Liberation Army (which, like every other institution in the DRV, had been legislated to redound to the benefit of the underground ICP) to carry out a campaign of annihilation against the nationalist parties, which the Chinese withdrawal had left exposed. The campaign was foreshadowed by an editorial in the official Viet Minh newspaper *Cuu Quoc* on June 19, which denounced the "reactionary saboteurs of the March agreement" and reaffirmed the policy of Franco-Vietnamese cooperation.

As the Chinese withdrew, the Liberation Army, newly trained and outfitted, moved in, establishing people's committees on the by then well-known pattern. The Dong Minh Hoi was finished as a viable force by the end of June.

O'Sullivan reported on July 1 that the Viet Minh had surrounded several cities held by VNQDD supporters at the head of the delta around Viet Tri and that serious fighting was going on. 149 The VNQDD could rely on a mass following in the Red River valley where it had established a guerrilla warfare school. Vu Hong Khanh retreated to Lao Kay, backed against the Yunnan border, where he held out until November. With one of the signatories of the March 6 accord gone from the scene, French troops, in a peculiar and perverse interpretation of maintaining law and order, assisted Giap by mopping up remaining VNQDD strongpoints in the capital and joined them in action against the DMH remnants in Hon Gay. The Dai Viets were also decimated. By the end of July, O'Sullivan was reporting that the "Viet Minh League seems steadily to be eliminating all organized opposition." <sup>150</sup> According to one estimate, 15,000 nationalists were massacred. 151 In a passage of his later writing that has often been quoted, Truong Chinh deplored the fact that the party had not killed a greater number of its enemies in the summer of 1946. More convincing proof of the party's reliance on violent means could not be asked for.

#### D'ARGENLIEU AND THE COCHINCHINESE ALBATROSS

In his efforts to elaborate the structures of the Indochinese federation, d'Argenlieu confronted the problem of what the French called a qualified interlocutor. In order to have a federation, the French needed to have legally valid governments in the five constituent states with which to deal. Cambodia and Laos, now reunified and sovereign in their pre-1940 territories, posed no obstacle to discourse with the French. In Tonkin and in at least that part of Annam north of the 16th parallel, the French had recognized the authority of the DRV as an equal partner in relieving the Chinese occupation, making the DRV at least a possible qualified interlocutor. Cochinchina, however, had been French territory since the conquest of 1862, and decisions affecting its people had been made since that time by governments of the Third Republic in Paris and now by the provisional government of the Fourth Republic, which in the present instance was represented by the ministry of colonies.

To the Vietnamese, Chinese, and other communities of Cochinchina (Nam Bo), there was something fatefully perverse about their relationship to the French during this period. What token representativity they had enjoyed under the old Colonial Council of Cochinchina, whose members had been elected, was taken away when, by a federal ordinance of February 4, 1946, d'Argenlieu replaced this body with a Consultative Council of Cochinchina, whose 12 members he appointed. Further, while d'Argenlieu's representatives were negotiating with the DRV government in Hanoi, these communities were being assured by the Norodom Palace that France would take care of them and not sacrifice them to incorporation into the DRV without having consulted their wishes by means of a referendum. While the Cochinchinese could be relied upon to vote in good bourgeois fashion for the rule of law over the rule of law, they were now being asked to vote for separation of Cochinchina from the rest of Vietnam, which was something quite different.

In d'Argenlieu's Cartesian logic, the only solution to the interlocutor problem in Cochinchina was to establish an autonomous government representing the inhabitants of Cochinchina on an equal footing with those of the other four states of Indochina. Such an autonomous government, needless to say, would have to be entirely responsive to his dictates. This was not so easily done, in view of the fact that the Fourth Republic had taken no steps to modify the juridical status of Cochinchina. When the impasse was finally revealed for all to see, in October, it was to lead to tragedy for the leader of the Cochinchinese republic.

Under the circumstances, a Franco-Vietnamese conference held at the Lycée Yersin in Dalat in April foundered on the issue of the DRV's claim to Cochinchina (Nam Bo) as an integral part of Vietnam. The head of the DRV delegation, Foreign Minister Nguyên Tuong Tam, a non-Communist, taking the only position he could, insisted the issue was non-negotiable. The French delegation submitted a *note verbale* to Tam stating its position that the French negotiators of the preliminary convention had accepted use of the term DRV as a matter of courtesy and out of a desire to avoid further complicating, for reasons of "face," particularly difficult negotiations. The French delegation, however, eluded any substantive discussion of the issue by declaring itself not competent. At the same time, Cédile was assuring the leaders of the small separatist Cochinchinese party that signature of the March 6 preliminary convention in no way implied that France recognized an all-Vietnam government embracing the three *bos* in the form of the DRV.

While the Dalat conference was going on, however, it was Giap, the deputy head of the delegation, who held the power of decision in the south, where the VNQDD was poorly organized. Giap ordered the southerners to keep their arms no matter what happened. Giap and the Tong Bo were playing their own subtle game with the French. While supporting the guerrillas in the south as a force for unity of Vietnam, they took no public responsibility for the war there, which had resumed with a vengeance at the end of March. The French had intercepted a message from the guerrilla leader Nguyên Binh calling for a general offensive timed to coincide with the opening of the Dalat conference. 153

Binh (his real name was Nguyên Phuong Thao) was a ruthless guerrilla fighter who had gotten his training in the military schools of the VNQDD and who was now sent south by the Tong Bo to do its bidding. Where Giau's scorched-earth policy in 1945 had failed to win the Viet Minh popular support, Binh's tactics succeeded in 1946. Carefully avoiding coming up against French troops, Binh's guerrilla squads enforced compliance by striking anywhere and at any time. They assassinated more than 1,000 notables and moderate nationalists in the following months, spreading word that anyone collaborating with the French would be punished and that to be neutral was to collaborate. Thousands of others abandoned their villages to the Viet Minh squads.

Because the records of the police had been destroyed, the French operated at a serious disadvantage. Their troops, youngsters for the most part and bewildered by these terrorist tactics, struck blindly and in the only way they knew how, by exacting reprisals.<sup>154</sup> In guerrilla warfare, there is no more effective re-

cruiting tool. On the basis of this campaign of terror, which resembled in some ways the actions of the secret societies of the 1920s and 1930s and foreshadowed the Viet Cong terrorist campaign of 1958–1960 against rural schoolteachers and others, Binh was able to reconstitute a rump UNF that included some factions of the Cao Dai, the Hoa Hao, and the Binh Xuyen, whose pirates were easily lured by the prospect of booty.

In spite of a cease-fire agreed to on paper in October 1946, fighting never really ceased in Cochinchina. It was fueled by shipments of arms from Siam, where a succession of postwar civilian governments were sympathetic to the anti-French cause of the Viet Minh, the Lao Issara, and the Khmer Issarak. The first contact for Siamese arms was made by Tran Van Giau, who had relinquished his post as head of the PEC in Saigon and who arrived in Bangkok in early 1946. According to Giau, his main assignments in Bangkok were to tend to the acquisition and shipment of arms and equipment back to Nam Bao, to strengthen the Cambodian resistance movement, and to expand links to and to integrate the overseas Vietnamese in Siam and western Indochina into Viet Minh operations. Giau was an old friend of Pridi Phanomyong (who became prime minister in March 1946) from their student days in France in the late 1920s. Two of Pridi's former Free Thai associates, Tiang Serikhan and Thongpin Phuriphat, were particularly helpful to Giau. 155 Both were politicians from Siam's northeast, and they also proved helpful to the Viet Minh liaison officer Vu Huu Binh.

Pridi assigned Admiral Luang Sangworn Yutthakit to supervise the delivery to the Viet Minh of arms left in the hands of the Free Thai movement at the end of the war; the arms included Thompson submachine guns, British Sten guns, ammunition, grenades, detonators, and booby traps (some of which came from the OSS, which had been directed in May 1945 to "supply arms, ammunition and other supplies to the Thai Army and other resistance forces"). Arms that could not be procured through normal theater channels could be requisitioned or purchased by the OSS under procedures approved by the theater commander. <sup>156</sup>

Sangworn was commander of the military police and he assured the "absolute sanctity" of the Free Thai arsenal, which was located within the headquarters of the military police. On the occasion of Sangworn's appointment on August 8, 1947, to the post of director general of police in conjunction with his position as commander of the military police, the American ambassador in Bangkok, Edwin F. Stanton, described him thus:

Sangworn is a tough character, strictly a stooge of Pridi and though prominent [in the] Free Thai during [the] war has [a] record of ship building for [the] Japs and shielding Jap war criminal Suriyaebata wanted by [the] British. Also [it is] alleged [that] he [was] one of biggest rice smugglers while customs chief until recently. Last week his military police [were] involved in [an] incident apparently connected with opium racketeering. 157

The arms thus acquired by the Viet Minh went both by overland routes through Cambodia and by sea. In one instance of arms deliveries to the Viet Minh that

has been documented, Pridi arranged for the delivery of a barge carrying 20 tonnes of OSS-supplied U.S. carbines. A Viet Minh captain, accompanied by a Siamese police official, Chana Samudavanija, sailed the barge down the Chao Phraya River and then motored off into the Gulf of Siam.<sup>158</sup>

The effects of Binh's campaign of terror in Nam Bo were twofold. First, it made any sort of popular consultation impossible. Second, it undercut the position of the southern Vietnamese separatist leaders, who had hoped to gain a popular following based on the widespread fear of being placed under the government in Hanoi; an artificial campaign to drum up support for separatism by means of "spontaneous" rallies in Saigon and elsewhere was poorly received.<sup>159</sup>

With intransigence mounting on either side on the Cochinchina issue, the Viet Minh had abandoned their initial acceptance of a referendum, born in the heady days of March when they felt sure the people of Nam Bo would vote overwhelmingly to join the rest of Vietnam in the DRV. They now were opposed to it. In reporting this change at the beginning of June, O'Sullivan in Hanoi noted that claims of victory in an eventual referendum were based on the unspoken premise that the claimant would establish the conditions in which the voting took place. <sup>160</sup>

D'Argenlieu had himself been reflecting on the way in which a referendum might be organized so that its result would not be prejudiced. This was a special responsibility he owed to his supporters in Saigon. It had to be carried out well, whatever happened. Moreover, if it failed, his project for the Indochinese federation would also fail, he believed, because the Laotians and Cambodians would certainly refuse to enter a structure so overwhelmingly dominated by the Vietnamese. His reflections were not helped, he would later claim in his memoirs, by unsolicited advice from Paris to the effect that the voting should express the true sentiments of the Cochinchese; that he, d'Argenlieu, was to maintain a strict neutrality in the matter; that even the establishment of an autonomous Cochinchinese government at this stage would smack of partisan politics because it would be responsible for organizing the referendum; even that contacts between responsible Cochinchinese elements and Ho's government for discussing their internal affairs should be encouraged, as if the issue concerned the formation of a joint football team and not the lives of several million people.<sup>161</sup> Giap, of course, told the Dalat conference with maddening reasonableness that the referendum should be organized by a strictly neutral administration in Saigon.

D'Argenlieu, however, was acting more and more as if he had a free hand; on occasion he acted in complete disregard of the government in Paris and the National Assembly to which it was answerable. He signed a federal ordinance of May 28, 1946, declaring null and void the decree Decoux had obtained from Pétain granting the governor general the power to act on his own in the event that communication was cut off with Vichy. 162 D'Argenlieu's federal ordinance nullified all decrees taken consequent to Pétain's decree. Largely because of pressing demands for troop reinforcements to deal with the guerrilla war in Cochinchina, the French government passed Law 46.9991 on May 10, 1946,

prolonging the legal state of war until the cabinet decided to end it by decree. Thus, from the French legal point of view, what was called the Indochina War was a prolongation of World War II. 163

While French troops were, on his orders, still trying to put down Binh's terrorist campaign, d'Argenlieu set afoot moves for establishing an autonomous government of Cochinchina in early May. On May 30, he took it upon himself to authorize the establishment of an Autonomous Republic of Cochinchina in response to a request from the chairman of the Advisory Council a few days previously. D'Argenlieu observed that in view of the fact that the French government and National Assembly had not pronounced themselves on the issue of independence for Cochinchina, and in view of the fact that the referendum provided for in the March 6 preliminary convention had not yet taken place, the government of the republic would have to remain provisional and conditional for the time being. 164 In Paris, the minister for overseas France, the successor to the minister of colonies, Marius Moutet, raised no objection to the admiral's actions, although they seriously undermined the government's good faith in negotiating with a DRV delegation led by Pham Van Dong which had come to France for the purpose. Ho himself, moreover, had come to France to lend the negotiations a high profile.

Although it was hardly mentioned at the ceremony in Pigneau de Béhaine Square in front of the cathedral where it was proclaimed on June 1, the provisional and conditional government of the Autonomous Republic of Cochinchina had only the slimmest of foundations in the form of any grounding in public sentiment. Its president was elected by a two-thirds vote of the Advisory Council, which was itself appointed by the high commissioner. The first president of this republic was Dr. Nguyên Van Thinh, who had served as a medic in France during World War I and who had founded the Democratic Party. 165 He, like seven of the nine members of the cabinet, had acquired French citizenship. The DRV government formally protested the establishment of the provisional government of the Autonomous Republic of Cochinchina. 166 Acting once again without consulting Paris, d'Argenlieu on July 22 announced that a conference to study the status of the federation would convene at Dalat on August 1, provoking a further protest by Pham Van Dong in Paris. The delegations participating in this second Dalat conference—Cochinchina, Laos, Cambodia—supported the admiral's theses on the federation, but not without dissent; the leader of the Cochinchinese delegation, Colonel Nguyên Van Xuan, said in a press interview that the separation of Cochinchina from Tonkin and Annam did not correspond to any national reality and that nothing would stand in the way of the union of the three regions if the Hanoi government were less committed to the left.<sup>167</sup>

Dr. Thinh, however, was already operating like the leader of a sovereign government, exchanging letters of agreement with d'Argenlieu's political adviser, Cédile. An agreement was signed on August 20, 1946. When he learned that in Article 74 the constitution of the Fourth Republic of October 27, 1946, reserved for French law the fixing of the status of colonial territories, now called overseas territories, 168 he realized that all his dealings with d'Argenlieu were

illegal and he became distraught. He had had difficulty recruiting able ministers for his government, and now he discovered that he had enlisted their cooperation under false pretenses, putting him in a dishonorable position. "All the deficiencies for which I am blamed stem from the hybrid political regime that one has given Cochinchina. Is it a colony or an autonomous republic?" he said in a session of the council on November 7. "Our government is constrained by this situation and does not have the means to act." Three days later, after having vainly sought a meeting with the admiral, he hanged himself. Thinh was succeeded as president by one of his critics, Dr. Le Van Hoach, whose membership in the Cao Dai at least gave him some political base among the southerners. The illegality of the actions of the autonomous government, however, continued until the entry into effect of the law of June 3, 1949, providing for the attachment of Cochinchina to the State of Vietnam. Its people still had not been directly consulted.

Nationalist sentiment in the south, so far as it could be gauged, ran heavily toward union with Trung Bo and Bac Bo, even if not with the Viet Minh. "There is no question but that the majority, perhaps 65 to 70 percent of the population in Cochinchina, would vote for union with the Viet Nam state if the referendum were held freely," Reed reported in October. People such as Nguyên Van Sam, the former *kham sai* of Nam Bo, were dead set against autonomy and spared the governments of Dr. Thinh and Hoach no mercy in criticizing their pro-French stand. They enjoyed the support of the two largest *quoc ngu* newspapers in the south, the *Nam Ky* and the *Tin Dien*, which along with four other unionist newspapers had a daily circulation of 58,000, compared with 4,000 for three separatist newspapers. <sup>171</sup> *Tin Dien* was suspended by the French when its criticism grew too sharp.

## **Toward Confrontation**

### THE "PHONEY PEACE"

It was the Cochinchina issue that finally scuttled the conference at Fontaine-bleau that had been intended to draft a definitive treaty between France and Vietnam. 172 Partly perhaps because Sainteny, who had accompanied Ho to Paris at his express wish, kept making reassuring noises that d'Argenlieu's actions with respect to Cochinchina were strictly provisional and that he should have trust in the government in Paris 173 (not the last time in Indochina that one would observe this kind of doublespeak), Ho kept to a conciliatory line as long as the delegations were meeting. But his delegation chief, Pham Van Dong, emitted nothing but hardness over d'Argenlieu's Cochinchina initiative. In addition, Dong cited the French actions in reoccupying Pleiku and Kontum, which, like Sam Neua and Xieng Khouang in Laos, were the crossroads of tribal minorities and favored places for Viet Minh recruiting and resupply activities. Furthermore, the French move back into the Puginier Palace in Hanoi on June 25 following the Chinese withdrawal, although Leclerc explained it to Giap as

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temporary and part of the "relief of the Chinese," occasioned widespread popular feeling among the people in Hanoi who saw the French flag flying once more from the old seat of the government general; a general strike was carried out peacefully the next day. O'Sullivan reported that the move increased the hate for the French.<sup>174</sup>

On the day before the conference broke down completely, Hoang Minh Giam and Pignon argued about what had been said during the negotiation of the preliminary convention. Giam said the French had agreed to a DRV suggestion to add after the word "Vietnam" in the text a parenthesis: "Vietnam means Tonkin, Annam and Cochinchina." Pignon denied this, saying it had been agreed to delete this draft language on grounds that it would jeopardize the whole agreement. On September 10, Pham Van Dong suddenly rejected the draft treaty in its entirety and demanded that the issues be discussed anew. This effectively broke up the conference. The private meeting with Moutet at which a modus vivendi was agreed to and signed on September 14, The left France frankly speaking of war in a famous interview with American journalist David Schoenbrun.

In the wake of the breakdown at Fontainebleau, a strange kind of "phoney peace" began in which the DRV leaders and French military toasted each other with champagne and pledges of Franco-Vietnamese friendship in Hanoi, while outside in the streets French soldiers were gunned down in isolated but obviously carefully planned incidents, French civilians were insulted and terrorized, and the cease-fire was increasingly disregarded. Each side denied responsibility for these incidents, which were occasions for profuse apologies. All too typical was an incident on August 3 in which a French resupply convoy was caught in a well-prepared Viet Minh ambush at Bac Ninh.

In the south, the old Provisional Executive Committee, which had fled Saigon in September 1945 and holed up in My Tho, then in the greater safety of the Plain of Reeds and in the palm groves of Ben Tre, reappeared on the scene, reorganized as the Committee of Resistance in the South under the DRV's Decree 182 of September 13 "in order to facilitate the implementation of the agreement of March 6." On September 22 this committee issued a statement calling itself the only legal authority in Nam Bo, which was nonsense, but, of course, unprovable nonsense, and the Viet Minh intended to keep it that way. On October 29, d'Argenlieu informed Paris that the DRV had proposed as its accredited representative to the high commissioner Pham Van Bach, the violently anti-French chairman of the Committee of Resistance in the South. 178

Yet another mopping-up campaign in Hanoi itself was necessary, however, before the Viet Minh were satisfied that their control was total. From October 23 to 27, more than 200 suspects were arrested, and some were executed, such as Vu Dinh Chi, the editorial writer of the VNQDD newspaper *Viet Nam,* the sole opposition newspaper remaining. In a raid on October 29 reported in the regime's official newspaper, more than 300 persons were arrested; "after screening, the majority have remained in custody to be transferred to concentration camps," the account said.<sup>179</sup>

When the National Assembly of the DRV reconvened in Hanoi on October 28 for its second session, its former membership of 444 delegates had shrunk to a total of 291 present at the opening. Only 37 members of opposition parties were present on October 30, and in answer to a question, Cu Huy Can, the minister of agriculture, stated that 33 opposition members had been arrested "with the approval of the permanent committee for common law crimes." Due to continued intimidation tactics, the ranks of the opposition had been reduced to two by November 8, the date on which the new constitution drafted by the select committee over the summer and autumn was approved by a vote of 240 to 2. Of the only members opposed, Cung Dinh Quy was arrested and Nguyên Van Thanh, a Caodaist from the south, returned safely to Tay Ninh, where he assumed a position of the leadership of the Cao Dai armed forces. The constitution was officially proclaimed the following day. 180 It affirmed the unity of Vietnam and stated that all power belonged to the people, but it made no mention of the role of the party, which was officially in dissolution. Ho presented his government's resignation and formed a new cabinet, which was approved under the name Government of National Union (Lien Viet). The only cabinet posts not held by the Viet Minh were public works, health, and social security, and defense was firmly in the hands of Giap with Ta Quang Buu as his vice minister.

The Assembly adjourned its session on November 14 with a decision that the constitution would not be promulgated but would enter into force without promulgation. The practical reason for this was that if the constitution was promulgated it would be necessary to first subject it to a national referendum and then to hold elections for a new Assembly. Instead of going into history as a constituent assembly, therefore, the DRV's Assembly decided to prolong its own term in violation of the constitution it had just approved. This decision has been seen as intended to avoid having the onus for the breakdown of the preliminary convention fall entirely on the DRV. The illegal and illegitimate coup d'état regime and its unrepresentative Assembly was now unconstitutional as well. Following precedent, the day-to-day affairs of the Assembly were entrusted to a 15-member permanent committee, whose vice chairman this time was Ton Duc Thang, whose name had not appeared in the list of elected members to the Assembly. This committee was to represent the DRV's claim to sovereignty until December 1953, when the Assembly convened the next time.

#### French Moves in Cambodia and Laos

In Cambodia, a Franco-Cambodian commission set about drafting a constitution as provided for by the modus vivendi signed by Prince Monireth in January. This, as finally agreed between the commission and King Sihanouk, provided for an assembly to be elected by universal male suffrage. In the process of drafting, an unprecedented set of decrees guaranteed freedom of speech, freedom of assembly, and the establishment of political parties.

What was to be the most important party was the Democratic Party, founded in April 1946 by graduates of the Collège Sisowath in Phnom Penh,

including a former editor of *Nagara Vatta*, Sim Var. The party received patronage from Prince Sisowath Yuthevong, a descendant of King Ang Duong's father, Ang Eng, who had earned a doctorate in mathematics in France, was married to a French woman, and had been brought back to Cambodia on a personal appeal by King Sihanouk to the French, who had their doubts about his loyalties. Playing on the fact that in Khmer there is only one word for both democracy and democrat (*pracheathippatei*), the party electioneered on the slogan "His Majesty urges you to vote for democracy" without seeming to contest the monarchy, whose popularity was too well known to be made an election issue. The party made a serious effort to organize regional and provincial branches, taking advantage of word-of-mouth communication networks among Buddhist monasteries, schools, and government offices. In elections for a provisional National Assembly on September 1, the Democrats won 50 of 67 seats. Two other smaller parties, the Liberty Party and the Progressive Democratic Party, also contested the election.

In Laos, the French put down the last resistance to their arms in a climactic battle at Thakhek in March. After visiting Luang Prabang in May and congratulating the king on his recent release from the hands of the Lao Issara, d'Argenlieu set in motion a Franco-Laotian joint commission which met in Vientiane the following month to discuss the future relationship of France and Laos within the Indochinese federation. The commission produced a document confirming the existence of a unified Laos under the sovereignty of the king of Luang Prabang, thereby fulfilling Phetsarath's hopes on that score. Major political, military, and economic powers remained in French hands. Elections for a constituent assembly were to be held within a year. A modus vivendi was signed on August 27. 183

On December 15, in the face of guerrilla harassment in the form of raids from across the river, 44 delegates to Laos's first popularly elected Assembly were chosen. Over the following months these delegates worked out, under French supervision, a constitution that was promulgated by Sisavang Vong on May 11, 1947, declaring Laos to be an independent state within the French Union. On November 26, 1947, the 33 deputies of Laos's first National Assembly invested a government headed by Prince Souvannarath, a half-brother of Phetsarath by Boun Khong's fourth wife. By terms of a confidential protocol of February 25, 1948, Boum Oum was allowed to keep his title of Prince of Champassak but renounced his suzerain rights to this former kingdom; in return he was made Inspector General of the Kingdom, the third-ranking personage of Laos.

A Franco-Siamese agreement signed in Washington on November 17, 1946 annulled the Tokyo convention of May 9, 1941, effectively restoring the right-bank provinces of Pak Lay and Bassac to Laos and the provinces of Battambang and Siem Reap to Cambodia. Crown Prince Savang Vatthana and Prince Monireth, on their way to Washington for the signing ceremony, expressed disappointment to the American ambassador in Paris over what they saw as a lack of U.S. support in obtaining the return of their territories. Subsequently, the Siamese government maintained its claims, but the multinational conciliation commission that examined them found against it in its report of June 27, 1947.

## LANG SON, HAIPHONG, HANOI, AND THE

## Breakdown of the Preliminary Convention

In Bac Bo, the incidents that marked the "phoney peace" now became more serious, leading to serious confrontations at Lang Son and Haiphong on November 20 and following days which benefited no one except the extremists on both sides. The mixed commissions were overtaken by these violations of the cease-fire.

Lang Son had been evacuated by the Dong Minh Hoi with the Chinese withdrawal. The Viet Minh, which were strong in the surrounding region, entered the town, followed shortly by the French. Efforts to arrange joint patrols to guard the border proved fruitless as each side sought a tactical advantage of position. On November 20, a French party began excavating the graves of soldiers and officers of the Indochina Army who had been massacred by the Japanese after March 9, 1945. These bodies were to be reburied in a military cemetery in a ceremony scheduled for November 24. The next day the party found defensive works they had destroyed rebuilt and booby-trapped. Two French soldiers were killed by mines set during the night. Exchanges of gunfire began, and fighting occurred in the town itself, which the French put down.

A menacing situation of wider scope arose at the same time in Haiphong with a dispute over customs prerogatives, an issue that should have been settled by a mixed commission. The so-called Haiphong incident began when a French patrol boat accosted a Chinese junk smuggling fuel on the morning of November 20 and brought it into the port. The patrol boat was fired upon by Viet Minh militia on the shore, and it fired back. Exchanges of fire between French troops and Viet Minh militia in the town went on for several days in spite of efforts by the French to contact local Viet Minh commanders under a flag of truce. Colonel Pierre-Louis Dèbes, the sector commander, having been ordered by General Etienne Valluy to obtain the evacuation of the town by the Viet Minh as a guarantee against a repetition of the exchanges of gunfire, then issued an ultimatum threatening heavy reprisals. Local Viet Minh commanders pleaded for additional time to consult their leaders in Hanoi, but Dèbes gave the order to French ships in the harbor to open fire. At the end of five days, the French were in complete control, at the cost of 23 dead and 86 wounded. Estimates of the number of dead among the Vietnamese civilian population ranged from the official 300 to 6,000, a frequently published figure which the French historian General Yves Gras considers to be highly exaggerated. The chief of French military intelligence estimated the number of Vietnamese killed or wounded in Haiphong between November 20 and 27 as between 1,500 and 2,700.<sup>185</sup> General Louis Morlière, the commander of French forces in Tonkin, had tried unsuccessfully to settle the conflict within the framework of the preliminary convention.

The American consulate in Hanoi was following the escalation of incidents in the "phoney peace," and in a perspicacious piece of reporting on Lang Son and Haiphong, Vice Consul O'Sullivan wrote: "In both instances it is probable, but cannot be established beyond reasonable doubt, that the Vietnamese fired

first. However, the basic reason they fired is that the French in both cases were forcing issues which had not been fully discussed nor upon which had any previous agreement been reached."<sup>186</sup> O'Sullivan's accurate assessment was later confirmed by Gras, who wrote: "The reality was in fact so complex that each party could, with some appearance of reasonableness, attribute to the other the responsibility for the conflict."<sup>187</sup> The mental process that lay behind the escalation was described by Abbot Low Moffat, a high State Department official who visited Hanoi at the time and who spoke with both French and DRV officials. "[The] French state [that the] Vietnamese keep enlarging claims after each agreement and [are] also so impractical and doctrinaire [that] all conversations [are] ineffectual. [The] Vietnamese feel [that the] French renege on each agreement and [are] attempting [to] re-establish control."<sup>188</sup>

When Sainteny was sent back to Hanoi in the wake of the Haiphong incident to try to pull the French chestnuts from the fire, he was told to look for some moderates among the DRV government supporters who would serve the French as "valid interlocutors." Finding moderates among the DRV leadership was now much more difficult than it had been a year earlier when Pignon had written that the elements of a pro-French party existed but were cowed by their fear of the revolutionary committees. <sup>189</sup> Franco-Vietnamese cooperation had become an empty slogan.

Sainteny's own evaluation of those who held power behind the facade of the DRV had changed for the worse since March, when the preliminary convention had been signed; now he thought that the DRV government was more terrorist, that the solution was to demand a cabinet reshuffle in which the hard-liners would lose their positions of power in favor of people with whom the French could negotiate reasonably. Sainteny was prepared to propose a "police action" to effect this change. When pressed on this point by O'Sullivan, he denied that French policy was to impose a puppet government. <sup>190</sup> But in the prevailing circumstances, almost any pro-French group would immediately be vulnerable to the accusation of being agents of French designs on the sovereignty of the DRV.

All power was now in the hands of the hard-liners. Radio Bach Mai's propaganda reached a new level of vehemence, denouncing the "reactionaries" among the French, a sure sign that the party ideologues were in control. Was the Tong Bo seriously hoping to extort further concessions from the French on implementation of the preliminary convention? Sainteny's orders did not allow him to make such concessions. D'Argenlieu and his military commander in the north, General Valluy, their patience at an end, appeared ready to force a show-down with the DRV. The Tong Bo, knowing this, may then simply have been trying to ensure that the onus for the outbreak of hostilities fell on the French, not on the DRV. The Tong Bo had made preparations to evacuate Hanoi completely and withdraw to its safe bases in the mountains of northern Bac Bo.

On the evening of December 19, in Hanoi the last vestiges of the cease-fire and the preliminary convention disappeared in the generalized fighting that broke out in the city involving the militia (Tu Ve) and regular forces, soon to be expanded throughout Vietnam in response to an order from Giap's clandestine

headquarters for all-out resistance to the French. What the Viet Minh called a "war of national liberation" now began. The question of who was to blame is still debated today. Certainly each side had elaborated contingency plans, as military commands are in the habit of doing, well beforehand. The capture by the Viet Minh at the Cat Bi airfield at Haiphong of a set of documents outlining such contingency plans appeared to give the Viet Minh a strong case they were the victims, rather than the perpetrators, of the aggression that was taking place, or at least excused preparatory actions on their part. But the same was true on the other side. In O'Sullivan's view, "Hanoi attack beyond doubt premeditated by Viet Nam government." What is known for certain is that in the streets of Hanoi in the hours following the outbreak of the war each side put up posters blaming the other; each sought to garner public opinion, as well as history, on its side.

# **Looking Back**

The Viet Minh, a front organization at the orders of the 3,000 active members of the Indochinese Communist Party nationwide<sup>193</sup> and the eight men who formed its Political Bureau, took over Hanoi on August 19, 1945, proclaimed an end to the authority of the Empire of Vietnam, and instituted their writ as law all over Vietnam. Like Lenin, Ho conceived that in the seizure of power only a small force was needed, provided it was well armed and disciplined enough; in the action, Giap's armed propaganda teams played a key role against people generally without arms and lacking Ho's iron will. The ICP had taken full advantage of a favorable conjunction of events on the international scene, again like Lenin's followers.

Everything else followed from this action. The ICP's decisions and their translation into action by the DRV government and its front groups were aimed essentially at legitimizing the fait accompli of the coup d'état. The French were an obstacle to the accomplishment of this objective, not so much because they wanted to re-impose the colonial regime, which all patriotic Vietnamese opposed, but because they had the power to encourage the growth of non-Communist nationalism. In any event, the French were not wise enough to exercise this power to some purpose, and they lost. In the party's view, dealing with the French through the negotiations for the preliminary convention of March 6, 1946, the long war from December 19, 1946, to the armistice of 1954, and the DRV delegation's demand at Geneva for a territory and a capital city showed a consistency of purpose; all were aimed at legitimizing the party's seizure and continued holding of power.

It seems natural enough to compare the seizure of power in Hanoi in August 1945 with the overthrow of Alexander Kerensky's provisional government in St. Petersburg in October 1917 by Lenin and the Bolsheviks. <sup>194</sup> Both were led by fanatics, both were carried out as a coup d'état with a series of small operations that were calculated and prepared in advance. On October 25, 1917, the only part of Petrograd to be seriously disrupted was the immediate vicinity of the Winter Palace; elsewhere life carried on, with streetcars and taxis running as

usual. In Hanoi in August 1945, aside from the crowds streaming through the streets to attend this or that meeting or demonstration under the bemused stares of the Japanese soldiers manning key points, people would have been hard put to say a coup d'état was taking place, as David Marr has so well described in reconstructing those events. Also, finally, neither the ICP nor the Bolshevik party was a monolith, as subsequent events were to prove in both cases.<sup>195</sup>

But at the time, none of the events in Hanoi was foreseeable from anywhere outside the innermost council of the Viet Minh, the Tong Bo, whose proceedings were kept secret. Few people even knew who Ho Chi Minh was, much less knew enough to identify him with the veteran Comintern operative Nguyên Ai Quoc. The Tong Bo knew how to exploit such public ignorance, which left its enemies incapable of decisive action. This does not imply that the Tong Bo was at all times following a preconceived plan; on the contrary, the evidence (in the provisional absence of the relevant archival materials) appears to indicate that the ICP, like the Bolshevik party in 1917, was at all times ready to exploit any favorable turn of events. Similarly, the ICP's propaganda skills were able to make historic events seem to an uninformed public to be the self-fulfilling prophecy of Marxist-Leninist dogma about class struggle and external enemies. 196

American policy during the events of the summer of 1945 was dictated by President Truman's decision that the United States would not question French sovereignty over Indochina, subject to the condition that it not involve re-imposition by force and that future events showed it to be supported by popular sentiment. There is, however, a disquieting contradiction between this policy and the actions of OSS operatives in July and August in enthusiastically backing the Viet Minh against (as they thought) the French and (as it turned out) against rival nationalist groups. The experience of the Warsaw uprising in August 1944 and the lack of action of the Communist-dominated Lublin Committee, which Stalin finally installed in power in Warsaw in January 1945, had demonstrated for all what "liberation" from Axis control by such Communist-front groups implied for nationalists.

The United States was very poorly informed about what was happening inside Indochina, particularly after March 9 when the intelligence flow dried up. What was probably the best source of such intelligence, the G.B.T. network, was the object of a clumsy attempt on the part of the OSS to take it over, probably reducing the amount of information G.B.T. was willing to share with the Americans. Nevertheless, even after Acting Secretary of State Joseph C. Grew requested information in July about the situation in Indochina, and specifically about the independence regimes in Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia, Donovan was able to provide nothing substantive, promising only to seek such information. 197 This must rank as one of the most signal intelligence failures of World War II. Had the United States been accurately informed from the start about Bao Dai's desire to "chercher les Américains" and the Tran Trong Kim government's efforts to solidify Vietnamese independence, the knowledge might at least have given Truman the basis for formulating a realistic policy alternative to giving France a blank check.

Knowledge of the activities of the nationalists might also have avoided the paradox of the United States aligning itself completely with a Communist-dominated movement, even one as cleverly disguised as the Viet Minh. Patti was made aware of the Communist connections of the Viet Minh by his Chinese and French contacts from the moment of his arrival in Kunming in April. How much Truman was told by Donovan about Communist domination of the Viet Minh, however, remains to this day something of a mystery. In Laos, the inability of the OSS mission to distinguish the aims of the Vietnamese Communists whom they met from those of the Laotian nationalists who were struggling for independence created conflict and had lasting repercussions.

As for Ho's government, it undoubtedly would have liked to obtain recognition by the United States immediately after its assuming power, but its moves in this direction were thwarted. The reported discussions Dewey had in Saigon about sending Thach incognito to Washington, where American recognition of the DRV would have been the highest item on his agenda, were aborted by Dewey's assassination. Ho's letters to Truman and Byrnes went unanswered. It was to be another 50 years before the leaders of the ICP achieved parity of state relations with Washington, and by then they had succeeded in eliminating all their rivals, forcing many of them to flee into exile in the United States.

Even allowing for the fact that de Gaulle had not been invited to the summit meeting at Potsdam and consequently had to cope with a fait accompli insofar as the Japanese surrender in Indochina was concerned, his government proved to be singularly inept in reasserting French sovereignty over Indochina. The fait accompli of Potsdam destroyed de Gaulle's vision of how Indochina was to be "liberated" from the Japanese by a victorious France. Due to delays and mishaps, in the end French sovereignty in Saigon was reasserted not by Decoux and his administrators, who were left to languish in prison, and not by de Gaulle's agents, who exercised little or no authority, but by the undisciplined men of the 11th RIC. Gracey's ill-considered decision to follow the advice of Cédile and Rivier ended up making a mockery of his orders to preserve law and order. These unfortunate proceedings violated Truman's condition and every other cannon of common sense and played into the hands of the Viet Minh. As for d'Argenlieu, in spite of the conciliatory words he pronounced in Saigon on November 1, All Saints' Day, that "there are not here several categories of Frenchmen and Indochinese,"198 in his mind those who had obeyed Decoux were automatically non-persons.

In one sense, at least, de Gaulle was consistent in his view of what needed to be done to reassert French sovereignty over Indochina as a possible prelude to his stated intention of making the magnanimous gesture of offering the Indochinese their independence. In a letter to Leclerc dated October 27, de Gaulle wrote:

My dear friend, we have nothing to conclude with the locals as long as we do not have force. Until then, we can, with prudence and according to the opportunity, make certain contacts, but that is all. 199

It is debatable whether de Gaulle, who had had the temerity to condemn as illegal and illegitimate the regime of Marshal Pétain, which had been duly approved by a 569 to 80 vote of the elected representatives of the French people at Vichy on July 10, 1940, after two days of debate, could have brought himself to approve negotiations on the matter of sovereignty with a government of Vietnam that had come to power through a coup d'état. French moves to negotiate with the DRV got under way after de Gaulle's departure from the political scene, for reasons having nothing to do with Indochina, on January 21, 1946. Yet it is unclear on what Vietnamese entity de Gaulle, having restored the status quo ante of French Indochina, would have bestowed independence. These are questions to which the answers must remain conjectural. The important point about de Gaulle, however, is that he had no first-hand experience to guide him and relied on d'Argenlieu and his narrow circle for advice. In these weeks and months when France bore great responsibilities, de Gaulle took no notable decisions.

The least that can be said about the French negotiators of the preliminary convention is that they seriously misled their own government. In a larger sense, however, they established a precedent for reaching secret deals with the DRV that accorded with the DRV's own secretive style of political action. Because France had no significant autochthonous allies in Vietnam in 1946, this did not result in too much damage. Eight years later, however, secret deal-making with the DRV was to profoundly undercut France's ally. And it is ironic that an American negotiator, Dr. Henry Kissinger, casting about for ways to open a dialogue with the DRV, turned to Sainteny for advice in 1969.

What strikes one in examining the events that led to the signing of the preliminary convention and the events of the summer of 1946 that followed is the commonality of interest between the provisional government and the French. This commonality of interest is eloquently attested to by the collaboration between Giap's forces and the French police in Hanoi in liquidating the non-Communist nationalists. This was not an insignificant footnote to political events, much less an accident. Under Sainteny's willing hand, the French had come to be the Communist-dominated provisional government's main supporters, and the provisional government's good faith became the main pillar of French policy in Indochina. Sainteny made the journey to Paris at Ho's express request; Ho saw that he represented the surest guarantee of French accommodation to the reality of power in Hanoi.

And here, again, there is another of those instances of parallel with the Russian revolution. In the summer of 1946, agents of the Viet Minh Sûreté, the famous Cong An, broke into the headquarters of the VNQDD at 7 Rue Bonifacy (On Nhua Hâu) in Hanoi and seized documents proving that members of this party planned a series of assassinations of French military personnel and kidnappings of French women and children between July 10 and 17, that is, while the Fontainebleau conference was in session. By these actions, the VNQDD, according to these documents (which were recovered from the house of the DRV mayor of Hanoi after December 19), intended to disrupt the proceedings of the conference and compel the DRV provisional government to take a harder anti-French line.<sup>200</sup>

The parallel could hardly be more startling. In the summer of 1918, when popular disenchantment with Bolshevik rule was well advanced, the central committee of the Left Socialist-Revolutionary (SR) Party decided to employ terrorism against high German officials, if necessary, to provoke immediate termination of the Brest-Litovsk treaty. Facing the impossibility of using the Fifth Congress of Soviets to force a fundamental change in the government's pro-German policies, two Left SR agents gained entry to the German embassy, where they assassinated the German ambassador, Count Wilhelm Mirbach. Lenin thereupon decided that the killing of Mirbach provided a fortuitous opportunity to put an end to the growing threat from the Left SR Party. Troops were mobilized to isolate Left SR military forces. The perpetrators themselves evaded capture, but an undisclosed number of other Left SR party members were summarily shot.

But the preliminary convention contained so many flaws that it could not serve as the basis of a lasting relationship. By the end of 1946 the Vietnamese Communists had good reason to feel a growing divergence between themselves and the French, as manifested by d'Argenlieu's actions in the south. From their point of view, Sainteny was no longer able to deliver the goods. They therefore contrived to make it look as if the French were only out to re-impose their rule by force, in the north as well as in the south. In this, they met a wellspring of support among the Vietnamese people.

The vast majority of the Vietnamese did not support the Communists, but in the interests of preserving their independence they supported a government under the control of the Communists that was carefully camouflaged by an alliance with other political parties that were largely phantoms (the leaders of the parties having been liquidated by the Communists) and by a front organization, the Lien Viet, that claimed to represent all strata of society. The Vietnamese saw clearly enough that the French had failed to protect them against the Japanese, and the symbolism of the surrender ceremony in Hanoi without the French was not lost on them. The French had failed to protect the emperor against his enemies. They had failed to protect the Vietnamese against the Chinese Nationalists. The Vietnamese saw that the provisional government could manage the country's affairs. Ergo, they supported the provisional government against the French.

Some foreign observers have formulated the thesis that the outbreak of the war was the result of a coup d'état carefully planned by the French high command long beforehand to get rid of the DRV government.<sup>201</sup> Given d'Argenlieu's practice of arrogating to himself vast powers of unilateral action in his position as high commissioner, and thus of delegating this authority to his subordinates, such a thesis has many plausible aspects. The French actions on December 19 in Hanoi were quite effective militarily, once the fighting had started in earnest late that night.

The most convincing argument against the thesis of a French coup d'état is the failure of the French action to achieve its alleged purpose, even with the benefit of excellent intelligence of the orders to the Tu Ve, who had been infiltrated by French agents. The government buildings the French reoccupied were

all empty, the DRV government having evacuated the capital for its secret bases in the bush. Moreover, four battalions of the Viet Minh's regular troops, which were stationed outside the city and did not take part in the action inside the city that night, were allowed to escape.<sup>202</sup> These are hardly the results one would expect from a carefully planned coup d'état.

The fault for the outbreak of the war actually lay with the arrangement of shared sovereignty, which had been unworkable from the start. The experiment had lasted just nine months, and toward the end had served to barely conceal what amounted to a "phoney peace." Even before the war broke out, one of the architects of the preliminary convention admitted that the experiment had failed. "It is more than ever capital that France understands that no sincere agreement will ever be concluded with the Viet Minh party," Pignon cabled Paris on December 17. "Such a thing is unthinkable. It is vain, in my judgment, to base any hopes on the personal action of Ho Chi Minh." A damning indictment indeed coming from the pen of one of the architects of the experiment, and one that, of course, implicates his share of responsibility. The best epitaph for the preliminary convention remains that of Hammer: "It was simply an armistice that provided a transient illusion of agreement where actually no agreement existed." 204

Similarly, the actions of the immediate postwar Siamese governments in supporting the Viet Minh in Laos and Cambodia do much to discredit the view that these countries could ever be buffer states. Instead of being "neutral," they became the ground for contending sovereignties. Even after the Geneva conference, the government in Bangkok had not reconciled itself to the existence of a sovereign Laos friendly with France and other Western countries, and on occasion it gave in to the temptation of meddling in its internal affairs. Of course, this was the counterpart of the party center in Hanoi, which had imperialist ambitions in those countries.

# 4. The Growth of Foreign Intervention

December 19, 1946-July 20, 1954

# The New Context

In exactly the same manner that the Viet Minh were readjusting recent history in order to monopolize the mantle of patriotism in Vietnam, the French were engaged in trying to turn the clock back on the dramatic shift in the fundamental balance of power that the events of 1945 had brought to Indochina. This is proved by the tenor of official French statements beginning with the March 24, 1945, declaration, which spoke as if the Indochinese were anxiously waiting for the French to liberate them from the Japanese. De Gaulle's statement to President Truman in August that France intended to grant independence to Indochina, although it was just what Truman wanted to hear, was conditioned on the premise that such independence would not come as a result of the events of World War II, but would result from France's own volition. De Gaulle did not, in fact, view the independence of the states of Indochina as following automatically from the Japanese surrender, but rather as an act by France once the situation quo ante had been re-established.<sup>1</sup>

The common cause between the French and the Vietnamese, which had been hinted at in the March 24, 1945, declaration, remained farther away than ever from realization, in spite of the fact that Admiral d'Argenlieu had taken that declaration as the basis of his every action from the beginning of his stewardship of Indochina. While the DRV government wrapped itself more and more in a populist mantle by multiplying front groups of all sorts and acquiring the trappings of a Western-style parliamentary regime, the French were being forced to act more and more as aggressors and less as protectors of the people. The admiral may well have prided himself on the fact that the tricolor flew everywhere in Indochina from north to south and from east to west,² but what did this represent for the people of Vietnam in particular? It did not represent an administration capable of solving their problems—paying taxes, dealing with land disputes, or even seeking the most elementary security, because once the French troops left a village the Viet Minh returned and exacted vengeance.

In Tonkin and Annam, the French had no constitutional position to stand on, the protectorate over these territories having been abolished and the ad-

ministrative structures on which they had existed for over half a century having been replaced by revolutionary organs at all levels. The great advantage for the Viet Minh of the shared sovereignty arrangement in Bac Bo, unworkable as it was, was that it allowed the French no dealings with their supporters among the population. Those francophile individuals to whom the French might have turned in normal circumstances were cowed by the Viet Minh anti-traitor campaign. As the preliminary convention of March 6 frayed and fell apart in a series of provocative incidents, in spite of the efforts of the mixed commissions, the French political position weakened further. In Nam Bo, their position depended on a government whose popular mandate had still not been demonstrated and whose legitimacy was widely contested on legal and political grounds. In short, they were soon in the position of acting at the request of no Vietnamese party and of defending no legally constituted government. The famous Indochinese federation, promised in March 1945 as a gesture of magnanimity to the peoples of Indochina, remained as elusive as ever.

Accordingly, the French came to rely increasingly on the application of military force, which originally was to be used to reassert French sovereignty but which was now to be used, in the view of the admiral, "to neutralize politically and morally the government of Hanoi and thereby to facilitate the pacification of the south." Paradoxically, as the French military forces, composed entirely of non-Vietnamese foreigners, built up their strength on Vietnamese soil, the French position disappeared in political terms. Thus, at the very beginning of what was to be a disastrous war, the French position was one of fatal weakness. D'Argenlieu himself had to deny that the French actions amounted to a replay of Rivière's conquest of Tonkin, proof enough of the resemblance.<sup>4</sup>

After the outbreak of war in Hanoi on the night of December 19, 1946, d'Argenlieu, convinced as always of the correctness of his actions and blaming the Viet Minh entirely, sent to Paris several letters summoning the government to announce publicly that henceforth it would have nothing to do with negotiations with Ho's government. Seeing that the politicians showed some hesitation in embracing this idea, he reminded them that he had followed his orders to re-establish French sovereignty over Indochina and offered to resign in case he was found wanting in this regard. Meanwhile, he continued to issue ordinances granting greater authority to the government of Dr. Hoach.

After the fact, d'Argenlieu and his political adviser, Pignon, claimed they had been duped by the Viet Minh into accepting the contents of the preliminary convention. The name Vietnam contained in this document had been allowed to pass, they wrote in the days following the outbreak of hostilities, "out of courtesy and in the face of the impossibility of substituting another." But the government that claimed to represent Vietnam, and which styled itself that of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, had taken advantage of this situation and had benefited from treatment by the French as a government having the prerogatives of a state, in spite of its "illegitimate origin" based on the election of January 6, 1946.5 (They did not add "illegal origin," which was a stronger case based on the August 19, 1945, coup d'état overthrowing the government of the Empire of Vietnam but

one that they were not in a position to adopt because from the start the French government had feigned ignorance of the existence of such a Vietnamese government. So they settled for a claim they had been duped.)

In Paris, Prime Minister Léon Blum no longer knew how to deal with the admiral, whose latest suggestion was that the government should authorize French forces to capture Ho's government, whatever its name, whose location in the jungle he claimed had been identified. At his wit's end, Blum made an attempt to persuade General Leclerc to accept the post of high commissioner in Indochina. The attempt failed due to the intervention of de Gaulle, whom Leclerc had consulted privately after receiving the offer. In a statement notable for its hypocrisy, de Gaulle placed blame for the aggravation of the situation in Indochina on his successors—Félix Gouin, Georges Bidault, and the unhappy Blum—and said d'Argenlieu should be supported at all costs. 6 De Gaulle's ideas about Indochina even at this early date seem to have been confused in the extreme, and he must share a large part of the blame for d'Argenlieu's non-policy as high commissioner, since d'Argenlieu never tired of proclaiming to all and sundry that he was implementing the general's directives. Years later, when he published his memoirs, de Gaulle only added to the confusion by seemingly attributing to himself positions that are otherwise undocumented; sorting out this confusion remains a challenge for future historians.

The admiral was finally summoned to Paris, where on arrival he received his own word of advice from de Gaulle in the form of a private letter advising him not to submit his resignation. After a testy interview with the new prime minister, Paul Ramadier, the admiral was dismissed from his post on March 1. Beneath the tactical questions about military action to capture Ho and his government in the bush, people in power in Paris were tired of putting up with a rival power center in Saigon and were beginning to wonder if they were not being asked to give the military in Indochina a blank check. It was not so much that they saw such a war as impossible to win (not yet, at any rate, since all the military prognostications were optimistic) as that they perceived with surprising clarity that the admiral had done nothing to formulate a viable policy other than the application of force of arms in the 18 months of his appointment. In Laos and Cambodia, the monarchs held the loyalty of the great majority of their peoples and, having retracted their declarations of independence, were well disposed toward the French, whom they saw as protecting them from outside (i.e., Viet Minh) intervention. In Vietnam, on the other hand, the monarch had reaffirmed his declaration of independence and had aligned himself with a movement whose objectives were diametrically opposed to those of France.

The admiral's single political initiative, the mongrel republic of Cochinchina, in the establishment of which he had clearly and blatantly usurped powers that rightly belonged to the French government and parliament now that France had a constitution once more, was headed for predictable failure. In addition, there were some vague plans, taken off the shelf and given a dusting, for granting autonomy to the mountain peoples of northern Tonkin who were friendly to the French and looked toward them to save them from Vietnamese

hegemony, plans that would have spread civil war if implemented. At various times, the admiral had made noises about reviving the Vietnamese monarchy (although no government, let alone the French Communists, could entertain this as a serious proposal), as if he doubted the legitimacy of his own actions in the name of France.<sup>8</sup> But this, like his other harebrained schemes, came to nothing. In the final analysis, d'Argenlieu was responsible for steering France into the blind alley of seeking a military victory in pursuit of a nonexistent policy objective.

The question of valid Vietnamese interlocutors would continue to divide the deputies in the French National Assembly along party lines up to 1954, and there was always to be a minority in favor of reopening negotiations with Ho's government. Throughout the war the Parisian press was full of speculation about negotiations with the DRV, which the latter kept itself informed about through the services of Nguyên Van Chi, its unofficial press attaché and general factotum in Paris. Whether or not there were to be negotiations with Ho, there certainly were going to have to be viable and representative interlocutors on the non-Communist side to whom France could one day turn over its burden of protecting the sovereignty of Vietnam.

### SIGNIFICANT STEPS

Now, however, there finally began to emerge out of the chaos in Paris new departures in France's involvement in Indochina that were likely to prove firmer bases for policy than the preliminary convention and various accords with Ho's government subsequent thereto. Ramadier had stated in his investiture speech before the Assembly on January 21 that

no doubt, one of these days, France will find before her representatives of the Annamite people with whom she will be able to speak the language of reason. She will not fear then to see realized, if that is the wish of the population, the union of the three Annamite countries ("pays"), no more than she will refuse to admit the independence of Vietnam in the framework of the French Union and the Indochinese federation.<sup>9</sup>

Ramadier had a son, Jean-Paul, who was in the Indochina civil service and who was imprisoned by the Japanese in 1945, and so had reason to take a personal interest in Indochinese affairs which contrasted sharply with de Gaulle's wooden statements bearing little relation to reality. Ramadier's government was invested by unanimous vote of the 549 voting deputies.

The Fourth Republic had been inaugurated with its own constitution, and the task now was to apply its Chapter VIII, establishing the French Union, to the three Associated States of Indochina, created by Article 60. The policy directives given to Emile Bollaert, whom Ramadier had originally entrusted with a six-month mission in Indochina to this end and who was finally named to succeed d'Argenlieu on the latter's dismissal as high commissioner, were significant. They stated: "It is necessary to emphasize that France has no wish to re-establish her sovereignty in its former form over her territories overseas in Asia. She declares formally that she has no wish to involve herself or intervene

against their will in the internal government of the Indochinese states." Bollaert's appointment marked a sharp break with the recent past in that it reasserted the government's intention to have a civilian rather than a military man at the helm in Indochina; this in spite of warnings by d'Argenlieu that the French military in Indochina would accept this grudgingly. As further proof of his liberal intentions, Bollaert handed over the La Grandière Palace, seat of the government of Cochinchina, "to the Vietnamese nation" on May 23.

At the same time, conscious of d'Argenlieu's abuse of power, the government tightened its authority over the high commissioner by means of a decree of March 27, which notably relieved the latter of all discretion to conduct diplomatic negotiations.<sup>11</sup>

The Council of State had given its ruling on March 17 that the high commissioner's usurpation of legislative powers in Indochina had been illegal and that he had possessed no authority to declare null and void the laws and decrees of Decoux's government general; in fact, it declared a large part of the federal ordinance of November 1, 1945, illegal.<sup>12</sup>

Attention has generally focused on what French officials in Indochina were prepared to offer the Indochinese, as if the former were speaking in a political vacuum. However, with statements such as Ramadier's on the public record and the liberal sentiments expressed in Bollaert's instructions in the secret files of the relevant French ministries, the French would find it difficult to refuse to Ho what they were willing to grant a non-Communist government. In the rivalry between the Communists and the nationalists in Indochina for French favor, this competition would play into the hands of the Communists, because of course they, and not the non-Communists, could make a credible offer to end the war. (A rather similar situation was to arise after the Americans opened negotiations with the DRV in 1968.)

## THE RESISTANCE WAR BEGINS

Giap had adroitly used the period of the "phoney peace" to build up the strength of the DRV's army, on which no limitations had been placed in the preliminary convention. He recruited among the youth, putting recruits through basic training courses of three to four months. The results were mediocre, particularly in view of the scarcity of arms, which still consisted mainly of Japanese stocks. Nevertheless, by the end of the summer, Giap could field an army composed of 35 infantry regiments and three artillery regiments, a total of 60,000 men, of whom some 12,000 were engaged in fighting in Nam Bo.<sup>13</sup>

The bulk of the fighting in Hanoi on December 19 on the Vietnamese side had been borne not by the army but by the Tu Ve Cuu Quoc Doi. The Tu Ve, as they were known, were a militia force eventually numbering some 3,500 that had been put together jointly by the Viet Minh and the opposition nationalists during the last months of 1946. They were essentially an urban self-defense force and their mission was to defend their own neighborhoods. Poorly trained, undisciplined, and headstrong, the Tu Ve were commanded by a Central Executive Committee, about which little is known, but which must, nominally at least, have

come under the orders of Giap as minister of defense. Their disarmament had been demanded by General Morlière hours before the outbreak of the war.

The Tu Ve included many partisans of the VNQDD and some Dong Minh Hoi. Ferociously anti-French, they asked nothing better than to trigger a showdown in the heart of Hanoi. Documents seized by the French showed that after the outbreak of war, Giap ordered the destruction of his orders of the day of December 12 and 19, 1946, together with all annexes thereto. <sup>14</sup> Furthermore, Giap is strangely silent about the events of December 19 in his memoirs. A need to conceal Giap's orders to his troops on December 19 would stem, from the party's point of view, from the fact that they did not quite match up to the public image of a party totally in control of the situation at all times, the sort of image conveyed by Giap's much-publicized general order for the war of national liberation.

There can be little doubt that there were individuals or groups who hoped to see a showdown with the French. André Moret, the head of the French Sûreté in Hanoi, had already reported this on December 9. Following the liquidation of many of their leaders at the hands of the Viet Minh and the flight of others during the summer, the survivors of the nationalist parties no doubt saw their participation in armed action against the French as the way to survival, and they were glad to encourage the Viet Minh in this course of action, if any encouragement were needed. Besides the VNQDD, with its reputation for a narrow and uncompromising nationalism, there was a Catholic-monarchist school of nationalists who were much more flexible. The latter were leftists such as Nguyên Manh Ha, traditional monarchists more favorable to the French such as Nguyên De and Tran Van Ly, and a more doctrinaire nationalist group led by Ngô Dinh Diem. These factions suffered different fates after December 19. The French police simply placed under house arrest respected leaders such as Pham Khac Hoe, Bao Dai's former private secretary; Hoang Xuan Han, Kim's former minister of education; and the Dai Viet leaders Tran Van Lai and Dao Trong Kim. Nghiem Ke To, who belonged to the VNQDD and who had served as Foreign Minister Nguyên Tuong Tam's vice minister, lived in Hanoi under an alias, the Chinese Ly Hai Kwang, and may have still been in contact with his minister-in-exile in China through the Chinese consulate. 15

In the emotional and psychological climate created by the French attacks on the Viet Minh in Haiphong and Hanoi, the Viet Minh were enabled to draw on overwhelming popular support from many sections of Vietnamese society. In this sense, Ho Chi Minh's appeal of December 21 to the effect that "whatever sacrifices we must endure and however long the war of resistance will last, we are determined to fight to the end" 16 tapped a broad stream of Vietnamese patriotism that reached back centuries and which the Viet Minh propaganda, directed by Tran Huy Lieu, was adroit at exploiting. O'Sullivan was probably not far from the truth when he reported from Hanoi four days after the outbreak of the war, "While it is still too early in fighting to be certain, it now seems as if French are faced with almost completely hostile population." 17

The difference between the Viet Minh actions in Haiphong and Hanoi was that the former was an action largely in self-defense. The latter action, in con-

trast, had all the trappings of an opening offensive. Attention has focused on whether this action was triggered by the French or by the Viet Minh and their non-Communist supporters. The timing of the action itself on December 19, quite apart from the question of causation, is significant. In France, Maurice Thorez had staked his claim to the prime ministership for his French Communist Party, "the first party in France," on November 14. It was only on December 11 that the French Communist Party gave up its claim to hold the premiership, in the form of a letter over the signature of Jacques Duclos addressed to the rival Socialists. <sup>18</sup> Once again, as in the instance of the softening of Viet Minh policy toward the French in December 1945, one is led to wonder at the coincidence of events in France and Vietnam. Again, one must await the opening of the relevant archives.

The Tu Ve continued to put up a dogged resistance in the Sino-Vietnamese quarter of Hanoi between the Small Lake and the Red River. They were forming, from volunteers, the Capital Regiment of the Vietnam People's Army, which was under the command of Vuong Thua Vu, future commander of the 308th Division. Initially given a strength of 500, the regiment mobilized 1,200 volunteers, including 200 women and 100 children. Valluy was in favor of bombarding the quarter, but Morlière hesitated to destroy the myriad of houses with brown tile roofs fronting on narrow winding streets which were home to some 30,000 inhabitants, including 8,000 Chinese, and preferred to end the resistance by blockading the quarter, carefully leaving an exit on the side of the river for escape into the countryside.

On February 14, following French occupation of the main market, the defenders decided to evacuate, for which the order was given at 6 P.M. on February 17. Rather than making a fighting exit in small groups or escaping through the sewers, they formed a column and slipped out of the city, passing under the Doumer Bridge and following the riverbank upstream. The crossing of the river began at 4 A.M. on 20 boats and lasted until 9 A.M. under cover of a seasonal fog, called the *crachin*, which sharply reduces visibility. The following day, the French were in control of the whole quarter, where piles of mattresses soaked in gasoline and ignited by incense sticks had destroyed many buildings. By this time Morlière, whose command was under criticism, had been replaced by Dèbes of Haiphong fame.

# Developments in the Viet Minh Zone

## THE DRV ADMINISTRATION

The DRV government, which d'Argenlieu claimed no longer existed, faded into the shadows of the mountains of northern Bac Bo. Its members, except for Ho and Giap, had quietly left Hanoi at the end of November, seeking safety in the Long Chau caves near Hadong, 10 kilometers south of the capital. On December 21, at the start of the war, they traveled on foot to Son Tay, Phu Tho, and Tuyen Quang, where they disappeared into the jungles. Few details are known

about this long march, but it appears to have been executed in perfect discipline and order along different itineraries to avoid detection by the French.

The DRV government now faced the need to be two things at once. It had to act as a government in its own "liberated zones," and it had to act as a revolutionary movement in the zones under French control. The seeming contradiction between these two functions was resolved by concentrating government energies on mobilization of the masses and of every public and private resource, with no possibility of dissent, for prosecution of the war, as the leaders themselves made clear in their writings. The vast network of functional groups under the Lien Viet gave every member of the community a place and a responsibility.

In the situation of national liberation war, the boundaries between the two zones were at all times fluid. The French could go where they wanted if they were willing to incur casualties. The guerrillas, for their part, operated in the French zone, at least at night, to tax the peasantry and middle classes and to engage in subversion and sabotage. Agents infiltrated the French forces at every level, even at the high command and in the ministries, where they recorded and reported information to the Viet Minh of great military value. The destruction of installations such as power plants, the cutting of communications by blowing up road and railroad bridges, and the mining of road transport and trains was justified by the Viet Minh by the exigencies of the just war.

The DRV was now endowed with a constitution, even though it had never been promulgated. As the National Assembly was unable to meet, its functions devolved for most of the duration of the war on its 15-member permanent committee. Likewise, the only elections that were held were for committees at various echelons. When the war broke out, the various existing grassroots committees were simply transformed into the resistance and administrative committees of the war period. It was the cadres, who continued to think of themselves as servants of the temporarily dissolved ICP, who really ran things, although the constitution gave them no formal role. Unlike the committee members, they were not local people and could be assigned anywhere.

Propaganda was an important action of the DRV government. In their quest for legitimacy, the intellectual leaders of the Viet Minh at one fell swoop appropriated 4,000 years of Vietnamese history as their heritage, which was, of course a monstrous lie, and Viet Minh propaganda adroitly compared the fight against the French to the historic fight for independence from the Chinese.

The economy of Vietnam was in a shambles in December 1946. Wartime Allied bombing raids had destroyed much of the rail system, coastal shipping, and important roads, making for a kind of self-sufficiency in each region. In these circumstances, there could be no consideration of economic development, even without counting the exigencies imposed by the state of war. The food situation was precarious; a real threat of famine loomed if something were not done to get basic food production started again quickly. Northern Vietnam had always depended on rice shipments from the south to make up a structural deficit in rice production. Now these shipments could no longer be counted upon. And the

prospect for the rice crop was not good, due to flooding in August that had destroyed rice seed in the provinces of Nam Dinh, Ninh Binh, and Thai Binh.

Faced with the impossibility of reviving the pre-1940 economy, the DRV government set about creating an alternative economy in the Viet Minh-controlled zones. This economy was one characterized by self-reliance. Within its limitations, it worked. The solution to the food shortage the DRV government found (as was again applied after 1975) was to boost the production of secondary crops such as potatoes, maize, and beans. These could be grown with a minimum of inputs and over a short period of time. Accordingly, a mass mobilization campaign was begun to bring the maximum area into production of these crops. The total area devoted to secondary crops rose to 410,000 hectares, compared with 1938-1943 average of 145,600 hectares, and output rose to 614,000 tons, compared with a previous annual average of 147,600 tons.<sup>21</sup> Thanks to these measures, famine was averted in the spring of 1946. Trade in this economy consisted of the transport of all manner of goods from flashlight batteries to bicycles from the French zone into the Viet Minh zone, a risky business under war conditions. This "foreign trade," which was lucrative, got a number of party cadres into difficulty during the Chinese-inspired campaign against the "compradore bourgeoisie" of 1953-1954. The relative invulnerability of the Vietnamese wartime economy to the destruction of physical infrastructure was demonstrated.

# GUERRILLA WAR AND POLITICAL WARFARE

The French generals were, from the start, completely aware of the nature of the challenge that faced them. Leclerc, who had a finely attuned sense of politics, said in his final report "We are faced with a minority, a party, solidly organized, which imposes itself by terror, no doubt, but which imposes itself from the province of Camau all the way to Tonkin, and which proclaims itself the standard bearer of the national idea. This national idea, joined with xenophobia, with the hate of the Yellow for the White, represents a real factor still diffuse among the masses, but which exists nevertheless." General Valluy expressed much the same thought at the time. This is why the official optimism generated by the French military successes of the first year of the war meant so little.

On the ground, the reality of the war was not so neatly compartmentalized as in the political thinking of the generals. Giap might exalt his concept of "people's war," but the full horror of the struggle fell on men, women, and children alike. If all and anyone could be a fighter, all and anyone could also fall victim to the accusations and the reprisals that went with a guerrilla war of mobility in which control of villages passed repeatedly from one side to the other. In this kind of war, allegiance went to whomever was in superior force at the moment. Loyalties often switched on the spot as a way of avoiding interrogation, torture, and possible summary execution. The former enemy became the present friend in the blink of an eye. In this climate of the need to survive, the forced avowal of tactical information, and betrayal, double agents abounded. The Viet Minh mastered the art of infiltration and soon had their agents planted at every level of the French military and civil administration.

In the Viet Minh zone, the population, willy-nilly, furnished the where-withal of making war. Each village raised guerrilla units. They were the so-called popular forces. There were three kinds. First, the *dan quan*, who represented all the village inhabitants—men, women, children, the elderly—groups of any sort according to need who were put to use according to their means, unarmed, for laying mines, setting up ambushes, doing guard duty, providing transport, serving as couriers, for doing intelligence work. The most adept of these *dan quan* furnished the *dan quan du kich*, guerrillas in the full sense of the term. These were peasants who worked in their fields by day and took part in guerrilla actions at night. Each village had about 15 of these. In villages where control changed hands at sundown and sunup, the exhausted peasants filled in by day the trenches across roads they had dug during the night. Finally, each village group held a permanent guerilla section numbering perhaps 30 men and women, the *dan quan thoat ly*. These individuals were exempt from civil tasks and were housed and fed at village expense.

The popular forces posed little military threat to the French Expeditionary Corps. Their main function was to give the war the semblance of a people's war in which the whole population was participating, as the French historian Yves Gras has pointed out. In the absence of the civil rule of law, the effects were devastating for the French. Guerrilla war as such, in the Viet Minh plan, however, called for better trained and more heavily armed units. This was to be achieved beginning in 1948 when the sections of *dan quan thoat ly* were progressively detached from their villages and constituted into "regional forces" intended to directly support the regular army.

For the moment, however, the procrastination of the government in Paris excluded any decision on the battlefield. Under various pretexts the politicians refused or eluded requests from the commander in Indochina to reinforce the Expeditionary Corps, which was dangerously overextended. In the south, the inconclusive guerrilla war continued, with the guerrillas retaining their mobility while tying the French down to the defense of the towns and roadside outposts, which were always vulnerable to guerrilla attack. In the north, where the veteran troops were concentrated under the command of an innovative commander, General Raoul Salan, the French were more successful militarily.

French troops had found the road and river approaches to the mountain redoubt where the DRV government had taken refuge to be obstructed by felled trees, ditches, mined barricades, and underwater mines. The government's temporary quarters themselves were protected by a circle of Tu Ve, and within that the government was under the security of a special commando unit. A daring French paratrooper drop near Bac Kan, however, which was thought to be the government's location, caught the Viet Minh by surprise and nearly succeeded in capturing the government. Here especially the French commanders felt, and resented, the lack of reinforcements; they constantly had to downsize their military objectives to fit the limited numbers of troops and the quality of their equipment. In hindsight, this criticism may be justified, because the Viet Minh, for one reason or another, failed to mount any significant counterattacks.

### PARTY ACTIVITIES IN CAMBODIA AND LAOS

The party center continued as before to direct clandestine party activities in Cambodia and Laos in accordance with the decisions reached at the Tan Trao congress.<sup>23</sup> The party's command of its agents in the three countries formed the basis of a hegemonic symmachy which would grow stronger with time. Activities in Cambodia and Laos were still largely in the hands of ethnic Vietnamese and, for the moment, were aimed at neutralizing any threat from the rear to the zone controlled by the Viet Minh. The party's leaders in Laos and Cambodia were half-Vietnamese métis whose identities, like that of the party itself, were kept secret from non-party members.

In Laos, the role of party leader was entrusted to a man who went by the name Kaysone Phomvihane, who was born in Savannakhet on December 13, 1920, of a Tonkinese father in the Indochinese civil service, Nguyên Tri Loan, and a Lao mother. A Kaysone is the transliteration into Lao of the Vietnamese phrase "Cai Son," which means Corporal Son. Phomvihane is the Lao transliteration of Pali Brahma-vihara, meaning the four sublime states of mind to be achieved by the Buddhist monk (loving-kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy, and equanimity). Kaysone grew up in a Vietnamese milieu and was sent to attend *lycée* in Hanoi and then the law school of the University of Hanoi. Kaysone and Nouhak Phoumsavan, another man of Vietnamese origin from Mukdahan, joined the party secretly. E

The man in charge of ICP affairs in Cambodia was born in Tra Vinh in the Mekong Delta around 1920 of a Cambodian father and a Vietnamese mother; he had studied at Wat Unnalom in Phnom Penh during World War II and had left the capital following the monks' demonstration in 1942. His Vietnamese name was Pham Van Hua, and in Cambodia he was known as Achar (a title meaning former Buddhist monk) Mean, but at some point in 1946 he adopted the pseudonym Son Ngoc Minh to capitalize on Son Ngoc Thanh's heroic reputation and to link himself in people's minds with Ho Chi Minh.

After the French reoccupation of Laos, the party depended for its activities on the recruitment of Vietnamese who resettled in northeast Siam beginning in late 1945 and on a string of riverside bases. Although Siam had not recognized the DRV, it allowed a DRV delegation to operate in Bangkok, which acted as the DRV's main foreign contact point. In March 1947, five companies of Viet Minh accompanied by Laotian guides crossed the river at different points from north to south. Their action, consisting of burning villages, destroying bridges, and organizing scattered ambushes, proved largely devoid of psychological effect on the population. The French reacted, moreover, by waging an adroit psychological warfare campaign against the principal Viet Minh agents in Siam that consisted of rumors and anonymous threats that took advantage of differences among these agents, of whom French intelligence had picked up evidence. One such agent, who received no fewer than 10 assassination threats, credits the psychological campaign with his decision to leave the Viet Minh. <sup>26</sup>

In November 1947, however, a coup d'état brought in a Thai government much less sympathetic than its predecessor had been to anti-French resistance activities in Cambodia and Laos.<sup>27</sup> The internal problems within the Lao Issara also came to the surface, notably in the form of a conflict between Phetsarath and Souphanouvong over the issue of the latter's insubordination to the government in having recruited Chinese Nationalist soldiers in Burma for anti-French raids into north Laos.<sup>28</sup> The moderates among the Lao Issara leaders were influenced by King Sisavang Vong's proclamation in 1948 of an amnesty for those who returned to Laos peacefully. A modus vivendi was signed in Paris by the king and President Vincent Auriol on July 19, 1949.

Even before his expulsion from the Lao Issara on grounds of insubordination, Souphanouvong had announced the formation of a Lao People's Progressive Organization separate from the government in February 1949. In June, a Lao Liberation Committee consisting of 22 members, with himself as president, was established. The members of the various departments of this committee included Phoumi Vongvichit, Phoune Sipraseuth, and Tiao Souk Vongsak, and it may have been due to their influence that the committee's pronouncements were couched in stilted Marxist-Leninist jargon and vilified the old king personally.<sup>29</sup>

Souphanouvong's conversations in July and August 1949 with Rolland H. Bushner, the second secretary of the American Embassy in Bangkok, reveal a man who held that Laos was a classless Buddhist society where Communism had no future and who was prepared to suggest that in return for American aid an independent Laos might serve as a buffer against Soviet or Chinese Communist penetration. The DRV supplied military and technical advisers (co van in Vietnamese) upon request, who consulted Vietnamese leaders across the border in Annam "in cases of mutual problems." He believed that Pham Van Dong was a Liberal Socialist, not a Communist. It is likely that Souphanouvong's naiveté about the DRV was genuine, for the party kept the Marxist-Leninist content of the ICP program a secret from non-party people because it, too, recognized that issues such as land reform and other aspects of class struggle, antithetical to the notion of Buddhist harmony, had virtually no appeal in Laos. Also it did not publicize the objective of overthrowing the monarchy, which had figured in the ICP program since 1932.30 Whether Souphanouvong was naive or not, two of his American friends, James W. Thompson (formerly of the OSS) and Lieutenant William H. Hunter, were of the opinion that he was a "consummate liar," and Bushner noted that he was given to exaggeration.

With the Lao Issara government-in-exile crumbling (it was not actually dissolved until October 1949), and after unsuccessful efforts in 1948 and 1949 to recruit Phetsarath to its cause, <sup>32</sup> the party center abandoned Thailand as an operational base and based its activities in Laos on the Vietnam border. Thao O, leaving Nouhak in charge of the Eastern Committee, set up his base at Con Cuong (Vietnam), from where he and his men could cross the border into Laos with relative impunity. In January 1949, Kaysone constituted the first unit of a new resistance army on the model of the Viet Minh; it was called the Latsavong detachment, after the *latsavong* of Vientiane who had led the resistance against the Siamese in the nineteenth century.<sup>33</sup>

The party center, recognizing Souphanouvong's appeal to Lao nationalists, made several attempts to get him to come to Vietnam.<sup>34</sup> Finally, in mid-Novem-

ber, the prince arrived in Vietnam and was taken to Ho's clandestine headquarters. The final victory of the Communists in China the previous month had put an end to his attempts to enlist the Chinese Nationalists for service in Laos. His first assignment for the party was to head the resistance government proclaimed at a congress held secretly in Vietnam in August 1950. This government included Kaysone, Nouhak, Tiao Souk Vongsak, and Phoumi Vongvichit and was under firm control of the party center. The congress also created a Free Laos Front (Neo Lao Issara). The basic line of this front's propaganda was the united struggle against the French without reference to political parties or ideology. Illustrative of this was the use it henceforth made of the name Lao Nation (Pathet Lao). The number of Viet Minh agents sent to Laos grew rapidly, from between 500 and 700 at the end of 1946 and the beginning of 1947 to between 5,000 and 7,000 at the end of 1950 and the beginning of 1951 to 17,000 in 1953.

In Cambodia, the political situation differed from that of Laos because the monarch, King Sihanouk, had effectively seized the independence issue from the Cambodian politicians, and no one dared attack him. Also, Viet Minh relations with the Khmer Issarak were tenuous because of the historic enmity between the Khmer and the Vietnamese, which made it politically difficult for the Viet Minh to recruit Khmer, a situation unlike that in Laos, where the rank-and-file Pathet Lao in this period were largely tribesmen who inhabited both sides of the border.

Cambodia served as an important transit region for the arms traffic from Bangkok to Viet Minh units in the mountains of Bac Bo and Trung Bo. In March 1950, nevertheless, Le Duc Tho met at Hatien near the Vietnam-Cambodia border with Sieu Heng, Son Ngoc Minh, and other Vietnamese and Cambodian subordinates and cadres to determine how to accelerate the Cambodian revolution. At the time of this meeting, French intelligence estimated that only 40 ethnic Khmer and over 1,000 resident Vietnamese belonged to the ICP inside Cambodia. Nevertheless, soon afterward a "first national congress of the Khmer resistance" convened inside Cambodia and adopted a flag featuring a yellow five-towered image of Angkor Wat on a red background. (This was to become the flag of the People's Republic of Kampuchea in January 1979.) The party held back, however, from creating a "resistance government" on the model of the Pathet Lao, which would have been in direct confrontation with Sihanouk.

# Developments in the French Union Zone

## THE NATIONALISTS TRY TO REORGANIZE

With the only sovereignty left in Vietnam residing in the Norodom Palace in Saigon, the constitutional problem for the French was becoming acute. From Paris there was no decisive action to fill the political void on the level of central government in Indochina created by the events of World War II. Ramadier had enunciated on March 5 a policy of fitting Indochina into the French Union as the latter was spelled out in the French constitution of 1946—that is to say an

Indochina consisting of several Associated States—but the way to do this in Vietnam had not yet been worked out.

Confronted with the continued lack of a valid interlocutor, successive French governments ended up debating the future of the Indochina question, when they debated it at all, in terms of whether or not to negotiate with Ho. Negotiations with the Viet Minh became the touchstone of French politics, dividing the parties on the left, who favored them, from those on the right, who opposed them.<sup>36</sup> It was an artificial framework in which to view the war, much as later in the United States the debate was between doves and hawks. As a result, the French government allowed things to drift. French casualties, although by no means negligible, were not yet at a level where the public took notice.

Ho and the DRV government, naturally, were not insensitive to this state of affairs. They sought to exploit the debate itself, counting on French public opinion to furnish them a potent weapon with which to undermine the French military. Feelers for negotiation from Ho's government succeeded each other rapidly during 1947 like mirages in the desert and just as quickly faded away. In playing this sort of game, which was part of their united front strategy, however, the Viet Minh had to take into account nationalist sentiment in Vietnam, which in large measure was still with them, although not unanimously so.

The French established Vietnamese committees with limited administrative functions in areas of Bac Bo and Trung Bo captured from the Viet Minh. These were usually staffed by former mandarins who supported Bao Dai. The French were drawn more and more to deal with Bao Dai as the only possible source of legitimacy on the nationalist side, since they rejected a French military government, and in January 1947 they posted a Vietnamese-speaking civil servant to their consulate in Hong Kong, where Bao Dai had been living since Ho's message to him in Kunming in March 1946 not to return home, for the purpose of keeping in touch with him.

Bao Dai for his part had stayed in touch with Vietnamese nationalist figures such as Ngô Dinh Diem. A new United National Front formed by exiles in southern China pledged its support to him. The common thought in many people's minds at this juncture was that in order to end an anomalous situation that left the Vietnamese outside the Viet Minh zone without sovereignty, Bao Dai might eventually step in, not as emperor but as head of state of a unified Vietnam, and form a new government. Thus the originator of what came to be known as the "Bao Dai solution" was neither the French high commissioner in Indochina nor the French general Le Bris<sup>37</sup> nor Ambassador William C. Bullitt nor Francis Cardinal Spellman nor Monsignor Fulton Sheen (as was claimed by a member of the French National Assembly),<sup>38</sup> but Vietnamese nationalists who confided their views to the ex-emperor or took a public stand, such as the three former members of the National Assembly who published an appeal for his return in the Hanoi newspaper *Thoi Su* in May 1947.<sup>39</sup>

On July 5, 1947, a few days after meeting with a French diplomat, Bao Dai took the initiative of publishing a statement in the Saigon newspaper *L'Union Française*:

If all Vietnamese place their confidence in me, and if, furthermore, my presence can contribute to re-establish good relations between our people and the French, I would be happy to return to my country. I am neither for nor against the Viet Minh. I belong to no party. Peace will return rapidly if the French would be willing to admit that our people's sentiment is no longer what it was 10 years ago. I will say no further, since the French government knows my demands. My proposal concerns only the role of mediator between France and all the Vietnamese parties. <sup>40</sup>

The French government was now approaching Bao Dai *en demandeur*, a reversal in their relationship since before March 9, 1945, when Bao Dai had had to approach the French for any slight favor. Ho also was sensitive to the change and reacted quickly. In a government reshuffle announced on July 19, Giap and Ton Duc Thang were dropped as ministers of national defense and interior. Out of 27 ministers and vice ministers, only three were left who were Communists. It was a move for appearance's sake only, to be sure, but it showed what price Ho was willing to pay to retain nationalist sentiment on his side. Giap remained influential as commander in chief, but he was no longer so visible. This was to become a familiar pattern: concessions by the Viet Minh came in the face of political challenges to their claim to represent Vietnam, not in the face of military force.

After a meeting on September 8 with 24 nationalist leaders that included Nguyên Van Sam, Ngô Dinh Diem, Tran Quang Vinh, and Dr. Le Van Hoach of the Cao Dai; Dr. Truong Dinh Tri, the head of the administrative committee in Tonkin; Tran Van Ly, the head of the administrative committee of Annam; and Nguyên Van Tam of Cochinchina, Bao Dai issued a proclamation on September 18. In it, without mentioning the Viet Minh by name, he addressed himself adroitly to his people:

I am fully aware of your hopes. I follow your torments, your sufferings. Despite the dictatorship which tries to stifle your voices, I hear today your appeals and your cries of distress. You outline a picture of your misery for me, and you present to me a record of the disasters suffered by our dear Vietnam after two years of experience during which your masters held the absolute exercise of power. Thus your hopes of happiness vanished little by little, hopes which a clever propaganda and a new ideology awakened for an instant in your hearts. In your distress you come to me.<sup>41</sup>

Bao Dai declared himself ready to contact "the French authorities." He said he hoped to obtain "the independence and unity conforming to your aspirations," and use his authority "to arbitrate the conflict which has you all turned one against the other" and thus to restore peace. Thus, two and a half years after winning their independence, the non–Viet Minh Vietnamese were going to have to win it all over again, in circumstances even more difficult. Moreover, in the circumstances of guerrilla war created by the DRV, the majority of Indochinese were reluctant to risk taking any action that could be construed as unpatriotic. Nationalists such as Ngô Dinh Diem and Nguyên Manh Ha (the DRV's former minister of economy who had remained in Hanoi) were unwill-

ing to lend themselves to any French political maneuvers against the Viet Minh; thus, a fine line was drawn between negotiating for independence and contesting the right of the Viet Minh to participate in the acquisition of independence.

Once again, the Viet Minh reacted quickly to Bao Dai's proclamation. Ho himself, putting his prestige on the line, appealed to "the true-born sons of Vietnam" to leave "the puppet regime" the French were planning to establish. "I cannot stand by and see our own people divided in an internal fratricidal war," he said, in a marvel of hypocrisy. 42

Perhaps the true colors of the Viet Minh were shown when their death squads assassinated Nguyên Van Sam and Dr. Truong Dinh Tri within 24 hours of each other. Certainly they had reason at that stage to fear the consolidation of nationalist sentiment behind Bao Dai. Again, the pattern of specific targets and the presence of well-armed hit squads suggested deliberate planning on the part of the ICP. Sam had had the temerity to say publicly in a speech on May 21 that Ho's government was a Communist government that followed a partisan and totalitarian policy.<sup>43</sup> By saying that Ho's government harbored objectives that made it different from the other nationalist groups, Sam had overstepped the line. The execution at about the same time of Huynh Phu So, the blind bonze (monk) who led the Hoa Hao, accused by the Nam Bo Executive Committee of treason,<sup>44</sup> also alienated many southerners.

Many Vietnamese had been swept up in the general enthusiasm when the Viet Minh seized power in Hanoi in August 1945. When Ho's government negotiated a modus vivendi with the French that left the Viet Minh in a strong position vis-à-vis the French, they applauded. When Ho's government attempted to settle outstanding questions involving the independence and sovereignty of their country, they applauded. Now, however, this government, battling on all fronts against the French, was embarking on a dangerous course they had never approved. They had not even been consulted; the National Assembly of 1946 was in a state of inactivity. Even the elected administrative committees of 1946, in which the villagers at least had had a say, were replaced by 1948 by Soviet-style "committees of resistance and administration," Uy Ban Khang Chien/Hanh Chinh (U.B.K.C./H.C.) completely under the control of party cadres. Now the entire population, which was enlisted in the various front organizations of the Lien Viet and directed by the hierarchy of committees at the village, village group, district, and province levels, participated en masse in the war.

Thus, Vietnam continued more or less in a political vacuum from January 1947 to March 1949. Americans were in a good position to see that colonial rule in Asia was ending and that attempts to re-impose the colonial order could only play into the hands of the Communists. A telegram sent to the Saigon consulate general in 1947 over Secretary of State George C. Marshall's name said: "We [are] confident [that the] French [are] fully aware [of the] dangers inherent in situation and therefore venture [to] express [the] renewed hope [that] they will be most generous [in the] attempt [to] find [an] early solution which by recognizing [the] legitimate desires [of the] Vietnamese will restore peace and deprive anti democratic forces of [a] powerful weapon."<sup>45</sup> Vietnamese national-

ists such as Ngô Dinh Diem used American contacts such as George D. Hopper, consul general in Hong Kong, to try to generate pressure on France to be more forthcoming.<sup>46</sup>

In an attempt to break the political deadlock, the French invited Bao Dai to sign a statement of principles with them at Ha Long Bay on December 7, 1947, which was, in fact, couched in such generalities that Bao Dai's followers criticized him for signing a meaningless statement. But Bao Dai assured them that he knew what he was doing. During these preliminary discussions, Bao Dai insisted that he was acting in his private capacity, leaving it up to the Vietnamese to choose by popular referendum, when this became possible, what form of government they preferred, the implication being that Bao Dai would be happy to return in some capacity.<sup>47</sup>

An effort at the beginning of 1948 by Tran Trong Kim to once again negotiate independence ended in failure when, after several conversations with French representatives, he concluded that their intransigence on the question of independence was total. A second attempt a few months later by the Dai Viet leader Dr. Nguyên Ton Hoan also failed when both the French and the Viet Minh rejected his plan for the return of Bao Dai and for the establishment of a "neutral nationalist zone." In the constitutional vacuum in non-Viet Minh areas of Vietnam, France finally approved the establishment of a provisional central government under the leadership of General Nguyên Van Xuan, who was a convert from Cochinchinese separatism from the time he headed that government until unification. Bao Dai refused to take an official role in this setup, but he endorsed Xuan's effort to rally nationalist support. The Xuan government's first ordinance announced that "because of the present state of war, the exercise of sovereignty by the Vietnamese people, who are the source of all legal power, is suspended."48 An agreement was signed at Ha Long Bay on June 5, 1948, by Xuan and the French; Bao Dai remained above the actual negotiations and merely countersigned the agreement. 49 Many nationalists thought even this was going too far. Ngô Dinh Diem still refused to support the Xuan government, and France's prevarications drove others of a patriotic bent to join the Viet Minh. Marshall expressed his impatience with the French delay in beginning the negotiations envisaged in the Ha Long Bay agreement and creating a free Vietnamese state associated with the French Union.<sup>50</sup>

## THE BIRTH OF THE STATE OF VIETNAM

By 1949 French military control had been re-established over fairly large but widely scattered regions of Indochina. In Bac Bo, French forces controlled the Red River Delta and the region around Haiphong and were assured security in the mountainous west, thanks to the friendly T'ai tribes who inhabited it. The French also held garrisons on the China border such as Lang Son and Cao Bang, although these were increasingly isolated. In Trung Bo, the French controlled the area around Hue and Tourane. Also, the central plateaus were secure because of the friendly mountain tribes. In Nam Bo, the French held only Saigon and the main axes of communication in the Mekong Delta.

In Laos, the French controlled the major portion of the country and had to deal only with the threat of sporadic raids across the Mekong or over the mountain passes from Vietnam. In Cambodia, finally, the French controlled very little outside Phnom Penh and the major towns because much of the countryside was in the hands of either Viet Minh or Khmer Issarak guerrillas, whose conceptions of the independence they were fighting for differed radically.

In talks with French President Vincent Auriol, Bao Dai gained acceptance by the French of the need to see the principles of the Ha Long Bay agreement confirmed and stated precisely with regard to the unity and independence of Vietnam. Specific commitments on these questions were embodied in an exchange of letters on March 8, 1949, at the Elysée Palace. 51 As the Elysée Agreements were not to come into effect until after the reunification of Cochinchina with the rest of Vietnam, France initiated the procedure required by the constitution to change the status of a French territory. In March, the National Assembly passed a law creating a Cochinchinese-elected territorial assembly (with very limited suffrage), and it was this body which finally met the condition of popular consultation on reunification, on April 23, by a vote of 55 of the 63 members present (of a total of 64 members). Bao Dai did not wait for the French National Assembly to approve the law changing the status of Cochinchina, which it did by a vote of 352 to 208, but left for home, ending his three years in exile. The law took effect on June 4. Later that month, the Cochinchinese government offered its resignation to Bao Dai, formally terminating the experiment in separatism begun by d'Argenlieu.<sup>52</sup>

The receipt of the text of the Elysée Agreements at the American Embassy in Paris was the occasion for the Department's drafting of a lengthy memorandum intended for presentation to the Quai d'Orsay. The memorandum stated:

The United States Government is inclined to believe that one of the strongest motivating forces behind nationalist movements among dependent peoples is resentment of the imputation of inferiority implicit in a subordinate status. When a people has fought for the goal of independence with such tenacity as that displayed by the Vietnamese resistance forces, it appears unlikely that it will be content with a position of anything less than equality with other peoples. It is feared that the concessions granted by the French Government may be obscured in the eyes of the Vietnamese by those terms of the agreement which are incompatible with Vietnamese national pride.

Should such feelings determine the reaction of a majority of Vietnamese to a Government formed under the March 8 agreement, then it must be supposed that the Communist-dominated "Democratic Republic of Vietnam" will continue to receive the support of these Vietnamese. Certainly as long as the Vietnamese are persuaded that the two-and-a-half-year-old war with France must be prosecuted to a conclusion if the goals for which they have fought are to be won, they will continue to regard the dominant Communist element of the Vietminh League in the light of its effective leadership of the nationalist move-

ment and not of its inevitable intention to subvert the nationalist cause in the end to the requirements of international Communism, with which they have had little acquaintance as yet.<sup>53</sup>

Unfortunately, even this relatively moderate message about the nationalist majority in the resistance forces was judged by the Paris embassy to be medicine that was too strong for the French, and the memorandum was never delivered, so far as is known. It was only after some initial hesitation to show endorsement or de facto recognition of his government that the Department gave permission to official Americans in Saigon to have dealings with Bao Dai.<sup>54</sup>

The Elysée Agreements were duly ratified by the French National Assembly, conferring on them the legal status of diplomatic treaty under the terms of the French constitution of October 27, 1946. On the Vietnamese side, the procedure for ratification was set forth in Ordinance No. 1 of July 1, 1949. Article 2 of that ordinance stated: "The Head of State signs and ratifies treaties." The whole question of the constitutional and legislative underpinning of independent Vietnam, however, was temporarily left in abeyance by the French and Bao Dai. Ordinance No. 1 of July 1, 1949, also stated: "The will of the people is the source of all national activities," but added that "in view of present circumstances, it cannot express itself freely." 55

Bao Dai used the ceremony in Saigon marking the entry into effect of the Elysée Agreements on June 14 to emphasize the Vietnamese aspect of things. The ceremony took place at the City Hall because the French politely avoided turning over the Norodom Palace to the head of state. Following the speeches, the yellow banner with three horizontal stripes was raised and there was a 21-gun salute, Bao Dai's formal radio address in Vietnamese, and a presentation of colors and review of troops. The guard of honor was entirely Vietnamese and included units of Cao Dai, Hoa Hao, Binh Xuyen, and Catholic local defense forces. <sup>56</sup>

In a letter to Bao Dai dated July 27, Auriol delivered some sensible advice of his own; decidedly, 1949 was a liberal year. It recalled that by negotiation the French government "has entirely satisfied the national claims of the Vietnam people, such as have been expressed by Your Majesty since 1945 and such as were specified at that time by the *de facto* government of Ho Chi Minh: The unity of the Vietnam was approved by the vote of the French Parliament and by a French law changing the status of Cochin China."<sup>57</sup> At least this recognition by the president of the French Republic of Bao Dai's sentiments, coming more than four years after his snub by de Gaulle, gave Bao Dai some satisfaction. Then, in what one French official in Saigon interpreted as an invitation to Bao Dai to open negotiations with the Viet Minh to end the war, <sup>58</sup> Auriol wrote:

"If, for the organization of the territory and for this consultation [on the choice of regime], the Vietnam people decided to unite for the cessation of hostilities, which, we repeat, depends only on themselves, the Government of the Republic and I will be glad to see thus established the peaceful conditions for the renaissance of Vietnam and for the renewal of the bonds of friendship which must unite our two nations for a sound prosperity and security."

The initiative for the unity and independence of Vietnam embodied in the Elysée Agreements had come from Bao Dai, who enjoyed the support of the nationalists who remained in the zone controlled by the French military. French policy in reluctantly conceding certain attributes of juridical sovereignty to Bao Dai was identical to that which had been pursued three years earlier in attempting to engage the Viet Minh in an experiment in shared sovereignty. Bao Dai, although he had abdicated the throne, still incarnated legal and legitimate Vietnamese sovereignty in the face of the Viet Minh coup d'état of August 19, 1945, and he was now formalizing this claim, not by taking the throne again but by taking the title His Majesty the Head of State. As such, Bao Dai and the Vietnamese nationalists owed the French nothing; they saw irony in the fact that, in one of those perversions of language so common in Indochinese affairs, the phrase "Bao Dai solution" was invented by leftist critics of French policy to mean something completely different from Bao Dai's systematic and patient efforts to wrest from a reluctant French government recognition of both the unity and the independence of his country.

Bao Dai sent a letter to President Truman, whom he addressed as "Great and Good Friend," on August 31 expressing his desire "that relations with Your Excellency's Government may be established according to international custom, in the common interest of our respective nationals and in order to permit us more usefully to contribute on our part to the strengthening of world peace and security." 59 The letter posed the issue of recognition. Edmund A. Gullion, who was shortly to leave for Vietnam to take up his new post as chargé d'affaires, circulated a memorandum in the Department arguing in favor of extending de jure recognition as being "more consistent with the existing triangular relationship among ourselves, Viet Nam and the French." While noting that the French constitution appeared to limit the exercise of sovereignty in international relations by member states of the French Union, Gullion concluded "I do not see why de jure recognition can not be extended to an evolving state at any stage in its evolution, when it is clearly in our interests to do so."60 Five days later, after the Soviet Union had recognized the DRV, Ambassador David K. E. Bruce in Paris urged that American recognition of the Associated States of Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos should follow immediately after French ratification of the Elysée Agreements had been completed.<sup>61</sup>

The National Assembly approved a bill establishing the Associated States of Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos within the French Union; the vote was 396 to 193, with the opposition consisting mainly of 181 Communists. The Senate completed ratification on February 2. In the letter drafted at the Department for delivery to Bao Dai the reference was to the Republic of Vietnam. A cabinet meeting on February 3, President Truman asked Secretary of State Acheson to present the question of recognizing Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos. Acheson did this. Afterward, Truman asked for the opinion of each cabinet member. All members present believed that the only possible course was to proceed with recognition. Truman then directed Acheson to proceed. The name finally settled upon by the Vietnamese for an entity that was neither a

monarchy nor a republic was the State of Vietnam. Gullion delivered the letter recognizing the State of Vietnam to Bao Dai in Dalat on February 9, 1950.

Bao Dai, rebuffed by the French high commissioner over occupation of the Norodom Palace, made his headquarters instead in Dalat. Here, between hunting parties, he carried on consultations with the nationalist politicians he summoned to meet with him. He was proceeding slowly, deliberately, as always. To Tran Trong Kim's nephew he observed: "We have to be very careful this time around—tell your uncle this—or else we'll be cheated like we were last time." His consultations failed to persuade anyone to take the premiership of his government, so he undertook to form it himself. On July 1 he constituted a cabinet that included General Xuan, four members of the revived Dai Viet party, a Cao Dai, a Hoa Hao, a VNQDD member, and several independents. 65

There was still great reluctance on the part of many nationalists to be seen as collaborating with the French, and the large subsidy the French were paying Bao Dai did nothing to allay these fears. 66 Bao Dai then left on a tour of the country. He returned to Hue, where he was reunited with the queen mother (who had faithfully fulfilled all the rituals expected of the royal family in his absence), where he noted the visible destruction from the war. As if to make the point, a few mortar rounds landed as he was speaking to a crowd. In Hanoi he outlined his government's program and held his first cabinet meeting. In a symbolic gesture, he laid a wreath at the tomb of the Viet Minh who died on December 19, 1946. He still saw himself as a mediator who was open to the Viet Minh, with whom he entertained discreet contacts through trusted intermediaries.

With Bao Dai's second government, headed by Nguyên Phan Long (a former journalist and elderly veteran of the defunct Constitutionalist party), who took office in February 1950, there were brief hopes that such negotiations might take place. Long released some political prisoners, reduced the role of the police, and appealed directly to the Viet Minh to cooperate in the common struggle for independence. Fewer political figures would seem more apt to lead such negotiations than Long, who did not fear to displease the French high commissioner, Léon Pignon, with blunt talk about French deficiencies in front of a visiting American delegation inquiring about aid to the State of Vietnam, and who obtained the entry of the State of Vietnam to the UN Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East. But it was too late in the day for conciliation.

The beginning of the provision of large-scale American military aid, decided upon following the Griffin Mission in early 1950, emboldened the Vietnamese nationalists to seek more say in how it was used, and their views found their way to Washington. The quality of political reporting by the American Legation (newly raised from a consulate general) was seen as noticeably improved with Gullion's arrival after the hiatus that followed the departure of Reed and O'Sullivan two years previously.<sup>67</sup>

There were two other hopeful signs for the Vietnamese nationalists. The first was a religious revival that worked to the detriment of the Viet Minh. The second was the enlistment in the war of the politico-religious sects in Nam Bo, which had so far remained aloof.

## RELIGIOUS REVIVAL: BUDDHISTS AND CATHOLICS

In 1951, the first congress to unify Vietnamese Buddhism took place at the Tu Dam pagoda in Hue. It brought together six groups of monks and lay followers from the north, center, and south. The first nationwide Buddhist organization in Vietnam was called the General Buddhist Association (Tong Hoi Phat Giao), because Bao Dai's Decree No. 10 prohibited use of the term "church" by any other than the Catholic Church. Its leader was the revered bonze Thich Tinh Kiet.

In the early days of the August Revolution, the Catholic Church stood foursquare on the side of the revolutionaries. The four Vietnamese bishops appealed to Pope Pius XII for support for the DRV government. As a result, Catholics enjoyed a preferred status in the early DRV. Catholics were represented in early DRV governments by figures such as Nguyên Manh Ha and Vu Dinh Tung. A Catholic, Ngô Tu Ha, became president of the National Assembly on March 2, 1946. The government did not interfere with the administration of the Catholic bishoprics of Phat Diem and Bui Chu, and the bishop of the former, Monsignor Lê Huu Tu, was named to membership in the Consultative High Council along with Citizen Vinh Thuy. Missionaries and nuns were still free to go about their ecclesiastical duties.

From 1950 onward, however, relations between the DRV government and the Catholics became strained. It became increasingly difficult for the bishops to preserve an attitude of neutrality in the war. Suddenly, in the autumn of 1951, the Viet Minh took the initiative by attacking the bishopric of Phat Diem by military force. French paratroopers and ground forces saved the bishop from being captured in the nick of time. A shift of allegiance to the French and Vietnamese nationalist side ensued, provoking further retaliation. Typical was the attack by three Viet Minh companies armed with automatic weapons on a Catholic school at the seat of Bui Chu diocese on May 5, 1953, which was beaten off successfully by local militia.<sup>68</sup>

The DRV government embarked on a policy of arresting priests and the faithful, confiscating church property, prohibiting communication with church authorities outside the Viet Minh zone, and so forth. Catholic organizations were taken over by the Lien Viet and became spokesmen for the regime. Intermittent violence was reported against Catholic communities, especially in Thai Binh Province in the Red River Delta.<sup>69</sup>

As a result, not surprisingly, Catholics reinvigorated their faith under this form of martyrdom. Attendance at religious ceremonies increased progressively as the war went on, and by the end the Vietnamese Catholics, living mainly in the north, were a solid bloc. This laid the groundwork for the mass exodus at the partition of 1954.

## THE ARMING OF THE VIETNAMESE SECTS

The southern sects, whose nationalist interests differed fundamentally from those of the Viet Minh and whose alliances with the latter proved to be matters of strict expediency, were a military and political force to be contended with in any claim to a mass following. By the end of the war, their armed formations

participated alongside the French, and above all their traditional zones of control kept large pieces of southern territory and large numbers of the southern population out of the reach of the Viet Minh.

Their allegiance was at all times subject to blackmail. Tran Quang Vinh, the commander of Cao Dai troops, was captured on one occasion and briefly held prisoner before escaping to Saigon. Vinh's return to Saigon proved providential for the French, for they managed to force a deal on him in June 1946 under which he consented to the integration of the *chi doi* into the French forces in return for French agreement to bring back "Pope" Tac, whom Decoux had exiled in 1941, 70 which they did in August. 71

Tac proclaimed that the presence of France was necessary in Indochina and that Caodaism had full confidence in France's ability to restore order and public safety. Tac's declaration caused General Nguyên Van Thanh and his captains Trinh Minh The and Duong Van Dang to abandon the Viet Minh and to return with their troops to Tay Ninh. Thanh was made chief of staff. Directly under him was Nguyên Thanh Phuong, a former sergeant in the Indochina Army. On January 8, 1947, the Cao Dai and the French signed an agreement for cooperation that was to last for two years. In swift and bloody retaliation, the Viet Minh attacked the Holy See at Tay Ninh and rounded up and executed 800 Cao Dai faithful.

But Tac's ambition to play a leading political role soon brought him into conflict not only with the Hoa Hao, to whom he proposed a pact, but with the French as well. He proposed the creation of a neutral zone to the French, under Caodaist control, which was "to serve as a refuge for repentant nationalists." The French refused the scheme. Consequently, Tac proclaimed strict neutrality for the sect and informed the French of his intention to dissolve the Caodaist units in the national army and to return their weapons to the French high command. It was in February 1949 that Thanh issued a secret order to repel every attack or attempt on Caodaist posts, regardless of who the attacker was, and to halt all offensive action against the Viet Minh. At the same time contact was established with the Viet Minh to obtain a promise of neutrality. But when the latter took advantage of Cao Dai inaction to inflict serious losses on them, Thanh issued orders on June 24, 1949, to renew the fight against the Viet Minh. At the same time, Tac renewed his vow of allegiance to Bao Dai, and Vinh became a member of the Xuan government.

Dissension within the ranks of the Cao Dai over the issue of the sect's relations with the French and the Viet Minh continued until the end of the war. In 1951, with General de Lattre de Tassigny pushing hard for the formation of a single national army, Vinh left for France and was replaced by Thanh, who nominated Trinh Minh The as his chief of staff, only to have The declare himself dissident, not for the first time in his checkered career, in June. The was the most anti-French of the Cao Dai leaders, and when the French attempted to cut off his support from the pope (who, it was said, secretly engineered The's dissidence as a way of obtaining greater leverage for the sect), he instigated terrorist outrages in Saigon using the bicycle bombs that were immortalized in Graham Greene's novel *The Quiet American*.

After further fits and starts, Vinh reassumed power in March 1953 and reestablished cooperation with the French. The Caodaist doctor, Le Van Hoach, became minister of health in the government of Nguyên Van Tam. The Cao Dai pope's relations with Bao Dai's various prime ministers, however, were never good, and this augured badly for the post-1954 government. Moreover, the problem of choosing between the Viet Minh and Bao Dai remained unresolved to the end of the war; in a letter to Ho written on May 5, 1954, Tac wrote:

You and His Majesty, Bao Dai, have succeeded in liberating the country. The Vietnamese people are grateful to both of you. However, there remains a problem to settle: reconciliation between the nationalists and the Communists.<sup>74</sup>

The Cao Dai forces eventually consisted of 55 "flying brigades" with a total strength of 3,300 men with French encadrement. These units were accustomed to a war of movement, and they proved so effective that the undermanned French command broadened the area of operations outside Tay Ninh to include all of Cochinchina. The Cao Dai leaders exploited this situation to conduct an effective proselytizing campaign. Subject to stringent discipline and a religious fervor, the Cao Dai troops acted as counterparts to the Viet Minh. In addition, the Cao Dai had 2,500 partisans in self-defense units.<sup>75</sup>

Although Tac desired the Cao Dai to play a strong role in state affairs, it was not his intent to have the sect form a political party or run the government. Rather, he saw Caodaism as the basis for a new national religion in Vietnam, one which would help restore the old traditions and values destroyed by Westernization and that would eliminate the decadence, individualism, and aping of Western ways brought about by French colonialism.<sup>76</sup>

After the assassination of Huynh Phu So by the Viet Minh on April 1, 1947, his chief lieutenant, the illiterate Tran Van Soai, assumed the title of commander in chief of the Hoa Hao armed forces. On May 18, the French signed a convention with Soai making his forces responsible for the protection of Hoa Hao followers in the provinces of Can Tho, Sa Dec, Vinh Long, Long Xuyen, Chau Doc, and Rach Gia. Under this convention the French furnished arms, uniforms, and advisers. But several other Hoa Hao leaders refused to accept Soai's leadership, and rivalries and factionalism continued to wrack the sect. The French showed their appreciation of Soai's cooperation by promoting him to the rank of general on January 1, 1953. Nguyên Van Tam offered a post in his cabinet also to the Hoa Hao, but they disputed the vacant seat so violently among themselves that Tam tired of their intrigues and soon gave up trying to obtain their cooperation.

The French also tried to arrive at an arrangement with the Binh Xuyen, who had served as willing agents of the Viet Minh in 1945, notably in carrying out the massacre of French civilians in the Cité Hérault. When a lawyer emissary of the United National Front, Tran Van Tuyen, made contact in 1947 with their leader, Bay Vien, in Go Cong Province south of Saigon and after a week's discussion persuaded him to leave the Viet Minh, the Binh Xuyen rallied to Bao

Dai. The French high command saw his defection from the Viet Minh as worth all the risks it entailed. A grateful Bao Dai promoted Bay Vien to colonel. From common thieves and murderers preying on the defenseless, the Binh Xuyen gradually transformed themselves into robbers of the rich to give to the poor, à la Robin Hood. Soon, every Chinese businessman of any consequence in Saigon-Cholon was paying protection money to the Binh Xuyen. In an accommodation with the French and Bao Dai, they were given the custody of the Grand Monde gambling den in Cholon, and from that moment forward they were "respectable" businessmen to deal with and to be dealt with; they profited in the many rackets spawned by the war and operated gambling, opium, and prostitution monopolies.

All these measures by the French to arm the sects and the Binh Xuyen were, of course, done with the expedient aim of balancing the forces in presence, which had become unbalanced due to the Viet Minh's mass mobilization campaign in the zones under its control. As such, they contributed little to the building of a national army. On the contrary, they were to enormously complicate the efforts of the post-war non-Communist Vietnamese government to deal on its own with the nationalist forces after the withdrawal of the French.

## THE CREATION OF NATIONAL ARMIES

In mid-1949, there were 41,500 Vietnamese troops actively participating in military operations with the French forces. <sup>80</sup> These were to constitute the nucleus of a national Vietnamese army, whose strength would be raised to 30 battalions by the end of 1950 and to 50 in 1951. <sup>81</sup> This was to a large extent the work of Bao Dai himself. He felt that it would require eight years to replace the French. <sup>82</sup> Bao Dai found an ally, after some false starts, in de Lattre, who genuinely believed in the formation of a Vietnamese national army. A military convention with France was signed on December 8, 1950, whereby the State of Vietnam agreed to raise four divisions during 1951 and Vietnamese military forces were placed under the command of Bao Dai and the ministry of national defense. Bao Dai, in turn, delegated command of military operations to the French commander in Indochina. By January 1, 1951, there were 65,000 Vietnamese troops under arms.

It was not until Bao Dai's government decreed mass mobilization that July, however, that things really began to move forward. Few young Vietnamese took the occasion to join the Viet Minh. It was not that they were unpatriotic, but they had no wish to give up the things they held to be precious and devote their lives instead to class struggle; they were nonetheless patriotic for believing they could win independence by non-violent means. Some left for France to escape mobilization, thereby becoming draft dodgers. The success of this first attempt to "Vietnamize" the war, as everyone realized, was inextricably linked with the question of independence.

Bao Dai's plans for a Vietnamese national army depended on obtaining financing from the United States, the only possible source for funds on a large scale. The United States was already providing aid to the French, and a major aim of American policy now became to channel an increasing share of this military aid to the Associated States. The United States established a Military Assistance Advisory Group (MAAG) in Saigon in September 1950 for this purpose. A five-way aid agreement was signed among the United States, France, and the Associated States on December 23, 1950.

By the winter of 1953–1954, there were 428,000 Vietnamese soldiers fighting on the French Union side. Of these, about 200,000 were in the Vietnamese national army, 50,000 were Vietnamese national army supplétifs, or special contract soldiers, 78,000 belonged to the local militia and police forces, and 100,000 were in the French Army.<sup>83</sup> General Nguyên Van Hinh was brought back from France to be chief of staff of the Vietnamese national army.

With French training, a Laotian royal army was created; by the end of 1952, this would comprise 17 companies and a battalion entirely commanded by Laotian officers.

#### CAMBODIA AND LAOS

In Cambodia, the January 1946 modus vivendi between the Cambodians and the French, the holding of elections to the Constituent Assembly later that year, and the elaboration of a constitution in 1947 had not reconciled everyone to the return of the French. The Democratic Party, which had swept the 1946 elections, consisted mainly of members of the educated elite and maintained that the Khmer Issaraks were patriots. This annoyed the French. It also put the Democrats on a collision course with King Sihanouk, who pinpricked their demagoguery in articles signed Norodom Thol (Thol being the nickname Sihanouk's grandfather, King Monivong, had given him), which were published in Prince Monireth's newspaper Krabei Prey ("Wild Buffalo"), which was modeled on Le Canard En*chaîné*. 84 Thus began for Sihanouk a lifetime avocation as a political commentator. More important, it helped form in his mind an association between intellectuals, especially those trained abroad, and activities that undermined the monarchy and sowed the seeds of chaos in the life of Cambodia. It is one of the ironies of Cambodian history, unsuspected at the time, that it would be Sihanouk's adoption of a band of just such intellectuals and his decision to place himself at the head of their revolution that would destroy Cambodia.

Prince Yuthevong, the patron of the Democratic Party, died in a Phnom Penh hospital in July 1947 at the age of 34. The party's activists, showing their customary energy, prepared for the National Assembly elections. As a result of the voting in December 1947, the Democrats won 73 percent of the votes and 54 seats in an expanded assembly. Liberal candidates won the other 20 seats. Two minor parties formed that year, the Renovation Party led by provincial civil servants such as Nhiek Tioulong, Prince Sisowath Sirik Matak, and Lon Nol, and the National Union, fared so poorly they failed to win any seats. The heavy voting for the Democrats was ascribed to this party's linkage with Son Ngoc Thanh and the events of 1945,85 as well as the party's role in writing the constitution and its commitment to winning independence. Among those who worked in the Democrats' 1947 campaign were two young men named Saloth Sar and Ieng Sary, a

Khmer Krom whose name at birth was Kim Trang; they were both subsequently awarded scholarships to France by a Democrat-controlled ministry of education and became Marxists and firm friends who married sisters.

Events were also moving rapidly for those Cambodians engaged in illegal activities in 1947. A joint Khmer Issarak–Viet Minh command, largely ceremonial in nature, was established by rebel leaders in Bangkok in that year. Its titular commander, Chhuon Mchhulpich (who went by the name Dap [Sergeant] Chhuon), who had deserted from the Cambodian militia in 1943, maintained a Cambodian force of about 800 loyal to him while collaborating with the Viet Minh, a rather similar alliance of expediency to the one struck by factions of the Cao Dai, Hoa Hao, and Binh Xuyen across the border in Vietnam. Chhuon had a daunting appearance, being cadaverously thin with unblinking, deep-set eyes. Three other notable Khmer Issarak leaders at this time were Prince Norodom Chantaraingsey, who operated in the provinces of Kompong Speu and Kompong Thom; Puth Chhay, who stands out because unlike the other guerrilla leaders he was an illiterate rural Cambodian; and Chan Dara, who operated in the south.

There were sporadic clashes between these guerrilla bands and the French. In the month of May 1947 alone, the Khmer Issarak suffered 500 killed and lost 136 arms, but they were far from being defeated, according to a report by the French Colonel Yves Gras. By early 1949, the number of Khmer Issarak in Cambodia were estimated at 10,600.

Two Issaraks more closely influenced by the Viet Minh than Dap Chhuon were Sieu Heng, a Sino-Khmer from Battambang born in Cochinchina, and his wife's nephew, a Sino-Khmer named Long Bunruot, who in 1946 was a student at Thammasat University in Bangkok, where he joined the Thai Communist Party. Sieu Heng became the leader of the Cambodian branch of the ICP when it was constituted in 1951. Long Bunruot, under the pseudonym Nuon Chea, became the second most important member of the Communist Party of Kampuchea and of the Khmer Rouge regime; one of his first acts after taking power in Phnom Penh in 1975 was to see that his cousin, by then half-paralyzed, was enticed from his home with promises of rewards as a "father of the revolution" and put to death. Thus, the period of the Khmer Issarak resistance to the French was the formative period of the two rival strands of Cambodian Communist orthodoxy that contested power later.

The Khmer Issarak with their non-Communist majority were accorded a hearing to some degree by American officials outside Cambodia. When in January 1951 Pra Phiset Phanit, a well-known Khmer Issarak, asked James Thompson, an American businessman in Bangkok who had been in the OSS, to secure an appointment for him with Ambassador Edwin F. Stanton, Thompson obliged. Pra Phiset pointed to zones in Cambodia controlled by the Khmer Issarak on a map, a western zone adjoining the Thai border, a southern zone north of Takeo, and a zone surrounding Phnom Penh. Pra Phiset identified the zones controlled by the Viet Minh as those along the southern extent of the Thai border to the Gulf of Thailand in the Cardamom Mountains and the northeast of Cambodia where it adjoined Laos and Vietnam. In response to a request for

arms, Stanton advised Pra Phiset to send an emissary to Phnom Penh to contact Sihanouk or a minister in the royal government. Pra Phiset replied that the Khmer Issarak had no confidence in the government, although both were anti-French, and that the French controlled the government and would scotch any such mission.<sup>86</sup>

On December 7, 1948, responding to a move by Auriol to have an exchange of letters with him on the pattern of Auriol's exchange with Bao Dai, King Sihanouk wrote to High Commissioner Pignon raising again, as Son Ngoc Thanh had done in 1945, the question of Kampuchea Krom. <sup>87</sup> Sihanouk's initiative got nowhere. In fact, when the Cambodian government learned of the conclusion of the Elysée Agreements providing for the incorporation of Cochinchina into Vietnam, it sent a delegation to Paris to protest this violation of Khmer Krom rights. It was not until November 8, 1949, that a treaty granting Cambodia independence within the French Union was signed.

In Laos, the French were also taking steps in 1949 to normalize their relations, as a State Department report put it. 88 A government headed by Prince Boun Oum, the former Franco-Laotian guerrilla leader in the south, signed a convention with France on July 19 making Laos a fully equal member of the French Union. Over the following months France transferred its remaining powers. Following the split in the Lao Issara government-in-exile in Bangkok, contacts were made between the French and the Lao Issara members who were considered moderates. In these contacts, important roles were played by a French nobleman, Baron Patrick de Surcouf, and by Nhouy Abhay, who crossed the river and sought out Boun Oum, who took him into his government. 99 The French then offered an amnesty to the moderates, who dissolved their government-in-exile in October and returned to Vientiane, leaving behind an unreconciled Prince Phetsarath.

On February 7, 1950, the United States and Britain accorded diplomatic recognition to the Kingdoms of Laos and Cambodia. At the end of the year, the United States opened a legation in Vientiane. Paul L. Guest, the new chargé d'affaires, recorded his feelings as he tried to look to the future.

By the presence of a Legation, it is my feeling that we Americans will be able to initiate a friendship and plant a seed that will be remembered for years—somewhat as Lafayette did at the time of the birth of our own country. Laotians want our help; they need our help. It is my belief that the efforts, if properly executed, may well be remembered for many years to come.<sup>90</sup>

The United States also opened a legation in Phnom Penh.

## Internationalization of the War

#### THE MILITARY STRUGGLE INTENSIFIES

Guerrilla tactics against the French served to prolong the war indefinitely. But to inflict a decisive defeat on the French, the Viet Minh needed regular troops

that were well armed, well trained, and well indoctrinated. In Cochinchina, during the dry season of 1949–1950, Nguyên Binh, who had been sent by the ICP to replace Tran Van Giau, waged a campaign that in effect passed from guerrilla warfare to frontal warfare before the French, with difficulty, regained the offensive. In Tonkin, the superiority of French forces prohibited such a transition until the arrival of the Chinese Communists on Vietnam's border in December 1949 made it possible. It was another of those "gifts from heaven," like the Japanese surrender in August 1945, that the party was to receive on its long march to power in Indochina.

In Cochinchina, after several months of patient work, Binh succeeded in forming 15 battalions of chu luc troops recruited from the best of the regional troops and armed with weapons purchased on the black market in Bangkok and smuggled overland across Cambodia or by small boats landing in the tidal inlets of the Mekong Delta. Binh's force was capable of taking the offensive against the French. From December 1949 until the following April, Binh launched a series of large-scale attacks on pinpointed objectives, backed up by well-prepared ambushes on roads leading to the objective. Unlike previous attacks, the Viet Minh hung on against French counterattacks and inflicted heavy casualties. This offensive began south of Tra Vinh and ended at Soc Trang and Sa Dec in April. Binh's mobile mortar squads infiltrated the defenses of Saigon itself and lobbed shells near two American warships moored in the Saigon River. But Binh was up against an adversary who understood the psychological and political dimensions of the war as well as he did, General Chanson, and finally he had to withdraw his troops, who had also suffered heavy casualties, into the Plain of Reeds and other safe bases.

In Central Vietnam, the French managed to contain the operations of several Viet Minh regiments operating from the relative safety of isolated coastal villages, protected by marshes from sudden attack. These forces, under the command of Nguyên Son, nevertheless managed to maintain a permanent state of insecurity along Route Coloniale 1. This was the fighting that Bernard Fall immortalized in his *Street without Joy*. 91

In December 1949 the Tong Bo sent a Central Committee member, Hoang Van Hoan, later the DRV's ambassador to Peking, to strengthen ties with the Chinese Communist Party. In mid-January 1950, the Chinese People's Republic granted formal diplomatic recognition to the DRV, the first state to do so. Ho Chi Minh himself, after walking 17 days, secretly arrived in China in late January 1950. The Chinese also sent a party liaison representative, Luo Guibo, later the CPR's ambassador to the DRV, to Vietnam.<sup>92</sup>

From China, Ho continued his secret journey to Moscow, arriving in early February. The Soviet Union since 1947 had declared itself in favor of supporting national liberation movements in Southeast Asia, and in the case of Vietnam, since the French Communists had not come to power in France, this new policy meant support for the Viet Minh. Although Stalin agreed to grant the DRV diplomatic recognition in response to Ho's request, his reception of Ho was by all accounts rather cool. In a telling incident, Ho asked Stalin for an

autograph on a Soviet magazine, as he had once asked Chennault for an autograph. 93 Stalin could not refuse but later, suspecting a trick, ordered the secret police to recover the magazine from Ho's hotel room.

In April 1950, the Tong Bo formally requested military advisers from the Chinese. The Chinese responded immediately, ordering the People's Liberation Army (PLA) to provide advisers at battalion, regiment, and division levels for a Vietnamese division. In July, some two months before the establishment of the MAAG in Saigon, the Chinese established the Chinese Military Advisory Group (CMAG), composed of 79 experienced PLA officers; it was publicly described as the "Working Group in Southern China." It was headed by General Wei Guoqing, a native of Kwangsi. Wei arrived in Vietnam in early August.

The massive aid in training and supplies thereafter provided by the Chinese to the Viet Minh allowed the latter to entirely refit their army into a powerful force capable for the first time of engaging the French Expeditionary Corps in battle. With the onset of the rains in June 1950, the Viet Minh sent its battalions to Chinese training camps in the region of Wenshan, Long Tcheou, and Chingshi. The troops, without arms, crossed the border on foot and once in China were transported by truck. Clothed in new uniforms, they followed an intensive training course for three months under Chinese instructors. The Viet Minh used these troops to form an entirely new military organization. From 2,000 men, the Viet Minh regiments rose to 3,578 men. At all echelons, these regiments were henceforth supported by heavy equipment, signals, and headquarters units. Some 20,000 men were rotated through this training in 1950 alone. They went to form the 308th Brigade, as well as the 209th and 174th regiments, recruited from the Tho people. During this period, according to French sources, the Viet Minh received from the Chinese 40,000 rifles, 125 machine guns, 75 mortars, 3,000 boxes of ammunition, and 870 tons of other supplies.94

Ho was looking for a military success that the Viet Minh could exploit for political purposes both at home and in France. He suggested to his Chinese hosts that an attack against French forces holding the towns of Cao Bang and Lang Son would offer the best opportunity for such a success. He asked that they send General Chen Geng, whom Ho had met in the 1920s and who had become a senior PLA commander, to Vietnam to help plan the campaign. Plans for the Border Campaign, as it became known, were finally approved in late July. They involved avoiding direct attacks on Cao Bang and Lang Son, which were both strongly fortified by the French; they relied instead on drawing the French out into the mountainous terrain and then attacking them as the Chinese had done in the nineteenth century.

The Chinese–Viet Minh plan worked like clockwork. French contingency plans for the evacuation of Cao Bang had been on the books for more than a year. They had figured in a famous leaked report by General Revers in 1949, so the Viet Minh knew all about them. The position at Cao Bang contributed little to French efforts to cut off the flow of Chinese supplies to the Viet Minh; because it was dependent on roads through the mountains that were subject to Viet Minh ambush, Cao Bang itself had to be supplied by air. Nevertheless, the

French commanders hesitated to proceed with the planned evacuation, which was finally scheduled for the beginning of October 1950.

Once the evacuation had been decided, the unwillingness to leave the civilian population to the mercy of revolutionary justice at the hands of Viet Minh "people's courts" led to the decision to rely on the roads rather than airlift for the evacuation. This decision was made in spite of the fact that there was a useable airfield at Cao Bang and the French air force commander affirmed that he had sufficient transport aircraft available and could evacuate the garrison in two days, given a break in the monsoon. Reliance on roads was the fatal tactical mistake that played into Viet Minh hands, while the main strategic mistake was to ignore intelligence reports that placed a force of 18 to 20 Viet Minh battalions, including three artillery battalions, in position just inside the Chinese border facing Cao Bang and Colonial Road 4 leading to Lang Son. The evacuation was to be conducted by surprise, but surprise was on the side of the Viet Minh; in spite of the capture of Dong Khe on Colonial Road 4 on September 18 by two Viet Minh regiments, the French never suspected that their enemy would attack in force. 95

The French columns, whose commanders had been given their orders in veiled terms and which were burdened by impedimenta, moved at a snail's pace, allowing the attackers to get into position. The fighting was a series of ambushes on a massive scale. The civilian evacuees from Cao Bang melted into the jungle, which is what they would have done in any case if they had been left at home with a minimal amount of warning time. Lang Son, in its turn, was evacuated in panic even though it had not come under attack. When the series of engagements was over, the French had lost 4,000 of their best men. <sup>96</sup> Militarily and psychologically, the French had suffered a major disaster. <sup>97</sup>

While in Paris recriminations succeeded one another at a rapid pace in the National Assembly and the artificial debate over negotiations with Ho was revived, notably by Pierre Mendès-France, in Vietnam the disaster of Cao Bang led to renewed criticism of the slow pace at which France was turning over the responsibilities that went with independence. It also gave fresh impetus to Bao Dai's plan for building a Vietnamese national army, thereby demonstrating that the Viet Minh's shock strategy was a two-edged sword.

The sharpest criticism came from the Dai Viet party, which had been revived from its near death in Bac Bo in 1945–1946. The party now called itself the Popular Nationalist Party (Quoc Gia Binh Dan) and published its own newspaper, *Quoc Dan*, which quickly achieved a wide readership. Several party figures, led by Dr. Phan Huy Quat, minister of education in Bao Dai's first government, were to move in and out of office in successive governments. The newly named governor of Bac Bo, Nguyên Huu Tri, also was an adherent. But criticism came also from the Cao Dai and the Hoa Hao. Tran Trong Kim and Ngô Dinh Diem, who were cut from the same cloth, saw nothing good coming from the manner in which the French were implementing the Elysée Agreements, delaying every step of the way, as was manifest in the Pau conference, and declined to become officially involved with Bao Dai's successive govern-

ments. Diem left his country in August 1950, having obtained permission from the French to attend the celebration of the Holy Year in Rome. He had been warned that spring that the Viet Minh had sentenced him to death in absentia. In Tokyo, Diem visited Prince Cuong De and met an instructor in political science from the University of California at Los Angeles, Wesley Fishel, who advised him to plead in the United States for Vietnam's independence as his best hope.

The Viet Minh's border campaign extended far to the west as well. There, in the Thai confederation, the chieftain Deo Van Long, who had heartened Bao Dai by promising to raise several battalions of volunteers for the national army, grouped his vastly outnumbered units and prepared to hold on as the French withdrew from one exposed position after another. Similarly north of the Red River, the Meo, under their venerable leader Chao Quan Lo, began guerrilla operations, in which they were expert. The Viet Minh did not push their numerical advantage and gradually faded from view once again. 98

As the military stalemate continued, the liberal sentiments expressed in 1949, and the hopes of a negotiated end to the war that went with them, evaporated. The balance of forces, in any case, was shifting irrevocably to the Viet Minh side. The longer the war went on, the tighter became the control exercised over the population of large areas of the country by the Viet Minh. Now it was too late. International events were moving rapidly that would change the character of the war on both sides.

Bao Dai had headed the government of the State of Vietnam from June 1949 to January 1950. In January 1950, he gave up the prime ministership to Nguyên Phan Long, who was already foreign and interior minister. On April 27, Tran Van Huu, a wealthy southern landowner and a French citizen, took over. Huu passed a diplomatic milestone by going to San Francisco to sign the Japanese peace treaty.

It would take a general who had served Pétain loyally until November 1942 to pull France's chestnuts out of the fire. General de Lattre de Tassigny, who assumed command in Indochina in December 1950, set about infusing a new sense of purpose in his troops. In the judgment of the pre-eminent French historian of the war, such was the effect a single individual could have on a desperate situation, and it does not happen every day. Pevertheless, de Lattre had no illusions about the nature of the war; if all went well it would end, he thought, in a mass desertion from the Viet Minh, not by a military victory.

In October 1951, Congressman John F. Kennedy visited Vietnam for a first-hand look at the war in the course of a world trip with his brother Robert and his sister Pat. Kennedy stayed with Ambassador Donald R. Heath but requested a briefing from Gullion, whom he had met in Washington in 1949. Gullion, departing from the official line propounded by Heath, told Kennedy that the war was unpopular and that as long as real power remained in French hands, and particularly in Paris, there was little prospect of the Vietnamese nationalists' being able to overcome the advantage enjoyed by Ho's government, no matter what the relationship of military strength on the battlefield. This was at a moment when de Lattre had done much to restore the military balance. The impression gained

from this interview remained with Kennedy. Gullion later recalled that he (Gullion) was not a rebel by inclination, that he was from a military family. Heath, however, maintained until his departure from Vietnam in 1954 that the presence in Vietnam of a substantial French force would not detract from support for a nationalist government. 101

Another member of the Congress who visited Indochina was Mike Mansfield, a member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. Like Kennedy, Mansfield was of Irish Catholic descent. He also had a degree in history and political science from the University of Montana, where he wrote a thesis on American diplomatic relations with Korea. In a report published after his trip in the autumn of 1953, Mansfield saw nationalism as the key to defeat of the Communists and thought it important that France grant independence to the Associated States. 102

#### THE OFFICIAL REAPPEARANCE OF THE PARTY

Although the ICP had announced its dissolution in 1945, it continued to operate clandestinely, and on February 11–19, 1951, the party's Second Congress, meeting in the Viet Minh zone, decided that the party would make its official reappearance under the new name Vietnam Workers' Party (VWP).<sup>103</sup> A party document explaining the change said that the merger between the Viet Minh and the Lien Viet Front had made the change possible. The reasons given by the party for the change were first, to "demonstrate clearly to the world that the Vietnamese Nation sides resolutely with the democratic bloc, fighting effectively for world peace"; second, to "direct the people and strengthen unity within the Party in order to guide the Resistance towards final victory and prepare the foundation for socialism"; and third, to "provide an opportunity for the consolidation of the Party and the resolute elimination of weak elements."<sup>104</sup>

The party's manifesto of February 19, 1951, was a document intended to be diffused in Communist-bloc media. "Our country and our people stand in the democratic camp," it declared, meaning the Soviet Union and its allies and China. This alliance with Moscow and Peking, were it generally known, would come as a shock to most of the Indochinese; therefore, it was carefully concealed. The reference to demonstrating to the world that the party sided resolutely with the democratic bloc suggests that pressure was exerted by the DRV's allies in exchange for their recognition of and aid to the DRV, which had begun the previous year. It was probably Peking that the party leaders had most in mind. In the final months of 1950, Ho and the party leadership had conducted a vast indoctrination campaign for party cadres to learn from the Chinese model of revolution in which the writings of Mao, Chu Teh, and Liu Shao-chi were read and discussed. The Second Congress of the ICP marked a definite turning point in this regard.

With respect to the party's activities in Laos and Cambodia, the document stated that "the Vietnamese Party reserves the right to supervise the activities of its brother Parties in Cambodia and Laos." The retention of the name ICP, the document pointed out, "would probably have prejudiced the support given by

the Vietnamese revolution to the revolutions of Laos and Cambodia. The nationalist elements of Laos and Cambodia might have suspected Vietnam of working to control Cambodia and Laos." In a further refinement of nomenclature, the Vietnamese party eschewed "Revolutionary" in favor of "Workers" to reflect the fact that in Vietnam the party was fighting foreign aggression, while in territories where the party branches were struggling to overthrow indigenous governments, as in Cambodia, in Laos, and in 1962 in South Vietnam, the name "Revolutionary" was retained. To justify the decision not to call the party Communist, the document gives the examples of the United Polish Workers' Party, the Hungarian Workers' Party, and the Korean Workers' Party.

Recalling that the three countries constituted "a combat zone," the document added: "Later, however, if conditions permit, the three revolutionary parties of Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos will be able to unite to form a single party: the Party of the Vietnam-Khmer-Laotian Federation." At this time, the ICP had 2,091 members in Laos, of whom only 31 were Laotians, and 1,784 members in Cambodia, of whom 150 were Khmer. 105 Establishment of a Cambodian party, the Khmer People's Revolutionary Party (KPRP), followed on June 30, 1951. According to Bernard Fall, the KPRP's statutes were drafted in Vietnamese and then translated into Khmer. They were probably brought back to Cambodia by Sieu Heng, who stayed in Vietnam until August 1950. The final draft of the statutes, dated February 1952, consisted of a "simplified version" of the VWP statutes, with references to Marx, Engels, Stalin, and Mao excised. The establishment of a Laotian party was delayed by four more years. 106

The party's domestic program called for "fighting to the end to wipe out the French colonialists, defeating the American interventionists, punishing the traitors and gaining complete independence and unity for the Motherland."

Although the manifesto contained no mention of negotiations, for tactical purposes, Ho seized many opportunities of interviews with Communist-bloc media or journalists from suitable third countries such as Sweden to drop hints of a willingness to negotiate. With the French government and a "puppet" government now involved in the war, the possibilities for spreading mischief were practically limitless. Party cadres understood that such "peace feelers" were solely designed to exploit the contradictions that as good Marxist-Leninists they saw between the imperialists on the one hand and the feudalists on the other. Later, after the war, the party would boast of these seized opportunities. The party leadership had no intention of negotiating with the "puppet" government, except for local accommodations reached on the battlefield, which fell into the category of proselytizing. It judged that favorable conditions had not yet been achieved for opening negotiations with the French; to create such conditions, a psychological shock on an even bigger scale than Cao Bang would be necessary.

To carry out its united front strategy, and particularly to facilitate the recruitment of the new army that Chinese training and equipment had made possible, the reappeared party convened a congress on March 3 to merge the Viet Minh and the Lien Viet Front under Ho's chairmanship. The Marxist-Leninist content was played down. In a speech to the delegates, the party secretary-general, Truong

Chinh, explained that while the party still advocated class struggle, the war situation demanded that class differences for the moment be "reasonably composed." The Lien Viet Front had been formed in Hanoi on May 27, 1946. Now the merged front, in which the name Viet Minh disappeared from view (although it continued in common usage for years afterward), came out with a revitalized program on the classical Marxist-Leninist united front pattern.

The Lien Viet Front promised political and socio-economic rights; freedom of political views and religion; freedom of choice of residence and movement; the right to elect and be elected; freedom of speech, press, organization, and assembly; freedom of personal property enterprise; and freedom of inheritance. No mention was made of Marxism-Leninism. <sup>108</sup> It was a program designed to appeal to any patriotic, peace-seeking, freedom-loving person, in other words, a program worth fighting for and making sacrifices for, which was exactly its purpose. It was the template of the party's future united front platforms, such as those of the Vietnam Fatherland Front (1955), the Lao Patriotic Front (1956), the South Vietnam National Liberation Front (1960), and the Kampuchean National United Front for National Salvation (1979).

The reappearance of the party in March 1951 ended the period of whole-hearted support of Vietnamese nationalists for first the Viet Minh and then the Lien Viet Front. Up to then, they had been able to more or less ignore the party's hidden hand behind the war of resistance against the French. After March, no self-respecting observer could deny that the resistance was entirely controlled by the party. Ngô Dinh Luyen and Ngô Dinh Thuc, brothers of Ngô Dinh Diem, who was in voluntary exile, came to Bao Dai and brought a message that Diem had been wrong to oppose the government, offering his services to bring about a public wakening to the dangers of Communist domination of the Viet Minh. 109 Thousands of ordinary patriots left the Viet Minh zones for the Bao Dai side of the lines.

The same dilemma of whether to leave the Viet Minh faced Nguyên Binh. Sensing his wavering, the party center accused Binh and the Nam Bo Committee of insubordination and sent Le Duan to the south to read the riot act to the famed guerrilla fighter and to purge his command of deviationism. Hesitating to eliminate him in his popular base of Cochinchina, however, the Tong Bo devised a scheme to distance him. Le Duan carried a letter signed by Giap ordering Binh to return to the north. Thanks to the papers recovered on Nguyên Binh's body, we know the story with accuracy. "My dear comrade," Giap's letter read, "you will have an escort of thirty men. I give you an important assignment. You will reconnoiter a new trail to Bac Bo through the Cambodian provinces of Kompong Cham, Kratie, and Stung Treng." This was to be the route over which the fresh deliveries of Chinese arms in the north were to be portered to the south, replacing the route from Thailand through Cambodia.

Having received his marching orders, Binh set off with a few companions, although he was a sick man. In his diary, Binh complained of the rigors of this march, which went slowly, more slowly than was safe through country inhabited by mountain tribesmen friendly to the French. Even requisitioning sticky rice

from the villages through which they passed proved difficult. He also expressed his personal thoughts, seemingly resigned to the fate that awaited him. "My only choice was to do what was demanded of me, consummating my death and the victory of the party, or to resist and to rally to Bao Dai. But by changing camps I would be a traitor. It would betray my comrades, both the living and the dead."

On September 29, after two months of march, Binh's small group was detained by mountain tribesmen at a hamlet near the Laotian border on the excuse of fetching rice and attacked at midday by Cambodian *chasseurs* from a post some 50 kilometers downstream on the Srepok. In the initial exchange of gunfire, Binh was lightly wounded. While the others of his escort fled into the forest, two political commissars approached him and shot him in the head with their pistols; they had orders from Le Duan to prevent Binh's capture alive. His body, dressed in blue gabardine pants, wearing sunglasses, and carrying a Colt pistol whose holster bore the name Binh, was identified by the French.<sup>110</sup>

In a report to Le Duan of his observations of military and political significance during his march through the eastern Cambodian provinces, which was also found by the French, Binh pointed out that, although the resistance organization in Cambodia was feeble, the country held the capacity to feed an entire army and urged that more attention be paid to enlisting the Cambodians, who were on the whole well disposed to the resistance, although easily excited to violence once wronged.<sup>111</sup> It was advice that the party center later discovered for itself and acted upon.

Ironically, a few weeks previously, General Chanson, Binh's old adversary, was killed during a military ceremony at Sa Dec by a Vietnamese soldier wearing a French uniform who ran toward him and detonated a grenade hidden in his pocket. The assassin's name was Trinh Van Minh, and a photo found on his body showed him seated behind a big desk looking elegant. He had been sent on the suicide mission by none other than Trinh Minh The, who had accused Chanson of refusing to deliver arms to his men.<sup>112</sup>

As part of the shake-up following Binh's elimination, the party center abolished the Nam Bo Committee and established a new organization called the Central Office for South Vietnam (Trung Uong Cuc Mien Nam), staffed by members of the Vietnam Workers' Party Central Committee, with Le Duan as secretary.<sup>113</sup>

#### LAND REFORM AND ITS POLITICAL USES

The party's 1951 manifesto had been extremely cautious on the subject of land reform, no doubt wishing to avoid alarming many supporters of the revolution who were either landowners themselves or had bourgeois origins. Accordingly, the manifesto promised no more than regulating land rents, "provisionally" reallocating French-owned land to poorer peasants and families of disabled and war dead, redistributing communal lands, and using land belonging to absentee landlords "appropriately." 114

As its armed forces had been built up, however, the Viet Minh was faced with an ever greater need for manpower, which could only come from the peas-

ant majority of the rural population. The need was not only for soldiers but also for porters; it was calculated later by the French that every Viet Minh division of 10,000 men required a force of 40,000 porters to keep it supplied with weapons, ammunition, food, and other necessaries. As the war approached a decisive conclusion, this need for manpower became all the more acute.

In January 1953, the Central Committee announced a program to accelerate the anti-feudal revolution throughout the liberated areas. This was given substance by a taxonomy of the rural population contained in a decree issued in March. 115 Class categories were proletarian peasants, poor peasants, middle peasants, rich peasants; all landowners were classified according to their production. In a report to the session of the National Assembly that met in December 1, 1953, Ho made the connection between the land reform and the revolutionary needs in manpower explicit. Those who were to benefit from the land reform were proletarian, poor, and middle peasants, the families of dead or wounded combatants for the motherland, revolutionary cadres and their families, and the employees of state enterprises. Those who would benefit from favorable treatment (chieu co) were rich peasants, ordinary or bourgeois nationalist landowners, progressive and democratic personalities, family members of peasants serving in the puppet army if they deserted, artisan landowners and their families, petty bourgeois, families of unemployed workers in the countryside, and those working for religions. On the other hand, land and personal property of feudal landowners, reactionaries, and religious institutions exceeding what was needed for cults would be confiscated. 116

The National Assembly thereupon voted the fundamental land reform law of the DRV. Cadres were enjoined to take into account local situations in applying the law. Exempted for the moment were the large areas inhabited by ethnic minorities, because of their differing land tenure systems, and the French-controlled zone, for obvious reasons. According to Bertrand de Hartingh, who has studied the archival materials on the land reform, the application of the land reform law was successful in mobilizing more than 100,000 soldiers and porters in the last year of the war.

# THE FRENCH DEFENSE OF LAOS

In Laos, despite troubles created by a former federal police agent named Boun Khong who committed various acts of sabotage and propaganda in south Laos in Phetsarath's name, 117 the political situation evolved generally peacefully. In elections to the National Assembly held on August 26, 1951, the Progressive Party formed by the returned Lao Issara ministers led by Xieng Mao, Prince Souvanna Phouma, and Katay won 15 of 39 seats; the Democratic Party of Kou Voravong won 4 seats; the Laos Union-National Party of Bong Souvannavong won 3 seats; and independents (which included Phoui Sananikone and Leuam) won 17 seats. Xieng Mao having failed to form a government, Souvanna Phouma was invested on November 21.

The party center in its jungle hideout considered Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia as a single battlefield, although tactical concessions to nationalist senti-

ment were made as necessary. These included the setting up of armed forces and "resistance" governments in Laos and Cambodia under the camouflaged control of the party for purposes of mobilizing support in those countries. The party's doctrine was that such entities were fighting to "liberate" these countries from the imperialists and their lackeys. The royal governments of Laos and Cambodia, of course, objected to the French use of the term "Indochina War"; <sup>118</sup> Sihanouk proclaimed it to be a strictly Vietnamese war. <sup>119</sup>

By 1951, enough troops of the "liberation army," mainly made up of ethnic minorities living along the Laos-Vietnam border, had been recruited and trained to take part in small-scale Viet Minh actions against French Union forces in Laos. In the spring of 1953, however, Giap diverted two divisions to overrun virtually all of Sam Neua Province and portions of Phong Saly, Xieng Khouang, and Luang Prabang Provinces. About 300 or fewer Pathet Lao personnel accompanied the Viet Minh. On April 19, Souphanouvong formally established the "resistance" government in Sam Neua Province. A "people's tribunal" presided over by Kaysone condemned the acting province chief to death for having helped organize guerrilla resistance to the Vietnamese invaders.

With Luang Prabang in danger of attack by the Viet Minh, Crown Prince Savang Vatthana received a letter from the American chargé d'affaires in Saigon, Robert McClintock, which was presented at the royal palace by chargé in Vientiane David R. Thomson, that expressed concern for the king's safety and said withdrawal from the capital "would seem the course of wisdom." Unruffled, Savang told Thomson the king intended to stay to bolster morale for the defense of his capital.<sup>120</sup>

The need to defend Laos was a subject of discussion by the National Defense Committee in Paris on July 24 presided over by Auriol and attended by the new commander in chief in Indochina, General Henri Navarre, who had been chosen by the French in preference to General Valluy, who had received the personal endorsement of President Eisenhower.<sup>121</sup> After hearing several ministers speak of the political importance of France's commitment to Laos, Navarre opined that he was perfectly willing to make plans accordingly, but he could not guarantee an effective barrier against the Viet Minh with the means at his disposal. Six days later, the contents of the discussion were published in *France-Observateur* under the byline of Roger Stéphane.

To what extent the revelation of French preoccupation with the defense of Laos influenced the Viet Minh strategy must remain a matter of speculation. In October 1953, the French commitment to defend Laos became formal with the conclusion of a mutual defense treaty as part of the documentation of Laotian independence. Thus, when Viet Minh forces again invaded Laos at the end of 1953 and beginning of 1954, pushing as far as Thakhek and creating considerable difficulties for the French Union defenders, France was formally committed to defend Laos. In this vast area of Central Laos, six Viet Minh battalions without artillery support and having only the supplies coolies were able to backpack from their base at Vinh over 100 kilometers away kept 20 French battalions supported by artillery and air power off balance. The appearance of the Viet Minh was also timed to take advantage of being able to buy up the opium

crop in Sam Neua and Xieng Khouang. By then, Navarre had ordered French Union forces to occupy a defense position at Dien Bien Phu on the invasion route to Luang Prabang.

The French concept of establishing an "aeroterrestrial base" at Dien Bien Phu stemmed from the successful operation of such a base at Na San months earlier. In October through December 1952, French forces under Colonel Gilles had held off repeated Viet Minh attacks in a valley rather narrower than that of Dien Bien Phu. Gilles had followed a strategy of immediately responding to enemy attacks with artillery fire, air bombardment, and sorties by his troops to recapture lost positions. In this way they had prevented the Viet Minh from placing the air strip, on which the garrison was totally dependent, under fire.

The movement of Viet Minh divisions toward Dien Bien Phu in December 1953 led the French high command to order the evacuation of Lai Chau, the capital of the T'ai country, whose population was loyal to the French. The town's three battalions were successfully airlifted to Dien Bien Phu. But the evacuation had been so sudden that the 25 companies of T'ai irregulars holding the surrounding countryside received little or no advance warning and were merely ordered to make tracks to Dien Bien Phu. As a result, only 10 French and 175 irregulars made it to Dien Bien Phu, the others becoming dispersed in the bush by Viet Minh ambushes. An American correspondent described the survivors' arrival:

[They came] shuffling through the dust in a long column, arms slung, leading small, heavily-laden mountain ponies. Their gaunt faces were blank with exhaustion. Some were carrying their wounded on makeshift bamboo litters, others supported a limping comrade. The slow-moving cavalcade exuded an aura of defeat. The members of the Dien Bien Phu garrison watching the column's arrival were grim-faced and thoughtful. One sensed a certain resentment on their part, as if the partisans had brought with them some unwanted, threatening virus. <sup>123</sup>

Afterward, there ensued an argument between a T'ai officer and the French, and the American was politely but firmly hustled from the scene, but not before he overheard the shouted word *trahison* (betrayal). On March 17, many of the T'ai were to desert their positions and disappear into the morning mist. It was only a small incident in a large war, and it made absolutely no difference to the outcome; but it showed that once loyalty had been betrayed there was no more reason to fight, no matter what the cause.

# The End of French Hegemony

# Competition for Leadership of

#### THE INDEPENDENCE MOVEMENT IN CAMBODIA

In Cambodia the forces of the French Union and the royal government faced an enemy characterized by a constantly shifting kaleidoscope of expedient alliances between various nationalist guerrilla bands and the Viet Minh. <sup>124</sup> The Viet Minh, indeed, were having difficulty imposing their hegemony on allies who were believed unreliable and all too ready to defect to the government. Infiltrating the suspicious Khmer resistance bands proved an insuperable problem, as shown by Nguyên Binh's 1951 report.

Because of Dap Chhuon, we cannot carry on any activities in the provinces of Pursat and Battambang. . . .

According to information supplied by armed propaganda cadres, we have relations with Dap Chhuon thanks to our long-term policy. His men are willing to remain neutral. They do not want to attack us, because they work under the name of the [Khmer] Issarak to fight the French (to fool the people).

Dap Chhuon has in his pocket all the bonzes of these two provinces. Ninety-nine percent of our fighters are Vietnamese. Dap Chhuon can say the Vietnamese come here to make trouble. For, with a population of 200,000 inhabitants, we have not been able to have any Khmer soldiers. <sup>125</sup>

In October 1951, thanks to Sihanouk, Son Ngoc Thanh returned from his detention in France to a triumphal reception in Phnom Penh. He received back pay and was even offered a cabinet post. He refused and set about renewing his old contacts. On February 22, 1952, with the help of the province chief of Siem Reap, Thanh arranged a secret meeting with Kao Tak, one of Dap Chhuon's former lieutenants, on the pretext that Tak was about to surrender. On March 9, Thanh disappeared into rural Siem Reap and joined up with Tak; their combined force numbered 500.

In early May 1952, the French high command destroyed two of Thanh's camps near the Thai border. Rumors that atrocities had been committed in this campaign were perhaps responsible for the fact that high school students on parade in Phnom Penh substituted anti-French banners for milder ones celebrating Cambodia's constitution. Toward the end of the month there were strikes and anti-French parades in Battambang, Kompong Cham, and Phnom Penh. In these circumstances, Sihanouk had to act swiftly to catch the nationalist bandwagon. Now he sprang into action. On June 15, 1952, he addressed a message to his people solemnly promising to obtain independence within three years. He abruptly dismissed the Democratic Party cabinet (the prime minister, Huy Kanthoul, left for a prolonged holiday in France) and took over as prime minister, citing residual powers granted him in the constitution. He put his cousin Sisowath Sirik Matak in charge of defense.

In December 1952, Sihanouk suffered the grievous loss of his four-year-old daughter Kantha Bopha to leukemia. <sup>126</sup> In his travels abroad, Sihanouk always carried her ashes in a small jewel case which was entrusted to an aide who deposited it with flowers beside his bed when he arrived at his destination. By 1952 he had also begun his liaison with Monique Izzi, the beautiful daughter of a Franco-Italian father who had lived with, but never married, a Madame Pomme in the 1930s. <sup>127</sup>

In February 1953, Sihanouk left for France to put his case for complete independence to President Auriol. However, failing to get anywhere, and sensitive to charges from his opponents that he was acting the playboy, he left in April for a trip to Canada and the United States. He was being hard pressed by the effectiveness on Cambodian public opinion of Son Ngoc Thanh's pro-independence propaganda, he told Heath. 128 But he found to his dismay that the Americans dismissed people such as Thanh as rebels without a future and had a very confused understanding of Cambodian sentiment; their only advice to him was to be a loyal servant of the French so that the Communists could be defeated in Indochina, which was to put the cart before the horse, as he observed. However, an interview he decided, apparently on the spur of the moment, to give to The New York Times before leaving the United States in which he hinted at an open break with the French hit Paris like a bombshell; the French may have suspected the Americans of quietly putting Sihanouk up to this unexpected threat. In the interview he said it was not he who risked Indochina's falling to the Communists, but rather the French through the intransigent policies they pursued. 129 Within a month, Sihanouk's delegation, led by Penn Nouth, had succeeded in winning from the French the important concession that the king henceforth would assume the post of commander in chief of the royal army and with it responsibility for maintaining law and order and security within the kingdom. 130

Sihanouk used his new authority to raise a popular militia, called *chivapols* in Khmer. Weary of insecurity in the countryside and pointless political maneuvering in Phnom Penh, tens of thousands rallied to Sihanouk's call to arms, including some Cambodian soldiers who deserted the French high command. Within weeks, more than 100,00 (Sihanouk claimed 400,000) men and women, young and old, embarked on basic military training. The military value of the *chivapols* was doubtful, but the political message was loud and clear: Sihanouk meant to exercise nationalist leadership, and everyone should take note. In a battle near Kratie in April 1954 that drove the Viet Minh 436th Battalion out of Cambodia, the militia took part.

Sihanouk's "crusade for independence," as he called it, headquartered in Siem Reap, was an exercise in political, rather than military, warfare. Using effective nationalist appeals, he managed to enlist the support of people who had been preyed upon by warlords with an insatiable appetite for new recruits to throw into losing battles against the French. He obtained the pledges of allegiance of several of these warlords. Cambodian enlistees in the French forces deserted to join him. And it was successful. Like Bao Dai, Sihanouk knew that only through negotiations, backed by visible popular support, would an independence that was not mortgaged to the Communists become a reality. Sihanouk was certainly influenced in his decisions with respect to the French during this period by Bao Dai's actions, as Gullion, who had an interview with him in June 1952, reported.<sup>131</sup>

The French high command in September was still reneging on France's commitment to turn over command of Cambodian troops to Sihanouk, how-

ever. It was insisting that operational control of five Cambodian battalions remain with the French rather than Sihanouk. American officials in Saigon and Paris were not supportive of the Cambodians. However, after a final round of negotiations in Phnom Penh in October 1953, led again by Penn Nouth, Cambodia was ready to accede to complete independence.

Sihanouk returned to Phnom Penh in triumph. It was a moment that he savored in memory many years later. 132 All along the road crowds shouted "Long live the king!" Independence was sealed by an exchange of signatures on November 8.133 Sihanouk received the homage of Cambodia's various institutions and was awarded medals, including several for Penn Nouth, who was also raised to the dignity of Samdech. The formal declaration of independence took place on November 9; the transfer of sovereignty was symbolized by a farewell marchpast of French forces commanded by General de Langlade and of royal army regulars and militia irregulars. Sihanouk sat in the reviewing stand with French commissioner Jean Risterucci and de Langlade. After the transfer ceremonies, awards of decorations, and a parading of regular units, chivapols marched in review with visible spirit and pride for nearly four hours, after which the king finally called a halt because of the pouring rain. There were still between ten and twenty thousand chivapols who had not paraded who would have taken another three hours to pass the reviewing stand. 134 The rain was probably a good omen for a growing tree; in his old age, King Sihanouk would be thanked by his countrymen for providing the shade for them in difficult times.

The Viet Minh celebrated the first half of 1954 with the greatest orgy of destruction Cambodia had seen up to then. They assassinated and kidnapped civil servants, burned down schools and rural dispensaries, destroyed bridges and public buildings, blew up trains, ambushed cars on the roads, and pillaged "uncooperative" villages. 135 Penn Nouth had broadcast a message to them saying that now that independence had been won they no longer had the excuse they had in 1947 to liberate the country from French rule. He offered them the neutrality of Cambodia in the conflict in Vietnam, but warned that if they had not evacuated Cambodian soil by December 1, 1953, they would face the Cambodian army. They paid no attention 136 (any more than they were to pay attention in March 1970 to a similar Khmer ultimatum). Sihanouk launched the small but highly motivated Cambodian army and his militia against the adversaries. He called it Operation Samakki ("Solidarity"). The Cambodians put the Viet Minh to flight across the border and captured a battalion flag in the process. It is significant that in Sihanouk's campaign against the Viet Minh invaders of his country, the considerable Vietnamese ethnic minority in Cambodia played no part; the Vietnamese were small shopkeepers and artisans for the most part, and their loyalty was to Sihanouk, who offered them peace and security, not to Ho Chi Minh.

#### THE DEBATE OVER THE FRENCH UNION

The French National Assembly became the focus of the growing public frustration with the war in Indochina. The French press during May and June had

been full of speculation about negotiations to end the war. In the National Assembly, advocates of opening negotiations with the adversary controlled two-thirds of the votes, if one counted the Communists. <sup>137</sup> Pierre Mendès-France of the Radical Socialist Party had his own plan, which he outlined to American Ambassador C. Douglas Dillon over lunch, for granting immediate independence to the Associated States, withdrawing French troops in phases, and offering a negotiated armistice to the Viet Minh involving elections to a constituent assembly. <sup>138</sup> The MRP party of Georges Bidault voted at its congress on May 25 in favor of international negotiations on Indochina.

As the United States by this time was paying for a large share of the financial costs of the war effort, its views carried considerable weight with the French government. The Eisenhower administration, with support from such influential senators as Mike Mansfield of Montana, propounded the view that in Vietnam the majority of the population would only oppose the Viet Minh if they felt that their government enjoyed all the attributes of complete sovereignty and independence. In practice, however, American influence over the French course of action in Indochina was limited by the fear that the French government, if pressed too hard on the issue of granting genuine independence to the Associated States, might abandon the war effort entirely.

Thus, in a debate on the floor of the Senate on June 29 and 30 and July 1, 1953, an amendment to a bill appropriating additional mutual security funds for Indochina that would have required the French government to make an immediate declaration setting a target date for the adoption of constitutions in the Associated States was dropped in favor of a milder version that tied expenditure of the appropriated funds to unspecified action to "encourage" the independence of the Associated States. The debate was precipitated by the Eisenhower administration's request for the funds, and it was only accidental that it coincided with a change of government in France. In offering his original amendment, Senator Barry M. Goldwater quoted from the American Declaration of Independence. However, saying that he, too, accepted the argument that it was necessary to avoid giving the French government the impression of being faced with an ultimatum, Goldwater accepted the substitute amendment offered by Senator John F. Kennedy. "French grants of limited independence to the people of Vietnam," Kennedy said, "have always been too little and too late." Finally, even Kennedy's moderate amendment was defeated, 17 to 64. It is small wonder that Bao Dai was not always clear about American intentions. He confessed to his defense minister at about this time that he had "been unable to determine in his own mind exactly what American policy is toward Vietnam."139

The government of Joseph Laniel made the issue of independence of the Associated States one of its top priorities upon assuming office on June 28, 1953. In a note handed to the representatives of the Associated States in Paris on July 3, Laniel's government proclaimed that

there is ground for perfecting the independence and sovereignty of the Associated States in assuring, in agreement with each one of the three interested governments, the transfer of powers that France had still retained in the interests even of the States, by reason of the perilous circumstances arising from the state of war. 140

The French government had therefore decided to invite each of the three governments "to come to an agreement with it on the settlement of the questions that each one of them will consider it ought to pose in economic, financial, judicial, military, and political fields." The statement recalled that independence had been granted under the terms of accords reached in 1949 by which these states also accepted association with France in the French Union.

The character of the fundamental agreement defining the relationship between France and Vietnam had been established by the Elysée Agreements and Vietnamese ordinance, but it was the French Constitution that was legally bound to conform to the provisions of the diplomatic treaty under its Article 28, which recognized the primacy of international laws over internal laws, and not the other way round.

This situation gave rise to a contradiction. Vietnam accepted association with France in the French Union, but the statutes of the French Union had been unilaterally defined by the French Constitution. In the words of one legal expert, "The defective procedure itself which consists, for example, of recognizing in the same text the independence of Vietnam and of establishing limits on this independence creates the greatest possible confusion." This is a reference to the fact that the French Union, the subject of the lengthy Title VIII of the constitution of October 27, 1946, 142 was not intended in the eyes of its drafters to be a union of equals, but rather a union under the presidency of the president of the French Republic.

From the viewpoint of the Vietnamese, so long as the fundamental document defining the relationship between France and Vietnam had not been reworded, the State of Vietnam continued to be bound by the French government's control of policymaking in the French Union. The rewording of this document was, from a legal point of view, the necessary and sufficient condition for "perfecting" the independence of the State of Vietnam. As a memorandum by Gullion of the Saigon Embassy put it:

- (a) The President of the French Republic is automatically the President of the French Union. The Government of France is the steering and directing agency for the whole Union. Article 62 of the French Constitution states that the members of the French Union "place in common all their resources to guarantee the defense of the whole Union. The Government of the (French) Republic shall coordinate these resources and direct such policies as will prepare and assure this defense."
- (b) The functions of the High Council of Associated States are specifically limited (Article 65) to "assisting the Government (of the French Republic) in the general conduct of the affairs of the Union." <sup>143</sup>

The writer assessed the effect of these restrictions as "keep[ing] a number of sincere anti-Communist nationalists from participation in the defense effort and the building of a national life."

Even before negotiations with the Associated States started, the immediate question of whether they would be considered free to leave the French Union gave rise to heated arguments within the Laniel government. It had taken no less than three cabinet meetings in the space of a week to arrive at the decision to issue the July 3 statement, and on July 3 the statement itself was interpreted differently by two government spokesmen. He statement itself was interpreted differently by two government spokesmen. Let also contained several individuals who had been involved previously in Indochina affairs. These included Vice-Premier Henri Queuille, who had been prime minister at the time of the Elysée Agreements; Paul Reynaud, now in overall charge of Associated States matters from his office in the Hotel Matignon next to Laniel's, who had been minister of colonies in the 1930s; and Bidault, at the Quai d'Orsay, who had been involved in the writing of the articles of the constitution relating to the French Union and who had been prime minister during the ill-fated Fontainebleau Conference.

In these circumstances, it is not surprising that the American Embassy in Paris interpreted the July 3 statement as a compromise between divergent points of view. The embassy saw Reynaud as the moving force behind the position taken. In a meeting with a small group of American correspondents that evening, he had taken issue with the interpretation advanced earlier in the day by Quai officials that the proposed talks with the Associated States would take place within the framework of the 1949 accords, implying that the discussions would represent an evolution and freer interpretation of those accords. Reynaud made it clear that this interpretation was not correct and that the entire basis of Franco-Associated States relations would be discussed if the latter so wished, as was expected to be the case. Another indication of Reynaud's influence was the simultaneous naming to the post of commissioner general in Indochina of Maurice Dejean, a career diplomat who had been ambassador to Japan since 1952. Dejean had been one of two private secretaries to Reynaud in the late 1930s.

The embassy advised the State Department to bear in mind the division of opinion between Reynaud and Bidault on the Indochina independence question. The antagonism between the two men was apparently personal as well as political. The fact remains that Reynaud, possibly alone among the members of the cabinet at that stage, saw that France's honor lay more with a course that would grant independence to Vietnam than with one that continued to withhold it on grounds of French public opinion, especially a course that withheld it beyond France's entry into some form of negotiations to end the war. But who, after all, could justify sending French boys to die in the rice fields for an independent Vietnamese government? The answer was no one. Reynaud was in a quandary; he professed to see "no light at the end of the tunnel." 147

Official reaction in Indochina to the July 3 appeal was favorable. In Laos, Prince Souvanna Phouma's government welcomed the initiative, saying it would respond to the invitation to open negotiations and reaffirming its adherence to the French Union. <sup>148</sup> In Cambodia, the government in a lengthy note recalled King Sihanouk's demand for the dual principles of Cambodia's total

independence and sovereignty and a willingness to adhere at the same time to a French Union "in which Cambodia enjoys a status at least equal to that of India in the Commonwealth"; the note then went on to give a list of responsibilities the royal government wished France to turn over. 149 Bao Dai's prime minister, Nguyên Van Tam, said that his government considered that the statement "expresses the will of France to realize in full the national aspirations of the Vietnamese people," and spoke of "the total independence which is solemnly promised." The phrase "total independence" was to figure prominently in the months to come in Vietnamese statements about their relations with France.

A few days later, Tillman Durdin of *The New York Times* found Tam studying the text of the Elysée Agreements. Tam had underlined sections that would need eliminating or changing. He pointed to an article stipulating that Vietnam's foreign affairs were to be "examined and coordinated under the direction and responsibility of the Government of the French Republic" and that chiefs of foreign missions in Vietnam were to be accredited concurrently to the President of the French Union. <sup>151</sup> The negotiations with the French would be long and complicated, Tam said. Bao Dai would head the Vietnamese delegation to Paris. <sup>152</sup>

The State Department had included among its talking points for trilateral consultations of the foreign ministers of the United States, Britain, and France the "wise and hopeful French decision for increasing sovereignty of Associated States." One of the drafters was Gullion, who was now on the Policy Planning Staff.<sup>153</sup>

This formulation still allowed a lot of latitude, particularly with regard to the speed with which the Department expected to see the negotiations take place. What guidance was the embassy in Saigon receiving from the Department at this critical juncture? Mindful of the French government's slim parliamentary majority and of the division within the cabinet over the question of revising the relationship with the Associated States, the Department instructed the embassy in Saigon in a July 13 cable drafted by the director of the Office of Philippine and Southeast Asian Affairs: "When the time comes we may wish discreetly [to] use our influence [to] see [that] positions taken by Vietnamese do not contribute to further weakening French will [to] continue fight and when peace [is] restored, continue [to] help develop and protect Vietnam." <sup>154</sup>

Ambassador Heath replied that he found the guidance offered "very help-ful [to] this Embassy in understanding [the] situation." He realized something was required of him, but there was obviously considerable doubt in his mind about exactly what it should be. "Perhaps the most constructive position which we can take is to convince the Vietnamese and Cambodians that in their vital self-interest they must take realistic view that they may have to make promptly certain concessions in substance or form in order to insure continuance of French effort in their behalf." Instead of perceiving that the restoration of peace was tied to the degree to which the Associated States could claim to be sovereign entities, and therefore that any concessions allowed the French on the question of independence put off the prospect of peace that much further, Heath was willing, without much enthusiasm, to espouse the expedient solution, which was to preserve the integrity of the government in Paris.

### THE NATIONALISTS SPEAK OUT

At this juncture, the only leader on the horizon who had no doubt in his mind about what he wanted to see happen was Bao Dai. When he arrived at Nice on August 2, he said "It is for the complete independence of Vietnam that I have come to France." Since his return in 1949, Bao Dai had held out hopes of a constitution for the State of Vietnam to be decided by popular will, a position that the State Department had welcomed. Bao Dai's hopes had remained unfulfilled, and in April 1953 he was still dithering with a plan to commission his private secretary for civil affairs, Tran Van Tai, to go to France in secrecy to begin studies on a draft constitution. 158

The State of Vietnam (unlike Cambodia and Laos) had no popularly elected national legislature. Bao Dai, the ex-emperor who was head of a state that was neither a monarchy nor a republic, had had no lack of advice on this subject. Before leaving for France, he had received a delegation of intellectuals, including the Catholic Ngô Dinh Nhu, Diem's younger brother, who requested him to take steps toward the election of a national assembly. In April, Governor Adlai Stevenson had asked him about the possibility of creating a Vietnamese national assembly. Bao Dai had replied, with alarming frankness, that since half his country was in enemy hands, this was a fairly useless suggestion, but later allowed that he believed it would come eventually. Another consideration, perhaps, was that all of Vietnam, including Saigon, was within reach of Viet Minh assassination squads, for whom representatives of an alternative sovereignty would be targets, and Bao Dai hesitated to put the lives of such persons at risk.

August was a month of labor unrest in France. With nearly 3 million railway and other workers on strike, it was not until August 26 that the Laniel government was able to turn its attention to the negotiations with the Vietnamese and announce the appointment of a delegation that included Reynaud, Bidault, and Marc Jacquet, a Gaullist who held the position of secretary of state for the Associated States. The French told American diplomats they expected the negotiations to start on August 31. But an initial meeting in the presence of President Auriol between Bao Dai and the French negotiators on August 27 and 28 at Rambouillet ended apparently inconclusively after some frank talk by Bao Dai about French deficiencies. And the French were not unhappy to use the excuse of the forthcoming national congress to put off the start of the negotiations until October or even November.

As Ellen Hammer has written, "The announcement that Bao Dai and Nguyên Van Tam would soon open negotiations with the French was the signal for an outburst of political activity." <sup>163</sup> In a sign of this nationalist revival, the Cao Dai "Pope" Pham Cong Tac took the initiative at the beginning of September in organizing what was described as a national congress. <sup>164</sup> Some 50 delegates, brought together by Tac and Nhu in a Congress of National Union and Peace that met in Cholon on September 6, voted a resolution in favor of unconditional independence and the election of a national assembly by universal suffrage. This was a bold step, and it got extensive press coverage both in Vietnam

and France. The resolution reflected widespread belief among ordinary Vietnamese that France was stalling. When President Eisenhower asked Vietnamese Ambassador Tran Van Kha how many of the people of Vietnam believed French promises of independence, "the Ambassador shrugged his shoulders and said perhaps two or three percent."165

Bao Dai was feeling somewhat under the weather; he faced opposition from the sects always looking for ways to seize their autonomy, from landowners resisting agrarian reform, from traditionalists who wanted no democratic evolution, from nationalists who accused Tam of being too pro-French, and from republicans who feared a restoration of the monarchy, not to mention the High Commission, which sought to limit the scope of every agreement. Because the French had paid subsidies to some of these groups for years, Bao Dai's problem was a real one.166 When his old friend General Georges Catroux, former governor general, came to see him at his residence at Cannes with a message from the Laniel government, all these feelings came to the surface. The message was to the effect that the French wished Bao Dai to democratize his regime. Specifically, the government urged him to convene a national congress of all political factions in Vietnam. "Very well," Bao Dai replied with sarcasm. "Tell Paris that I will convene a congress in Saigon bringing together all political tendencies. It will be like your own National Assembly, a magnificent display of divergent points of view!"167

Officially, the National Congress that convened in Saigon on October 12 was to prepare for the negotiations that would define the new relations between Vietnam and France. Nationalists of every coloration, however, saw it as a rare opportunity to express their views and have them heard in Paris. While he faced a difficult assignment in the circumstances, Buu Loc, Bao Dai's cousin who had been appointed by Bao Dai to inaugurate the congress, sportingly announced at the opening session that its work would provide a test for the democratic future of Vietnam.

This indeed happened. Tran Trong Kim was elected chairman, a figure from the past whose association with Vietnamese independence, even after many years of retirement from active politics, symbolized the burning issue of the day. It was to be Kim's last appearance on the political scene; this scholar and writer with his unrelenting sense of public duty was to die in the following month. Under the leadership of Dr. Pham Huu Chuong, who had recently left the Viet Minh zone where he had been director of public health services, the congress passed a series of four resolutions. In the first, the congress declared that total independence was the essential condition for ending the war and recommended that the government obtain recognition of Vietnam's total independence, exercising full internal and external sovereignty. The second declared that independent Vietnam "could not participate in the French Union in its present form." It also declared that "no negotiation, no proposal or decision affecting Vietnam could take place or be taken at an international conference without the agreement of the Vietnamese government." The third expressed the "total confidence" of the congress in Bao Dai and asked him to choose qualified representatives to undertake the negotiations with France. Finally, a fourth resolution expressed gratitude to both France and the United States for their aid to Vietnam in its efforts to consolidate its independence. What had emerged from what one foreign observer described as "a monumental free-for-all" were resolutions that represented, on balance, a considered viewpoint on the issues facing the nation at this critical juncture.

The absence of American support for the congress in its work was a bitter disappointment to the Vietnamese. Ambassador Heath interpreted the resolution on the French Union as a sign of irresponsible demagoguery and exerted his efforts to water it down. The congress provided an object lesson of the fact that the nationalists could only count on American support for their efforts within certain rather narrow limits.<sup>170</sup>

In Paris, the resolution was not viewed as easing the passage to negotiation of independence; the American Embassy, in fact, reported it as having the effect of a "bombshell." 171 It complicated the Laniel government's relations with the National Assembly, where the expected expressions of outrage soon materialized. Bao Dai, with characteristic unflappability, issued a statement expressing satisfaction with the National Congress in general and congratulating the delegates for their outstanding patriotism and citizenship. 172 But he did not hesitate to criticize the French Union himself in an interview.<sup>173</sup> He attributed passage of the original resolution to a misunderstanding and reaffirmed the affection Vietnam felt for France. He added, however, that it was necessary to develop bonds of equal and voluntary cooperation without delay. 174 He was secretly pleased at the turn of events; on his return to Vietnam, he told the congress leaders as much. 175 A debate on Indochina in the French National Assembly was scheduled for the end of October. A cabinet meeting on October 21 was entirely taken up with consideration of the Vietnam situation. The government decided to send a moderately worded note repeating the July 3 conditions and asking for an official explanation of the Vietnamese government.<sup>176</sup>

Laniel himself was apparently having doubts about the feasibility of changing the fundamental concept of the French Union as embedded in the constitution.<sup>177</sup> The agitation in Saigon appears to have given the moderates among the French some encouragement, however. Seeing the moment as propitious, Prince Souvanna Phouma, prime minister of Laos, slipped into town to finalize negotiations, and on October 23 King Sisavang Vong and President Auriol signed a Treaty of Amity and Association granting Laos the status of a "fully independent and sovereign state" (Article 1) and expressing Laos's adherence "of its own free will" to the French Union, "an association of independent and sovereign peoples, free and equal in rights and duties" (Article 2).<sup>178</sup>

At the same time, the French Union was undergoing a subtle shift, from being a French-dominated organization to one composed of equal and sovereign states, thereby providing for an enlarged interpretation of the Union and proving, once again, that legal texts need not impede human action when there exists sufficient motivation. Auriol himself gave this shift substance when he declared at the conclusion of a session of the High Council of the French Union in November 1953:

A great fraternal community formed by France and its departments and overseas territories, as well as by states freely associated, independent and sovereign, free and equal in rights and duties, who solemnly undertake to pool their resources and coordinate their efforts in order to develop their respective civilizations, augment their welfare and assure their security. This coordination is to be accomplished in the High Council where, under the Presidency of the President of the French Union, is defined in confident and common agreement the general policy which will be the strength of each one in every sphere.<sup>179</sup>

Three days after the National Assembly opened its debate, Bao Dai left Nice to return to Saigon. Among those seeing him off was Ngô Dinh Diem, who was now living in Belgium. In a letter printed by *Le Monde* on October 26, Diem criticized the organization of the National Congress. To be sure, the manner in which the delegates to the National Congress had been chosen left much to be desired, and a more representative national assembly would have filled the need better.

On October 28, Tam's government gave its reply to the French statement, saying that Vietnam agreed to continue its participation in the French Union, but only on condition that this participation was based on a negotiated treaty, not on the French constitution. The formulation chosen had implications for the negotiations, which were still in the future. But on the face of it it was reasonable in view of the burden of war the Vietnamese were bearing. Bao Dai himself, a few days later in conversation with visiting Vice President Richard M. Nixon, said the Vietnamese knew the French Constitution by heart. "As now written," he said, "the French Constitution by definition makes membership in the French Union not compatible with absolute sovereignty." 181

In view of the tension prevailing in Vietnamese-French relations, the American Embassy in Saigon thought it wise to limit Nixon's contacts among Vietnamese political figures. His visit was confined to official receptions and ceremonies, and his speeches without exception emphasized the theme of the necessity of close association of Vietnam with France in winning the war. <sup>182</sup> At a dinner in Hanoi given by the governor of northern Vietnam, Nguyên Huu Tri, Nixon likened France's efforts in Indochina to French assistance to the American revolutionaries, <sup>183</sup> a comparison that must have sounded strange to the ears of his listeners, who were among the most outspoken advocates of cutting all ties with France. Later, the vice president summed up his conclusions by saying a French offer of independence "might be helpful," <sup>184</sup> but he obviously had not drawn the same lesson from his brief visit as Kennedy had two years earlier.

The American Embassy in Paris, preoccupied with larger issues in Franco-American relations and not wishing to add to the Laniel government's political difficulties, avoided pressing the issue of negotiations with the Vietnamese at this point. The prevailing view at the embassy was that the Vietnamese could not expect to enjoy genuine independence until the war had been won. <sup>185</sup> The Americans expected the "Navarre Plan" to bring this military success closer. As autumn passed into winter, General Navarre in Indochina prepared to put into operation a key part of his strategy by occupying the aeroterrestrial base of Dien Bien Phu.

The National Assembly debate on Indochina passed off in a generally calm manner. In his policy speech on October 27, Laniel addressed the issue between France and Vietnam over the French Union.

In a communication which was sent to them [the Vietnamese] several days ago, we reminded them not only of the services rendered, not only of our reciprocal engagements, but also, and especially, of the fact that the French Government would be justified, if they were to challenge the very idea of the French Union, to consider herself free of her own obligations, notably those concerning the military responsibilities which she takes upon herself. 186

Another subject Laniel touched upon was the question of negotiations to end the war. He agreed with his critics that it was preferable to negotiate, but with whom? Laniel declared that his government would not refuse the occasion to negotiate an armistice in the event the Viet Minh recognized they could not win the war. The Assembly closed its debate on October 28 by adopting, by a vote of 315 to 257, a motion that invited the government to "use every possible means in order to lead to, through negotiation, a general pacification of Asia." Indeed, the recent armistice in Korea provided a convenient precedent, in the minds of many deputies, for what might be arrived at in Indochina. <sup>187</sup>

#### French Assurances of Consultation

The prospect of negotiations on Indochina, no matter how dim they were at this point, was of such a nature as to unsettle the Vietnamese. They knew that if the French went into negotiations for an armistice with the Viet Minh, political questions would be unavoidable. To give the French the final say on the political future of Indochina, as was presently inevitable under the terms of the State of Vietnam's membership in the French Union, was to ask for trouble. The Laniel government, ever worried about the contribution of the Associated States to the war effort, was sensitive to these realities.

On December 4, Laniel gave assurances to the State Department that in the hypothesis of a Viet Minh peace feeler sent through diplomatic channels, "France would only consider it in conjunction with the Governments of the Associated States." A few days later, Bidault said the French "will never abandon their comrades and supporters in the Associated States and will therefore never negotiate without the latter's approval." With meaningful negotiations on the independence question safely put off for the time being, the French apparently felt at liberty to multiply such assurances. The kind of "approval" envisaged, in any event, had nothing to do with the relations between sovereign states.

Apparently sensing the danger to the Vietnamese represented by negotiations on Indochina without their full participation, Navarre took it upon himself at the beginning of December to warn Bao Dai that while he could count on French troops fighting with their present spirit and success in the immediate future, he should not delay negotiating the terms of a future Franco-Vietnamese association. <sup>190</sup> But Bao Dai was in the process of changing prime ministers.

Tam, in spite of his brave talk of forming a national union government to negotiate with the Viet Minh, had outlived his usefulness. On January 12, 1954, Bao Dai replaced him with Prince Buu Loc, a French-educated lawyer who had been serving as Vietnamese high commissioner in Paris and who had headed the Vietnamese negotiating team at the time of the Elysée Agreements. In his speech accepting the charge on January 16, Buu Loc gave first priority to the negotiation of "total independence." Dejean, in his counterpart speech, referred to "a new step" toward independence.

Still there were delays. At the beginning of February, the French told American diplomats they expected the negotiations to begin at the end of the month. On February 24, they said the negotiations would begin in the first week of March.<sup>191</sup>

In the meantime, however, without consulting the governments of the Associated States<sup>192</sup> or even its own commander in Indochina,<sup>193</sup> the Laniel government had agreed at the four-power conference of Berlin "that the problem of restoring peace in Indochina shall be discussed at the conference [to be held in Geneva beginning in April] to which representatives of the United States, France, the United Kingdom, the USSR, the Chinese People's Republic and other interested states will be invited." The "other interested states" were not specified, but American officials in Paris reported that in the view of the French Foreign Ministry the governments of the Associated States would not be participating because their participation would raise the question of Viet Minh participation. At this very moment, Bidault was declaring, at a meeting of the Permanent Committee of the High Council of the French Union presided over by President René Coty, that the "French position for Geneva would be prepared with [the] concurrence [of the] Associated States and that no decision would be taken at Geneva without their approval." <sup>194</sup>

On the eve of his departure for Paris to begin constitutional negotiations, Buu Loc told Heath that he faced the choice of negotiating independence before the Geneva conference opened and having France pull out of Indochina, which would leave his army to fight on alone, or else taking the risk that the French would be drawn into negotiations for an armistice with the Viet Minh. "If they are going to request Communist China to stop aiding the Viet Minh, that is fine; but if they are going to negotiate an armistice with Ho Chi Minh, that is something quite different."

In fact, Laniel, in laying before the National Assembly the conditions under which France would be willing to conclude a cease-fire agreement, had implicitly accepted the participation of the Viet Minh in negotiations. These conditions were: (1) complete withdrawal of Viet Minh troops from Laos and Cambodia; (2) withdrawal of Viet Minh forces outside a "no man's land" surrounding the Red River Delta; (3) regrouping of Viet Minh forces in central Vietnam in specified zones; (4) disarming or evacuation of Viet Minh forces from Cochinchina; and (5) guarantees and means of control to prevent the Viet Minh from using a cease-fire to re-arm or reinforce themselves during the period of negotiations which would follow. 196 Already the prospect of the Geneva

conference had shaken the Vietnamese and in particular had had a disastrous effect on morale in the Vietnamese armed forces, Defense Minister Phan Huy Quat told Heath. 197

#### DIFFICULT NEGOTIATIONS FOR INDEPENDENCE

The long-delayed negotiations between France and the State of Vietnam finally opened at the Quai d'Orsay on March 8. Laniel and Buu Loc both made statements on the occasion. Laniel confined himself to generalities. Buu Loc used the expression "total independence." The following day, however, the National Assembly adopted an order of the day that read in part:

[The Assembly] solemnly recalls that France is sustaining the armed struggle in Indochina by virtue of the provisions of the Constitution relative to the French Union, to which the Associated States have already voluntarily adhered, and that any repudiation of these provisions by the said States would relieve France of her obligations toward them while leaving her free to judge the measures that might be dictated by her interest, which is inseparable from that of the free world. <sup>199</sup>

This order of the day was approved by a vote of 377 to 235. <sup>200</sup> This action obviously made French ratification of any negotiated treaty redefining the nature of association in the French Union (the only change required strictly speaking in terms of legality) difficult, not to say impossible. Nevertheless, for want of anything better, the Vietnamese persevered. When substantive negotiations got under way on March 12, Buu Loc said he wanted to see the treaty of independence negotiated first and the treaty of association negotiated second. But the adoption of the order of the day had narrowed the government's room for maneuver.

Revising its earlier opinion that the French Union was a flexible instrument that would allow France to accommodate Vietnamese independence without major complications, the embassy now advised that inasmuch as the government's only hope short of constitutional revision lay in disregarding certain French Union provisions of Chapter 8 (particularly articles 62 and 65) and in defining the French Republic's relationship with Vietnam in a bilateral instrument (per article 61) along lines reflecting the spirit of the last three paragraphs of the preamble to the Constitution, the March 9 order of the day complicated matters. The French government was not willing to subscribe to a public statement that any member of the French Union could consider itself free to withdraw at its own initiative. The Laniel government feared the effects on other members of the French Union of such a concession, especially in Africa.<sup>201</sup>

While the Laniel government was trying to find a way out of this thicket, in Vietnam itself Dejean had informed Bao Dai that the French National Assembly doubted the representativity of the government of the State of Vietnam. Elections for membership in provincial assemblies were held in the territory controlled by the French Union forces in early 1954, but plans for a Consultative National Assembly were not to materialize until Diem came to power. He

could constitute a National Assembly, Dejean suggested helpfully. But, Dejean went on, the attempt to create a Vietnamese National Assembly at this stage would only lead to squabbling and detract from the war effort.<sup>202</sup>

At the end of March, Ambassador Heath, his previous faith in General Navarre's confidence in victory obviously badly shaken by the tightening noose around the French Union garrison at Dien Bien Phu, showed signs of being agitated over the latest delay in getting the negotiations moving ahead. In cables to Washington and Paris, he pointed out the consequences that would result if the State of Vietnam still did not enjoy "perfected" independence before the discussion of Indochina got under way at the Geneva conference, and urged that "at [the] highest level [the] French Government should be apprised of our views." In a memorandum dated March 29, Gullion commented: "I am entirely in accord with this telegram and only wish that it had come in under the same dateline three years, two years, or even one year ago." 2014

Ambassador Dillon, however, continued to recommend against an approach to the French government, arguing that the United States should "do nothing further to undermine French interest in continuing the military effort in Indochina." In his opinion, the Vietnamese were more to blame than the French for the long delay in getting negotiations started. When Nguyên Dac Khe, who was minister in charge of democratization and a member of the Vietnamese delegation in Paris, approached the embassy about interceding with the French to promote the signing of the treaty before the opening of the Geneva conference, Dillon recommended no action. Buu Loc, in the meantime, had had to leave behind these legal complications and return to Saigon on March 25 to confront the thorny constitutional issue and the potentially even thornier one of Vietnamese representation at Geneva.

#### **DULLES INTERVENES**

The apparent breakdown of the negotiations between the French and the State of Vietnam alarmed Senator John F. Kennedy. Speaking on the Senate floor on April 6, 1954, Kennedy reviewed the optimistic predictions of victory made by officials over the years, beginning in February 1951 with the favorable turn of events seen by Brigadier General Francis G. Brink, the head of the MAAG in Saigon. Expressing a wish to find the cause of the wide gap between such predictions and reality, and "to inquire in detail into the nature of the struggle," Kennedy said:

The hard truth of the matter is, first, that without the wholehearted support of the peoples of the Associated States, without a reliable and crusading native army with a dependable officer corps, a military victory, even with American support, in that area is difficult, if not impossible, of achievement; and, second, that the support of the people of that area cannot be obtained without a change in the contractual relationships which presently exist between the Associated States and the French Union.<sup>207</sup>

It was a speech that, in the light of subsequent events, stands out as being so remarkable that Kennedy's close friend and speechwriter Theodore Sorensen

observed, "It had more sense in it than anything he said later." Kennedy grounded the conclusion he had reached from his inquiry into the nature of the struggle from his talk with Gullion in Saigon in 1951. Unlike many others, Kennedy did not allow himself to be lulled by the oversimplifications frequently offered by administration and congressional spokesmen. He saw that the colonial nature of the relationship between the French and the Vietnamese nationalists had led to the vicious circle of the former promising the latter independence once the Communists were defeated, and the latter denying the former the one thing they needed most to achieve this—credible political support. Kennedy drew the appropriate conclusion: in these circumstances, no superiority in numbers, finance, or equipment could make victory over the Communists possible.

Secretary Dulles, having weighed all the arguments, now decided to take a firm stand on Vietnamese independence. In a cable sent to the embassy in Paris on April 9, he said he desired "to stress the extreme importance attached here to successful prompt conclusion of Franco-Vietnamese negotiations on a basis which will be generally accepted as effectively perfecting the independence of Vietnam." He added that while he was personally convinced that the French Union framework offered a desirable means of furthering mutual interests, "there must be a free association with sovereign right of withdrawal enjoyed by all associates," adding that this view was also held by Australia, New Zealand, Thailand, and the Philippines.<sup>209</sup>

Whether due to American pressure on the French or to the diligence of the Vietnamese negotiators, the negotiations made rapid progress, and by early April the Vietnamese were optimistic. When Bao Dai arrived at Nice on April 11, he said he had come to see the independence of Vietnam consecrated by treaty. In a meeting in Laniel's office with Dulles, who visited Paris from April 13 to 14, Reynaud said that the Vietnamese were asking for two treaties governing their relations with France.

One would set forth their total absolute independence. On this, the French had given them satisfaction. On the second treaty which governed the relations between France and Vietnam, they had asked for an association of free and equal states, but were willing for such an association to have the name of French Union. But it was by no means the French Union envisaged by the French Constitution in which France had a preponderant voice. In place of the High Council of the French Union, the Vietnamese wished to establish a round-table assembly. The French had given them satisfaction on these points, and Mr. Reynaud hoped that the French would never again be regarded as colonialists.<sup>211</sup>

The Vietnamese were also making one other demand, which was apparently not mentioned at Dulles's meeting with Laniel. This was for written assurances that the French would not negotiate at the forthcoming Geneva conference to the detriment of the State of Vietnam. The conference was to open on April 26 with a discussion of the Korean problem. In light of the legitimate Vietnamese concern over French intentions, Dulles's failure to meet Bao Dai during his brief

sojourn in the French capital was, in the words of the Vietnamese ambassador to Washington, "most unfortunate." In Saigon, Buu Loc was telling the Americans that his government would not consider participating in the Geneva conference until the negotiations with France were completed with the independence of Vietnam clearly established.<sup>214</sup>

On April 17, the Vietnamese were able to inform the American Embassy in Paris that the French had conceded the point that decisions of the High Council of the French Union should be taken by mutual agreement. By April 21, the embassy reported that the negotiations were basically concluded. On the following day the political committee at its eleventh meeting approved the texts, as well as the text of a joint statement, and decided to submit them to a plenary session of the negotiators. Jacquet then informed American officials, however, that the treaties would "not be signed immediately, for it is wished to have [their] signature coincide with that of other conventions to be concluded." The cabinet was again divided over the question of granting independence to Vietnam, as it had been the previous July. This time, however, with all prospect of victory in Indochina gone<sup>218</sup> and hopes resting on a successful negotiation for an armistice, those who favored refusing independence were in a commanding position since they could argue, quite correctly, that even members of the governing coalition in the National Assembly would vote against the government on this issue.

The fullest and most complete account comes from Buu Loc, who would have been in a good position to know the details of the French cabinet's deliberations with respect to negotiations with the team of which he was the titular and de facto head. He told McClintock that the French had discussed the matter of signature of the treaties at a cabinet meeting that lasted until 4 A.M. on the 23rd and had finally decided not to sign the treaties at that time. The French, according to Buu Loc's account, told the Vietnamese that they preferred to complete the negotiation of the ancillary provisions and that it would require at least two months. The Vietnamese maintained the position that the treaties should be "signed and published" before the opening of the Indochina phase of the Geneva conference, which was to follow negotiations on Korea.<sup>219</sup> The National Assembly had scheduled a new debate on Indochina for the week following the opening of the Geneva conference. In his statement of policy on May 3, however, Laniel made no mention of the independence negotiations, understandably.<sup>220</sup>

#### BAO DAI TAKES A HAND

If the French thought they would have an easy time getting Bao Dai to fall into line with their plans for the conference itself when he arrived in Paris to consult with Laniel and Bidault on strategy, they were mistaken. No arrangement had been agreed on for seating the Vietnamese. Bao Dai told the French there was no question but that the State of Vietnam would participate in the conference on the basis that it was a fully sovereign and independent state. The problem was Viet Minh participation. Bidault assured Dulles he meant to oppose this, but in the event the Soviet Union insisted on it, a formula would have to be found for acceptance of a "Viet Minh presence in some restricted capacity."<sup>221</sup>

April 24, the day set for the French delegation's departure for Geneva, was a particularly busy day in this busy period. At 11 A.M. Bao Dai met with Secretary Dulles, who had returned to Paris for another hurried visit to consult the French and British foreign ministers (April 21–24) and informed him of the delay in signing the treaties decided by the French cabinet. In consideration of the French government's difficulties with the National Assembly over the French Union issue, Bao Dai said, he had accepted the delay. In the meantime, Bao Dai had written to Coty asking him to convene a meeting of the High Council of the French Union to discuss these vital issues, but he had received an evasive reply.<sup>222</sup> That evening, Bidault communicated to Buu Loc's foreign minister, Nguyên Quoc Dinh, a professor of international law at the University of Toulouse, what was officially described as "a full statement regarding the position of the French Government in relation to Geneva." The Vietnamese, however, did not consider this a "working session" or one that in any way met their desire for coordinating strategy at the conference.<sup>223</sup>

Bao Dai was dissatisfied with his conversations with Laniel and Bidault and the French delay in signing the treaties as well as the French manner of "coordinating" strategy for Geneva. Coty's refusal to call a meeting of the High Council of the French Union was apparently the last straw. Powerless as that body was under existing statutes to take a stand independent of that of the French government, the Vietnamese might at least have presented their position. Bao Dai saw this as a violation of the undoubted right of any member of the French Union to ask for a meeting of the High Council.<sup>224</sup> Coty did not share the liberal views on France's relations with the other members of the French Union that had been expressed by his predecessor. Bao Dai therefore took the unusual step of issuing a public statement in his own name on April 25.

After recalling the progress made since the statement of July 3, 1953, Bao Dai pointed out that in spite of the absence of serious disagreement over the matter of Vietnamese independence, the treaties giving effect to this independence had not yet been signed. France had declared on many occasions that it recognized the independence of Vietnam. Vietnam had shown unequivocally its desire to remain associated with France in the framework of a freely constituted union of sovereign states. Vietnam, Bao Dai said, was aware of having done nothing to delay a solution that seemed to be imperative before the opening of the Geneva conference.

The Vietnamese Government has finally accepted not to conclude this phase of the negotiations by the signing of the two treaties of independence and association on which agreement has been reached. As a matter of fact, in certain respects Vietnam does not have all the concrete assurances that its unity and its independence as a freely associated partner are completely guaranteed under conditions which answer to the principles proclaimed.<sup>225</sup>

In using the word *accepté*, Bao Dai was merely stating that he had had to accept this situation, for not to have accepted it would have meant certain rebuff.<sup>226</sup>

What concerned Bao Dai most of all were published reports that partition of Vietnam was being considered. On April 22, *The New York Times* had frontpaged a dispatch from London reporting that British Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden was prepared to present a case for partition of Indochina at the Geneva conference. According to a member of the British delegation, the British saw partition as the key to compromise in the negotiations and had already sounded out Soviet diplomats about its acceptability.<sup>227</sup> The French considered public statements by the British about partition as "doing less than no good."<sup>228</sup> By the time Bao Dai issued his statement, the possibility of partition of Vietnam appears to have been envisaged within the French cabinet.<sup>229</sup> About the only party to the forthcoming negotiations that was said not to be envisaging partition was the DRV; on May 1 sources close to the Chinese delegation told Tillman Durdin that the Viet Minh did not envisage partition.<sup>230</sup>

Evoking the reports of proposals to partition Vietnam at the conference, Bao Dai said that while they offered at first sight certain advantages, diplomatically speaking, they would entail "inconveniences and extremely grave dangers for the future" and would be in defiance of Vietnamese national sentiment:

Vietnam could not tolerate the prospect of negotiations in which France, contrary to the principle of the French Union which she cites, were to negotiate with those who are in rebellion against the Vietnamese nation or with powers hostile to it, disregarding or even sacrificing her associates.

Neither the Chief of State nor the Government of Vietnam will consider itself bound by decisions which run counter to the independence and unity of their country at the same time that they violate a people's rights and offer to reward aggression, contrary to the principles of the United Nations Charter and to democratic ideals.

Bao Dai nevertheless instructed his delegation to continue the negotiations on the ancillary economic, financial, cultural, judicial, and military conventions. On the day the Geneva conference opened, negotiations on these matters were reported to be proceeding.<sup>231</sup>

The next bone of contention between the Vietnamese and the French was a proposed statement to be issued jointly establishing that agreement on the treaties had been reached. Jacques Roux, director of the Asian Department at the Quai d'Orsay, told the Americans on April 27 that the French had proposed to the Vietnamese that they issue a declaration that agreement had been reached in principle, initial the accords, and make them public. Work would then continue on the ancillary conventions. <sup>232</sup> But the Vietnamese were still pressing for word changes. <sup>233</sup>

Dulles was sufficiently worried about the reservations Bao Dai had expressed about the State of Vietnam's position at the Geneva conference to ask Heath, who had come to Geneva from Saigon, to see the head of state on his behalf. Heath asked the French how they would view such a move.<sup>234</sup> Bidault, meanwhile, in his capacity as issuer of invitations to the conference on the West-

ern side, had seen his counterpart, Soviet Foreign Minister Molotov, and had been told by Molotov that no solution could be arrived at without the participation of the Viet Minh. Bidault thereupon told the Americans that he had asked the foreign ministry to contact the representatives of the Associated States to try to get an affirmative reply regarding Viet Minh participation. <sup>235</sup> The French position, as expressed to the Americans and British, was that France did not consider the Viet Minh a state, although the USSR and China did. France considered the three governments of the Associated States as the only legitimate governments of the area. By the French definition, the idea that only states should participate would exclude the Viet Minh. However, the French would accept the Viet Minh presence if it would facilitate the end of the war, even though they could not be considered representatives of a state. <sup>236</sup>

Regardless of Bidault's assurances to the Americans and British, both the French and Bao Dai realized that as long as the treaties were not signed "perfecting" its independence, Vietnam was bound by its role of subordinate to France within the French Union. The Vietnamese were to maintain the stand enunciated by Bao Dai consistently throughout the duration of the Geneva conference. Under the circumstances, they found themselves to be unwilling but powerless accomplices of the French in the latter's negotiation of the terms of armistice with the Viet Minh.

Bao Dai's stance, apparently, was finding a more sympathetic audience at the American delegation in Geneva than it had at the American Embassy in Paris. Bidault suggested that Heath should go to Cannes, whither Bao Dai had retired, to use his influence to solve the impasse over invitations to the conference.<sup>237</sup>

French frustration with Bao Dai must have been heightened when the Quai d'Orsay received a note from him on April 27 restating his opposition to the partitioning of Vietnam and suggesting that, when Vietnamese independence had been perfected, his government approach the Viet Minh directly to propose the establishment of a coalition government in which the Viet Minh would not hold the key positions. The American Embassy, which received word of Bao Dai's démarche through roundabout sources, commented that it had no prior hint of his communication, which may in any case have been inspired by mischievous motives.<sup>238</sup> Needless to say, this was not only a most unwelcome complication to the French but also completely at variance with American policy, which was to keep the French fighting in Indochina.

Perhaps in an effort to keep the Vietnamese in line, the French finally assented on April 28 to release of a public statement in which France and the State of Vietnam jointly affirmed their agreement to regulate their mutual relations on the basis of two fundamental treaties. The Franco-Vietnamese association within the French Union was described as "founded on equality."<sup>239</sup> The Vietnamese had finally won their point. But the treaties themselves remained unsigned.

French dealings with Bao Dai and his legal advisers now moved into high gear. Jacquet was dispatched to Cannes on April 28 and returned to Paris convinced that Bao Dai would agree to an invitation to the Viet Minh. According to Bao Dai, Jacquet told him of Bidault's meeting with Molotov and added the

embellishment: "Sire, the Americans and the Russians reached an agreement at Berlin; everything has already been arranged in advance."240 Jacquet told the Americans in Paris that Bao Dai would come around in a day or two and that Heath's visit should accelerate the process.<sup>241</sup>

Heath did find the head of state more forthcoming on the following day; Bao Dai told him promptly that he was willing, in view of the necessity of his government's participation, not to interpose objections to inviting the Viet Minh. Nguyên Quoc Dinh, however, insisted on a procedure whereby Bidault, Eden, and Dulles would write to him asking what reply he would make to an invitation that would be extended both to him and to the Viet Minh, again according to Heath.<sup>242</sup> The letter was written on April 29 and delivered to Bao Dai in Cannes the next day.<sup>243</sup>

On April 30, Prime Minister Buu Loc left Saigon for Paris. His departure coincided with popular demonstrations in Hanoi and elsewhere against territorial partition.<sup>244</sup> On May 1, Bidault sent a new note to Cannes in exchange for the one of the 29th, which was "retrieved." <sup>245</sup> In yet another statement, this one addressed to his compatriots in an effort to explain his decision to accept the Viet Minh, Bao Dai said that if it had not been for "a small minority without a country who have cloaked themselves in the mantle of patriotism to deceive the people, we would have been able to liberate ourselves without too many difficulties from a largely out-of-date colonial domination."246

# The Geneva Conference

#### BAO DAI'S CONDITIONAL ACCEPTANCE AND THE START OF THE CONFERENCE

On May 2, there was a meeting between Bidault and Dinh, who had arrived in Geneva from Cannes. The substance of this meeting was outlined by Jean Chauvel to Dulles at a dinner given by the latter at the Restaurant du Nord. Chauvel was former director for Asia at the Quai d'Orsay and now French ambassador to Switzerland. By this account, Dinh pressed very strongly for a formal letter from Bidault indicating that the French would not agree to any settlement in Vietnam involving partition. The French told Dinh that they had already given formal verbal assurances that France would not agree to a territorial division of Vietnam, and that if now a new written assurance had to be carried back to Bao Dai time would be consumed and the discussions on Indochina could not begin. After some discussion, and a telephone call from Dinh to Bao Dai, it was agreed that the formal note requested by Dinh would not be a necessary precondition for the French to inform the Soviets that the Viet Minh could participate in the conference. Chauvel indicated that some form of letter regarding French non-acceptance of a division of Vietnam would subsequently be given to Dinh. Chauvel said that on the basis of the agreement with Dinh he had seen Gromyko at 6 P.M. and informed him that the French and Vietnamese governments agreed to the participation of the Viet Minh.<sup>247</sup>

On this basis, the Soviets invited the DRV and the French invited the State of Vietnam at 10 A.M. on May 3. In a letter to Bao Dai on May 6, Bidault wrote: The French Government does not propose, at the present time, to seek a definitive political settlement. Our task consists, as foreseen in the Berlin communiqué, in establishing peace in Indochina.

Our goal is therefore to obtain a cease-fire, in the framework of an armistice which furnishes necessary guarantees to the three states of Indochina, to France and to the allied powers whose general interests are in solidarity with ours in Southeast Asia. This armistice must not prejudice a definitive settlement the examination of which can be approached later on, when the required conditions of peace and liberty for the holding of general elections can be reunited.

From this moment, I am nevertheless in a position to confirm to Your Majesty that nothing could be further contrary to the intentions of the French Government than to prepare the establishment at the expense of the unity of Vietnam of two states each having an international vocation.<sup>248</sup>

In advance of the opening of negotiations, it was relatively easy to make bold statements. Bidault had, in fact, taken other steps to multiply his "assurances." On May 3 he had authorized Dejean to publicize the French government's refusal "to contemplate any partition of Vietnam."<sup>249</sup> On May 4, the Saigon newspaper *Le Journal d'Extrême-Orient* published a declaration by Dejean: there was "no intention" of partitioning Vietnam.<sup>250</sup>

But the situation on the ground belied Bidault's bold statements, which therefore met with skepticism from the Vietnamese. The noose drawn by the Viet Minh around the French Union garrison at Dien Bien Phu had been tightening every hour since March 13. The siege had not turned out like that at Na San. For one thing, Dien Bien Phu was in a wider valley, which made control of the inward-facing slopes, vital for the defense of the outnumbered garrison, almost impossible. For another, the commander at Dien Bien Phu, Colonel Christian de Castries, lacked the drive of Gilles and failed to respond to the initial enemy attacks in March as Gilles had done at Na San. He even failed to order aggressive patrolling outside the lines for fear of incurring casualties.

When the siege finally ended late in the afternoon of Friday, May 7 (Friday morning Paris time), with the famous exchange between De Castries and a Viet Minh captain (Could he tell his troops to cease fighting? "That's superfluous. They've already given up without your order. We've won."<sup>251</sup>), it shook the French people and at a stroke eliminated all policy alternatives for Laniel's government other than arriving at a negotiated armistice as soon as possible. Although it involved fewer than 5 percent of the French Union forces engaged in the war at that moment, the loss of the besieged garrison was the last straw for a public that felt it had been badly misled by its government. In the words of the French historian Georgette Elgey, the hostility the people felt toward their government stemmed from the fact that the same people whose bland assurances had been repeatedly contradicted by events in the past eight years were still clinging to power.<sup>252</sup> The French public had not been passionately interested in the details of affairs in Indochina, but one thing it knew with certainty was that

Bidault had been prime minister at the time of the Fontainebleau negotiations in 1946 which had failed to provide a workable relationship with Vietnam, and it was Bidault who was now about to embark for Geneva to solve the problem of Indochina in his manner. In the language of a later time, the French were beginning to feel some of the same credibility gap on the part of their government as the Indochinese had been feeling for years.

The DRV leaders (but really the party center) had been carefully listening to what was being said in Paris. The open debates in the National Assembly, the foundation of a democratic society, allowed them to make an accurate assessment of the various pressures to which the French government, which constituted the principal obstacle to achieving victory over their Vietnamese adversary, was subject. All they had to do was determine how best to exploit these pressures. Laniel's acceptance of the eventuality of negotiating a Korea-type armistice—and an armistice negotiated specifically with the Viet Minh (they would impose recognition of the DRV)—in the National Assembly debate on October 27 and the motion passed on the following day had alerted them to the need to coordinate action on the battlefield with political and diplomatic actions. The National Defense Committee, whose susceptibility to leaks had already been demonstrated, had debated the question of how best to approach negotiations at its meeting of November 13.

In contrast, Laniel's government had singularly failed to appreciate the risk to which it was putting the garrison at Dien Bien Phu by accepting the principle of negotiations. By the end of December Viet Minh units had moved into position around Dien Bien Phu, cutting off any possibility of withdrawal either by air or overland. General Navarre was committed to defending Dien Bien Phu, but it was not to be the defense of a base for offensive operations in the surrounding region that he had prepared for in his strategic plan. In addition, his immediate subordinate, General René Cogny, commander of French forces in the north, had doubts about the ability of the French to hold Dien Bien Phu, doubts he did not hesitate to express to journalists, <sup>253</sup> and once the siege had begun he never visited the battlefield, unlike de Lattre. The announcement at the Berlin conference in February that negotiations would take place at Geneva at the end of April that would cover Indochina was unaccompanied by any coordinated moves on the Laniel government's part. The sensible course for the French government would have been to rush reinforcements, even including draftees, to Indochina in order to demonstrate to the adversary that it had no intention of negotiating from a position of weakness; such a course might have given the DRV pause in throwing its best forces into a single battle.<sup>254</sup>

Once the airfield came under enemy artillery fire in the first days of the siege, the garrison's fate was sealed. Parachuting in reinforcements (one battalion of Vietnamese on March 14 and a half-Vietnamese French battalion on March 16) or a last-minute attempt to organize a relief column from Laos, led by a young Meo lieutenant named Vang Pao, were insufficient measures to avert disaster. Vietnamese constituted almost half the reinforcements parachuted in after the start of the siege. 255 It was a trap that the DRV had arranged to the last detail, making the final assault on the French command post coincide with the eve of the

conference on Indochina. The final word on Dien Bien Phu was written by the official commission of inquiry, presided over by General Georges Catroux, which issued its report on December 3, 1955. The opening paragraphs read:

The fall of Dien Bien Phu, in a strictly military perspective, represented a very serious failure but one that in the immediate, that is to say, in the spring of 1954, did not upset the balance of forces present in Indochina. It only assumed the aspect of a definitive defeat of our forces by reason of its profound psychological effects on French public opinion, which, tired of a war that was unpopular and seemingly without end, demanded in a way that it be ended.

The event itself was in fact, both in terms of public opinion and of the military conduct of the war and operations, merely the end result of a long process of degradation of a faraway enterprise which, not having the assent of the nation, could not receive from the authorities the energetic impulse and the size and continuity of efforts required for success.

If, therefore, one wishes to establish objectively the responsibilities incurred in the final phase of the Indochina war one would have to examine its origins and evoke the acts and decisions of the various governments in power, that is to say their war policies, as well as the ways in which these policies were translated by the military commanders into operations.<sup>256</sup>

The garrison's fall was the occasion for President Eisenhower, in a personal message to Bao Dai, to pay tribute to "the gallant men of the Vietnamese forces who, together with their comrades of the French Union," defended against insuperable odds, <sup>257</sup> who had volunteered in spite of their certain knowledge that they would be especially harshly treated as prisoners of the DRV. The loss of Dien Bien Phu was certainly a tragedy for the autochthonous participants on the French Union side, one that caused them to ask whether they had been sacrificed in a vain cause, as the DRV propaganda was telling them. According to French tabulations, fully one-half of French Union casualties in Indochina in the first three months of 1954 were Vietnamese. <sup>258</sup>

After a final staff meeting in the "strange kind of silence" that had settled over the central command post at Dien Bien Phu on the afternoon of May 7, Lieutenant Colonel Pierre Charles Langlais returned to his dugout, burned his red paratrooper beret, and exchanged it for the anonymous hat of an infantryman. <sup>259</sup> It was the symbolic end of a colonial empire, as the raising of the tricolor over the citadel in Hanoi by Garnier and Rivière had been symbolic of its beginning. <sup>260</sup>

For Giap's reputation, Dien Bien Phu was a turning point. His role as interior minister who was responsible for the police in the first purge of July–September 1946 had turned him into an object of hatred on the part of the nationalists. The victory at Dien Bien Phu, for which Giap took credit, did a lot to restore his patriotic credibility, for it could not be denied that Giap had masterminded a seven-year struggle that had reduced the French Expeditionary Corps to a state of impotence and led the French government to seek a negotiated armistice at Geneva. In

Marxist-Leninist perspective, the Vietnamese Workers' Party had led the people in a successful national liberation struggle, and now the way seemed open to transforming Vietnamese society, in that portion of the country controlled by the Viet Minh, at least, into a dictatorship of the proletariat.

# INITIAL FRENCH, DRV, AND STATE OF VIETNAM PROPOSALS

The first plenary session on Indochina at Geneva opened at 4 P.M. on May 8. Each delegation sat at its own small rectangular table. The French delegation (Jacquet, Bidault, Chauvel) had on its left the delegation of the State of Vietnam (Foreign Minister Dinh and aides). <sup>261</sup> Bidault opened the substantive proceedings with a speech recalling the history of the conflict and proposing a cessation of hostilities, the regrouping of regular units in defined assembly areas, and the evacuation of Viet Minh units from Laos and Cambodia. <sup>262</sup>

On May 10, the conference heard the initial proposal of the DRV delegation, presented by Pham Van Dong following a "two-hour long Communistline recital [of] Indochina events leading to [the] present situation."263 Its first point was the necessary recognition by France of the sovereignty and independence of Vietnam throughout the territory of Vietnam and of Cambodia and Laos. Its second point concerned withdrawal of "all foreign troops" from Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos and their assembly in defined areas. Its third point proposed "organization of free, general elections" in the three countries with a view to the formation of a single government in each. Such elections would be prepared through "consultative conferences composed of representatives of the Governments of the two parties" in each of the three countries. The "consultative conferences" would "take all measures to guarantee the free activity of patriotic parties, groups, and social organizations." Pending the formation of single governments in each country "the Governments of the two parties respectively will administer the regions under their control."<sup>264</sup> In his speech to the conference, Dong said that "the lessons of history prove that war, as well as peace, are indivisible on the whole territory of Indo-China."265

The DRV's attempt to seat separate delegations from the Viet Minh–sponsored "resistance governments" in Cambodia and Laos at the conference failed. The DRV delegation had brought representatives of these organizations to Geneva: Keo Moni and Mey Pho for the Khmer Issarak and Nouhak Phoumsavan and Ma Khamphitay for the Pathet Lao. Their seating was strongly opposed by the sovereigns of these countries, King Sihanouk and Crown Prince Savang Vatthana, on the grounds that seating them would enable them to infiltrate the royal governments and set a precedent for their calling at any time for armed intervention by the DRV.<sup>266</sup> The leader of the delegation of Laos, Foreign Minister Phoui Sananikone, denounced the Viet Minh before the conference for their invasions of his country in 1953 and 1954 and evoked the puppet character of the Pathet Lao, who had played a token part in the invasions and had established a clandestine administration in the areas taken over. The retribution meted out by a "peoples' tribunal" under Thao Ma Khay Kham Phitoun during the brief Pathet Lao occupation of Sam Neua, resulting in the summary execu-

tion of five Lao civil servants, remained a vivid memory with the non-Communist nationalists for years afterward.

On May 12, it was the turn of the State of Vietnam to remind the conference of the independence treaty negotiated with France and to present its proposal for a settlement, which embodied fundamental constitutional and jurisdictional principles. It stated that relations between the State of Vietnam and France were to be governed by the joint declaration of April 28 providing for the signature of the two treaties. With respect to the internal political settlement in Vietnam, the proposal stated:

By reason of the political and territorial unity of Viet Nam, recognition must be accorded to the principle that the only State entitled to represent Viet Nam legally is the State of which His Majesty Bao-Dai, Head of State, is the embodiment. In this State alone are vested the powers deriving from the internal and external sovereignty of Viet Nam. . . .

Within the framework and under the authority of the State of Viet Nam, free elections shall be held throughout the territory, as soon as the Security Council determines that the authority of the State is established throughout the territory and that the conditions of freedom are fulfilled. International supervision must be exercised under the auspices of the United Nations so as to ensure the freedom and genuineness of the elections.

The proposal also guaranteed against any prosecution of persons who collaborated with the Viet Minh during the hostilities and called for a representative government to be formed under the aegis of Bao Dai. With respect to a military settlement, the State of Vietnam delegation declared itself ready to consider any working document submitted to the conference. However, "it must not involve any division, whether direct or indirect, definitive or temporary, *de facto* or *de jure*, of the national territory."

In a speech before the conference, the State of Vietnam delegate declared that "peace is possible with those patriots still fighting in the ranks of the Viet Minh who believe they are fighting for total independence of the nation." Referring to the treaties, he declared that in a few days independence would be achieved "in a total and absolute fashion such as every son of Vietnam has wished for the past 80 years." Under these circumstances, the struggle of the Viet Minh no longer had any reason for being.

History will say if it is not preferable to obtain our independence by way of peaceful and loyal negotiations with France; if it is necessary in order to end colonial domination to introduce communism, which is the most elaborate form of imperialism; if it is necessary, in order to cease being a French colony to become a Chinese satellite. <sup>268</sup>

On May 14, Bidault made a formal reply to Dong's initial proposal, pointing out that France and the State of Vietnam had negotiated the independence of Vietnam, that the unity of Vietnam was not open to question.

I would remind you first of all that there does exist a Government of the State of Vietnam. That government is the government of His Majesty, Bao Dai, which is recognized by thirty-five states, is a member of various international organisations, and which is represented here in the eyes of all those who have recognised it. This government is fully and solely competent to commit Viet Nam. With it the French Government has conducted a series of negotiations which, as I mentioned at the beginning of this statement, led to the joint declaration and to the conclusion of two treaties which the delegation of Viet Nam read to the Conference on the 12th of this month. The sovereignty and independence of Viet Nam are therefore recognised by France over the whole territory of Viet Nam, a fact which demonstrates the superfluity of paragraph 1 of the Vietminh proposals. <sup>269</sup>

The war was still going on, however. On May 11, Dulles instructed Dillon to inform the French of the six conditions the United States would require to be met in the event President Eisenhower were to ask Congress for authority to use American armed forces in Indochina. One of these conditions was "that France guarantees to Associated States complete independence, including unqualified option to withdraw from French Union at any time."<sup>270</sup> In addition, Dulles said, these conditions would have to be accepted by the French cabinet and endorsed by the French National Assembly, a point to which he attached importance because of the uncertain tenure of French governments. These conditions made it virtually impossible for any French government to have requested, much less obtained, American intervention in Indochina, the government's critics notwithstanding.

Dillon postponed placing the conditions before Laniel in view of a fresh debate on the government's Indochina policy which began in the National Assembly on May 11.<sup>271</sup> In the event, Laniel's government survived a vote of confidence on May 13 by the margin of 289 to 287. Dillon, who was by now warning the State Department that the National Assembly was in such a mood as to force any French government to sue for peace with the Viet Minh at almost any price in the event of a failure of the Geneva negotiations,<sup>272</sup> said he was not favorably disposed to giving any publicity to an American demand that the Associated States be allowed to withdraw from the French Union.<sup>273</sup> To this, Dulles replied crisply that since any public statement on the issue had been deferred to avoid embarrassing the French government politically, the matter was academic and would Dillon kindly inform Laniel that the United States believed it was essential to remove any taint of colonialism and the only way to do this was through provision of the right of withdrawal.<sup>274</sup>

With the head of state and a large part of the cabinet of the State of Vietnam occupied in Paris negotiating with the French for independence or in Geneva attending to the business of the conference, suggestions of radical changes in Vietnam itself were arising. Although these were to lead nowhere, they showed to what extent conspiracies and plotting had become the order of the day. One scheme, actually supported by the American chargé in Heath's temporary absence, McClintock, would have deposed Bao Dai and replaced him with a council of regency with a

new government that would have operated under a streamlined constitution which, he suggested, would be written by the Americans. The government would be dominated by northerners, which in McClintock's opinion would be no bad thing as it would "indicate clearly to the Viet Minh that we do not contemplate partition." As to the injury such a move would do to Vietnamese sovereignty, McClintock suggested with a grain of truth but scant relevance that it would be less harmful than a government under Ho Chi Minh. The harm, however, would come from the conclusions many Vietnamese were to draw about the receptivity on the part of their American friends to such thinking.

# THE CHOICE OF DIEM

Meanwhile, grappling with real problems rather than with half-baked schemes of salvation, Bao Dai had lost all patience with the French. In views communicated to Under Secretary of State Walter Bedell Smith and Philip Bonsal at Geneva by Ngô Dinh Luyen, his personal representative, he said that any agreements signed with the French were "pieces of paper" which could in practice be nullified by French actions and restrictions on the Vietnamese nationalists. The French had opposed his projects for building a state in Vietnam throughout, delaying the establishment of a national army and then denying it the wherewithal to constitute an autonomous fighting force. The national army at that time consisted merely light of infantry reinforcements which were fed into battle as required by the French command and were more often than not destroyed before they achieved any real combat worthiness. In contrast, the national army's morale was low compared with the very high morale of the Viet Minh armed forces. This situation would continue as long as the French Expeditionary Corps remained in Vietnam. Six years previously, when he had returned to Vietnam he had done so not because the political solution then adopted had seemed to him ideal but because he wished to avoid a situation in which Vietnam was a battleground between communism and colonialism and he hoped to ensure that Vietnamese national interests would win out over those of both the Communists and the colonialists.

It was apparent to his American listeners that, through Luyen, Bao Dai wished to sound out the Americans on the extent to which they were bound by French wishes and what the Vietnamese nationalists could expect in the way of American support for their efforts to free themselves of the French. According to the memorandum of conversation drafted by Bedell Smith and Bonsal, Luyen indicated that Bao Dai was contemplating the early dismissal of Buu Loc. Luyen gave the strong impression that if Bao Dai were in fact free to choose, he would now call on Diem, Luyen's elder brother (whom, unbeknown to the Americans, Bao Dai had already summoned to Paris four days previously from the abbey of St. Andrew in Bruges where he had been living as a tertiary member of the Benedictine Order), a move that would certainly be opposed by the French. In view of the obfuscation that later surrounded Bao Dai's choice of Diem it is essential to be absolutely clear that in this conversation with Bedell Smith and Bonsal, Luyen did not say that Bao Dai would make the appoint-

ment if he had the support of the United States, as stated in one published account.<sup>276</sup> Without directly answering Bao Dai's question of the extent of American support to be expected, Bedell Smith recommended that direct contact be established with Diem in Paris.<sup>277</sup>

Acting once again in his self-imposed capacity as "arbiter" among Vietnam's political tendencies<sup>278</sup> and after consulting with other nationalist leaders, Bao Dai received from Buu Loc the resignation of his government and summoned Diem. After calling on Sainteny (a strange friendship perhaps at first sight, but the two men were tied by their common experience of having dealt, each in his own way, with Ho Chi Minh in Hanoi in 1945–1946, and both agreed that Ho was a Communist and his freedom to maneuver was limited), Diem answered Bao Dai's summons.

Bao Dai impressed on Diem the need he had for someone with his patriotism and experience of dealing with the Americans and obtained Diem's agreement to re-enter the political arena after an absence from Vietnam of several years.<sup>279</sup> Diem after some hesitation agreed. Taking him by the arm, Bao Dai led him into an adjoining room where there was a crucifix. Before the crucifix, Bao Dai told him, "There is your God. You will swear before Him to preserve the territory that is entrusted to you. You will defend it against the Communists and if necessary against the French." After a moment's silence, Diem replied "I swear." 280

Diem was cut from a different cloth than the politicians Bao Dai had been accustomed to dealing with in Saigon. He had set out to become a priest but instead went into the mandarinate, rising to become a provincial governor in 1929 and then (briefly Bao Dai's) interior minister. The Ngô family's nationalist credentials were impeccable. Diem shared with John F. Kennedy the loss of an elder brother in war. "He was the brightest son of our family, a tall handsome man," Diem said later of Ngô Dinh Khoi, who had been killed by the Viet Minh in 1945. "The welfare of his people was his life's work." <sup>281</sup>

In 1950 Diem had left Vietnam. He had acquired through his efforts while in exile an independent base of support among his American friends in the Congress, the Catholic Church, and the academic community, which would be useful to any government in Saigon. Moreover, his exile had kept him free of the links with French influence and money that weakened many of those politicians who had previously held office under Bao Dai, and even Bao Dai himself, who, in the judgment of people such as Diem's younger brother Luyen, was far too dependent on French funds. What impressed the Vietnamese who knew Diem then was above all his "sense of mission." 282 In a statement on June 18 announcing his acceptance of the appointment, Diem quoted from Bao Dai's message of August 1945 to de Gaulle warning him not to tamper with Vietnamese independence,<sup>283</sup> calling it a wise warning to which no one had thought it necessary to pay attention, with predictable consequences.<sup>284</sup> In recognition of the all-but-impossible task Diem faced, Luyen pleaded in Paris with Heath, the day after Heath had seen Bao Dai in Cannes and 10 days after the announcement, for some public declaration of support for his brother from the United States, which had maintained a complete silence on the subject.<sup>285</sup>

After further discussion with the French, who, as he had predicted, flatly refused to consider any public statement granting the Vietnamese the right to withdraw from the French Union, Dillon on May 24 proposed an alternative. Instead of pressing the French to make a public statement that would be taken badly in the National Assembly and even in the country at large, the pressure of American diplomacy could more profitably be brought to bear to force the signature of the treaties of independence and association. Dillon said "If signature of these documents were made a firm prerequisite for U.S. assistance I feel confident that French Government for their part would agree to prompt signature and assume Bao Dai would as well." Dillon added that at the time of signature Bao Dai should be prevailed upon to make "a very clear statement regarding the full independence of Vietnam and the fact that Vietnam is joining [the] French Union entirely of her own accord," the same formulation that had been inscribed in the Laos treaty.

From Geneva, after a meeting that same day with Buu Loc, Bedell Smith cabled "I believe it is of the utmost importance to have prompt signature of the two basic treaties." Until they were signed, he added, "we are in a false position here." Buu Loc told Bedell Smith that the French were refusing to sign the treaties "on the pretense that signature must await conclusion of the subordinate financial and cultural agreements," but in reality "because the French did not want to commit themselves irrevocably until they saw how the Geneva conference would turn out." Buu Loc said he was urging Bao Dai to leave further dealings with the French on the matter of the treaties to Foreign Minister Dinh and Minister Dac Khe and that he was returning promptly to Saigon.

In accordance with this advice from Paris and Geneva, Dulles cabled his instructions to Dillon on May 26:

It seems to me [that] what is primarily needed now is something which will have immediate and convincing impact on world opinion and above all on Vietnamese themselves. We cannot wait for abolition of all deep-rooted abuses and extra-territorial privileges in times like these. We can, however, attempt [to] have it made unmistakably clear that the Treaty of Independence between France and Vietnam represents [a] full and unqualified commitment on [the] part of France which will be carried out in practice.

#### He then added:

Following represents certain minimum measures that we believe [the] French should take now, and which we feel will not place [the] government in [a] more difficult position than it is already: a. France and Vietnam should sign draft treaties promptly. b. At moment of signature, President of Republic, in his capacity as President of the French Union, should make statement to effect that Union is composed of equal and sovereign states.<sup>289</sup>

The next day, Dillon reported that he had communicated the contents of this message to Alexandre Parodi, secretary-general of the Quai d'Orsay.<sup>290</sup> At

the same time, the embassy reported that "negotiations on economic, financial, and military conventions are currently bogged down."<sup>291</sup>

# THE TREATIES INITIALED

In deciding finally to deal with the more pliable Buu Loc rather than with Diem, the French were taking precautions. Diem was probably less anti-French than Bao Dai, but the Laniel government judged that this new man in Saigon might well follow an order from Bao Dai to break all ties between Vietnam and the French Union, dealing a fatal blow to the latter. Diem told the embassy he was followed by French and Viet Minh agents in Paris.<sup>292</sup>

Reynaud summoned Buu Loc just as he was about to depart for Saigon and, on June 4, at 5 P.M., in a simple ceremony at the Hotel Matignon, Laniel and Buu Loc initialed the treaties. Article 1 of the Treaty of Independence of the State of Vietnam stated: "France recognizes Vietnam as a fully independent and sovereign State invested with the jurisdiction recognized by international law." Article 1 of the Treaty of Association between France and Vietnam stated: "Vietnam and France affirm their will to associate freely within the French Union, and decide by mutual agreement to proceed to the establishment of conventions, which shall be annexed to the present treaty and which alone shall henceforth fix all conditions for the organization and functioning of this association."293 This article removed the strictures that the French Union had exercised on Vietnam in the form of Articles 61 and 62 of the French Constitution of 1946 and established in their place a relation of equals. Finally, after seven years of foot-dragging and posing one constitutional obstacle after another, the French had taken the step that would have salvaged something of French honor, assuming in the atmosphere of the Paris of 1954 there was still the will to salvage it, which from the perspective of the Vietnamese in Saigon was far from certain.

The question remains of why the treaties of independence and association were simply initialed by Laniel and Buu Loc and not signed by Coty and Bao Dai, and why there was no statement from Coty as had been stipulated as "minimum measures" by Dulles in his instructions to Dillon. Many writers place the blame for the non-signature of the treaties on the Vietnamese. But there exists no logical explanation why it should have been the Vietnamese, rather than the French, who refused their signature to the treaties which had been negotiated. Bao Dai had made it clear that Buu Loc's principal mission as prime minister was to see the negotiations with the French successfully concluded, and he had arrived in France in April believing the treaty-signing was only a matter of two or three weeks away. There exists, however, a quite satisfactory explanation in what was happening in Geneva, where the negotiations were moving ahead with surprising rapidity.<sup>294</sup>

The French public and much of the world had a different impression. It looked in the first days of June as if the negotiations on Indochina, if they had not broken down, were producing little in the way of substance, as the cynics had predicted. Even the fact of the start of restricted sessions on May 17 had been completely eclipsed in the press by speculations about American intentions with respect to possible military intervention in Indochina.<sup>295</sup>

The rapid progress of the negotiations in secret was due mainly to the efforts of Chou and Eden. Chou, in particular, had exercised himself to push the French to talk directly to the DRV while at the same time toning down the more extreme demands of the latter. At the restricted session of May 25, Pham Van Dong made a proposal which, while couched in general terms, sounded very much like partition. Dong proposed as follows:

- (a) Must be recognition of the principles of readjusting areas under control each state.
- (b) Readjustment would mean exchange of territory taking into account actual areas controlled including population and strategic interests.
- (c) Each side would get territory in one piece to include complete control of the area both economic and administrative.
- (d) Line of demarcation should be established following the topographical line of territory to make transportation and communication possible within each state.
- (e) When the demarcation lines are determined each side would withdraw its troops into its own area including all air and sea forces, military facilities and police forces.
- f) Territory under administration of one side would continue under the control of that side until its troops were withdrawn, immediately after which administration would be transferred to control of the other side.<sup>296</sup>

At the seventh restricted session on May 27, Chou proposed that the two belligerent parties "begin negotiations on appropriate readjustments of the area of their occupied zones."297 On the face of it, this was not a dramatically new proposal. The French, in the first point of their initial proposal of May 8, had spoken of "grouping of the regular units of both parties in delimited zones to be determined by the conference."298 And Chou was merely repeating in this respect the formulation of a readjustment of territory occupied by the two belligerents used by the DRV in point 8a of its initial proposal on May 10.299 In explanatory remarks, Chou said Bidault's suggestion at the fifth restricted session on May 24 of "demilitarized zones" warranted further consideration and might be a topic for discussion directly between the parties.<sup>300</sup> Taken separately, grouping of regular units and creation of demilitarized zones between the opposing forces in Vietnam, where the problem faced by the conference was not simply one of withdrawal of foreign troops to another country as it was in Cambodia and Laos, had little or no significance. But taken together it had enormous implications: "Regrouping and creation of a demilitarized zone: did this not already amount to subscribing to the idea of a division of Indochina, or at least of Vietnam, into two separate zones?"301

On May 29, Chou once more moved things ahead by supporting a proposal that Eden made that day that representatives of the two commands meet immediately in Geneva and also make contact in Indochina. They should study the disposition of forces to be made upon the cessation of hostilities, beginning with the question of regrouping areas in Vietnam. They should report their

findings and recommendations to the conference as soon as possible. It was agreed that the date of the first meeting between such representatives should be fixed before June 1.302 Chou's one sentence brushed aside a long harangue by Dong, made purely for the record, that regrouping was essential but that it would not interfere with the unity of Vietnam.303 On May 31, both the French and the DRV named their representatives to meetings of the military commands. The chief French representative would be Brigadier General Henri Delteil and the chief DRV representative would be Ta Quang Buu, vice-minister of defense.304 Their seconds, Colonels Michel de Brébisson and Ha Van Lau, who had been meeting since May 19 to settle matters connected with the evacuation of wounded from Dien Bien Phu, met on June 1 and arranged a meeting of the military commission for the next day. The military commission's eight members met on June 2: General Delteil and Colonels de Brébisson, Fleurant, and Le Van Kim on the French Union side and Ta Quang Buu, Colonel Ha Van Lau, and Hoang Nguyên on the DRV side.305

# THE DIE IS CAST FOR PARTITION

The military commission spent its first six meetings in rather inconclusive exchanges about reaching agreement on areas in which each side had military superiority as a basis for proceeding to discuss regrouping of forces.<sup>306</sup> Chauvel, acting head of the French delegation in Bidault's absence in Paris, had been struck by how much Dong's proposal of May 25 resembled a proposal for partition of Vietnam. He took it on his own authority to instruct De Brébisson to sound out Ha Van Lau on what Dong had meant by an "exchange of territories," and whether such an "exchange" might be based on considerations other than of strategy and tactics. This De Brébisson did at the conclusion of a meeting of the military commission on Wednesday, June 9, at about 1 P.M. 307 The following day, Lau replied that Dong had expressed the liveliest interest in the questions asked by the French colonel and had characterized them as constructive and conducive to leading to "a peace with honor." Lau proposed that discussions along this line be continued in secret without delay between Delteil, De Brébisson, Buu, and himself.<sup>308</sup> These became known as the "underground military talks."

That same evening, June 10, between 10 P.M. and midnight, the four men met in a hastily rented villa on the outskirts of Geneva. Buu was reported to have unfolded a map of Indochina, pointed to northern Vietnam, and said it was essential for the Viet Minh to have a state, a capital for their state, and a port for their capital; the state he envisaged would comprise territories in Tonkin and northern Annam down to the region of Hue. The division he contemplated was only temporary, he emphasized, until general elections were held in Vietnam (a point proposed in Dong's initial speech of May 10), after which the country would be legally reunified. When asked by the French, who had no instructions, what territorial compensations they could expect in return for their abandonment of Tonkin, Buu gave no answer. Before the meeting ended, he stressed the need for secrecy and indicated he preferred bilateral talks to the

"inconveniences" of the larger political conference.<sup>309</sup> There were to be further meetings of the "underground military talks" on June 17 and 22.

Chauvel sensed that the Viet Minh were anxious to conclude. The reason undoubtedly was that with the treaties of independence finally signed the way was opened for the Americans to provide direct military aid to the State of Vietnam, a possibility that had already found its way into the press. By restricting the "underground military talks" to the French and themselves, the DRV delegates succeeded in eliminating the participation of Colonel Le Van Kim, who was an officer of the Vietnamese National Army and who would, of course, immediately report the DRV's proposals to the State of Vietnam delegation. But Kim's exclusion from the military talks worked two ways: it also relieved his government in the future of the onus of having sanctioned the partitioning of Vietnam. Meanwhile, the military commission continued discussing areas of military superiority with an exchange of maps, which of course were totally dissimilar, and drafting a report on its deliberations.

The debate in the National Assembly in Paris on the government's Indochina policy that began on June 9 saw both Laniel and Bidault, who by now was shuttling back and forth to Geneva, in attendance. Mendès-France set the tone with a rousing speech in which, playing on the fears of the deputies, he accused Bidault of playing "infernal poker" in asking for American intervention and risking general war by secretly inviting American armed intervention. Later on, once he was in power, he was to talk to American officials about the same possibility of a wider war. He also made capital by ridiculing the foreign minister for allegedly refusing to talk to the Chinese at Geneva, much less the Viet Minh. "During the six weeks that the Conference has already lasted, there wasn't a single serious talk between the two delegates most directly interested in the conflict," he said with respect to the Viet Minh. "This was, in the apt words of Alexander Werth, the coup de grâce for the Laniel government. The fact remains, it was a falsehood."

The next day, the Assembly, by a vote of 322 to 263, refused to give priority to an order of the day requested by the government. Laniel thereupon said he would seek a vote of confidence on June 12 with respect to three resolutions critical of his government. The Assembly voted, 306 to 293, not to reject consideration of the three resolutions. In spite of the fact that this was eight votes short of the majority required for a vote of no confidence, Laniel submitted his resignation on June 13.

The French military delegates at Geneva had immediately reported to their superiors on the partition proposal of their Viet Minh counterparts in the early hours of June 11. At some point in the next few hours Chauvel informed Mendès-France that the basis for an agreement existed at Geneva. The other person who had been briefed by the French military delegates was the minister for the Associated States, Edouard Frédéric-Dupont. Realizing the significance of what he had just learned, he tried to alert officials in Paris. Bidault, however, put an end to these attempts, which would seriously have embarrassed his government's diplomacy. Frédéric-Dupont was shortly thereafter replaced in his post.

Thus it was a matter of only 72 hours between the time the Laniel government heard the DRV's proposal for partition and the time it submitted its resignation. The French were afraid that word of the DRV military delegates' proposal would become public knowledge. Yet it would become necessary sooner or later to inform the representatives of the State of Vietnam. While keeping word of the proposal secret from their Vietnamese allies, the French delegates at Geneva did, however, inform the Americans in confidence of what had been proposed in the "underground military talks." <sup>314</sup> Chauvel told Bedell Smith that in the event the French accepted the partition proposal (one senses from the account of this conversation how carefully Chauvel concealed his enthusiasm for recommending its acceptance) "it would be most difficult to sell it to them [the State of Vietnam], which might be necessary within the next few days." The major difficulty, of course, was the promise he, Chauvel, had made to Dinh of a written French guarantee of no partition about which he had informed Dulles and Bedell Smith at the Restaurant du Nord on May 2. About this the less said the better; France's ally had become distinctly inconvenient to the search for peace. Chauvel implied that Ambassador Heath, who was temporarily in Geneva, would be a suitable candidate to do the dirty work.<sup>315</sup> Dulles's reply was characteristic: "There can of course be no question of U.S. participation in any attempt to 'sell' a partition to non-Communist Vietnamese."316

The idea that the DRV could propose partitioning Vietnam was startling in the extreme. Dinh, in discussing partition with Dulles in May, rejected it as being so illogical as to be unthinkable. Dulles had observed that the partitions of Germany and Korea had been the work of occupying powers, not the work of the peoples of those countries.<sup>317</sup>

Determined to push ahead with the negotiations in his caretaker capacity, Bidault met with Mendès-France on June 14. He returned to Geneva on June 16 and authorized the continuation of the secret military talks ad referendum. He had already taken the precaution of asking General Paul Ely (who on June 3 had been named commander in chief in Indochina, in preference to General Valluy and commissioner general in replacement of Dejean) for his views on the military situation. He then informed Ely of the secret military talks in Geneva and asked him for his reactions and suggestions as to the line of partition. Ely, who was concerned that a collapse of morale in the Vietnamese nationalist forces resulting from an announcement of the partition of their country would ripple through the French Expeditionary Corps, in which they were integrated at all levels, replied that despite "the grave risks as a result of possible political repercussions in certain regions" such a partition proposal entailed, they were on the whole not greater than those "resulting from a prolongation of the conflict without foreign aid." He thought that acceptance of the partition proposal would not be impossible to obtain from the State of Vietnam. 318 Narrowly speaking, therefore, it seems that the Laniel government honored the commitment it had given the State of Vietnam not to accept a partition of Vietnam, since the subject was still at the discussion stage and there had been no binding reply as yet to the DRV. But Bidault was gearing French diplomacy to prepare for it.

The next day, Bidault had his third and final meeting with Chou at the French villa. Chou dwelt on the problems of settlements in Laos and Cambodia and volunteered that he thought he could persuade Pham Van Dong to accept the principle of the withdrawal of foreign troops from these two countries, which would provide a Pathet Lao regroupment zone in Laos, at least.<sup>319</sup>

Thus, by the time Mendès-France was sworn in on June 17 the negotiations were on the track that would take them to the final armistice agreement. Once he had been officially designated as Coty's choice as prime minister (and as his own cabinet's foreign minister), there could no longer be any pretence of ignorance of the state of the negotiations in Geneva. The word pretence is not to be automatically excluded; in the light of Bidault's meeting with him on June 14 and of his meeting on June 18 with an emissary sent by Chauvel from Geneva, 320 his subsequent claim that he first learned of Bidault's three meetings with Chou when he himself met Chou in Berne on June 23 is hard to believe. 321 He, indeed, very quickly became convinced that the major elements of a settlement based on partition had already been tabled, and it was on this basis that he made his dramatic offer to resign by the deadline of July 20 if he did not achieve a settlement, an offer that ensured his investiture by the National Assembly. 322

In his investiture speech on June 17, Mendès-France spoke of his determination to bring about a cease-fire in Indochina and find peace. He did not say a word about the independence of the Associated States, which had been the first point of the plan he had told Ambassador Dillon about. He talked about the sacrifices of the French soldiers, about the moral and material implantation of French forces over wide areas, about concluding an honorable peace, and about preserving French interests. He said not a word about carrying out French commitments to the defense of Laos and Cambodia and not a word about the State of Vietnam.<sup>323</sup> Thus, the war was destined to end the way it had begun on December 19, 1946—a war to re-impose French sovereignty over Indochina; in short, a colonial war.

The meeting Mendès-France had with Chou at the French Embassy in Bern on June 23 proved to be decisive for the course of the conference. Opening their conversation with a strong statement of Chinese refusal to be intimidated by (American) threats, Chou went on to list the concessions the Chinese had made with respect to recognizing Cambodia and Laos as neutral states and furthermore ensuring that the DRV do the same. In Vietnam, Chou went on, the armistice should be followed by free elections which would put that country on the road to unity. He also indicated to Mendès-France that he was urging the DRV delegation to move closer not only to France but also to the State of Vietnam.<sup>324</sup> By these commitments, Chou enabled the second and final phase of the conference to begin.

It is clear from his actions that Mendès-France considered himself to be bound neither by the initials of his predecessor on the treaties of independence and association with the State of Vietnam nor by the commitment Laniel had given the State of Vietnam regarding prior consultation in the negotiations with the adversary. He acted as if the articles of the Constitution of 1946 relative to

the French Union still gave him the authority to negotiate international commitments in the name of the State of Vietnam without consulting the latter, as indeed one of his legal advisers has argued in print.<sup>325</sup>

At a meeting of his advisers on Indochina held at the Quai d'Orsay on June 24, Mendès-France gave them instructions and told them to prepare for a partition of Vietnam at about the 18th parallel. He had been informed by De Brébisson on June 17 that "if you accept to deal [the line of partition] between the 16th and 17th Parallel, I can assure you that you have a 90-percent chance of obtaining the cease-fire." He made no significant changes in the delegation at Geneva, and he instructed that the secret military talks be continued. From this point forward, these military talks became official (although still secret) meetings of the conference and the principal forum for the negotiation of the details of the armistice; they thus led directly to the agreements on cessation of hostilities in the three countries that were eventually signed on July 21.

Whatever his intentions were with respect to the two rival Vietnamese governments at this point, <sup>328</sup> Mendès-France had placed his government in a position where it was no longer able to give a categorical assurance of recognition of the sovereignty and unity of Vietnam embodied in the State of Vietnam, as Bidault had done in his speech to the conference on May 14. It was, if anything, a short-term policy and could not provide a basis for a stable peace in Vietnam. It is important to understand that the breakdown of the Geneva agreements, which started to become apparent barely one year after they were signed, was due primarily to the short-term nature of the arrangements made by Mendès-France, not by any other party or individual.

Indeed, Mendès-France was trying his best to keep Diem, the prime minister-designate of the State of Vietnam, "quite in the dark," as a cable to Paris drafted by Gullion put it.329 Having kept the military talks with the DRV a secret from the State of Vietnam for weeks, the French informed Bao Dai on July 4 of the start of talks between Chauvel and Pham Van Dong on the previous day; smuggling Colonel Ha Van Lau into a suburban villa after dark was a relatively simple matter, but the easily recognizable Dong presented a major problem. Dejean visited Bao Dai at Cannes and reported that Bao Dai accepted the principle of partition with sangfroid, in the words of Philippe Devillers and Jean Lacouture on the basis of their sources in the Mendès-France camp, but he nevertheless insisted on guarantees for the southern, non-Communist area of Vietnam. 330 Bao Dai had probably never placed much stock in the promises the French had made to him in May regarding the non-partition of Vietnam. In actual fact, the French treated Bao Dai virtually as a convenient hostage. Dejean told the wife of an American diplomat that Bao Dai remained in France at the express wish of the French government, saying that "the cabinet thought it better to have Bao Dai under its hand" as insurance against the possibility that Diem or other leaders in Saigon would refuse to accept an armistice agreement negotiated on their behalf by the French.331

Diem's foreign minister-designate, Tran Van Do, arrived in Geneva on July 1 accompanied by his brother Tran Van Chuong, minister of state, thoroughly

alarmed by press speculation about partition of Vietnam. He tried to see Chauvel, but the latter put him off by saying he was "too busy." The American delegation was not much more helpful, pointing out to him that Diem's government had not yet officially taken office.<sup>332</sup> Do and Chuong were not entertained at dinner by the American delegation until July 12.<sup>333</sup> Do accepted an invitation for a meeting with Chou after the latter's return to Geneva on July 12, and Chou informed him officially of the partition plan. Thus, the foreign minister of the State of Vietnam learned of the partition plan not from the French or the Americans, but from Chou.<sup>334</sup> Do was soon to become as anti-French as Chuong. In view of the difficulty of obtaining information on the negotiations, Diem also dispatched his younger brother Luyen to Geneva.

As late as July 12, Ely was still seeking permission from Paris to inform Diem; all he had done up to then had been to indicate to Diem that the trend of the negotiations regarding regroupment had been in the direction of a provisional partition. He expected to see Diem shortly and hoped that before then instructions to acquaint him fully and frankly of the conversations with the DRV would have arrived, he assured Heath. Diem was insisting that an enclave be retained in the north; in case the French decided to abandon Hanoi, Diem said, he would ask that Vietnamese units of the French Union Northern Command be allowed to defend the city. Ely replied that without French direction and support a Vietnamese defense of the city could not last three days.<sup>335</sup> In fact, Mendès-France had given instructions to the French high command that it was to allow no interference with the carrying out of the armistice plan by the Vietnamese.

Ely's relations with Diem were tenuous at best. He had assigned a political officer to deal with the prime minister at this delicate stage. A crisis could have erupted at any moment, because Diem was fully absorbed by the human drama caused by Ely's decision to pull back the defense perimeter by abandoning the southern Red River Delta, which he started to put into effect at the end of June. It was a move that exposed the Catholic bishoprics of Phat Diem and Bui Chu to takeover by the Viet Minh and created scenes of mass hysteria at the evacuation points that were witnessed personally by Diem and his brother Nhu. The decision, taken against the advice of General René Cogny of the Northern Command, had all the earmarks of a political signal to the DRV that the French government was serious about reaching an agreement that it would carry out regardless of consequences.

Diem had no illusions about Ely's defeatist attitude, which was aggravated by the loss of Dien Bien Phu but which had set in much earlier. Ely had argued in his reply to Bidault in mid-June that the French Expeditionary Corps was fatigued and that five Viet Minh divisions were threatening Hanoi itself; nevertheless, he said, he preferred fighting for Hanoi than abandoning it.<sup>336</sup> This astounding and essentially meaningless statement (there were no French plans for abandoning Hanoi at that point), taken together with Ely's lack of confidence in the Vietnamese national units, made the commander in chief a willing tool of the politicians in Paris. Mendès-France was himself later to exaggerate the precariousness of the French military hold on the Red River Delta prior to

the cease-fire for his own political purposes.<sup>337</sup> Sensing their commander in chief's attitude, French commanders in the southern delta had not waited for the formal order to begin evacuating their troops.

For this "political" general, the Vietnamese national army, which had been created reluctantly by the French in response to Bao Dai's insistence five years previously and under constant prodding from the Americans, had become a potential source of obstruction and contagion for the French Expeditionary Corps. This explains Ely's preference for withdrawing from the north and partitioning Vietnam over continuing to fight a war "without foreign aid," an illogical set of alternatives since the United States was committed to supporting the French military in Indochina and was bearing a large share of the war's cost, as Ely knew full well. One feels it was with a sigh of relief that Ely sent a telegram to Delteil in Geneva authorizing him to sign the armistice agreements for Vietnam and Laos, the texts of which had been kept from him until the last moment.<sup>338</sup> Who had ever heard of the commander of an allied army in time of war authorizing the signing of an armistice agreement—much less one that gave away half an ally's territory to the enemy—without so much as consulting the ally? No one, because it had never been done before.

Chou's suggestions to the DRV delegation regarding the constructive attitude they should adopt toward the State of Vietnam delegates apparently proved effective. Dong, accompanied by the DRV Minister of Industry and Commerce Phan Anh, met with the State of Vietnam delegates for the first time on the afternoon of July 13 at his villa. They talked about reunification. Dong suggested the elections be held in six months.<sup>339</sup> After the talk with Dong, Do told the Americans he foresaw the "probability of [a] settlement which would be difficult but unavoidable."340 Further meetings followed.341

However, the Viet Minh negotiators had hardened their position in the military talks at the end of June and demanded that the partition line be set at the 13th parallel.<sup>342</sup> It was not until a meeting of the principals on the afternoon of July 20 at the French villa that this question was settled with Mendès-France accepting Molotov's suggestion that the line of demarcation be established at the 17th parallel.

The DRV hard-line position on the line of demarcation had obviously been designed to force concessions on political aspects of the settlement, which now moved to the fore. If there were to be all-Vietnam elections, the participants faced the decision of when such elections would be held. For three weeks after the understanding between Mendès-France and Chou of June 23, there had been no new developments with respect to this date. On July 13, Dong proposed six months. The French and British were agreed that at least 18 months would be required for Diem's government to stabilize the situation in the non-Communist area.

The question had been discussed again by Mendès-France and Molotov on July 15. Confronted with Mendès-France's preference for fixing no date at all, Molotov suggested that the two Vietnamese parties be allowed to settle on a date. When Mendès-France and Molotov met with Eden the following day,

Molotov suggested first June 1955, then "in the course of 1955." On July 19, the French received word from the Chinese that Chou was favorably disposed to two years, 1956, with the understanding that the two Vietnamese parties would agree on the exact date. 343 At a meeting with Dong late on the same day, according to an American report, Mendès-France "accepted June 1956 as the latest date elections would be held in Vietnam." 344 In a French draft of the Final Declaration provided to the Americans on July 20, the date for elections in Paragraph 7 had become July 20, 1956. 345 The absence of any French consultation regarding the date for the elections with the State of Vietnam, on whose territory the elections were to be held, is remarkable in diplomatic history.

The Americans had reserved their position with a statement by Bedell Smith to the restricted session of July 18. The final paragraph, much cited in the subsequent literature, read:

If the agreements arrived at here are of a character which my government is able to respect, the United States is prepared to declare unilaterally that, in accordance with its obligations under the United Nations Charter, and particularly Article II(4), it will refrain from the threat or the use of force to disturb them, and would view any renewal of the aggression in violation of the agreements with grave concern.<sup>346</sup>

During a long talk with Bedell Smith the following day, Mendès-France urgently asked him to expand his unilateral declaration so as to take note not only of the agreements between military commands, but also of paragraphs one to nine of the proposed conference declaration. Bedell Smith made it clear that he could under no circumstances associate the United States with the proposed conference declaration.<sup>347</sup> In view of this American position, among other things, Eden and Molotov agreed shortly before the final plenary session that the Final Declaration would list all the participants in the conference and would remain unsigned. Accordingly, the statement in Paragraph 7 of the Final Declaration regarding the holding of all-Vietnam elections remained, in the words of one astute observer, more in the nature of "a statement of intention or policy" than a binding commitment.<sup>348</sup> Nevertheless, to prevent any misunderstanding about the American position on these elections, and in view of the fact that a provision had been inserted in the Final Declaration at the eleventh hour appearing to give the International Control Commission (ICC) authority in the matter, Bedell Smith again clarified American policy at the final plenary session:

In the case of nations, now divided against their will, we shall continue to seek to achieve unity through free elections, supervised by the United Nations to insure that they are conducted fairly.<sup>349</sup>

The State of Vietnam delegation had done all in its power to avoid partition. Foreign Minister Dinh had repeatedly stated that his government could not accept an outcome that involved the partition of Vietnam, as he told the restricted session of May 25<sup>350</sup> and again on June 9.<sup>351</sup> In an ultimate effort to avoid partition, Dinh's successor, Tran Van Do, proposed an armistice agree-

ment without partition at the final plenary session of the conference on July 21 in a speech that eloquently expressed the State of Vietnam's opposition to what had been negotiated.

Do pointed out the legal anomaly that France had negotiated with the DRV an armistice agreement binding the actions of Vietnamese troops who had been placed under the French high command through a delegation of authority by the head of state of the State of Vietnam. He went on to protest against the abandonment at the orders of the French high command to the DRV of territory still under the control of his government's troops. He then protested the inclusion of the provision of a date for elections in the Final Declaration without his government having been consulted on this important political matter. 352 Do concluded by reserving for his government "complete freedom of action to guarantee the sacred right of the Vietnamese people to territorial unity, national independence and freedom."

In his reply, Mendès-France said the French delegation did not wish to return to the points raised by the State of Vietnam delegation, but he believed the French high command had acted within its mandate. Eden, chairing the session, did not insist that Mendès-France reply to Do's objection about the provision of a date for elections in the Final Declaration; to have done so would have risked collapsing the entire structure that had been so painstakingly built up over the previous 10 weeks.<sup>353</sup>

In contrast to Do's protest at the proceedings, Pham Van Dong concluded with a defiant speech at the final plenary, challenging his countrymen in the south. "We will win the unity of Vietnam as we have won the peace. No force in the world will deter us. . . . People of Vietnam, compatriots of the South, victory is ours!"354 As usual, DRV negotiating strategy had been aimed at achieving more than a single objective. The DRV negotiators wanted not only to reach a binding agreement with the French but also to isolate the State of Vietnam from its allies. In this they succeeded brilliantly, as the final plenary session demonstrated.

The cease-fire agreements were signed in the early hours of July 21, the clock having been stopped at midnight. Ta Quang Buu for the DRV and General Delteil for the French Union forces signed those dealing with Vietnam and Laos, while Buu and Nhiek Tioulong, on behalf of the Khmer national armed forces, in an evident display of reminiscing about their common past, signed that for Cambodia. The Cambodian delegation, led by Foreign Minister Tep Phan, in taking matters into its own hands and refusing French assistance in producing a draft of an armistice agreement until the very last minute, thoroughly exasperated the French.<sup>355</sup> But it was a good show of national sentiment, at least.

# "Are You Not Both Vietnamese?"

On July 22, in a last feat of diplomacy, Chou gave a dinner for all four Indochinese delegations. Attending were Pham Van Dong and Ta Quang Buu of the DRV, Phoui Sananikone of Laos, and Tep Phan of Cambodia. Tran Van Do declined the invitation, but Luyen went in his stead. After insisting on a toast in honor of Bao Dai, Chou went on to evoke the tragedy of the division of China. Marxism was only a means to an end; one was attached to it because it gave

good results. But what was supremely important was the unity of China. Then the dinner began.

While the Laotians and Cambodians were at tables slightly to one side, Chou placed Luyen at his table, between Dong and Buu. A conversation of three hours' duration then began. Chou used all his charm to get Luyen and Buu to reminisce about their student days in France, where Chou had also studied. As the conversation turned to Vietnam and its past, Luyen remarked that several temples in Hanoi constructed by the emperor Minh Mang on the Chinese model had been destroyed in the war. Chou suggested that Luyen could come to Peking to see the originals. When Luyen asked in what capacity he could possibly visit Peking, Chou replied: "Why don't you open a legation in Peking?" Dong became agitated. But Chou continued: "Certainly, Pham Van Dong is closer to us ideologically, but this does not exclude a representation of the South. After all, are you not both Vietnamese, and are we not all Asians?" 356

Perhaps a more significant exchange between Dong and Luyen also occurred at this dinner. "Tell the prime minister, your brother," Dong told Luyen, "that he must accept the present situation, and we shall have talks in a few years. But tell him also that we know the Americans much better than he does." Dong made his telling judgment on the basis of the Viet Minh's experience with the Deer Mission of the OSS and the subsequent letdown of the hopes they had placed in President Truman. The Americans were fickle friends, Dong was telling Diem's brother. Beware.

On July 23, the French National Assembly approved the Geneva agreements by a vote of 462 to 13, with 134 abstentions. Among those abstaining was Bidault; he could not in good honor have voted for an agreement that violated the assurances he had repeatedly given France's ally, a member of the French Union. In coming years, the United States was to negotiate and sign armistice agreements with its allies and enemies in Indochina on two occasions, and on neither would the agreement be submitted for consideration by the Congress, in contrast with the practices of the French.

# "Tell Them That We Will Never Abandon Them"

Ely's order of the day to the French Expeditionary Corps on the signing of the armistice agreements, cited without blush in his memoirs, summed up the situation perfectly. Obviously intended to shore up the morale of a fighting force whose rank and file were starting to ask what they had been fighting for, it said:

Let us bow our heads before our dead: since nine years they have paved the great road of French honor with their bodies. They will not see the fruits of their sacrifice.

Let us think of our comrades of the national armies and first and foremost of the Vietnamese army. They have a right to our esteem, for they have fought with us under difficult conditions. Today, when some of them suffer for their country, they have the right to our fraternity more than ever. Tell them that we will never abandon them.<sup>358</sup>

These were not the words of someone talking of a sovereign nation.

# **Looking Back**

For each of the signatories of the cease-fire agreements, the outcome represented a compromise. The DRV government had achieved control of the northern half of Vietnam, control that was uncontested both internationally and at home, giving it a strong base for achieving legitimacy and leaving the party free to carry on its Marxist-Leninist revolution. In 1979, when they were enemies, the DRV would accuse the Chinese of having used their influence as the principal arms supplier to the Viet Minh to sell out its interests at Geneva. Mentioned in particular was Chou's meeting on June 17 with Bidault. But Chou's subsequent meeting on July 3-5 with Ho Chi Minh near the Sino-Vietnam border ensured the cooperation of the Viet Minh, willy-nilly, in making the conference a success.<sup>359</sup> While almost nothing is known about the discussions at this meeting, Ho was in no position to make demands on Chou, whose government had made possible the Viet Minh victory at Dien Bien Phu. The accusation reflects the inimical spirit of later years when the DRV's imperial ambitions had become more apparent, for relations between the DRV and China remained very close in the years immediately following the Geneva conference.<sup>360</sup> Any suggestion that the Viet Minh might have obtained more than half their country had it not been for Chinese pressure is contradicted by the historical fact that the Viet Minh military delegates proposed to partition Vietnam on June 10, before there was any guarantee of elections being held at all, and this without any foreign pressure, Chinese or other.

The French, by skillful diplomacy, had achieved an end to the horrible war, misbegotten from the very beginning and waged half-heartedly, in the shadows, without popular support at home and with little gratitude from those who might have been expected to offer the strongest support, the French colonial society in Indochina. By signing, they had obtained an armistice from their enemy and an end to French casualties. Moreover, they had avoided having to take the unpopular step of sending draftees to Indochina, which Mendès-France had threatened to do if the conference failed by telling the National Assembly on July 7 that he would submit a bill authorizing draftees before he resigned. The war had cost the French Expeditionary Corps 59,745 dead and missing in action, of which 26,923 were autochthons serving in the Corps. The Vietnamese national army had lost 58,877 dead and missing in action. But the main casualties had been the civilians, some 400,000 in all, of which an estimated 100,000 to 150,000 had been assassinated by the Viet Minh. The strong war, which was a strong to the strong war, and the strong war,

On the whole, for the French it had proven far simpler and taken less time to negotiate an armistice with their enemy (73 days) than to negotiate a treaty of independence with their ally (90 days). The question that remains pertinent after all these years is a simple one: Did the result do honor to France? The *mesquin* manner in which the French government had grudgingly accepted the independence of the State of Vietnam within the French Union resulted, as the more enlightened Vietnamese nationalists had warned, in an unequal relationship rather than one between fully equal partners engaged in a common enterprise. This reality gradually seeped into the negotiations in Geneva.

To set the negotiations on the track to success, the Laniel government had found it necessary to renege progressively on the assurances it had repeatedly given the State of Vietnam regarding prior consultation. Once the French military delegates had accepted the DRV negotiators' insistence on excluding the State of Vietnam delegate, Colonel Le Van Kim, from the military talks and on preserving absolute secrecy of discussion, French consultations with the State of Vietnam delegation became impossible. The end result, France's agreement to the establishment of the provisional military demarcation line and the demilitarized zone effectively partitioning Vietnam, was, of course, a flagrant violation of the condition on which Bao Dai had agreed to have his delegation participate in the conference in the first place.

If such considerations troubled Mendès-France after he took over the leadership of the negotiations on the French side, he gave little hint of it. He had, after all, achieved his position on the basis of misrepresenting before the National Assembly the true state of the negotiations at Geneva. One of the most ardent advocates for years in that august body of "negotiating with Ho Chi Minh," Mendès-France needed little persuasion from his advisers to the effect that "the Bao Dai experiment" had proved a failure and that he, Mendès-France, enjoyed a free hand to make whatever deal was available. Accordingly, the statement the prime minister made to General Delteil in the early hours of July 21 seeking to reassure him of the soundness of the armistice agreements he was about to sign, is an extraordinary one. "I know what I am asking you is a painful task for an officer," Mendès-France is reported to have said, his face grave. "But you know as well as I that there is no other way out, and that this night's agreements are the best we could have obtained, that they go against neither the honor of our army, nor the higher interest of our country, nor our commitments to our allies." Only if he were speaking for himself, who had, it is true, made no commitments to his allies, rather than in the name of France could it even remotely be construed that this statement did not constitute an outright lie. Moments later, the agreements signed, General Delteil had the sense of honor to refuse Buu's invitation to join himself and his colleagues in drinking a glass of champagne.<sup>363</sup>

The State of Vietnam had paid the price of France's conclusion of an agreement with the DRV. Its delegation would never have accepted the agreement had it been treated by the French as a full and equal ally. The Vietnamese nationalists accepted their bitter fate with all the equanimity they possessed. They had missed the chance, if it ever existed, of receiving their independence by the stroke of the pen; they now accepted an armistice concluded without their consent or even consultation which rewarded the rule of violence, not law. They faced the arduous task of demonstrating in practice that they could manage their affairs without the French, whose grip on their country would at long last be broken. In these circumstances, the true state of the two countries' relationship would continue, as before, to be defined in the day-to-day nitpicking about customs duties and the status of the high commissioner's office. In Saigon, July 20 would be observed as a day of shame.

# 254 The Indochinese Experience of the French and the Americans

The relatively favorable outcome for the royal governments of Cambodia and Laos was due to two factors: (1) their independence had been assured well before the Geneva conference met and so escaped becoming hostage to the negotiations; and (2) they were able to capitalize on this invaluable asset in terms of international diplomacy, particularly Chou's indefatigable efforts, both in the conference sessions and outside, on their behalf. Chou privately assured Eden and Mendès-France that China was prepared to entertain normal relations with Cambodia and Laos on the same basis as it did with India, Burma, and Indonesia, namely the five principles of peaceful coexistence, provided they harbored no foreign bases. In his dealings with Dong, Chou had a strong argument, and presumably made use of it, that as Dong had repeatedly insisted on the territorial integrity of both countries it was illogical that he should propose their partition. During his visit to New Delhi on June 25-28, Chou gave assurances along these lines to Jawaharlal Nehru, whom he sounded out about India's assumption of the chairmanship of an international control commission after the signing of the armistice.<sup>364</sup>

Chou's assurances to Mendès-France meant that the latter felt less need to compromise the sovereignty of Cambodia and Laos in the pursuit of a successful negotiation with the DRV. Yet the sovereigns of both nations were suspicious of a possible deal at their expense to the end, when they learned what had been concluded secretly between the French and the DRV. King Sisavang Vong of Laos presided at a meeting of the cabinet in late June in which a decision had been reached not to recede in any degree from the position taken initially by the delegation of Laos at Geneva, namely to demand the unconditional withdrawal of Viet Minh "volunteers" from its soil. But Crown Prince Savang Vatthana was suspicious of the French. Both he and Prime Minister Souvanna Phouma were fearful that, in the framework of an armistice covering Vietnam, Mendès-France might be willing to grant concessions to the DRV which would be injurious to Laotian sovereignty and territorial integrity. Savang said that if the French did arrive at any backstairs deal of this nature, he would publicly disavow any such arrangement and Laos would, if necessary, fight on alone. Laos would in such an event make an immediate appeal for UN intervention.<sup>365</sup>

American diplomacy had sought as best it could to protect the State of Vietnam and the royal governments of Cambodia and Laos from suffering grievous damage at the hands of the Communist delegations. The United States had remained engaged to the end, in spite of pressures from some in Congress to withdraw. A suggestion by a member of the State Department's Policy Planning Staff that the United States should withdraw from the conference and an attempt should be made to persuade the governments of the Associated States likewise to withdraw on the grounds that the negotiations were moving in a direction threatening their independence was not followed up. 366

# 5. The Crucible of Nationalism

July 20, 1954-1957

The negotiations at Geneva ended the First Indochina War. The signing of the armistice agreements was to be followed by a breathing spell lasting two years, no more, in Vietnam and Laos, and slightly longer in Cambodia. For Laos and Cambodia, the truce meant the exercise of their independence and sovereignty in the community of nations, and both soon became member states in the United Nations. But this exercise was never to be entirely free of foreign intervention in spite of the opportunity of Geneva.

Like the 1946 preliminary convention, the 1954 armistice was a bag full of contradictions. It did not mean peace in any real sense of the term. The armistice left two rival governments in Vietnam, each claiming to represent the entire country. As a fact of geography, the armistice agreement had partitioned Vietnam so that, temporarily, the DRV government controlled everything north of the demilitarized zone (DMZ) at the 17th parallel, and the State of Vietnam (soon to give way to the Republic of Vietnam) controlled everything south of the DMZ. From this moment forward, it became the practice, in English as well as in French, to refer to North Vietnam and South Vietnam. This practice, although it had no basis in legality, tended to give the impression of two sovereign states with two distinct territories, although this was false. Nevertheless, on the territory of Vietnam there were henceforth two Vietnams.

The opposing Vietnamese sides had met privately and had taken each other's measure. Each understood fully the meanings behind the other's elliptical public statements in conference sessions. South of the 17th parallel, the population accepted the results of Geneva with stoic resignation; in Saigon, flags were flown at half-staff. North of the 17th parallel, a vast exodus got under way from the "non-liberated" areas, while the party solidified its control everywhere.

The partition went against the feeling of all patriotic Vietnamese. The armistice agreements set no terminal date for the provisional partition, but for reasons of convenience, and because of a compromise of differing positions among the delegations at Geneva, the election date of July 1956 was chosen to be included in the Final Declaration.<sup>1</sup> In actual fact, the reunification which

some thought would require two years was to require 22 years. In the summer of 1954, a resumption of the war over the reunification of the country seemed a distinct possibility in Saigon and Hanoi. Although it was not quite the same as in 432 B.C., when the citizens of Athens and the Peloponnesian League had debated the question of war or peace and, having listened to the counsels on both sides, voted for war, the same kind of fatal inevitability was felt by the Vietnamese. Both sides, recognizing war as a distinct possibility, adopted a hard line in public and sought to firm up their foreign alliances while keeping open contacts between the two regimes to the extent possible. Like Athens and Sparta, Saigon and Hanoi, together with their allies, were fated to fight it out without pity to the ultimate victory of the one and the defeat of the other. And the long war would leave the country in part destroyed and its people exhausted in body and in spirit, just as the war in ancient Greece had done.

Meanwhile, the focus shifted, albeit temporarily, to other matters. The government in Saigon was struggling to finally evict the French and create a meaningful independence. The DRV was preoccupied with the carrying out of a Chinese-style land reform, which itself was used to ferret out "enemies of the people" and create a firm basis for party control for the running of the putative 1956 elections. The class struggle and the duty toward the world revolution required that the population of the hegemonic symmachy be kept on a war footing. As so often in the past, the party had several objectives in view simultaneously, and the party propaganda about the Saigon government and its agents as a constant threat to the DRV became an important element of the land reform campaign.<sup>2</sup>

# **Evaluation of the Armistice Terms**

### VIETNAM

The Agreement on the Cessation of Hostilities in Vietnam comprised six chapters, 47 articles, and an annex that delineated the boundaries of the provisional assembly areas and the location of the provisional military demarcation line and the demilitarized zone.<sup>3</sup> It was signed on July 20 by Brigadier General Henri Delteil for the French Union forces and Vice Defense Minister Ta Quang Buu for the Viet Minh.<sup>4</sup> It came into force at midnight, Geneva time, on July 22, 1954.

Under the terms of the armistice, the respective commanders were required to "order and enforce the complete cessation of all hostilities in Viet Nam by all armed forces under their control" (Article 10). They were also responsible for ensuring that persons under their command who violated the cease-fire agreement would be suitably punished (Article 22). The armistice was to be simultaneous throughout Vietnam (Article 11), although, because of the time required to transmit cease-fire orders to the lowest echelons of combatants, the final effective date varied according to region. Thus, a complete cease-fire would be in effect in northern Vietnam by July 27, in central Vietnam by August 1, and in southern Vietnam by August 11.5

After the cease-fire, the forces of the belligerents were to regroup in two principal regroupment zones, which were divided by a demarcation line at about the 17th parallel. This military demarcation line was provisional. The Viet Minh were to regroup north of the line after their withdrawal from areas they controlled south of the line, and the French Union forces were to regroup south of the line. An annex to the agreement and an attached reference map located the line precisely. A demilitarized zone, not wider than five kilometers, was established on each side of the demarcation line (Article 1). Military forces, supplies, and equipment were to be withdrawn from the demilitarized zone within 25 days after the entry into force of the cease-fire agreement (Article 5).

Civil administration and relief in the zones on either side of the demarcation line were made the responsibility of the commanders in chief of the parties of the respective regroupment zones (Article 8), and the commanders in chief would determine the number of persons who were to be permitted to enter the demilitarized zone for administrative purposes. No persons, however, military or civilian, were to be permitted to enter the demilitarized zone except those who were concerned with relief work and the conduct of civil administration and those who had been specifically authorized to enter by the Joint Commission for Vietnam (Article 7). Article 6 forbade any person to cross the demarcation line unless authorized to do so by the Joint Commission.

The regroupment of belligerent forces into their respective zones was regulated by fairly detailed provisions. Articles 2 and 15(a) stipulated that the disengagement of the combatants, withdrawals, and transfer of all military forces, together with their equipment and supplies, were to be completed within 300 days. The parties undertook to inform each other of their plans for movement from one regroupment zone to the other within 25 days of the agreement's entry into force (Article 11). Other technical details of establishment of provisional assembly areas and procedures for troop disengagement and withdrawal were given in the various paragraphs of Article 15.

Article 14(a) said that pending the general elections which would bring about the unification of Vietnam, the conduct of civil administration in each of the two major regrouping zones was to be placed under the control of the signatory whose forces were to be regrouped. In Robert F. Randle's view, this meant that the commander in chief of the People's Army of Vietnam had control of civil administration in the north, while the commander in chief of the French Union forces had control of civil administration in the south. Implementation of this article obviously posed no problem for the DRV, since the army was an integral part of that government. For the south, however, the article posed a major problem, because no sovereign state could envisage handing over responsibility for civil administration on its territory to a foreign power, and as long as the French Union forces in Vietnam were under the command of a Frenchman this would certainly be the case. In this particular instance, Foreign Minister Tran Van Do's reservations about the agreement expressed in plenary session would weigh heavily on the diplomacy of the next few years. The most notable feature of the armistice agreement was that in neither Article 14(a)

nor in any other article was the political character of the administration in either zone specified.

Under Article 14(b), steps were to be taken to ensure there was no break in the transfer of responsibilities; the transfer of civil administration of Hanoi and Haiphong was made subject to special provisions. Article 14(c) proscribed reprisals against persons for their activities during the war. Article 14(d) permitted civilians to leave a district controlled by one signatory and reside in the regroupment zone assigned to the other signatory; moreover, the authorities of a particular district were supposed to help civilians who had opted to leave.

The agreement contained provisions limiting both the war-making power of either side and the use of its territory for such a purpose. Article 16 prohibited the introduction into Vietnam of troop reinforcements and additional military personnel, subject to one principal qualification, rotation, which was defined as the replacement of units no larger than battalion size by other units of the same echelon. The paragraphs of Article 17 prohibited the introduction into Vietnam of all types of arms, munitions, and other war matériel, such as combat aircraft, naval craft, pieces of ordnance, jet engines jet weapons, and armored vehicles. The signatories were permitted to replace on a piece-for-piece basis arms and munitions that had been destroyed, damaged, worn out, or used up after the cessation of hostilities, but such replacements were subject to inspection at specified points of entry. From the date the cease-fire agreement was effective, the establishment of new military bases in Vietnam was prohibited (Article 18). The two signatories were to "ensure that the zones assigned to them do not adhere to any military alliance and are not used for the resumption of hostilities or to further an aggressive policy" (Article 19). Release and repatriation of prisoners of war and civilian internees were prescribed in Article 21. Article 24 stipulated that "the armed forces of each party shall respect the demilitarized zone and the territory under the military control of the other party, and shall commit no act and undertake no operation against the other party."

Article 25 provided that "the commanders of the forces of the two parties shall afford full protection and all possible assistance and cooperation to the Joint Commission and its joint groups and to the International Commission and its inspection teams in the performance of the functions and tasks assigned to them by the present Agreement." The composition and duties of these two bodies were specified in Articles 28 through 46. The Joint Commission was composed of representatives of the two signatories and the International Commission for Supervision and Control (ICSC, usually abbreviated ICC) was composed of India as chairman and Canada and Poland as members.

An important aspect of the agreement was that, as there was no fixed date when its provisions would cease to have effect, the two signatories assumed a continuing responsibility for their execution. Article 27 stated that "the signatories of the present Agreement and their successors in their functions shall be responsible for ensuring the observance and enforcement of the terms and provisions thereof. The Commanders of the Forces of the two parties shall take all steps and make all arrangements necessary to ensure full compliance with all the provisions of the present Agreement by all elements and military personnel under their command." Article 28 stated that responsibility for the execution of the agreement rested with the signatories themselves.

#### **C**AMBODIA

The Agreement on the Cessation of Hostilities in Cambodia comprised five chapters and 33 articles. The cease-fire came into force at 8 A.M. Peking time on July 23. By shrewdly holding up the final signature, the Cambodian negotiators had retained for their country the right to have foreign military relations. The agreement was signed by General Nhiek Tioulong, commander in chief of the Khmer National Armed Forces, and Ta Quang Buu. The withdrawal of foreign armed forces and military personnel from Cambodia was governed by Article 4. Paragraph 1(a) of that article specified the armed forces and personnel of the French Union. Paragraphs 1(b) and 1(c) referred to the Viet Minh armed units and personnel.

Although the Khmer Issarak had not been recognized at the conference, Article 6 contained the text of a statement by the royal government guaranteeing them the enjoyment of rights and freedoms under the constitution. Reprisals were specifically ruled out. Article 7 contained the text of another government statement foreswearing foreign military alliances or bases.

### Laos

The Agreement on the Cessation of Hostilities in Laos was signed by General Delteil and Ta Quang Buu and came into force at midnight, Geneva time, on July 22, 1954. The document comprised seven chapters and 41 articles. The terms of the armistice agreement for Laos provided for a cease-fire, the withdrawal of French and Viet Minh forces from Laos, a prohibition against introducing foreign military personnel into Laos (except for a French military training mission to be limited to 1,500 men), a prohibition against foreign bases (with the exception of Séno), and the exchange of all prisoners of war. Article 14 of the agreement provided that "pending a political settlement, the fighting units of 'Pathet Lao,' concentrated in the provisional assembly areas, shall move into the Provinces of Phong Saly and Sam Neua except for any military personnel who wish to be demobilized where they are."

On the last day of the conference, the royal government issued two important statements regarding its future internal policies. One declared that it would take necessary measures to integrate all citizens without discrimination into the national community and to guarantee them the rights and freedoms provided for in the constitution, affirming in particular that they might participate freely in general elections by secret ballot as voters and candidates. The other declared that it would not join any foreign military alliance, allow foreign military bases, or request military aid "except for the purpose of its effective territorial defense." The wording of these two statements was almost identical to the wording of the Cambodian royal government's statements inscribed in that country's cease-fire agreement.

The cease-fire in Laos was to go into effect at 8 A.M. on August 6. The withdrawal of foreign military forces from Laos was governed by Article 4. The ICC was formed by August 11. At the same time, a Joint Commission, made up of Franco-Laotian and Viet Minh–Pathet Lao delegations, was set up; it functioned until January 1955.

At Geneva, all the major powers were in favor of a neutral status for the Kingdoms of Laos and Cambodia, and the royal governments there enjoyed the goodwill of their neighbor China. Although the chief American policy aim insofar as Laos was concerned, to see that Laos was "not allowed to go behind the Iron Curtain" in the words of Secretary of State John Foster Dulles, had been met by the outcome of the conference, the circumstances prevailing between the Chinese and American delegations sowed the seeds of future conflict in these kingdoms. The American administration was under strong congressional pressure to show a firm anti-Communist stance; the majority leader in the Senate, Senator William Knowland of California, spoke of "a Far Eastern Munich" and was strongly opposed even to Dulles's mere presence in Geneva. 10 It was one of the relatively rare periods in American diplomacy when congressional leaders were in effect making foreign policy on a major issue. Dulles refused to shake Chou's hand, a snub the Chinese statesman never forgave. 11 Thus, when China could have used its influence to ensure compliance with the armistice by all concerned, it did not do so because it would have appeared to its allies that China was doing Washington's bidding. In particular, American disengagement at Geneva enlarged the freedom of action of the DRV, probably an unintended effect, but one nonetheless that was to cost dearly. No analysis foretelling this effect has been found in the State Department archives of the period.

At the close of the conference, the United States delegation had opted for a compromise between rhetoric and reality in issuing a statement conditionally accepting the terms of the armistice agreements in Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam. <sup>12</sup> In succeeding years, the question of whether their actions violated the 1954 terms was much in the forefront of discussions between the three governments and their American allies, as the diplomatic record makes clear.

# FINAL DECLARATION

The Final Declaration began by listing in the heading the participants in the conference, a device agreed upon by Eden and Molotov to serve as a compromise between Chinese insistence that the declaration be signed by the participants and American refusal to sign an agreement with the Chinese.<sup>13</sup> It committed the participants (France specifically in Paragraph 11, all participants in Paragraph 12) to respect the unity of Vietnam.

# Problems of the Two Vietnams with the French and the Americans

The long war against the French had conferred, at tremendous cost, great prestige and a degree of legitimacy on the DRV government that partially covered up the illegality of its origin and its indebtedness to foreign intervention. Those

who had waged a successful war of liberation, like the American colonists of 1781, enjoyed huge popular support. In June 1954, many Vietnamese nationalists believed, with Dac Khe, the deputy chief of the State of Vietnam delegation at Geneva, that if elections were held at that moment, the Viet Minh would win them over any of the discredited governments Bao Dai had put in place.<sup>14</sup>

The Geneva armistice had endowed the DRV with a territory, and its leaders were quick to take advantage of this fact. On January 18, 1955, the party newspaper *Nhan Dan* carried a front-page declaration by the DRV government, signed by President Ho Chi Minh, on January 14:

The DRV now declares to all governments of the world that it is the only official and legal Government of the Vietnamese people and that now the DRV is ready to establish diplomatic relations with any government which respects the DRV as an equal, sovereign power and respects its territorial integrity, and wishes to live in peace and build a democratic world.<sup>15</sup>

There followed a list of foreign countries, led by the Soviet Union and China, which had recognized the DRV. The claim that the DRV was "the only official and legal government of the Vietnamese people" was obviously inconsistent with the armistice agreement, which recognized the right of the signatory whose forces were to be regrouped in each zone to administer that zone pending the elections which would unify the two zones, as the Office of the Legal Adviser pointed out immediately to the Office of Philippine and Southeast Asian Affairs.<sup>16</sup>

The popularity of the DRV government rested on no formal mandate, for the war had obviously precluded the holding of any national elections, and the National Assembly elected in 1946 met again only at the end of 1953. The regime's claim to represent the Vietnamese people, even in the area of its control, was a subterfuge, for sovereignty resided not in the government or the other institutions of the state, but in the Vietnam Workers' Party. It was a regime that existed of the party, for the party, and by the party. The war fought by the DRV since 1946, a point likewise emphasized by *Nhan Dan*, had served not only to defeat the French but also to ensure the party's supremacy. The nature of the regime was already cast in the Viet Minh zones during the war; its totalitarian underpinnings, therefore, existed well before the end of the war. And for the purpose of concealing the locus of sovereignty from the Vietnamese people and foreign governments, Ho Chi Minh's dual position as president of the DRV state and as party leader served convenience.

In the view of the DRV government, there was a significant difference between the agreement on Vietnam and the agreements on Cambodia and Laos. The agreements on Cambodia and Laos stipulated deadlines for the withdrawal of all French Union forces. The agreement on Vietnam provided only for the regrouping of the French Union forces south of the 17th parallel and set no deadline for their withdrawal from Vietnam. The only reference to such withdrawal was contained in Paragraph 10 of the Final Declaration taking note of a

French statement of July 21 expressing readiness to withdraw its forces from Vietnam at the request of the government concerned.<sup>17</sup> Meanwhile, under Article 14(a) of the armistice agreement, civil administration in the south was to remain under the control of the French Union forces, whose representative had signed the agreement.

This construction conformed to the view of the Marxist-Leninist leaders of the DRV that only half their country had been liberated in the war and that the portion of the country south of the 17th parallel was still under French colonial control, and would remain so until reunification was achieved. As no patriotic Vietnamese would vote to reinstate the colonial regime, the election would result in a triumph for the DRV. This view required, of course, a continuation of the refusal to ascribe any legal status or autonomy to the State of Vietnam, which now claimed to be the southern government, or even any mention of its continued adherence to the French Union. The armistice agreement required the DRV only to recognize the southern "administration," and this could be done by dealing exclusively with the French. At the same time, preparing for the day when the French withdrew, the DRV began almost immediately after Geneva to shift responsibility for the actions of the "puppet government" in Saigon from the French to the Americans. American public assistance to Diem was proclaimed in the DRV's propaganda to prove the puppet nature of this relationship and the colonial designs of the United States. This was, on the face of it, nonsense. No American president who presided over American involvement in Indochina nurtured any design to annex South Vietnam. If the amount of assistance were taken as the measure of the relationship, the DRV qualified as a colony in 1954 more fully than the State of Vietnam, considering the massive Chinese aid to the DRV during the war, which the DRV kept secret, and the full extent of which only became known after the war from Chinese archival sources.

# DIEM'S FIRST GOVERNMENT

Ngô Dinh Diem had been delegated full civil and military powers as prime minister by imperial ordinance on June 19. Diem was as pure a Vietnamese leader as could be imagined. Unlike Ho Chi Minh, he had lived almost all his life in Vietnam but had been lucky to have been absent in 1953–1954 when French intervention in Vietnamese politics and the corruption that went with it had reached its zenith. Untainted by the scandals that plagued the Vietnamese politicians of Bao Dai's previous governments, Diem commanded a claim to loyalty from nationalists. But he had few supporters outside his immediate family whose loyalty he could count on completely. Bao Dai had thought enough of Diem to nominate him, but by October he told Heath that "with all his virtue of honesty and sincerity, Diem was not a natural statesman nor overly intelligent." And to the Americans, particularly, Diem's reliance on his brothers became a refrain of criticism almost from the first day; Heath commented to Bao Dai that Diem seemed to have too many brothers advising him.<sup>18</sup>

Diem's naysayers were legion. His predecessor, Buu Loc, thought that Diem, by his sincerity and unworldliness, would become the dupe of "more expert peo-

ple," a significant choice of words. 19 The French, with many axes to grind, were more blunt in their uniformly negative appreciation of Diem. Mendès-France said "that if and when any agreement was reached with the Viet Minh he expected to have considerable difficulty" with Diem's government (an understatement) because Diem was "a fanatic much like Syngman Rhee." 20 Dejean saw him as "too narrow, too rigid, too unworldly, and too pure to have any chance of creating an effective government."<sup>21</sup> On the eve of the signing of the armistice agreements, Ely was concerned about whether the government would permit demonstrations against their terms that would endanger public order "or take some action or make some declaration which might lessen discipline and obedience of Vietnamese units serving with French Union Forces." And he added that should such things occur "he would not hesitate to take firm action, even to point of putting Diem under arrest."22 Although he was absolutely honest, in Ely's opinion, Diem was not overly intelligent.<sup>23</sup> In an opinion relayed by La Chambre, Ely was said to believe that no matter how estimable Diem "may be in terms of integrity and purity, he is very ineffective in dealing with the political realities of the situation in Vietnam."24

Hubert Graves, the British ambassador in Saigon, "expressed doubt whether Diem could succeed in rallying people around him." Graves also viewed Diem as "useful as a figurehead," but lacking the necessary qualities of leadership. Mamong American diplomats, Robert McClintock, who had deplored Diem's "lack of political sophistication," foresaw worse to come. "Diem is a messiah without a message," he reported. "His only formulated policy is to ask immediate American assistance in every form." And he added that "his only present emotion, other than a lively appreciation of himself, is a blind hatred for the French." Collins, on the other hand, saw Diem otherwise. "Diem is a small, shy, diffident man with almost no personal magnetism. He evidently lacks confidence in himself and appears [to] have an inherent distaste for decisive action." In an article that later became famous, American journalist Joseph Alsop, who often reflected the thinking of high American officials, predicted that Diem's government would not last six months. Of course, journalists such as Alsop had little basis for reaching such premature judgments. His was the mainstream opinion at the time.

About the only people who held positive opinions about Diem were Dulles, a handful of foreign observers, and the Viet Minh. Dulles said that "while we had no particular fondness for Diem, he nonetheless appeared to be a man of integrity and honesty, and we did not know of anyone who might be any better."<sup>30</sup> "My strongest impression on first meeting Ngô Dinh Diem at the end of October, 1954, was that this was a man who did not in the least doubt the favorable outcome of his struggle with his opponents," Joseph Buttinger of the International Rescue Committee recalled.<sup>31</sup> Tran Van Do had already picked up from his talks with Pham Van Dong at Geneva the Communists' worry about the genuine nationalist character of Diem's government.<sup>32</sup> This seemed to be confirmed by the propaganda attacks against him on Radio Hanoi. In the testimony of defectors from the Viet Minh, Diem ranked as the only nationalist Vietnamese the Communists were worried about.<sup>33</sup>

Diem left Paris for Saigon on June 24 accompanied by his brother Luyen; by Tran Chanh Thanh, a pro-Diem militant of the first hour who had been director of cabinet of Tran Trong Kim's minister of justice and had been coopted by Ho in 1945 to study the reorganization of Vietnam's judicial system and legal code, serving the Viet Minh until August 1952; and by Nguyên Van Thoai, a relative of the Ngô family and the only prominent exile willing to join Diem's cabinet. Diem's arrival in Saigon on June 25 caused little excitement and no popular joy.<sup>34</sup> This small, unimpressive man who looked much younger than his 53 years, walked without a trace of a smile from the Air France Constellation toward the crowd gathered to receive him, which experienced a moment of great tension. Some 500 in number, they consisted mainly of bearded mandarins, Catholic dignitaries, and government officials. Among the thousand or so who greeted him in town, the absence of young people and the lack of enthusiasm were painfully evident. There was only one fervent message of welcome, sent by Monsignor Phan Ngoc Chi in the name of the Tonkin Catholic communities about to be abandoned to the Viet Minh. 35

Diem's principal task was described as achieving without delay "the common denominator of the deep aspirations of all Vietnamese, including the fighters of the Viet Minh." Diem's refusal to cast into moral darkness all those on the Viet Minh side was seen as significant evidence of his deep conviction, which he did not see to be in contradiction to his hatred of the Communists, that in the long run they were all more Vietnamese than anything else. He saw his government as a pole of political and spiritual attraction for the entire people.

The cabinet, constituted by imperial decree of July 6, consisted of nine ministers and eight secretaries of state (deputy ministers), none of them holdovers from Buu Loc. The cabinet's perceptible orientation, more by the relative importance of responsibilities than numerical composition, toward the north and center marked a departure from the previous cabinets invested by Bao Dai, in which comfortable and well-heeled Cochinchinese landowners and magistrates had long exercised a disproportionate influence. Second, the cabinet was characterized by a marked concentration of executive power in and around the prime minister; ministers such as Tran Van Chuong and secretaries of state such as Tran Chanh Thanh and Nguyên Ngoc Tho were responsible directly to Diem. Diem himself kept the ministries of interior and national defense, but appointed Ho Thong Minh as chargé de mission at the prime minister's office to work on defense matters. The change from past practice was accentuated by Diem's abolition of the posts of governors of the three regions who had held quasi-autonomous powers under Bao Dai (who had appointed them) and by the integration of the crown domains in the highlands into the Vietnamese national community. Finally, the cabinet appointees were drawn mainly from the professional world, including lawyers such as Chuong and Le Ngoc Chan; engineers such as Phan Khac Suu, Tran Van Bach, Tran Huu Phuong and Tran Van Cua; teachers such as Nguyên Duong Don and Pham Duy Khiem; doctors such as Pham Huu Chuong; lawyers such as Thanh; and journalists such as Le Quang Luat. In this respect, Diem's first cabinet bore some resemblance to

Kim's cabinet of 1945. Besides Thanh, Nguyên Tang Nguyên, the minister of labor and youth, and Pham Huu Chuong, the minister of health, had served the Viet Minh. All except Chan, a prominent VNQDD member, were non-party people. Chuong, Luat, and Phuong were Catholics like Diem. The cabinet took office on July 7.<sup>36</sup>

Diem's firm intention on assuming office was to insist on speedy signature of the treaties of independence and association with France. However, having secured his diplomatic "triumph" at Geneva by steadfastly ignoring the right of the Associated States to be consulted on the negotiations, Mendès-France now proceeded to equivocate on the question of the independence of the State of Vietnam. This course was encouraged by members of his entourage who had for years been advocating negotiations with the Viet Minh and who saw themselves vindicated by the result at Geneva. These included a number of influential French journalists who developed a fierce loyalty to Mendès-France rather similar to that a politician engaged in Vietnam, Henry Cabot Lodge, enjoyed years later from American journalists.

Mendès-France's actions at Geneva had been based on the freedom he considered he exercised to conclude agreements in the names of the Associated States. The Laotians had negotiated their treaties of independence prior to Geneva, but their relatively small forces committed under the French high command and the defense of their territory provided by the French forces had disposed them not to contest the negotiation and signature of the armistice agreement on their behalf by the commander of the French Union forces. The Cambodians, on the other hand, had balked at this procedure and insisted on signing their own armistice agreement, which they did. In the case of Vietnam, however, the question of the degree to which the French government could act in the name of the State of Vietnam was complicated by the facts that the treaties of independence and association between the two governments were initialed after the armistice negotiations had begun and that these treaties had not received the signatures that would bring them into effect. If we are to believe Professor Roger Pinto in his major contribution to this legal question, the right of the French government to conclude international agreements in July 1954 committing the State of Vietnam was "incontestable" by virtue of Articles 61 and 62 of the 1946 Constitution establishing French executive dominance of the French Union.37

Mendès-France had long since dropped the reference to granting "immediate independence" to the Associated States that he had somewhat brashly advanced to Dillon when he was merely another contestant for political power in the arena of the National Assembly. With the reality of a negotiated agreement ending France's war in Indochina finally within his grasp in the early days of July, Mendès-France pulled out all the stops. The Vietnamese nationalists, after all, had no votes in the Assembly. Nevertheless, their complaints of not being consulted had been a refrain in the ears of American diplomats in Saigon, Paris, and Geneva.

On July 8, Dulles had found it necessary to send a two-paragraph telegram to the Paris embassy instructing it to make sure Mendès-France understood that the willingness of the United States to issue a public statement that it would respect an agreement on Indochina was "predicated [on the] assumption [that the] Associated States and in particular Viet Nam would agree [to the] terms [of the] settlement." The point it contained was deemed sufficiently important that from Geneva, the acting head of the American delegation, U. Alexis Johnson, cabled Paris inquiring whether the embassy had carried out Dulles's instructions. The telegram had been delayed in transmission and arrived in Paris on a Saturday evening after Mendès-France had already departed for Geneva; Ambassador Dillon was instructed to fly from Aix-en-Provence to Geneva on Sunday at midday to see the prime minister.

Dillon opened this important interview by pointing to the assumption in the July 8 telegram on which American action would be based and went further: the feeling was that the government of the State of Vietnam should be kept more fully informed by the French. Adroitly turning the question, Mendès-France replied that he would consider informing the Vietnamese after discussing the matter with his advisers that afternoon. He said he had originally felt it was preferable not to inform them until he could assure them that the United States was prepared to guarantee them against further aggression or subversion. He spoke at great length of the necessity for a clear-cut American guarantee that would protect the Associated States in the event that the Communists did not honor the spirit of any agreement that might be reached at Geneva. Without such a guarantee, he added, a settlement would not be worth the paper it was written on. In such an eventuality, if the war continued, the French might have to appeal to the United States to intervene.<sup>42</sup>

In Saigon, Heath welcomed the dispatch of the July 8 telegram.<sup>43</sup> He had spelled out for the Department's information the minimum terms Diem's government was willing to accept for a cease-fire. These included the retention in nationalist hands of Hanoi and Haiphong and of the Catholic bishoprics in the north.<sup>44</sup>

Dulles himself visited Paris on July 13 and 14 and talked at length with Mendès-France. At the meeting on July 14 there was considerable discussion of the Vietnam independence issue, and later that day both men signed a "France-United States Position Paper," the sixth and final paragraph of which read: "France reaffirms the principle of independence for the Associated States in equal and voluntary association as members of the French Union." An annex, also signed by both men, spelled out seven points constituting a result which France believed to be obtainable at Geneva and, "France believes," by the Associated States. The annex committed the United States, which was not a belligerent, to respecting such terms, which included the retention of the southern part of Vietnam below a line of military demarcation.<sup>45</sup>

Having officially committed the United States to respect the provisions negotiated by the French for the partition of Vietnam, Dulles gave Bedell Smith the text of the six-paragraph position paper and its seven-point annex in the "basic instructions" he sent to him two days later for his participation in the final days of the conference. Smith was told not to go beyond the role of "the representative of a nation friendly to the non-Communist states primarily interested, which desires to assist, where desired, in arriving at a just settlement." He was instructed to avoid participating in the negotiations in any way that could be construed as making the United States responsible for the outcome. Thus, thanks to the willingness of Mendès-France to lie to Dulles as he had lied to Dillon, and to American reluctance in the circumstances to draw the substance of the lie to the attention of the liar, Mendès-France had a free hand in meeting his deadline, using, as Professor Pinto pointed out in his subsequent article, the powers bestowed on the French government as head of the French Union by the 1946 constitution.

Hours before the end of the negotiations, Diem's government had still not been officially informed of what was being negotiated and had to rely on the Americans for scraps of information. Thus, at a working-level meeting of six friendly delegations on July 18 to discuss drafts of the Final Declaration that were being circulated among delegations, Luyen said, with irrefutable logic, that his delegation was not in a position to express any views as his government had not participated in the negotiation of an agreement and was therefore unfamiliar with its terms.<sup>47</sup> Later that same day, Bedell Smith, still without any firm evidence that the condition set forth in Dulles's telegram of July 8 had been met, made his statement clarifying the American position with respect to the armistice agreements.

From the strong rhetoric of its delegates at Geneva protesting both the way in which the armistice was concluded and its conditions, one might have deduced that the State of Vietnam would reject the agreement outright, or at least exert efforts to upset its implementation. However, Diem, after hearing from Heath that rejection of the agreement "would be a grave step not to be undertaken lightly," instructed his delegation merely to register on the conference record its right to reserve its position. With respect to elections, Diem told Heath that he would insist that elections for reunification not be held for two years, the actual outcome at Geneva.<sup>48</sup>

The State of Vietnam maintained the consistent position during this period that it was bound to respect, if not wholeheartedly, the provisions of the military armistice agreement with respect to Vietnam signed by General Delteil and Ta Quang Buu. An attempt by Foreign Minister Do to have this position inserted in the Final Declaration at the final plenary session on July 21 was turned aside by the chairman, Eden.

The Conference takes note of the Declaration of the Government of the State of Viet Nam undertaking:

to make and support every effort to re-establish a real and lasting peace in Viet Nam;

not to use force to resist the procedures for carrying the cease-fire into effect, in spite of the objections and reservations that the State of Viet-Nam has expressed, especially in its final statement.<sup>49</sup>

In fact, events were to show that quite the opposite of rejection occurred. Not only did the Saigon government take no steps to obstruct implementation of the signed armistice agreement, it gradually came to accept its provisions. By April 1956, it publicly stated that it would "not seek to violate by force the demarcation line and the demilitarized zone," and that it "will continue to give [the ICC] an effective cooperation, will ensure the security of its members, and will facilitate as far as is possible the fulfilment of its mission of peace." The ICC in Vietnam, in fact, moved its headquarters from Hanoi to Saigon on March 31, 1958.

The talks foreseen at Geneva between military representatives of the two sides in Indochina on the technical details of implementing the forthcoming cease-fire and the prisoner exchange issue had already opened at Trung Gia 25 miles (40 kilometers) north of Hanoi on the road to Thai Nguyên on July 4. The two sides met in a shed made of corrugated iron sheeting; the five French delegates sat opposite five DRV delegates and the three State of Vietnam delegates sat facing empty chairs across the table. The DRV delegation, which had set up a nearby tea tent made of parachutes recovered at Dien Bien Phu, was led by General Van Tien Dung, dressed in a Chinese-style tunic without insignia of rank. The French Union delegation, led by Colonel Marcel Lennuyeux, studiously avoided giving its Vietnamese allies any indication of the instructions it was receiving from its government.

Two sessions were held each day. In the plenary session all delegation members were present. In a restricted secret session only the French and DRV delegation chiefs were present, and Lennuyeux briefed the other members of the French Union delegation, including the Vietnamese. The latter were entirely dependent on French means of communication and their messages were encoded by the French. The Vietnamese had been ordered by their government only to discuss the prisoner exchange. When the French and DRV delegation chiefs agreed to begin discussion of the cease-fire, the Vietnamese were left without orders, according to a Vietnamese member of the delegation. According to an American correspondent present, both the French and DRV delegates completely ignored the Vietnamese members. The DRV guards snapped to attention and saluted the French but paid no attention to the Vietnamese.<sup>52</sup>

The prisoner exchange was an especially emotional one. French prisoners were subjected to re-education attempts by the Viet Minh, later described by French combat cameraman Pierre Schoendorffer to Hellyer and Simpson of the United States Information Service (USIS) in Saigon. The Viet Minh subjected their captives to strong anti-American propaganda. News from Geneva was read to prisoners daily, and if the conference had not accomplished much during the day the blame was laid on the Americans. Schoendorffer had this comment on the Viet Minh: "They are people who have forgotten how to smile." The Viet Minh treated the captured Vietnamese, who accounted for 42.6 percent of those missing on the French Union side between 1945 and 1954, with particular attention; only 9.1 percent of them were returned during the prisoner exchange in July-October 1954, compared with 43.9 percent of the missing among the French mainland, Foreign Legion, North African, and African troops.<sup>54</sup>

One of the first things Diem and Nhu did after Diem's arrival in Vietnam was to pay a visit to the north to evaluate the situation created by the French evacuation; they were appalled by the human suffering they saw.<sup>55</sup> Diem requested American assistance in early August to transport the thousands of refugees from the north to the south. The U.S. Navy responded, organizing a sealift in coordination with the French. French ships transported refugees from Haiphong and then transferred them to American landing ships, which brought them to the south. We have an eyewitness description of these refugees from a participant:

Just as the connecting gangway is putt [sic] down I go over to the LSM and have the control people taken off first. These are the priests, nuns, the Vietnamese officers who handle the mobs. . . . Then they start up. Milling thousands in total. Miserable, filthy, lame, blind, crippled and war wounded come aboard. I am sure you have seen the newsreels. Eighty percent are very old men and women, and others are infants, all swollen with malnutrition and starvation, and literally dozens without limbs. They have a few paltry bags on sticks, called yokes, with two bags on each end. This is the only things they have left in the way of possessions. <sup>56</sup>

A total of 887,931 refugees were reported to have moved to the south.<sup>57</sup>

# MENDÈS-FRANCE'S TWO-FACED POLICY AND AN AMERICAN COMMITMENT RECEIVED

The French government's declaration at Geneva on July 21 that it would proceed from the principle of respect for the unity of Vietnam implied that France would avoid any categorical stand on the question of the sovereignty exercised by either Vietnamese government until the putative elections in 1956 had reunified Vietnam and eliminated one or the other of the two existing governments. Mendès-France told the National Assembly that French policy was to insist on these elections and to abide by their results. La Chambre stated in a parliamentary committee that if the DRV received a majority of only one vote France would accept the result and let the DRV take over all of Vietnam. 58 This ostensible readiness to accept the verdict of the Vietnamese people, north and south, was admirable in its own way, no doubt, considering his predecessors' hypothetical arguments with Bao Dai's government over the French Union, their haggling over the sharing of the last piaster of customs revenues and such minor matters, and particularly in view of the fact that the regime in the north was several times removed from Bao Dai's in terms of the traditional French values of liberty, equality, and fraternity.

In the following days, the policy implied by this stand took a more visible shape, no longer concealed behind the words of a double, or even triple, diplomatic game as it had been at Geneva. The minister for the Associated States, Guy La Chambre, told Dillon on July 27 that France considered it more important to turn over the administration of services to the State of Vietnam than "to make a great show over the signature of general treaties." <sup>59</sup> He explained that signing the treaties with the Vietnamese authorities who were now only re-

sponsible in the southern part of Vietnam would give the impression of creating a permanent division of the country. La Chambre's added statement that now that the war was over the French intended to build up the Vietnamese army sounded so hollow that it must have caused France's great generals Leclerc and de Lattre to turn over in their graves. A few days later, La Chambre said flatly that the formula of the treaties "would be entirely discarded." In other words, the State of Vietnam would be made by the French to go on paying even beyond the partition of Vietnam, the consecration of a Communist-controlled state in the northern half of the country, and the other provisions of the armistice agreement.

It did not take Mendès-France's breezy references to "the thin thread of legality" represented by Bao Dai<sup>61</sup> to alert the nationalists to the fact that the French premier was embarked on a policy of dealing with both Vietnamese governments simultaneously. He intended to "hold them on a leash," they felt, making sure they did not cause any trouble while he worked out the arrangements he wanted with Hanoi. <sup>62</sup> What was thin was not the legality of a government with which France had concluded countless agreements over the preceding five years, but France's commitment to that government. The nationalists were now watching the United States, on whom they counted for support. They had been reassured by Heath's statement to Diem that the United States, in sharp contrast to France, recognized the sovereignty of the State of Vietnam as extending over all of Vietnam. <sup>63</sup>

Mendès-France had already exchanged letters with Pham Van Dong on July 21 concerning the safeguarding of French economic and cultural establishments in northern Vietnam after the partition became effective. Hut the formal proof of Mendès-France's two-faced policy, if one were needed, was the August 7 announcement of the appointment of the banker Sainteny to the post of delegate general in the north. Sainteny had not been able to get the time of day from de Gaulle in Paris in July 1945, when it might have made a difference. His reputation had not suffered from the breakdown of the unworkable preliminary convention he had negotiated with Ho in 1946, and from time to time during the war Ho had let it be known that Sainteny was still considered to be a valid interlocutor should the time for negotiations arrive. Although the credit for negotiating an end to the war went to Mendès-France, Sainteny found for himself a role to play in renewing contact with Ho after Geneva. The fact that the minister for the Associated States, La Chambre, knew nothing about the Vietnamese problem.

The Vietnamese nationalists greeted the announcement of Sainteny's appointment with the fatalism that had become customary since Geneva. The announcement of Sainteny's mission seems to have caught Ely by surprise. Ely had written La Chambre to offer congratulations to Mendès-France for the success at Geneva. Now, suddenly, he wondered what French policy was and where it left the State of Vietnam. He rushed to Paris in August to find out. On his return, Ely told Heath that he had received "unqualified assurance of loyal and single support of remaining Vietnam." Once again, however, it seems to be a case of Mendès-France telling Ely one thing and Sainteny another.

Granted that there were members of the prime minister's entourage whose views were pro-DRV, granted that Sainteny appears to have been once again under the spell of Ho's promises, granted that some of Ely's own subordinates were engaging in private plotting with various individuals and factions in South Vietnam, the American diplomatic reporting makes it unmistakably clear that the two-faced policy originated with Mendès-France and no one else. The corollary of what Mendès-France referred to as his *politique de souplesse* was that the French would have to retain control over the actions of the southern government at least until July 1956. This was the mirror image of the DRV government's view, which its leaders did not hesitate to express to the French at every occasion after 1954.

Reality intruded here to the extent that it was likely to prove difficult to force Diem to implement the terms of an agreement from whose negotiation he had been deliberately excluded and to interpret it in the sense that the DRV interpreted it. Mendès-France therefore placed his hope in finding a more pliable candidate. This led him and his successor to heavy-handed attempts to replace Diem, legally if possible (that is, through pressure on Bao Dai to appoint a replacement), illegally if necessary (by supporting a coup in Saigon against Diem's government). Under cover of helping the new government to prepare for the putative electoral contest with the DRV, France would grant Saigon a decent interval prior to the DRV's expected success. This was so in spite of statements Mendès-France made before the National Assembly "not to interfere in the internal affairs of states that we have wished to be independent," not the first lie he had told his fellow deputies.<sup>70</sup>

Almost before Diem landed in Saigon, the French plotting against him began, as the American diplomatic reporting makes clear. <sup>71</sup> After denigrating Bao Dai's prime ministers for years, the French now suggested two of them (Tam and Huu) as possible replacements for Diem; the Americans were dubious. The man most responsible for the deficiencies of the national army was its chief of staff, General Nguyên Van Hinh, a man whose main claim to high rank was the fact that he was Tam's son.

General Hinh, General Le Van Hien, and General Xuan, claiming the authority of Bao Dai, who remained in France, sought to secure advantageous positions for themselves even at the cost of Diem's downfall (threatened openly by Hinh on several occasions). Of course, to the Americans they maintained that they were motivated by nationalist interests and argued that the Diem government was not acting effectively to counter the Communists. In these maneuvers, in which they changed their demands from day to day, they had the encouragement of their French friends. Indeed, Hinh's dual nationality created a split loyalty. The sects, for their part, adopted a wait-and-see attitude while these maneuverings went on; they were mainly concerned that the French might cut off their subsidies. (Diem moved adroitly to assure them continuation of subsidies.)

Bao Dai finally summoned Hinh to Paris and cashiered him. Despite Hinh's bold talk about the army's being opposed to Diem, his unceremonious

departure occasioned no murmur in Vietnam. He went on to make a successful career in the French armed forces, which is where he had belonged all the time, fighting in Algeria and elsewhere. (The politicians of the Fourth Republic would learn to their cost in Algeria what it meant to have their generals scheming in politics; they would have to appeal to de Gaulle to save them from such generals.)

Acting Secretary Bedell Smith now took matters in hand, sending the Paris embassy a sharply worded message to be delivered to Mendès-France stating that fresh reports of French meddling in Saigon politics were inconsistent with assurances given the United States by France.<sup>73</sup> Bedell Smith had had plenty of time to reflect on the fact that his statement of July 18 at Geneva giving American support to the armistice agreement negotiated by the French and the Viet Minh had been obtained by the French under false pretenses. In the present, the most glaring inconsistency, of course, was the piece of paper dated July 14 bearing Mendès-France's signature in which it was stated that France reaffirmed the principle of the independence of the Associated States. In reply, Mendès-France, as usual, disclaimed any knowledge of French meddling and claimed Diem's government was disintegrating but agreed to send instructions to the French in Saigon to avoid such behavior until Ely and La Chambre, whom he was sending to Washington to coordinate policies, had had an opportunity to discuss the matter.<sup>74</sup>

Even before he had formed his cabinet, Diem told American officials he counted on American aid. 75 However, the provision of American aid to the Associated States was entwined with the French and the pentalateral agreement.<sup>76</sup> Thus, the first issue to be tackled with the French at the end of September was the provision of American aid directly to the Associated States by the MAAG in Saigon. La Chambre had told Dillon that his experts had studied the armistice document and that it was their view that American military assistance to Vietnamese forces could continue as long as it was channeled through the French.<sup>77</sup> This was obviously not satisfactory to the Vietnamese.

The second issue to be tackled with the French was support for Diem's government, which had been reshuffled on September 24 so that it now included eight Cao Dai and Hoa Hao out of a total of 14 ministers. If the French could not be persuaded to take a stand on sovereignty in Vietnam, at least they might be forced to bring an end to their plotting against Diem, who was beginning to get his program organized and seeking to unify the various factions. In the Washington meetings, it was mainly the firm position taken by Bedell Smith in facing Finance Minister Edgar Faure, La Chambre, and Ely that held the French to a modicum of respect for legality in Vietnam. 78 In this, Bedell Smith was backed up by assurances he had received from Heath about the durability of Diem.<sup>79</sup> Also, during this crucial period congressional support was vital; State Department officials were able to tell French officials to their face that reports such as the one Senator Mansfield had written on returning from his trip to Indochina carried particular weight in Congress, and if it could be shown that the French were continuing to encourage plotting against Diem, as articles in the American press were reporting, congressional reaction would be adverse.80

In addition to Mansfield, Dulles's stand against French meddling received particularly strong congressional support from Representative James P. Richards (D-SC), chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee. One of those present on the American side in the meetings with the French was a Foreign Service officer named Frederick E. Nolting, Jr.

The Minute of Understanding reached at these meetings read:

France and the United States will continue support independence Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam. This will include the completion transfer of powers in Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam, to free governments these States on orderly and progressive basis.

We agree Viet Minh represents Communist force aggressively opposed to ideals and interests of free peoples of Associated States, France and the United States. We will firmly oppose extension of influence or control of Viet Minh movement having in mind positions taken by respective Governments in connection with Geneva agreements.

We will work toward political, military and economic goals in Indochina which will strengthen each of Associated States' Governments and which will enable them maintain their independence. To this end, we are considering programs both economic assistance and aid to national armies enable latter assume full responsibility for defense their territories, to which French Forces Laos and Vietnam now contribute. The channel for French and U.S. economic aid, budgetary support and other assistance to each of Associated States will be direct to each state. Such programs will be planned and closely coordinated to assure maximum effectiveness through appropriate machinery established in agreement with interested Governments.

With respect to Vietnam, the representatives of France and United States agree their respective governments support M. Ngô Dinh Diem in establishment and maintenance of a strong, anti-Communist and nationalist government. To this end France and the United States will urge all anti-Communist elements in Vietnam cooperate fully with Government of Ngô Dinh Diem in order counter vigorously the Viet Minh and build a strong free Vietnam.<sup>81</sup>

In a final meeting on September 29, representatives of the Associated States were invited to take part. Vietnamese Ambassador Tran Van Chuong and La Chambre engaged in a spirited and rather heated exchange concerning a Vietnamese release to the American press the previous day of an announcement that the French Expeditionary Corps should be withdrawn from Vietnam by March 1956. The tenor of the French response was indignation at the ungratefulness of such an announcement. Chuong replied tartly to this outburst to the effect that the present government was the first to speak the real truth of the Vietnamese desires and that the French Expeditionary Corps was needed more at home than in Asia. Cambodian Ambassador Nong Kimny asked whether American military aid would be furnished directly to his government and received an affirmative reply. The statement by the Laotian ambassador was mild, conciliatory, and gracious.<sup>82</sup>

Bedell Smith retired on September 30 to go into business. He had been in the military since the age of 15 when he joined the National Guard in his native Indianapolis. He had worked his way up to join the establishment, first as an ambassador under President Truman and then director of the CIA, later still in the State Department. In appreciation for his efforts at Geneva Nong Kimny gave him a farewell letter from Cambodia's foreign minister. 83 In Saigon, despite Ely's claims to American officials in Washington, it was General John W. O'Daniel, the chief of the MAAG, and not Ely, who told Hinh in no uncertain terms that as a military man with an active command he had no mandate to meddle in politics.<sup>84</sup> O'Daniel, like Bedell Smith, had worked his way up through the ranks after enlisting in the army in 1916. Both men had fought in both world wars. After reaching command positions they never forgot what war looked like to the infantryman in the foxhole, which gave them empathy with the ordinary Vietnamese foot soldiers who were starting to be a significant factor on the scene for the first time, an empathy that Ely, who had never commanded troops in battle, did not have.<sup>85</sup> With Bedell Smith and O'Daniel, two men who had had proof, each in his own way, of French diplomatic duplicity, the American position in Indochina achieved its finest hour in terms of standing for principle. Diem was heartened by these American efforts on his behalf and by the failure of the plots of the generals against him.86

Dulles had written to Mendès-France in August that the Americans proposed to address a presidential message of appreciation to Diem by way of dissipating the present discouragement in Vietnam. In an aide-mémoire given by the French Embassy to the State Department commenting on Dulles's letter, the French objected to its tone of personal support to Diem and, on the question of military and economic aid, they expressed surprise that continued American financial support to the FEC was not mentioned and stated that direct American military aid to Diem's government might be construed as a military alliance of the kind prohibited by the Geneva agreement. I have found no documentary evidence that Mendès-France, in what might have been a sign of evenhandedness called for by the circumstances, protested to the DRV government the continued presence of the Chinese Military Advisory Group, which remained in North Vietnam until March 1956. Despite the French protest, the Americans went ahead, with Bedell Smith drafting a letter for President Eisenhower to send Diem assuring him of American support.<sup>87</sup> The letter was a way of putting certain facts on the record. Eisenhower now ordered the letter delivered and published.

#### Dear Mr. President:

I have been following with great interest the course of developments in Viet-Nam, particularly since the conclusion of the conference at Geneva. The implications of the agreement concerning Viet-Nam have caused grave concern regarding the future of a country temporarily divided by an artificial military grouping, weakened by a long and exhausting war and faced with enemies without and by their subversive collaborators within.

Your recent requests for aid to assist in the formidable project of the movement of several hundred thousand loyal Vietnamese citizens away from areas which are passing under a *de facto* rule and political ideology which they abhor, are being fulfilled. I am glad that the United States is able to assist in this humanitarian effort.

We have been exploring ways and means to permit our aid to Viet-Nam to be more effective and to make a greater contribution to the welfare and stability of the Government of Viet-Nam. I am, accordingly, instructing the American ambassador to Viet-Nam to examine with you in your capacity as Chief of Government, how an intelligent program of American aid given directly to your Government can serve to assist Viet-Nam in its present hour of trial, provided that your Government is prepared to give assurances as to the standards of performance it would be able to maintain in the event such aid were supplied.

The purpose of this offer is to assist the Government of Viet-Nam in developing and maintaining a strong, viable state, capable of resisting attempted subversion or aggression through military means. The Government of the United States expects that this aid will be met by performance on the part of the Government of Viet-Nam in undertaking needed reforms. It hopes that such aid, combined with your own continuing efforts, will contribute effectively toward an independent Viet-Nam endowed with a strong government. Such a government would, I hope, be so responsive to the nationalist aspirations of its people, so enlightened in purpose and effective in performance, that it will be respected both at home and abroad and discourage any who might wish to impose a foreign ideology on your people.

Sincerely,

Dwight D. Eisenhower<sup>88</sup>

Mendès-France had promised Dulles that he would give Diem a good try. But after Heath had shown Eisenhower's letter to the French in Saigon before delivering it, Mendès-France, claiming that the letter was a "clear cut violation of Franco-American agreements reached in Washington," made an unsuccessful last-minute attempt to prevent its delivery to Diem. Mendès-France's two-faced policy was obviously entirely incompatible with the Minute of Understanding in terms of relations with the DRV government (even allowing for the condition attached at the end of the second paragraph of that minute) and in terms of efforts to urge all factions to cooperate with Diem's government. Diem, obviously pleased by the American pledge of support, expressed gratitude to Heath. When he published the letter in the Saigon press, however, he toned down "expects" in the final paragraph to "wishes." State's Kenneth T. Young drafted a telegram to the Paris embassy that rebutted Mendès-France's arguments point by point.

To the Vietnamese on both sides these maneuvers were just another example of the contradictions inherent in the French treatment of their country. The leaders of the DRV, with their Marxist-Leninist dogma, welcomed these contradictions, which in their eyes confirmed the correctness of the party's strategy in dealing with the imperialists. The holding of the putative 1956 elections had become a central objective of the DRV government to erase the blemish of having partitioned Vietnam, and in this the DRV's French policy was the cornerstone. In the pursuit of this objective, the DRV government, adroitly playing on the interest of the French in retaining their economic and cultural holdings in North Vietnam, which were hostage to the goodwill of the DRV, succeeded in making its defeated adversary a covert ally, and this persisted even after the French failed to deliver the South in the non-elections. (In the same manner, after 1975, Hanoi encouraged American businesses to pressure Washington to give it diplomatic recognition.)

Within weeks of the Geneva conference, Dulles had taken the initiative to form an alliance, the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO), intended to prepare for the eventuality mentioned by Mendès-France to Dillon on July 11 that the Communists might resume the war, in which case the Geneva settlement might not be worth the paper it was written on. The treaty itself was a very weak instrument, obligating the member states to only consult with one another in the event of aggression against one of them or against the so-called protocol states, Cambodia, Laos, and South Vietnam. It was an instrument poorly designed for helping these governments deal with the threat of internal subversion, and in fact it became a liability to them in their efforts to cultivate diplomatic relations with other Asian states such as India. After Geneva, Mendès-France's two-faced policy made SEATO a moot question, in any case, and American diplomats received the impression that the French viewed SEATO as irrelevant to the problems of Indochina. 93 On the rare occasion that the Americans suggested SEATO intervention in Indochina, they met with rejection by the French, as in the crisis in Laos in 1961, when de Gaulle wrote to President Kennedy.94

For the non-Communist Vietnamese nationalists the immediate post-war problem, in any case, was not SEATO but how to extricate themselves from the embrace of their former French masters. It seemed that if they were somehow able to wipe away the French presence overnight they would be able, notwith-standing many material difficulties, to arrive at some sort of accommodation among patriots who had fought a long and hard war, to wipe the slate clean, as it were. The fact that in the final months before the cease-fire there had been little fighting in southern Vietnam between the forces of the State of Vietnam and the DRV seemed to show that this might not be complete fantasy. The problem was getting rid of the French once and for all.

### AN ORDERLY EXIT

In accordance with the schedule in Article 15 of the armistice agreement, the French were to evacuate Hanoi within 80 days and Haiphong within 300 days. We have eyewitness accounts of these evacuations. By the last days of Septem-

ber, Hanoi began to take on a deserted look as its Vietnamese inhabitants returned to their villages or packed up their belongings and headed south. Many houses and buildings were boarded up. Vehicles became scarce because gasoline was in short supply, and those few remaining formed lines at gasoline pumps. Soon French armored cars on patrol and the white sedans of the ICC, whose members had installed themselves in the city's three main hotels, were the only moving vehicles. Bicycles gradually took over the streets as the main form of transportation. Pictures of Malenkov and Mao were put up on Hanoi walls flanking those of Ho welcoming the Viet Minh. It is difficult to imagine workers of the Diem government putting up pictures of President Eisenhower alongside those of Diem in Saigon, although Eisenhower was probably known to more Vietnamese than Malenkov.

It was the rainy season as the day for turnover approached. The French Expeditionary Corps paraded for the last time in Hanoi as General Cogny took the salute; the sound of martial music echoed through the empty streets. October 9 dawned cold and damp. Offices, private villas, apartment buildings, cafés, and restaurants were closed and shuttered. Gusts of wind rippled street puddles. At midmorning the unaccustomed silence of the city's center was broken by a distant hum from the city's edge. This hum increased in volume. Then the identifiable sounds of clapping and bursts of song were carried on the shifting wind. The soft shuffling of hundreds of feet in cheap tennis shoes heralded the appearance of the first soldiers of the People's Army, marching in two files, one on each side of the street. They wore drab uniforms and cloth-covered pith helmets fitted with camouflage nets. Loaded down with weapons and equipment, the soldiers of the 102nd Regiment of the 308th Division were entering a city totally unknown to most of them.

A sudden, isolated flash of red at the far end of the street soon became a general blossoming of color. Shutters were raised and windows flung open as the vanguard of the troops passed beneath, and the red flag with the yellow star appeared. For weeks the neighborhood liberation committees had been secretly producing the flags. Propaganda teams dropped out of the line of march to lead the onlookers in shouts and songs. One such team was made up largely of women, their black, shoulder-length hair hanging straight under their helmets, the shortest one carrying a guitar.<sup>97</sup>

The turnover was orderly and efficient with no incidents, the consulate reported. Red flags were hoisted rapidly over government buildings. A simple ceremony under the marquee of the Hotel Metropole marked the entrance of the People's Army into the governor's palace. By noon, guard details had been posted at all government buildings. The troops seemed confident and well disciplined, and they presented an excellent appearance. The majority were very young. Onsul Thomas J. Corcoran had been ordered to keep the consulate open as long as feasible.

The next day, a holiday atmosphere prevailed as the city assumed a more normal appearance for a Sunday. Large crowds thronged the streets and there were numerous organized processions and demonstrations of schoolchildren and other groups. The city was bedecked with flags. The general impression was one of enthusiastic popular participation plus a high degree of organization and direction. 99 An elaborate parade marked the entry of fresh troop units to cheering and applauding. Many of the soldiers carried bouquets of flowers. Triumphal arches were put up at major intersections. On the Boulevard Hai Ba Trung not far from the consulate an English-language slogan appeared: "People of Vietnam Unite with People of the World for Peace." Most slogans from Diem's government had been taken down or painted out by afternoon. 100

Mendès-France continued to pursue his two-faced policy, leading American diplomats to warn of a fundamental divergence and its possible consequences.<sup>101</sup> Dulles himself stated to Mendès-France that the American objective was if possible to build indigenous power, authority, and military strength within the formula of national independence, which implied a gradual lessening of the French role and activity. 102 As had been the case with the ethereal discussions about the merits of Tran Van Huu, Nguyên Van Tam, Buu Hoi, and other potential candidates, however, the French were merely taking the Americans on another merrygo-round and really weren't interested in whether Diem was effective or not: he afforded them a convenient pretext for actions or non-actions designed to advance their underlying policy objective. In this vein, Mendès-France continued to mislead Dulles, telling him, for example, when Dulles raised the matter of all-Vietnam elections with him, that the elections should be held by small local units so as to allow some anti-Communist local leaders to be elected rather than having a clear Communist victory through a national slate. 103

The fact that the French preferred to deal with the Americans rather than with the Vietnamese made the latter's problem of disentangling themselves from the vast web the French had wrapped around them for the past century all the more difficult. One of those who correctly gauged the problem was Ambassador Tran Van Chuong in Washington, who argued strongly for a rapid disengagement.104

Influential officials in Mendès-France's entourage, encouraged by the prospect of maintaining French relations with the DRV, were continuing to broach to American officials in Paris the idea that if the United States wished to avoid the 1956 elections, a "more moderate" or possible "left-wing" government in Saigon would be essential. American diplomats debated whether French preference for such a government was dictated by a belief it would influence the DRV to moderate its demands for organizing the elections or whether a rapprochement between North and South would make the question of the elections "largely academic." <sup>105</sup> Beneath such conversations, of course, lay the reality that bringing such a government to power in Saigon required the ouster of Diem, an action that could not remotely be explained to the Vietnamese, both North and South, as anything other than the exercise of French dictates as in the old Cochinchinese autonomous republic.

The Americans found it particularly reprehensible on the part of the French that on several occasions Ely and La Chambre had supped at Diem's table in the Norodom Palace, which the French had finally turned over to the Vietnamese on

September 7, and then had confided to Heath, apparently to cover themselves with their superiors in Paris, that the Diem government was on its last legs and an alternative must be found. The feeling that the slightly unreal and tiresomely repeated arguments about the relative ineffectiveness of Diem's government in confronting its problems were mere cover and concealed a deeper motive on the part of the French prompted Eisenhower to send a prestigious general, J. Lawton Collins, to be his special representative in Vietnam at the beginning of November. 106 Perhaps with Collins's prestige such tactics would cease.

Indeed, a number of important agreements were signed between the governments of the Associated States and the French in the weeks following Collins's arrival in Saigon. One provided for the removal of the Interstate Bank of Issue from the three Associated States, which now established their own national banks for the issuance of their currencies—the piaster for Vietnam, the riel for Cambodia, and the kip for Laos. The National Bank of Vietnam was established by decree of December 3. The French agreed to end the currency activities of the Bank of Indochina. On January 12, Diem's government formally took over the administration of the port of Saigon from the French.

Sainteny's activities in the north offered clearer proof of Mendès-France's two-faced policy than the shadowy plotting and forced concessions in Saigon. After a short trip to Hanoi in September to make contact with the French civilian community, which was sharply reduced from its pre-Geneva figure of 6,500 (by mid-November it was down to 114), Sainteny returned to Hanoi in October as the Viet Minh were taking over, priding himself on arriving ahead of the Soviet and Chinese ambassadors and thus securing for himself the unofficial title of dean of the diplomatic corps. On October 18 he had an extremely cordial meeting with Ho. Ho politely did not refer to the nearly eight years of war that had gone before and declared himself ready to take up the dialogue that had been broken off in 1946. "The DRV seems to be prepared to talk, to negotiate, to reserve for us a very acceptable position, in short, to respect Geneva and to 'play the game,'" Sainteny reported. 107

Although not officially an ambassador, Sainteny was treated as such by the DRV. In order to sign the commercial agreement with the DRV, Sainteny needed some sort of accreditation; this was provided in a brief letter from Mendès-France to President Ho Chi Minh which, while it avoided use of the name DRV, nevertheless accredited Sainteny as "general delegate of the French Government to Your Excellency." The agreement was signed on December 10 with Minister for Economic Affairs Phan Anh. Ho told Sainteny "I am happy that France sends an ambassador here and that you are that ambassador. But tell me, Mr. Sainteny, when do you think that I will be able to send an ambassador to Paris?" When Sainteny left Hanoi, after a lavish reception in his honor attended by Ho and other DRV leaders and the French business community, *Nhan Dan* gave public expression to the DRV's views. In an editorial titled "Welcome to the New Progress in Reestablishment of Relations between Our Country and France," it cited Mendès-France's letter to Ho, interpreted the economic agreement as proof of equal and friendly relations, and finally declared that the DRV needed to have its

official delegate to the French government. 110 Sainteny's efforts to reassure Collins in Saigon did nothing to dispel American distrust. 111

The DRV lost little time in exploiting for propaganda purposes the divergence between France and the United States over their policies in South Vietnam. The December 19 "anniversary of national resistance" and the December 22 anniversary of the founding of the people's army afforded the occasion for speeches and protests against "American imperialism." Ho made an appeal to his people calling for continuation of the struggle in peacetime now that the war was over. The protests had the participation of schoolteachers, students, construction workers, artisans, shopkeepers, bonzes, and intellectuals. Hanoi assumed a festive air, with a flourishing of DRV flags, banderoles bearing anti-American slogans, new triumphal arches, and the arrival of thousands of peasants from the countryside. The celebrations culminated in a giant anti-American rally attended by up to a quarter of a million people in Hanoi on January 1, 1955. 113

Even after the differences between the French and the Americans in Saigon over aid to Diem's government had been patched up, sensational stories in the French press continued to fan the anti-Diem flames. Lucien Bodard of France-Soir had been in the thick of the General Hinh affair, having reported that an innocent and aggrieved Hinh had been dismissed by Diem in a "coup d'état." The Saigon telegraph office had held up Bodard's cable and notified the interior ministry, which in turn requested Diem's permission to censor the story. Diem refused in view of his promise to end all censorship of political articles.<sup>114</sup> Bodard's wild exaggerations about the situation in South Vietnam led the State Department's Bureau of Far Eastern Affairs to warn of great damage being done to Diem's prestige and American policy. 115 The State Department need not have worried, however. The press stories only made Diem more determined to persist in his course. He remained confident, as he had been in October in facing down the threats of General Hinh. Even establishment newspapers such as Le Monde published officially inspired stories that claimed to see a plot by American intelligence and military agencies to evict the French from their positions in South Vietnam. A perverse effect of these press stories was to make it appear that Diem was an American puppet, which was far from being the case. (Some of the same colonialist-minded journalists still hankering for the past glories of France's presence in Indochina would later create the legend of the spontaneous generation of the NLF as an anti-Diem organization.)

# DIEM FINDS A FEW FRIENDS AND FACES DOWN THE BINH XUYEN

Having rid himself finally of General Hinh, whose compliant obstructionism Mendès-France had used in an unsuccessful attempt in October to persuade the Americans that Diem had failed to form a viable government and therefore should be replaced, Diem sought friends among the Americans in Saigon. He cannot be said to have formed close friendships with foreigners, but with a handful of Americans he came to a relationship of mutual trust. He had from the start a good friend in General O'Daniel. But perhaps the most important

friend in the long run would be Colonel Edward Geary Lansdale, a CIA operative. In Lansdale, Diem found someone who knew Asia and who he could call in and talk freely with at the end of a tiring day of grappling with his problems. He found that Lansdale had much useful advice to offer. Much has been made of the friendship between Lansdale and Diem by writers, especially French, with an axe to grind. Lansdale is sometimes seen, erroneously, as the antecedent for Alden Pyle in Graham Greene's novel *The Quiet American*, which is another myth created by journalists; Lansdale with his numerous contacts among the Vietnamese knew about the proponents of a "third force," but was too intelligent to get himself mixed up with schemes against Diem. He and O'Daniel stuck by Diem to the end. (In Lansdale's train, on July 1, another American, Lucien Conein, the ex-OSS operative from the 1945 mission to Hanoi, arrived in Saigon. He, too, was now working for the CIA.)

Another good friend was Wesley R. Fishel, a political scientist he had met in Japan in 1950. With Fishel, Diem talked freely about his family as he did with no other foreigner, and Fishel's entrée to the palace made him the envy of embassy officials. As a private citizen, however, Fishel had an ulterior motive in cultivating Diem's friendship by 1954; nevertheless, their friendship lasted another seven years. In Washington, Diem felt he could count on Senator Mike Mansfield, a member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, whom he met on the senator's second trip to Indochina in 1954.

Things began to look up after February 5, 1955, when Mendès-France lost the confidence of his National Assembly and resigned. Within days, Faure, who was to become the new prime minister, sent a letter addressed to Dulles in which he assured him that the previous difficulties that had arisen over training of the Vietnamese national army had been rapidly overcome and that "there will no longer remain in fact any divergence of views between us." As a result of this newfound cooperation, a letter from Ely was delivered to Diem on February 11 saying that all units of the Vietnamese armed forces would be staffed and commanded by Vietnamese officers on July 1. A letter from Ely to Collins on the same date said that all American and French training and advisory personnel assigned or attached to the Vietnamese armed forces would be under the direction of the chief of MAAG. The President Eisenhower wrote to Bao Dai on February 19 telling him that in Collins's opinion the actions of Diem and his government afforded Vietnam a good chance of remaining free.

Badly misjudging the degree of American support for the legal and constitutional government, at a press conference on March 21 the main leaders of the sects and the Binh Xuyen issued a declaration in the name of a presidium of the United Front of Nationalist Forces and announced they had sent a motion to Diem the previous day calling upon him to reorganize his cabinet and take other steps. If he did not do so within five days, the declaration said, the dissident leaders would appeal to the people for a decision. The signers of the declaration were Cao Dai "Pope" Tac; Hoa Hao Generals Lam Thanh Nguyên, Le Quang Vinh (also known as Ba Cut), and Tran Van Soai; and Le Van Vien of the Binh Xuyen, who was obviously the principal instigator. Cao Dai Generals Nguyên

Thanh Phuong and Trinh Minh Thé were also included in the list of signatories, although they expressed reservations about acting against Diem. The American Embassy was receiving reports that various of these leaders were being furnished arms and funds by the French.<sup>118</sup>

The sects had remained on the margins of Bao Dai's efforts to create a Vietnamese national identity through service in the cause of independence. After Geneva the various sect factions did not need much encouragement from the French to oppose Diem; they wanted to continue the enjoyment of the same autonomy they had enjoyed during the war and felt threatened with the loss of their privileges, especially by reports of Diem's plans for land reform. Diem was attuned to the popular following enjoyed by the Cao Dai and had himself dedicated the new basilica at the Holy See at Tay Ninh. 119 He had contempt, however, for venality of the sect leaders and their lack of political astuteness. He had already proven their susceptibility to bribery, and in his efforts to avoid armed confrontations he had himself offered them subsidies, supposedly to pay their troops, but in actual fact to line their pockets. Although the sects were well armed, he was sure they would be no match for the national army. He also was suspicious of their history of switching sides and of their readiness to strike up alliances of convenience with the Communists.

The immediate threat to be faced, however, were the Binh Xuyen, who, unlike the sects, were present in Saigon itself. In a move as surprising as it was horrific, these gangsters in April 1954 bought for themselves the control of the Saigon-Cholon police and Sûreté by paying Bao Dai a reported 40 million piasters from their business proceeds. 120 Vien's military counselor, Lai Van Sang, was named director of the Sûreté, and his brother Lai Huu Tai was nominated to be director of the Saigon-Cholon police. Ely's subsequent action in preventing Diem from engaging the national army in a showdown with the Binh Xuyen at the end of March, the "strong French objections" voiced by the French to Collins about Diem's plans to remove Sang forcibly, 121 and the fact that the French at the critical moment in April interposed themselves between American diplomats and Bao Dai to prevent the former from getting him to dismiss Sang<sup>122</sup> all suggest a French interest in this monetary arrangement between the Binh Xuyen and Bao Dai. Bao Dai had a notorious need for money for the upkeep of his establishment, and some secret arrangement providing for this need made by the French on the eve of the Geneva conference, when they had need of his cooperation, is not altogether implausible. Vien took part in all the French-encouraged maneuvering against Diem in 1954. 123

Diem confided to Fishel, for whom the Binh Xuyen's control of the police and Sûreté represented a serious obstacle to Fishel's plans to engage his university, Michigan State University, in a program of training the police and Sûreté in basic law enforcement methods, 124 that the Binh Xuyen's largest source of revenue, the gambling monopoly, would not be renewed when it expired on January 15.125 Vien, in retaliation, began arming Binh Xuyen followers and fortifying strongholds in Saigon-Cholon. The French were also concerned by the threat of "direct action" by 14,000 Vietnamese civilians who had been on strike against the French army for the past six weeks and whose claims were in large measure justified; the American Embassy agreed to support a request by the French to Paris for funds to settle the dispute. To meet the open challenge of Vien and his force of 5,000, which was well armed with light weapons, Diem announced on March 1 that three battalions of Nung minority soldiers from Tonkin had been brought into Saigon. Two weeks later, the government ordered two battalions of paratroopers, also originally from Tonkin, under their commander Lieutenant Colonel Do Cao Tri into the capital.

At the end of March in Saigon the flowering junipers and tulip trees lining the streets lose their petals and the colorful flowers that mark the celebration of Tet—the bong-mai blossoms, the chrysanthemums called bong-cuc, the van-tho Buddha flowers, mong-ca rooster combs, and dahlias—wither under the bright blue sky and hot sun preceding the onset of the rains. On March 27, Diem ordered the paratroopers to occupy the police headquarters on Boulevard Galliéni, which had been fortified by the Binh Xuyen. General Marcel Carpentier of the French Expeditionary Corps (FEC) promised Colonel Tri 200 million francs if he would ignore the order; Tri put Carpentier off by telling him he had momentarily lost contact with his battalion commanders. 127 The Binh Xuyen retreated from the police headquarters before the paratroopers, but not the Sûreté building, which Diem ordered Tri to attack the following day. Before the attack began, Ely intervened and obtained Diem's reluctant agreement to call it off.<sup>128</sup> Nevertheless, in a clash between Binh Xuyen and the army on the night of March 29 casualties were suffered by both sides. In a conversation with Ely at the Norodom Palace on March 30, Diem complained that Ely was treating the government and the Binh Xuyen as equals by proposing a plan to separate the opposing sides and that Ely's proposal did not include neutralizing the Binh Xuyen headquarters at the Y Bridge on the southern outskirts of Cholon, from which attacks could be launched on the city at any time. 129 Diem's protest in this regard received whole-hearted support from Dulles. 130

Diem's reliance on his army involved a large measure of good faith. Its leadership was by no means a sure source of support, as Hinh's defiance had proved. Although most of its officer corps thought it prudent to hide their sympathies in light of what had happened to Hinh, they were French educated, French appointed, and, like their former chief, more French than Vietnamese in culture and habits. These officers included Colonels Duong Van Minh, commander of the Saigon-Cholon garrison; Tran Van Don, the chief of staff; and Le Van Kim, assistant to the chief of staff. The fathers of many of these officers were landowners, high officials, or wealthy members of the Saigon bourgeoisie. Also, they were now operating in an environment where Americans ran the training and organization, and so a certain anti-French affectation on their part became the order of the day. But Diem trusted the ordinary soldiers to fight the Binh Xuyen.

A particular source of worry for Diem were the actions of the FEC, which was still present in Saigon in large numbers (toward the upkeep of which the United States was contributing \$100 million a year). <sup>131</sup> The French Expeditionary Corps had declared certain zones of the city defense zones where it had

exclusive responsibility and which the national army was prohibited from entering. Three of the Binh Xuyen's outposts were located within these defense zones. Also, the French still controlled supplies of ammunition and gasoline to the national army, which they were capable of withholding, which they did. Would the FEC interpose itself between the army and the sects, using as a pretext Ely's declaration that the FEC would act to preserve law and order?

A French-imposed cease-fire went into effect, momentarily putting a stop to Diem's advance. Collins strongly urged Diem not to resume the attack. <sup>133</sup> At that point, things looked their grimmest for Diem. The sect representatives whom he had persuaded to join his cabinet all resigned. His foreign minister, Tran Van Do, also deserted him temporarily. He was without a defense minister, as Ho Thong Minh had resigned. Nguyên Van Thoai also resigned. Outside Saigon, the countryside remained controlled by the sects or by the cadres of the Viet Minh left on the spot. The sects, with help from the French, had expanded their areas of control into areas evacuated by the Viet Minh. Army units loyal to Diem were needed in Saigon, and Diem's efforts to move additional troops from Trung Bo into Saigon were frustrated by the French.

# A French-American Coup Narrowly Averted

Collins was displaying a disturbing willingness to accept Ely's advice to him as the basis of his recommendations to Eisenhower, and Buttinger predicted as early as January 1955 that this would result in the failure of Collins's mission. <sup>134</sup> With the crisis with the Binh Xuyen momentarily suspended but not yet resolved, Ely had another long conversation in private with Collins on the morning of April 7. Ely had reflected on the situation, he told Collins, and then proceeded to list the familiar litany of Diem's faults and failings, which he and La Chambre had put to the courtly and unbudging Heath over dinner on the day Heath had delivered President Eisenhower's letter to Diem. Ely importuned Collins to "demonstrate to our governments it is impossible to continue [any] longer on [the] present course and our governments must now ask Bao Dai to remove Diem and name a successor."

Collins returned to the embassy and that evening sent out a telegram addressed personally to Dulles, the first of a series of telegrams that must rank as among the most extraordinary lapses of judgment and common sense by an envoy in American diplomatic history. Taking Ely's verdict on Diem and his problems at face value, Collins reported that he, too, had decided Diem had to go. 136

I must say now that my judgment is that Diem does not have the capacity to achieve the necessary unity of purpose and action from his people which is essential to prevent this country from falling under Communist control. I say this with great regret, but with firm conviction.

As I have often pointed out, he [Diem] pays more attention to the advice of his brothers Luyen and Nhu than he does to General Ely or  ${\rm me.}^{137}$ 

The last is undoubtedly a true statement, but it may be due to the fact that Collins spent more of his time in Saigon with Ely than with Diem. In any event,

his telegram of April 7 met with skepticism in Washington not only from Dulles but also from Mansfield, whose reaction was reported in a conversation with Young of the State Department:

- 1. The U.S. should stick to its guns in continuing to support Diem. He is the truly nationalist leader in Free Viet-Nam who has any chance of saving Free Viet-Nam. That chance is small, much less than the 50/50 figure that General Collins was giving when he was here in Washington. But the importance of Southeast Asia is so high and our stake is so great that we must take even that chance.
- 2. Ngô Dinh Diem and Ho Chi Minh are the only two national leaders in Viet-Nam. To eliminate Diem will leave the field to Ho. Diem has a lot of support in Central Viet-Nam and even in the southern part. We cannot ignore over a half million refugees who probably know of and support Diem.
- 3. Dropping Diem now would probably lead to chaos and disintegration. The Binh Xuyen would clearly be on top if we drop Diem. The French are not to be trusted in any event. The Cao Dai and the Hoa Hao are self-interested. Bay Vien and his gang are totally unreliable. The issue with them has to be met head on sooner or later. Diem has demonstrated that he understands this problem and will meet it. The French have stopped him. Even the second truce is probably undesirable. The government should be free to take care of the Binh Xuyen challenge or go down—this government or any government would face the same problem. <sup>138</sup>

In answer to the State Department's numerous questions and a request that he offer some recommendations on establishing a new government and resolving the problem of the dissidents, Collins sent back a lengthy telegram on the evening of April 9.<sup>139</sup> In this reply, Collins became engaged in what can only be described as plotting in collusion with the French, as Diem had no inkling yet of what was afoot. Collins showed great concern for patching up French-U.S. cooperation in Vietnam. He demonstrated that he was not reluctant to have the French take the lead in a plan for replacing Diem that he outlines in general terms.

I believe it is important to place on [the] French the onus and responsibility of designating Diem's successor. [The] French are all too ready to place [the] onus [of] Diem's lack of success on [the] U.S. It would be preferable therefore for the head of new government to be proposed by [the] French and concurred in by the U.S. Ely indicated he would favor Quat, Do or perhaps ex-Defense Minister Minh. He stipulated as [a] primary requisite that any new government must avoid [the] taint of colonialism.

He felt the French would raise no objections to the plan, presumably on the basis of his conversations with Ely, who after all had suggested that the two men ask their governments to take the necessary steps to replace the prime minister. They should persuade Diem to resign of his own free will, or, failing

that, they should persuade Bao Dai to dismiss Diem and "consent" to a nominee agreed on by the French and the Americans. It is worthy of note that implementation of this scheme would have meant that if Bao Dai had not acted in 1954 under American pressure to appoint Diem as prime minister, he would have been acting in 1955 under American pressure to dismiss him.

But in this scheme the French and American role would not end with the French and Americans telling Bao Dai who to nominate. The nominee, having accepted the task of forming a government, would return at once to Saigon for consultations, first of all with Ely and Collins to become informed about the nature of the programs that France and the United States could support. Armed with this knowledge, he could then proceed with conversations with prospective ministers, representatives of various political parties, and leaders of the sects. This is the only acknowledgement in this extraordinary telegram of the existence of Vietnamese political parties or their constituents.

And what of Diem in this plan? Collins admitted that handling Diem presented Ely and himself with a tricky problem because Diem, as stubborn as he was, might not only resist resigning or being dismissed, but, more damagingly, might compile a white paper on his relations with the French and the Americans of the type that Hoang Co Binh had prepared in July on the French withdrawal from the southern Red River Delta. In view of this danger, Collins wrote, under no circumstances should Diem be told of the plan before Bao Dai's "consent" had been obtained; to inform Diem could give him material for his white paper. Unquestionably, Collins continued, as soon as Diem received such notification, he would call on Collins to find out what information he had and perhaps to ask for advice. Collins proposed replying that he had been notified by his government of Bao Dai's decision and seeking to persuade Diem to remain in office until his successor could take over.

Aside from Collins's acceptance of lying to the head of the government to which he had been accredited, the most amazing part of his telegram concerns the Binh Xuyen. The Binh Xuyen were still the immediate problem, and Collins may have been worried by the fact that on April 7 he had not been able to get anything firmer from Ely on how to deal with this immediate problem than a vague suggestion that if the government were changed control over the police "should be changed within [the] overall new framework." Ely, falling back on his usual argument about preserving law and order, flatly refused to support any move to divest the Binh Xuyen of their control of the police so long as Diem remained prime minister. This effectively eliminated the first option proposed by Collins, namely to have Diem sign the ordinance transferring control of the police to the government before he resigned. The second option was to offer Bay Vien various inducements to give up control of the police voluntarily to the new government. Collins suggested that he might be willing to settle for some economic assistance from the government in his commercial ventures. Here Collins's judgment of the Binh Xuyen, in failing to see the political rewards they would stand to reap from his scheme, was as wide of the mark as was his judgment of the character of Diem.

On receiving this extraordinary telegram, Dulles immediately discussed it with President Eisenhower. He cabled back, in a telegram drafted by himself, "We feel that what has happened does not reveal anything new about Diem but rather a basic and dangerous misunderstanding as between France and the U.S."<sup>140</sup> For Dulles and Eisenhower, the plan smacked too much of the operation of "colonial interests," which would do no good to the image of the United States in Asia. Dulles also spoke of Mansfield's opposition to the plan. Collins was advised not take any action as long as no commitment had been received from the French about transfer of police control in Saigon. <sup>141</sup> The French, in an *aide-mémoire* handed to the embassy in Paris on April 17, spelled out their version of the plan, which, allowing for a few embellishments, was almost identical to Collins's, not surprisingly. <sup>142</sup>

Meanwhile, Bao Dai continued to play a cautious game between the Americans and the French. He responded to Eisenhower's letter of February 19 by expressing gratitude for past American support for his government and for assurances it would continue in future. Carefully choosing his words, Bao Dai wrote that to safeguard the unity of his people he had instructed them that their first duty was to obey their government and that he had asked Diem to devote all his efforts to the reconciliation of sincere patriots. <sup>143</sup> While studiously avoiding taking a stand personally between the Americans and the French, he sent his chief of cabinet, Nguyên De, to the American Embassy in Paris to indict Diem's actions and float a suggestion for a "supreme council" to replace him. <sup>144</sup> Besides putting pressure on Bao Dai, the French also began leaking stories to the American press that the United States had agreed to a French request to seek a replacement for Diem and that Ely and Collins were looking for a man able to command greater popular support. <sup>145</sup>

Before returning to Washington, where Dulles had summoned him for consultations, Collins said in a meeting with Diem on April 19 that suggested a farewell call that in his opinion Bao Dai would remove him if he continued as at present and expressed regret that he, Collins, had not been able to do more for him and his country. 146 Diem and his American friend Lansdale were about the only two persons concerned at that point who had not been officially informed of the Ely-Collins plan and had to get their information from the newspapers and roundabout sources. As described in his memoirs, Lansdale pointed out to Collins that he was seeing Diem almost every day and was bound to be asked if the United States would support him as head of government should trouble arise. Collins's reply puzzled Lansdale. He said flatly that Lansdale should tell Diem that the United States would support him. But then he added a strange remark. He said Lansdale might hear rumors that the United States would not support Diem, but he could be assured that the United States would continue to support Diem and should so inform him. 147

On April 23 Diem made an important radio broadcast. He attributed the restraint of his government in spite of provocations to his wish to allow the transgressors to repent and to the government's desire to avoid bloodshed and the destruction of property. He called on the sect leaders to meet with him and

discuss their problems, and he hinted that they might receive financial compensation. He strongly hinted that it was the French who were responsible for current misunderstandings and preventing the sect leaders from negotiating with him. Having appealed to his people for support, on the following day Diem dismissed Lai Van Sang at long last, after notifying Bao Dai that he had no other choice, and replaced him with Colonel Nguyên Ngoc Le, a Catholic on whose loyalty he could count. All officials and agents of the police and Sûreté were invited to present themselves at headquarters by 2:30 P.M. on April 28 under penalty of dismissal and legal action. The government also announced that henceforth the Binh Xuyen troops would be forbidden to circulate in Saigon-Cholon, which had been one of their most provocative practices. Diem also sent his brother Luyen to Cannes to ask for Bao Dai's understanding, but Bao Dai made excuses not to receive him immediately. 150

Luyen also thought it wise to send his chief of cabinet, Vo Lang, to Washington to firm up support. There was no need; influential figures such as Mansfield had already made up their minds and stood firm in spite of lobbying from the French Embassy in Washington. <sup>151</sup> Thus it is not correct to say, as Chaffard does on the dubious authority of Vo Lang's American interpreter, that Vo Lang changed minds at a crucial moment. <sup>152</sup> Fishel was helpful, however, in assuring a hearing for Luyen's emissary. <sup>153</sup> Vo Lang told Fishel that Bao Dai had asked him for 30 million piasters and was still seeking payment of 50 million piasters that he said Diem had promised him the previous November. <sup>154</sup>

At noon on April 28, the fateful day as it turned out, Diem summoned Lansdale to the palace urgently. On the second-story porch of the palace's eastern portico, Diem told the American he had received a report from Washington that Collins had obtained Eisenhower's approval for a change in American policy toward Vietnam. Diem was to be "dumped" in favor of a coalition government. Diem, looking intently at Lansdale, asked if the report was true. Lansdale said firmly that he did not believe it but offered to check on it. But because of the time difference this would require several hours. 155

Collins's consultations in Washington added little new to the situation other than to raise more doubts about the soundness of the Ely-Collins plan to replace Diem. Nothing anyone said could shake Collins's determination to see Diem go. He had had lunch with Eisenhower the day after his arrival in Washington and made his case to the President "in considerable detail." When Eisenhower asked Collins if he ascribed the deterioration in the stability of the Diem regime to undermining by the French, Collins replied no. To this, Eisenhower said he understood the facts to be otherwise and that the undermining of Diem by the French had been a material and substantial contributing cause to the present plight of the government. Collins replied that he felt the president had received inadequate and inaccurate intelligence. Eisenhower admitted to being somewhat confused by the whole thing. "It is a strange and it is almost an inexplicable situation, at least from our viewpoint," he commented at a press conference. Collins's first meeting with Dulles was delayed by the latter's weekend of duck hunting in Ontario, but there was no mistaking where the secretary

stood. "We would support Diem until and unless genuinely Vietnamese elements turned up with another acceptable solution." Having drafted and sent off two "long and complicated" telegrams to Saigon and Paris, whose carefully worded formulations were approved by all concerned, the conferees were then obliged to put out a stop order holding up action on them indefinitely. Events in Saigon had overtaken them while they were still trying to find a suitable replacement for Diem.

Around noon on April 28 a truckload of army soldiers passing a building held by the Binh Xuyen on Boulevard Galliéni (renamed Tran Hung Dao) received fire, 159 and the army quickly moved four battalions of paratroopers and an armored unit against other Binh Xuyen strongholds in the city. At 1:15 P.M., as Lansdale was pulling into the driveway of his house after his meeting with Diem on the palace portico, the Binh Xuyen fired four mortar shells onto the palace grounds. In the ensuing exchanges of gunfire, a large area of shacks near the Binh Xuyen headquarters was set afire, making an estimated 20,000 people homeless and filling the bright sky with dark smoke. General O'Daniel added his touch to the battle by leaning from his sedan and cheering the army troops on—"Give 'em hell, boys, give 'em hell!" They cheered back. 160 In the face of the determined action of Tri's paratroopers, the Binh Xuyen resistance collapsed, as Diem had predicted it would, and their last defeated units retired from Cholon before dawn on April 30. They had apparently counted on the French to save them; Ely remonstrated with Diem on the telephone (he was no longer welcome at the Independence Palace), but took no action other than staging a show of force of the French Expeditionary Corps in Saigon.

If Lansdale's account is to be believed, Collins had lied to one of the members of his country team, and as a consequence Lansdale had misinformed Diem. Diem thus entered the showdown with the Binh Xuyen facing the hostility of the French and not knowing whether he could expect support from the United States. Lansdale's version seems plausible because he and Collins were not on the same wavelength. Lansdale was a populist who cared little for protocol and arrived at a reception at Gia Long (the former La Grandière) Palace given by Prime Minister Buu Loc in a cyclo-pousse, scandalizing his American mission colleagues. Collins, on the other hand, was an elitist and a stickler for protocol who ran the embassy like a military headquarters. With his numerous Vietnamese contacts all over town, Lansdale contrasted with Collins, who seems to have got most of his information from Ely. At the height of the fighting, Lansdale one morning found a crowd of ordinary Vietnamese, neighborhood officials, civil servants, and cyclo-pousse drivers for the most part, camped outside his house; they said they had been alarmed by leaflets and broadcasts on the Binh Xuyen radio placing a price on Lansdale's head and were there to protect him from harm. The Binh Xuyen had already tried to set a trap for Lucien Conein.<sup>161</sup> Incidents such as this may have introduced a measure of jealousy between Lansdale and Collins, which was not diminished by Lansdale's reporting to Washington at the height of the crisis, which contrasted sharply with the picture of an ineffective Diem that Collins had painted. 162

Bao Dai's attempts to intervene at the last minute ended in failure. His telegrams could not save Sang. Diem also disregarded Bao Dai's telegram summoning him and chief of staff General Ty to Cannes with the obvious intention of dismissing them. Diem replied that the situation demanded his presence in Saigon. Bao Dai then tried to send General Hinh back to Saigon, where events were unfolding rapidly. On the afternoon of April 30 a gathering of some 200 people at the Saigon city hall constituted itself as a "General Assembly of democratic and revolutionary forces of the nation." After the symbolic act of tossing Bao Dai's picture out the window, the meeting decided that Bao Dai had to abdicate and that a new government be formed under Diem. The task of the new government was to restore order, to obtain the early departure of the French Expeditionary Corps, and to prepare elections for a national assembly. The meeting concluded with election of a 33-member Revolutionary Committee, which instantly went to the palace to submit the demands of the General Assembly to Diem. All of this was thought to have been prearranged by the sponsors of the meeting and possibly by Nhu.

When the Revolutionary Committee arrived at the palace Diem was in conference with Generals Le Van Ty and Nguyên Van Vy. Vy had just issued a statement announcing that he had assumed command of the army on orders of Bao Dai. The appearance of the Revolutionary Committee accompanied by armed followers of Generals Thé and Phuong put an end to Diem's conference. Vy was prevailed upon to read a prepared statement repudiating Bao Dai and supporting the Revolutionary Committee's demands. Vy and Ty were allowed to leave. The next day Vy made one final try to carry off his coup. Ty, however, went to the palace in company with Colonels Minh and Don, and this show of solidarity was sufficient to induce Vy to flee to Dalat. 163

Bao Dai was at a disadvantage in dealing with his prime minister in that he suspected, perhaps correctly, that Diem wished to martyrize himself. Diem enjoyed the thought that his life was in danger and risked assassination in trying to establish his rule by force "with the support of no one but his own family and the U.S.," Bao Dai said. <sup>164</sup> In the end, all Bao Dai did was convoke a meeting of leading personalities for consultation.

During the next few days the Binh Xuyen were again defeated outside the city by the army and Cao Dai units under General Thé and finally driven into the marshes of the Rung Sat south of Saigon. None of the other signatories of the United Front of Nationalist Forces had come to their help. Unfortunately, General Thé was shot and killed in the last phase of these operations at a key bridge on the southern outskirts. He received a sniper's bullet behind the ear, possibly from a French sniper, as indeed seemed plausible as Thé had been behind the killing of General Chanson. Thé's death was grieved by Diem. He was given a state funeral in Tay Ninh organized by Colonel Don and attended by Nhu.

Diem had found the decisive commander he needed in Colonel Tri of the paratroopers. Colonel Minh, on the other hand, proved to be indecisive when it came to combat. According to Ely, Minh had ordered his troops to remain on the defensive on April 28, and Diem had had to go over his head and order them into action. <sup>167</sup> Minh was reported on April 30 as being reluctant to continue with the use of force, while Colonel Don was of a somewhat firmer view. <sup>168</sup> Similarly, after the Binh Xuyen had been driven out of Saigon-Cholon, Minh told Ely of his doubts that the army could wage a successful campaign against them in the open countryside and that he had no confidence in certain battalions and preferred to put the least trustworthy in the line and away from Saigon. <sup>169</sup> Thus, it is incorrect to say, as Buttinger does, that Minh and Don had saved Diem. <sup>170</sup> In fact, their main assistance to Diem was their appearance at the palace on May 1 and their message to Bao Dai, using cautious words, that they would follow only a regime chosen "by the will of the people." Nevertheless, Diem promoted Minh to the rank of full colonel and Don to that of brigadier general after they had renounced their French citizenship.

Thus, the time of plotting passed. The American Embassy, in Collins's absence, distinguished itself by the diplomacy of Randolph A. Kidder, the chargé d'affaires, who could see right through Ely and his coterie and was not having any more of Ely's protestations of keeping law and order. "Ely is personally and emotionally involved and can see only one side of the picture," Kidder reported.<sup>171</sup> In a particularly sharp confrontation with Kidder, Ely exploded.

So, when Ely asked me whether the U.S. would support the French in removing Diem [Kidder later wrote] all that I knew for certain was that further instructions from Washington would be following. Obviously they were having second thoughts there but what these were I had no idea. I was left no choice but to make up my own mind what our policy was as I would be damned if I was going to say I didn't know. . . . I told Ely "No." He was flabbergasted, being fully aware of Collins' decision to urge Washington to drop Diem and believed that was to be our course of action. "How do you know that?" he asked me. My reply, "General I know American foreign policy." <sup>172</sup>

In this no-nonsense attitude, Kidder was in tune with the sentiments of the officers of his embassy.<sup>173</sup> Indeed, the embassy under Kidder's direction set the policy of supporting Diem. Kidder received commendation for his "cool and capable handling of delicate situation under tense and critical conditions" and for his "clear and timely reporting of fast-moving events."<sup>174</sup>

Diem and the army had defeated the Binh Xuyen in the streets of Saigon-Cholon, with some help from the Americans, but Diem had also received support in Washington. A major influence in getting the plotting stopped had been Mansfield with his categorical and unconditional support of Diem and his threat to cut off aid if Diem were replaced; he had prepared a speech for delivery on the Senate floor on May 2 but decided to issue it as a statement on April 29. <sup>175</sup> A grateful Diem sent Mansfield a warm letter: "If I am permitted to quote Confucius, the sage said: 'Only in winter do we know which trees are evergreen, as luxuriant as always'; not only have you been the stark fighter for democracy and human rights but also the true friend of the Vietnamese people." <sup>176</sup>

Senator Hubert Humphrey and the House Foreign Affairs Committee were also supportive of Diem.177

It deserves to be noted, considering subsequent French behavior, that the placing in abeyance of the Ely-Collins plan for the replacement of Diem was not due to any change in French policy with respect to Vietnam. The plan fell through, and with it the expectations of its backers, simply because of the march of events. From his long dealings with the French over Vietnamese independence, Dulles had the clearest view of anyone on the American side of what was needed from the French. At least the episode had placed the spotlight on Franco-American relations in Vietnam. In a telegram to the Paris embassy before the issue had been decided, Dulles spelled it out:

> To obtain U.S. support, therefore, any future government in Viet-Nam, whether or not it includes Diem, must be clearly assured of the following:

- 1. The full and unqualified support of France, thereby dispelling any ambiguity with respect to North Viet-Nam.
- 2. Bao Dai must ensure that the legal government has full authority, including control of the police and the military forces of Viet-Nam.
- 3. Bao Dai and the French must wholeheartedly assist by every means available to them in integrating the sects into the normal life of Viet-Nam, in relieving them of their feudal power and territorial control, and integrating their private armies into the national army. 178

As it turned out, these conditions accorded completely with Diem's own goals for his country. They would be met one way or another; the first became moot when Diem finally compelled France to withdraw irrevocably from South Vietnam, the second was met when Diem successfully achieved the unification of the government and armed forces, and the third was met when Bao Dai (following his ill-considered last-minute attempts to save his agents in Saigon) and the French ceased to exert a divisive influence over South Vietnamese politics.

The lists of Vietnamese convoked by Bao Dai to Cannes and on Diem's behalf in Saigon show the watershed that Vietnamese politics had reached. Among those whom Bao Dai convoked and who were in one way or another indebted to him personally were his former prime ministers, Xuan, Huu, and Buu Loc; his former minister of defense Phan Huy Quat; the sect leaders "Pope" Tac and General Soai; Bay Vien; Monsignor Le Huu Tu; Diem's former ministers Tran Van Do and Ho Thong Minh; and party leaders Nguyên Ton Hoan and Tran Van Tuyen. With the exceptions of Do, Quat, and Tuyen these were all figures from the past and had become irrelevant. 179 Bay Vien, Lai Van Sang, Lai Huu Tai, and Generals Nguyên Van Thanh and Nguyên Van Vy were named in a judicial inquiry charging them with treason. 180 General Thanh of the Cao Dai, who was in government custody, was sentenced to death as prescribed for the crime of treason. The military court that heard his case was not impressed with the defense argument that he had acted on orders of Bao Dai in

defecting to the Binh Xuyen in early April; Thanh had switched sides once too often, and he was made an example of the penalty for doing this in the new order of things in Saigon.<sup>181</sup>

Collins's relations with Dulles survived the crisis in Saigon. There was, in any case, no need to behave in an ungentlemanly manner; Dulles merely told Collins on the latter's return to Saigon that the events of the past few days had put the situation in a different perspective and repeated that American policy was to allow the indigenous and nationalist political forces to work things out as best they could. Research And in a follow-up message Dulles declared: "The ultimate form and organization of the state and the government must be left to the Vietnamese to decide in an orderly manner." It was a piece of wisdom that would be abandoned by Dulles's successors, causing Diem enormous problems in his dealings with the Americans and eventually costing him his life. But for the moment, at least, it stood as the benchmark of American policy toward Vietnam.

Collins departed from Saigon unceremoniously within days of his return from Washington. In his report of their final conversation, Collins made no mention of any reference by Diem to the French-American plotting against him. It was business as usual. When Collins expressed concern about the anti-French tone of the Vietnamese press, Diem replied that he had counseled moderation in a radio address the previous day, but he agreed at Collins's insistence to speak to his information minister about the possibility of imposing censorship, something Diem was reluctant to do. <sup>184</sup>

# FEUDALISTS, COLONIALISTS, AND COMMUNISTS

Diem had already given the bare outline of a political program in his April 23 radio broadcast, before the showdown. He promised general elections based on universal suffrage to take place within four months and promised to place himself before the judgment of the people. He asked his listeners four questions: (1) Are you in favor of general elections? (2) Are you in favor of unification of the army? (3) Are you in favor of a government program including agrarian reform, raising the standard of living of the working classes, a public works program, development of Vietnamese economic enterprises, advancement of national culture as well as creation of a Vietnamese university, and liberalization of regulation of the press? (4) Do you support the restoration of sovereignty and the strengthening of independence? He summed it up by saying he was fighting three enemies: feudalists, colonialists, and Communists. These were personified, respectively, by Bao Dai, the French, and the Vietnam Workers' Party Central Committee and the DRV government it controlled.<sup>185</sup>

Factors that weighed against Diem were: (1) the police had been under Binh Xuyen control for one year; (2) the party and government, for the moment, were secure in their base area in North Vietnam, but continued to operate in the south; and (3) the party operated secretly, allowing the DRV government to deny responsibility for events in the south. But this negative balance of factors was to ignore the people. Foreigners such as Collins found it "very difficult to get a balanced estimate of the popular opinion of Diem." <sup>186</sup> However, there was evidence

that Diem's popular support was growing even as he dealt with the crises of the Binh Xuyen and the dissident sect leaders and as he faced down the attempt to replace him. During a year-end swing through the south-central coastal provinces he was greeted by unprecedented crowds at stops and along the road. 187

For Diem, such popular support was comforting. President Eisenhower's letter to him of October 23, 1954, had expressed hope for a government that was responsive to the nationalist aspirations of its people. The signs of popular support addressed to him in his visits to the countryside were taken by Diem as fulfilling this hope of Eisenhower's. He saw clearly that at present Vietnam was not ready for American-style democracy. It would be sufficient if the leader enjoyed popular support; no matter if multiple political parties and candidates did not vie for the people's vote. Thus, in describing himself, as he sometimes did, as an "optimistic democrat," Diem was treading on dangerous ground; Americans would interpret that word differently than he. Diem risked getting himself in trouble: he had one idea of the meaning of democrat, the Americans another, and in future years as the Americans multiplied their demands on him to install an American-style democracy in South Vietnam, this could only lead to misunderstandings and trouble.

Diem's constituent was the common man rather than the vocal politician. He felt that the old-line nationalist parties such as the VNQDD and Dai Viets had failed miserably against the Communists in 1945 when they might have counted for something. He was determined not to let them have another opportunity to share in power, so he drove many of their vocal spokesmen into exile abroad, perhaps not realizing fully what a danger they represented to him through their constant criticism via writing letters to the press, calling on State Department officers, and their propaganda in favor of a "liberalization" of Diem's regime. In their place, he tried to build a genuinely indigenous political organization, the National Revolutionary Movement (Phong Trao Cach Mang Quoc Gia). The National Revolutionary Movement (NRM) described itself as a "vast political organization grouping in its midst revolutionary forces from all classes of the population." It claimed that its membership rose from 10,000 persons in 1955 to about one and a half million in 1959, with all but 42,000 of them living outside Saigon. 189 Diem and his brothers, oddly, shared many of the same prejudices against the urban-based elite and the privileged in their country as did Sihanouk in his.

The variety of opposition groups and individuals in the south made the enforcement of law and order particularly difficult. One thing that Diem was determined about, however, was that this was a task for his government and his government alone. No foreigners would be allowed to dictate who was violating the law. Thus, when his government arrested the Saigon leaders of the Movement for Defense of Peace, a front group of solid Cochinchinese bourgeois whose leaders had permitted themselves to go so far as to advocate the use of violence against the government, the foreign ministry took a firm stand that the ICC had no basis for intervening in the due process of the law. The ICC decided it was not appropriate to intervene in cases under judicial process "when changes and

proceedings [are] not directly inconsistent with [the] Geneva agreement," but reserved the right to keep informed of developments and to examine the final verdict to see if the accord was violated.<sup>190</sup> It was obvious that the leaders of the Movement for Defense of Peace were being used by the party center for its own purposes.

The State of Vietnam had emerged into independence without any functioning elected body of representatives, a project repeatedly put off by the French on the excuse of the exigencies of the war and without any constitution. Diem's idea was therefore to organize elections for a constituent assembly. This idea was certainly inseparable in his mind from the future competition with the DRV and the future reunification of the country.

The constitutional issue in turn raised the problem of Bao Dai, the absentee head of state. Diem had tried to the end to be loyal to Bao Dai. But the latter's ill-considered actions had strained relations to the breaking point. On May 1, Diem asked the American Embassy what its attitude would be to him should he decide to depose Bao Dai and form a new government with the full support of the people and the army.<sup>191</sup>

After his victory, Diem stripped away Bao Dai's remaining assets in Vietnam. He abolished the Imperial Guard on May 15, its 5,000 men becoming the 11th and 42nd infantry regiments of the national army. He deprived Bao Dai of his extensive crown lands. On June 15 Diem got the Council of the Royal Family at Hue to decide that Bao Dai should be deprived of all remaining prerogatives and that he, Diem, should be elected president. But Diem continued to move slowly in removing Bao Dai, in accordance with Dulles's advice that he should avoid placing the government in a position where the issue would be decided by military strength rather than by legality. On July 17, Diem announced that a national referendum would be held on October 23 to decide the future form of government. Any such change would be adopted strictly in keeping with legality.

In dealing with the French, Diem had plenty of ammunition.

The Vietnamese had uncovered evidence at Binh Xuyen headquarters of French collusion with the Binh Xuyen. They had captured French officers serving as advisers to the Binh Xuyen. The Binh Xuyen radio transmitter was found to have been operating from a French army camp. A French ambulance was intercepted while transporting arms to Binh Xuyen units during the fighting. And on August 22 police of the First Arrondissement of Saigon arrested two officers of the French Expeditionary Corps as they were preparing to place plastic explosives under the veranda of the Bar Sporting on Tu Do Street (formerly Rue Catinat). The officers were identified as Jean Manauthon and Claude Marcel Simon. The car in which they were riding was found to belong to Lai Van Sang and had been repainted and its license plate falsified. The French High Command demanded the release of the officers, but the Vietnamese refused.<sup>193</sup>

In an effort to establish a new basis for cooperation between sovereign states, a delegation led by Nhu and Nguyên Huu Chau went to France in June 1955. It met with polite but firm refusals to negotiate from a government afraid

of offending Hanoi and under pressure from the Gaullists and the Communists to maintain a firm line in favor of the putative 1956 elections. It must have seemed to the Vietnamese like the frustrating effort to negotiate independence all over again. Finally, the delegation returned to Vietnam in September with nothing accomplished.

If, as seemed to be the case, the French government continued to refuse to sign the treaties of independence and association with his government, Diem would return the ingratitude by kicking the French out of Vietnam bodily, even at the risk of raising certain complications with respect to responsibilities for carrying out the terms of the armistice agreement. 194 In June 1955, he requested elimination of the ministry of the Associated States as a colonial anachronism. This was done on October 27, 1955, when the foreign ministry took over. In 1955 Diem also eliminated the Vietnamese representation in the Assembly of the French Union, which gave particular satisfaction to the Vietnamese who remembered the refusal of the French Union to even discuss Bao Dai's request prior to Geneva. On January 19, 1956, Diem requested the withdrawal of the French Expeditionary Corps from Vietnam. On April 28, 1956, the French High Command was eliminated, and between April 28 and September 27, 1956, the French Expeditionary Corps left Vietnam. On September 12, 1956, the chief of the French liaison mission to the ICC and Colonel Nam, his Vietnamese counterpart, signed a final minute transferring responsibility for liaison with the ICC from the French to the South Vietnamese.

On September 27, 1956, the tricolor was lowered for the last time. It now flew no more over Indochina (except at diplomatic posts and at the Séno base in Laos). The training of the South Vietnamese armed forces had been governed by the understanding signed by Collins and Ely on December 13, 1954, in the midst of the maneuvering to find a replacement for Diem. This understanding, the object of much consultation between Saigon and Washington and between Saigon and Paris, had preserved an ambiguously worded responsibility of the commander of the French Expeditionary Corps in matters of "strategic direction" and "security of Viet-Nam against external aggression and internal subversion." At American insistence, all references to the Geneva agreements had been omitted from the French drafts, but the French had preserved a reference to "in conformity with existing agreements" in the final version. 195 Once the FEC and its commander in chief had withdrawn from South Vietnam, the training position changed; no longer did the chief of the MAAG have to consider the "strategic direction" of the FEC commander in his relations with the Vietnamese. Thus, when on May 25, 1957, the chief of the MAAG received a written request from Assistant Defense Minister Tran Trung Dung requesting the assignment of American military advisers to replace the French of the air force and naval training missions 196 (which were the last to leave), it represented a symbolic step but nothing much in substance. The major concern of the embassy was not the possibility this step might deepen American involvement but rather assuaging French sensitivities. 197

The decree ending the state of war in Indochina was passed in Paris only on September 9, 1957, fixing the date for ending of the state of war on October 1, 1957.<sup>198</sup>

The Communists, obviously, would prove to be the most difficult of the three for Diem to deal with. The first priority was to obtain the evacuation of Viet Minh troops from the south. The recovery of the Camau peninsula on February 8, 1955, by the national army following its evacuation by the Viet Minh, who had used it as a base area for years, allowed Diem to put into practice his desire to be a man of the people. The operation had been carefully planned by the military with some friendly assistance from Lansdale and his team. Lansdale quietly assigned two American advisors to the operation, Sam Karrick for logistical support and Rufus Phillips to accompany the troops. Public health teams followed the troops and treated the people for cerebral malaria and other ailments, making a big impression. Diem visited Camau town a week later. He was greeted with enthusiasm. People waved excitedly and called out to him. Some broke out of the crowds to talk with him. Troops drawn up in an honor guard forgot their discipline and broke out in cheers. When Diem returned to Saigon he seemed revitalized, bubbling over with new energy. 199

The last provinces evacuated by the Viet Minh were Quang Ngai and Binh Dinh. The government was scheduled to move into the area on April 22, entering at the northern end and proceeding southward, adhering to a rigid timetable. The Viet Minh troops would embark at the port of Qui Nhon. Again, Phillips accompanied the troops. As they moved south, they found destroyed bridges and roads cut by trenches. As news of the operation spread, however, more and more people came out to the roads to greet the advancing troops. They cheered and passed food and drink to the soldiers. By the fourth day, villagers were showing the troops where the Viet Minh had cached their weapons. Meanwhile, at the southern end of the area, the people were turning hostile to the Viet Minh, particularly because of the forced recruitment by Viet Minh political cadres of children to go north. As the last units of the Viet Minh troops marched through the streets of Qui Nhon, the angry population threw rocks at them and screamed invective. It was hardly a noble exit, and it occurred before the arrival in the town of the army. Diem arrived at Qui Nhon just as the army entered. As he disembarked from his aircraft, people rushed up to him. The excited people boosted him up on their shoulders so the crowd could see him. A great cheer went up. It was an unprecedented scene. 200

In dealing with communism, Diem's program soon faced the test of the rule of law. It was not enough that the national flag of a field of yellow and three red bars flew from the mast in front of the Independence (Doc Lap) (the former Norodom) Palace. The Viet Minh had been active in disrupting civil rule in the south well before the cease-fire. At Binh Chanh and Binh Dien, about 15 miles southwest of Cholon on the road to My Tho, the Viet Minh kidnapped all the members of the council of notables and destroyed all civil records in a daylight attack on May 30, 1954.<sup>201</sup> Among the first violations of the Geneva armistice agreement reported by the French High Command were those of Article 15(d)

prohibiting interference with civil administration. These violations involved the organization of arms caches, secret cells, and administrative units paralleling and thwarting the legally established local authorities for purposes of propaganda, political agitation, and assassinations.<sup>202</sup>

On October 23, 1955, the people living south of the 17th parallel finally, after almost 10 years, had the opportunity to register their vote. The occasion was the referendum promised by Diem in July. The people were called upon to choose between Diem and Bao Dai. According to the official figures, 5,721,735 voted for Diem; 63,017 voted for Bao Dai; 44,155 cast invalid ballots; and 131,395 eligible voters did not vote. The result was a foregone conclusion, as the balloting was preceded by an intensive propaganda campaign against Bao Dai, but the size of the turnout surprised all observers. A referendum committee comprising representatives of the ministries of interior and information and the National Revolutionary Movement, the National Revolutionary Civil Servants League, the Cao Dai, and the Movement of Struggle for Freedom organized meetings countrywide, sent cadres in all cities to contact voters, and orchestrated a massive propaganda blitz using all available media in the days prior to the voting. The voting itself proceeded peacefully, and no incidents of violence were reported. The final judgment of the embassy was that "it is by no means impossible that the results announced by the government were approximately correct." On October 26, Diem spoke at the Saigon city hall acknowledging the results of the referendum and proclaiming the State of Vietnam to be a republic.<sup>203</sup>

The voting in the south on October 23, 1955, ushered in a republic. Its non-violent character contrasted sharply with the Viet Minh coup d'etat of August 19, 1945, Giap's armed propaganda teams, and the summary executions of high officials of the previous regime such as Pham Quynh. Not a shot had been fired in anger, no one had lost his or her life. Bao Dai had suffered a loss of face but continued to live out his long life in France unhindered. The Republic of Vietnam was proclaimed according to constitutional and legal procedures, in contrast with the illegal and illegitimate takeover in Hanoi by the DRV.

On March 4, 1956, the people of the south again went to the polls to elect a National Constituent Assembly, the first task of which was to be the elaboration of a constitution. On the basis of information laboriously gleaned from a number of sources, the embassy calculated that approximately 80 percent of the eligible voters participated in the election. The percentage turnout varied by area; an estimated 95 percent participated in Central Vietnam, 82 percent in Saigon-Cholon, and less in the Mekong Delta. <sup>204</sup> There were 405 candidates for 123 seats. The results were announced on March 8: National Revolutionary Movement, 47 seats; independents, 39; Citizens Community, 18; Movement of Struggle for Freedom (a party composed mainly of intellectuals and professional people), 11; smaller parties, 8. The embassy reported that party lines in the Assembly were likely to be subordinate to the overwhelmingly pro-Diem orientation of the body as a whole. Only 33 seats had been won by candidates who had run against candidates unofficially favored by the government. <sup>205</sup> After two months of study and debate, the Assembly approved by unanimous vote of

the deputies present the text of a draft constitution, which was then forwarded to Diem for his approval.

The training and integration of the troops of sects had begun by the end of 1955 with the processing of two regiments of Cao Dai troops at the Quang Trung training center north of Saigon. In all, approximately 16,000 former Cao Dai and Hoa Hao troops were scheduled for integration. On the same time, General Van Tien Dung, who had absented himself from meetings of the Joint Commission for several months, was reported to be in the Camau area negotiating with Le Van Vien, Tran Van Soai, and Ba Cut to enlist the dissident remnants of the Binh Xuyen, Cao Dai, and Hoa Hao troops in an anti-Diem alliance.

Diplomatically, the Republic of Vietnam was very successful, thanks to an active foreign ministry. France established an embassy in Saigon, as did Britain. In all, 55 countries had extended formal recognition to the Republic of Vietnam by August 1960.<sup>208</sup> The country that posed the most difficulty for Diem in foreign relations was Cambodia. Not only was there the sore of the Vietnamese takeover of Kampuchea Krom, which Prince Sihanouk kept festering, but the related problem of border disputes on both land and at sea and many more mundane problems left unresolved by the departed French, such as financial obligations and navigation rights on the Mekong.<sup>209</sup> Slights on both sides (Diem did not insult Sihanouk publicly) multiplied so that the Cambodian high commission in Saigon was ordered closed. However, thanks to tireless diplomacy by G. Frederick Reinhardt, who had replaced Collins in Saigon, and McClintock in Phnom Penh, for which they received expressions of gratitude by Cambodian Foreign Minister Nong Kimny, Cambodian hurt feelings were soothed and relations between the two countries were re-established, albeit at a less than embassy level.

India, which held the chairmanship of the ICC, was a big question mark. Immediately following the Viet Minh takeover of Hanoi, Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, on his way to Peking, had paid the DRV an official visit during which he was elaborately received. On his return from Peking, he visited Saigon and was politely welcomed by Diem, who admired him. India had recognized neither government during the war, although its consulates accredited to the French by the British government of India were continued in Saigon and Hanoi after 1947. The turmoil that prevailed in the south after 1954, in contrast to the order imposed in the north, appeared to work in the north's favor in soliciting India's friendship, although India itself had emerged in August 1947 in much the same kind of turmoil because of the partition of the subcontinent. This puzzled the Vietnamese nationalists.

Seeing that the Saigon government was here to stay, India opened "de facto diplomatic relations" with the Republic of Vietnam in October 1956 and mutual feelings warmed. Nhu visited India in April 1957, and Diem visited the following November. Diem's visit gave him the opportunity to state his government's views on its international relations. "Vietnam accepts neither foreign military bases, nor foreign troops on its territory," he said. <sup>210</sup> Diem also told his hosts that his government had no intention of joining SEATO, from which he had already taken pains to distance himself.

In accordance with India's non-aligned policy, Ho was received in New Delhi on February 5–13, 1958. The question of Vietnam's admission to the United Nations was debated in the Special Political Committee, inconclusively, on January 23, 1957. Diem was particularly intrigued by a suggestion put to him by a high-ranking Indian official in 1956 that India should obtain a solemn declaration of non-aggression against a unified Vietnam from China; India's diplomacy would be used to bring about the unification of Vietnam in exchange for a Chinese withdrawal from North Vietnam and an American withdrawal from South Vietnam. Although Diem thought the suggestion impractical, he obviously gave it considerable thought; he talked for an hour and a half about India with Ambassador Elbridge Durbrow. T. N. Kaul, the ICC chairman, on July 23, 1957, broached the idea anew with Diem, who discussed it with Durbrow, and put it away in his mind for future reference. 212

#### **DIEM'S PROGRAM**

Diem now turned his attention to his program for the economic development of South Vietnam. The government he had instituted on May 10, 1955, was working smoothly, in the opinion of the embassy, and "the cabinet as a whole appears to function with adequate competence and unquestionably enjoys a vastly increased sense of confidence and stability."<sup>213</sup> Diem gave priority to three vast projects that his government undertook under his impulsion: the rehabilitation of the Trans-Indochina Railroad in South Vietnam, the land development program, and land reform.

Vietnamese engineers set to work rebuilding the southern part of the railroad, where the track had been torn up for hundreds of kilometers by the Viet Minh. Using Vietnamese government funds, with direct American aid only for bridges, the engineers put the line back in working condition and repaired the rolling stock. The rehabilitation of steam locomotives called for considerable ingenuity because replacement parts were no longer available and had to be manufactured on the spot using artisanal methods.<sup>214</sup>

The second priority went to the land development program, launched in April 1957 with the creation of a Commissariat General for Land Development. This program had dual economic development and security aspects. A series of land development centers were created in territory, mostly sparsely populated, along South Vietnam's borders with Laos and Cambodia. By July 1959, about 90 land development centers had been established all over the country, but they were concentrated in the Central Highlands, the Phuoc Long area near the Cambodian border, and the Mekong Delta. Thousands of persons were resettled and provided with land with which to make a living. As originally conceived, the land development program was to have been a joint undertaking of the Vietnamese government and the United States Operations Mission (USOM) in Saigon, which initially provided major local currency support, technical assistance, and other aid. But serious differences soon appeared with regard to scope, direction, and tempo. Mainly due to Diem's preoccupation with security in the highlands, the emphasis of the program was shifted northward, where the problems of re-

settlement were greater than in the delta. By the end of 1957, tension had reached the point where USOM cut off all local currency support for the program, thus substantially withdrawing from participation. American aid was limited to technical advice and the provision of some mechanical equipment.<sup>215</sup>

Another high priority was land reform. The Vietnamese nationalists were conscious of the fact that the Viet Minh had made much headway by promising land to the peasants during the war. Land ownership and tenancy were bigger problems in the south than in the north, and Diem resolved to deprive the Communists of this political issue. The government promulgated two basic measures embodied in Ordinances 2 (January 8, 1955) and 7 (February 5, 1955). These dealt with matters affecting the welfare of tenants: rent reduction, security of tenure, and putting the 1.3 million hectares of cultivated land that had been abandoned during the war back into cultivation. By the end of June 1959, there were 800,000 contracts under these ordinances, representing about 80 percent of all contracts theoretically possible. Ordinance 57, issued on October 22, 1956, dealt with land redistribution. No landowner was permitted to hold more than 100 hectares of rice land. Land in excess of this ceiling was to be sold first of all to tenants and agricultural workers who had cultivated the land for two years; war veterans, refugees, and the unemployed were next in priority for redistribution. The amount of land involved totaled 425,000 hectares owned by 2,033 landowners. In addition, there were 245,000 hectares owned by 430 landowners of French citizenship. By the end of December 1960, all the Vietnamese land subject to Ordinance 57 had been surveyed and, in effect, set aside for distribution. Approximately 300,000 hectares of this was already under cultivation by 120,000 tenants, and half of them had received title to the land. Almost all the French-owned land had been transferred to the government. The real opposition to the land reform program came not from the landowners but from Radio Hanoi and the Communist agents in the countryside, who dissuaded tenants from buying land on the grounds that they would benefit from free distribution once the revolution had been successful.<sup>216</sup>

As Diem carried out his program, Nhu was almost constantly at his side, working from a small, cluttered office in the Independence Palace usually filled with cigarette smoke. Nhu was in charge of political affairs, while Diem concentrated on security and economic issues. Luyen had been posted to Europe as the family's observer of affairs there, the only brother abroad. Thuc carried on his ecclesiastical duties as archbishop of Vinh Long and his dealings on the side in Saigon real estate. The next-to-youngest brother, after Luyen, was the reclusive Can, who lived with their widowed and infirm mother in the family house in Hue, located in a walled compound; its living room was furnished with massive mother-of-pearl—encrusted furniture, flowers, birdcages, and stuffed animals. Although Can was reputed to run Central Vietnam with an iron fist on behalf of his brother, he shunned an official government position in favor of the title "Supreme Counselor to Political Groups in Central Vietnam."

When the United States opened a consulate in Hue on July 29, 1957, American officials hoped to seize the occasion to get to meet Can. On arriving at

the Ngô family residence, however, Ambassador Durbrow and Consul Robert E. Barbour were informed that Can's arthritis forced him to remain at his house at the beach. The officials had a social visit with Mrs. Ngô Dinh Kha, who was 87. Subsequent attempts to engineer a meeting with Can by sending him a protocol letter informing him of the opening of the consulate and requesting "the honor of being received" and by sending flowers to the house did not work out, either, as Can renewed various excuses.<sup>217</sup> He did not receive an American visitor until the following Tet, and only then on condition their talk remain absolutely secret. Barbour described Can as a rather handsome individual of moderate stature who wore plastic and gold-rimmed spectacles and dressed in the traditional black tunic, turban, and sandals. In their conversation, Can refused to speak French (although he used an occasional French word) and smoked the small, home-rolled cigarette of the peasants. To Barbour, Can epitomized all the extreme features of Hue—ultra-traditionalism, xenophobia, conservatism, and a general distrust of things or ideas new or foreign.<sup>218</sup>

# A PARTNERSHIP OF SORTS

Diem had led a rather cloistered life in Vietnam. But when he went into selfimposed exile in 1950 he began to make the acquaintance of Americans, and it seemed as if he could not get to know enough of them. He sent the State Department a steady stream of correspondence giving his opinions on events in his country, and while he was at the Maryknoll Mission in Lakewood, New Jersey, he pestered influential Congressmen such as Mansfield and the young Kennedy for introductions to a wide variety of Americans. He talked with some of them at a luncheon hosted by Supreme Court Justice William O. Douglas in Washington on May 7, 1953 where he and Bishop Doan of Bac Ninh were the guests of honor.219

Although it was Mansfield of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, who had visited Indochina more frequently and whose reports were influential, who was consulted most often at times of crisis in Indochina by State Department policymakers, Kennedy was beginning to take as active a role as his somewhat junior ranking and his duties on the Committee on Labor and Public Welfare permitted. Kennedy was optimistic about the chances of preserving South Vietnam from takeover by the Communists. At their luncheon, the bishop had told him stories about how he traveled freely around his diocese, part of which was under Viet Minh control, because he took care not to offend either the forces of the French Union or the Viet Minh. The bishop had told him the ordinary people sided with whoever could protect their villages at night. The day of the luncheon, Kennedy dispatched his secretary, Evelyn Lincoln, to the State Department with a letter to Dulles attaching a list of 47 questions. The following morning he telephoned Dulles's office and asked for a reply to the questions that same day.<sup>220</sup>

Kennedy's optimism was based on the fact that the situation in Indochina was different from what it had been in 1953, as he judged it from his first-hand visit and his continuing contacts with the Indochinese. (He also kept a copy of Ellen J. Hammer's history of Indochina in his library.) The French were withdrawing, and the Republic of Vietnam had come into its own sovereignty. The people had elected their representatives and an independent government composed of men with nationalist credentials had come to power in Saigon.

Kennedy felt that the South Vietnamese, if given the means, could prevail. Kennedy had remained silent during the debate in Washington over support for Diem. A year later, however, in June 1956, he gave a speech that evoked his historical insights and betokened a quaint sort of paternalism at the same time that it contained an uncanny prophecy:

Vietnam represents a proving ground of democracy in Asia. . . . Vietnam represents the alternative to Communist dictatorship. If this democratic experiment fails, if some one million refugees have fled the totalitarianism of the North only to find neither freedom nor security in the South, then weakness, not strength, will characterize the meaning of democracy in the minds of still more Asians. . . .

Vietnam represents a test of American responsibility and determination in Asia. If we are not the parents of little [South] Vietnam, then surely we are the godparents. We presided at its birth, we gave assistance to its life, we have helped to shape its future. . . . This is our offspring—we cannot abandon it, we cannot ignore its needs. And if it falls victim to any of the perils that threaten its existence—Communism, political anarchy, poverty and the rest—then the United States, with some justification, will be held responsible, and our prestige in Asia will sink to a new low. . . .

America's stake in Vietnam, in her strength and in her security, is a very selfish one—for it can be measured, in the last analysis, in terms of American lives and American dollars. It is now well known that we were at one time on the brink of war in Indochina—a war which could well have been more costly, more exhausting and less conclusive than any war we have ever known. The threat of such war is not now altogether removed from the horizon. Military weakness, political instability or economic failure in the new state of Vietnam could change almost overnight the apparent security which has increasingly characterized that area under the leadership of President Diem.

... We should not attempt to buy the friendship of the Vietnamese. Nor can we win their hearts by making them dependent on our handouts.... This is the revolution we can, we should, we must offer to the people of Vietnam—not as charity, not as a business proposition, not as a political maneuver, nor simply to enlist them as soldiers against Communism or as chattels of American foreign policy—but a revolution of their own making, for their own welfare, and for the security of freedom everywhere.<sup>221</sup>

Among the South Vietnamese public, the sentiments expressed by Kennedy were reciprocated by an eagerness to accept everything American after so many years of French rule. English classes on the premises of the Vietnamese American Association at 55 Mac Dinh Chi Street in Saigon were filled to over-

flowing. The association had been founded in 1955 to organize lectures; recitals; concerts; art exhibits; tours to museums, temples, and historical sites; and orientation classes for newly arrived American civilians. Although it was largely funded by the cultural section of the American Embassy, its board of directors comprised equal numbers of Vietnamese and Americans.

Ambassador Reinhardt, before he left Saigon, did much to smooth over the rough edges of the evolving partnership. Diem's government had given the embassy a memorandum criticizing the slowness of American economic aid program procedures; the embassy admitted that these criticisms were in part justified.<sup>222</sup> Queried by Young, Reinhardt reported that American advice, particularly on internal matters, was not accepted by the Vietnamese with any alacrity, in contrast to American assistance, which was eagerly sought. Young had also asked for Reinhardt's reaction to the charge that Diem was acting like a mandarin. Reinhardt replied that Diem's philosophy of government contained elements of the mandarin tradition in its better sense. "Yet I think it would be erroneous not to recognize that Diem is far too intelligent and forward-looking to be a prisoner of his own early training and experience as a member of the mandarinate," he wrote.<sup>223</sup>

Diem was slowly building a partnership with the Americans. Although at the beginning it was a partnership between equals, Diem soon had cause for doubts about its equality. Grappling with the thorny problems of wielding power, Diem found his relationships with the Americans to be far different from the sentimental ideals exchanged while he was still out of office. Diem found the Americans very different to deal with than the French. The Americans were more open on the surface, and their cunning was less obvious than that of the French. But there was never the degree of understanding with the Americans that there had been with the French. Initial differences over the planning and running of the American aid program revealed a wide gulf between Saigon and Washington that was to grow wider with the years. Reinhardt's successor was less chary of Vietnamese sensitivities, and admitted frankly at a staff meeting that Diem disliked him.<sup>224</sup>

Apart from a few Americans who were well informed about his country such as Lansdale, Diem had to deal with visiting politicians, bureaucrats, and military men who did not know their facts about Vietnam. He complained that he and his officials had to sit politely through their talk, while their advice was judged valueless and was not heeded.<sup>225</sup> On a state visit to the United States in May 1957, Diem wanted to inform the Americans about the importance he attached to his government's relations with its Asian neighbors.<sup>226</sup> But serious discussions were put aside in favor of ceremonial occasions such as Diem's visit to Michigan State University to receive an honorary degree; looking around him at the academics in their black robes he must have thought himself surrounded by American mandarins. When Diem's mother was shown a film of the proceedings, she commented that he wore "such an odd costume."<sup>227</sup>

Diem encouraged the formation by Joseph Buttinger and others of a private American group, the American Friends of Vietnam, to try to bridge the gap

in understanding between the Vietnamese and the Americans.<sup>228</sup> But he does not appear to have held high hopes for this organization, and his disinterest surprised Westernized Vietnamese such as budget and aid director Vu Van Thai. Chiang Kai-shek and his wife had a much better understanding of the American political process and how to take advantage of it, and there never was a Vietnam Lobby similar to the China Lobby. Indeed, Buttinger and other leading members of the AFV turned violently against Diem in later years. Perhaps symbolic of the newfound alliance was an incident when the American cruiser St. Paul paid a visit to Saigon for the October 26 national day in 1960. As the ship approached its mooring in the Saigon River a rain squall blew up and the sailors lining the deck in their whites sought shelter below. The Vietnamese sailors lined up on the Quai Bach Dang before naval headquarters remained standing at attention as the rain drenched them.

# Cambodia and Laos Seek Neutrality

#### TRADITIONAL SOCIETIES

Laos after Geneva was still a country bound by tradition. In 1957 when the American anthropologist Joel M. Halpern was living there, the advent of the New Year was celebrated in Luang Prabang with pomp and circumstance as it had been for centuries. On the first day of festivities that lasted 10 days, the royal elephants were taken in procession through the narrow, flag-bedecked streets to pay homage to the protective spirits of the town at Wat Visoun, Wat May, and Wat Xieng Thong. Later in the week, the aged King Sisavang Vong was borne in a palanquin to Wat May to sprinkle holy water on the prabang, the palladium of the kingdom, and he and the queen offered food to the bonzes. Crown Prince Savang Vatthana presided over a grand open-air meeting in the Lat-Leng Tay Square of the King's Council, the National Assembly, the royal government and high civil servants (all dressed in the sampot), army officers in dress uniform resplendent with medals, notables, merchants, and the population at large; it was the occasion for speeches, march-pasts, band playing, and the awarding of even more decorations. The assembled diplomatic corps gave New Year wishes to His Majesty. On a more popular note, the festivities were marked by performances of the traditional pou gneu-gna gneu dance, football matches between rival provincial clubs, movies, illuminations and fireworks, dancing, and a handicrafts fair.<sup>229</sup>

The king and the Lao elite gave a warm welcome to General Navarre when he called at Luang Prabang to say farewell; it was, after all, a whole way of life and not merely Laotian territory that he had sought to defend with his ill-fated occupation of Dien Bien Phu. His reception contrasted with the coldness of that given General Ely a few days later.<sup>230</sup>

The bitterness left over from the deeply felt rivalries of the Lao Issara days had not yet completely dissipated, and this made the Lao nationalists vulnerable to outside intervention. On September 18, 1954, Defense Minister Kou Voravong

was assassinated while attending a dinner party at the home of Foreign Minister Phoui Sananikone in Vientiane.<sup>231</sup> There was little doubt in the minds of the Lao that Prince Phetsarath was implicated; despite attempts by the royal government to induce him to return to Laos, the prince had remained in Thailand.<sup>232</sup> When Phoui called on him during a brief stopover in Bangkok on his way home from the Geneva conference, he found Phetsarath's attitude to be intransigent. Phetsarath insisted that he would return to Laos only if his titles and prerogatives of 1945 were restored, and furthermore he would insist that he be made hereditary prime minister. 233 These ideas of Phetsarath's were obviously not in keeping with the parliamentary regime that had been instituted in Vientiane in his absence.

The evidence implicating Phetsarath in the assassination of Kou Voravong was circumstantial, but convincing. Phetsarath had visited northeast Thailand in June, shortly before troubles broke out at the Chinaimo army camp on the outskirts of Vientiane involving thefts of arms, distribution of propaganda, desertions, abductions, and finally at the end of June two acts of terrorism. Phetsarath was always accompanied by Thai police officers in his travels.<sup>234</sup> In a cowardly act, terrorists threw grenades into a movie audience at the military camp, killing seven persons and wounding 50, all Lao. The following night, terrorists struck with small arms, killing a French sergeant and wounding other French and Lao military personnel.<sup>235</sup> Evidence confirming Laotian suspicions that Phetsarath was involved in these disturbances, which had originally been envisaged as an uprising against the Laotian government, was reported by the American Embassy in Bangkok.<sup>236</sup>

The royal Laotian government, tipped off ahead of time about Phetsarath's schemes, had on two occasions warned the Thai minister in Vientiane and requested his government's help, without result. The Laotian police had a large dossier on Udom Luksurin, one of the actual assassins, who succeeded in escaping across the river after the assassination in spite of being wounded; the boatman reported to police that Udom had boasted of his crime. Udom had lived in Thailand since escaping from the Vientiane prison on June 16 with one Boun Khong, a bandit type who had been responsible for stirring up trouble in Laos since 1950 and was known to be an agent of Phetsarath's. What only the police and high royal government officials knew was that Udom's target had been Phoui, not Kou Voravong, and the police had warned Phoui about Udom, who was hiding out in the villages of Muong Noi and Xieng Da on the other side of the That Luang marshes north of Vientiane.<sup>237</sup> In Phoui's view, Phetsarath's support for these criminals was aimed at forcing the breaking up of the royal government and/or intimidating the Lao leaders into offering him a permanent place in, if not the leadership of, a new government.<sup>238</sup>

The question was, Who was acting behind Phetsarath? That officials of the Thai police had been in contact with Udom and his henchmen appeared to be well established. Corroboration was provided in police interrogation of some of the Lao deserters who had petitioned to be allowed to return to Laos and who had been granted amnesty, except for those charged with criminal acts, beginning in June 1955; these individuals told police of their consternation at learning that Kou had been assassinated instead of Phoui. Given the background of Thailand's activities in providing sanctuary and arms to rebels against the royal governments of Cambodia and Laos during the war, it was not all that surprising. The general motivation behind such activities was the memory of Siam's humiliation at the hands of the French in the nineteenth century and more recently in 1941. Some Thai figures saw an opportunity now that the war had ended and the French were supposedly leaving to reassert Thailand's dominant influence in Cambodia and Laos. Into these schemes, Phetsarath fitted perfectly by virtue both of the moral debt he owed the Siamese for having established his family as the vice-regal line of the Kingdom of Luang Prabang and of his impeccable nationalist record.

The Thai police showed solicitude in protecting Udom and Boun Khong, despite requests from Laos for their extradition. It was only after the intervention of the American Embassy that the Thai police announced Udom's arrest; this was accompanied, however, by an unbelievable "confession" in which Udom attributed the orders he had received to Phoui Sananikone. Moreover, the Thai press gave free currency to this "confession," thereby further unsettling Phoui and his cabinet colleagues. For the Laotians, who had handled the matter quite properly,<sup>240</sup> it was the very worst possible outcome.

The head of the Thai police at the time was General Phao Siyanon, who, in the words of the American Embassy in Bangkok, "seems to have exercised a fascination for fishing in Laotian waters and who is suspected by many persons of trying to establish a regime in Laos under Prince Petsarat [Phetsarath] subservient to Thailand."<sup>241</sup> Phao funded and housed Phetsarath while he was in Bangkok. During a visit to Washington two months after Kou's assassination, Phao told Dulles that Phetsarath probably was involved in the attack, but that "our [the Thai] side did not know or have any foreknowledge." Phao nevertheless continued his "vicious and unconscionable" meddling in Laos, inspiring stories in Bangkok newspapers in October 1955, for example, about an impending coup d'état in Laos based on an alleged split between Katay and Phoui that was backed by opposing U.S. and French sides.<sup>242</sup>

Phetsarath also had family connections with the Thai (he was married to a Thai), and Phao's successor as police chief, General Sawai Sawaisaen-yakorn, was Phetsarath's cousin.<sup>243</sup> By supporting Phetsarath's intrigues, Phao did much to discredit the prince's nationalist credentials at a time when, had he returned promptly to Laos, he would have been honorably welcomed and might have played an important role in settling affairs in the kingdom peaceably.

It was Phao's closeness to the CIA that particularly alarmed the Laotians. Phao had been befriended by the American ambassador in Bangkok from August 1953 to August 1954, William J. Donovan, the former director of the OSS. Donovan had arranged funding for Phao's projects of training a number of irregular military forces, the best known of which was the Police Aerial Reconnaissance (Resupply) Unit (PARU), which was closely connected with the CIA. Crown Prince Savang wondered aloud whether Phetsarath was trying to make

a bid to oust the monarchy and whether foreigners might be behind him.<sup>244</sup> Udom was never extradited; Boun Khong was arrested in March 1957 when he returned to Laos in Phetsarath's suite.

In this significant political affair, the Thai were playing their old game from the nineteenth century of keeping the Lao stirred up against one another. In the past, these activities had allowed Siam to exercise its influence in the territories that had once constituted the Lan Xang kingdom; in present circumstances they merely played into the hands of the enemies of stability in Laos. In engaging in these intrigues, the Thai wove a web that entangled the Americans in ill-considered actions in Laos and eventually trapped themselves in a war in which they would emerge as a belligerent on the losing side, much to the discomfiture of these proud people who had enjoyed pointing out to foreigners that they had escaped unscathed from World War II.

In Cambodia under King Norodom Sihanouk the monarchy was solidly based and held in veneration by the great mass of the people. By January 1955, 41 foreign countries had granted diplomatic recognition to the royal government.

#### INITIAL PROBLEMS OF THE ARMISTICE IMPLEMENTATION

Most of the military clauses of the Geneva armistice agreement relating to Cambodia had been fulfilled by the end of 1954. The cease-fire had gone into effect on August 7. Under close supervision of the ICC, some 2,400 Viet Minh troops were evacuated between October 12 and October 18—"an intricate and delicate operation" but one smoothly conducted by the ICC teams who accompanied each group taken in French transports to the Cambodia-Vietnam border, whence they rejoined the Viet Minh regrouping areas before evacuating to the north. The Joint Commission dissolved itself on October 20, declaring its work under the Geneva Agreement finished.

The "Khmer resistance," whose congress had convened in 1950, faded into the shadows after Geneva. In the face of the refusal of the royal government to accord them independent status on the Joint Commission (comprising the royal government and Viet Minh), the Khmer Issarak members who had fought with the Viet Minh were withdrawn to North Vietnam by decision of the party center. The orders came down in October 1954 from Son Ngoc Minh, who was already in North Vietnam. It was felt they would be too exposed to the risk of reprisals against them if they remained, in spite of the government's guarantee in Article 6 of the armistice agreement. About 1,000 Khmer Issarak, including the ones whose identities were known to the police, thus buried their weapons and marched across southern Vietnam to the sea, where they boarded Polish vessels bound for the north under ICC auspices; Sieu Heng was evacuated by air on an ICC plane with the Viet Minh commanders on October 24 (he soon returned to Phnom Penh, however). The majority of the pro-Viet Minh Khmer Issarak would remain in North Vietnam, largely inactive and held in reserve, until after 1970.

A handful of Khmer Issarak, however, remained in Cambodia after the ceasefire in the hope of keeping the party branch, the Khmer Peoples' Revolutionary Party (KPRP), alive on Cambodian soil through undercover work and careful participation in legal activities, such as contesting elections to the National Assembly, under the guarantee of freedom contained in Article 6, supposedly enforced by the ICC, where they could look for protection to the Polish delegates.

Sihanouk's repression fell indiscriminately on Communists and non-Communist nationalists as the government prepared to hold the first post-war elections to the National Assembly. Some KPRP cadres attempted to register legal parties to contest the elections. The government insisted that the party name make no reference to the anti-French resistance, and it was finally agreed to call the party the Krom Pracheachon (People's Group). Among the founders of this party was a young Marxist recently returned from studies in France, Saloth Sar, who would later be known as Pol Pot. He made himself useful in ensuring a liaison between the Pracheachon group and the Democratic Party, which, having survived Sihanouk's wartime campaign against it, was developing favorably to the Cambodian left.

Sihanouk's principal wartime rival, Son Ngoc Thanh, reappeared in Siem Reap town to pledge his loyalty to the government. Sihanouk's resentment against his popularity, however, was so great that the king refused to grant him an audience, and, fearing for his safety, he withdrew once more to the Thai border. He remained a shadowy figure whose name was often evoked in derogatory fashion by Sihanouk, but he did not reappear on the Cambodian political scene until after 1970. Dap Chhuon also reappeared at this time with his armed men, but he managed, for the time being, to retain royal favor.

In Laos, unlike in Cambodia, the withdrawal of the Viet Minh went largely unsupervised by the ICC, which noted that neither party gave it "precise information regarding the movement of its troops sufficiently in advance as to make supervision effective." However, the French substantially completed their withdrawal by November 19, 1954, and the Viet Minh did so three days later. The ICC complained that supervision had been impeded by lack of cooperation, bad weather, inadequate communication and transportation facilities, the difficult terrain, and the ICC's inability to distinguish Viet Minh and Pathet Lao units, which were both made up largely of minority tribesmen living in the border area.

The Pathet Lao, acting under orders from the party center different from those given the Khmer Issarak, gave every indication of turning the regroupment areas in the northern provinces of Sam Neua and Phong Saly they had been assigned at Geneva into a permanent base and foothold on the sovereignty of the kingdom. As soon as the cease-fire went into effect on August 6 they began mobilizing young recruits impressed from villages around the country by the withdrawing Viet Minh, allowing them to constitute an occupation force of some 6,000 men in comparison with the few hundred they had had at the time of the cease-fire, and to confront the royal government on an equal footing.

There were almost immediately problems relating to the regroupment. The Franco-Laotian delegation to the Joint Commission pointed out that guerrillas armed and trained by the French during the war, and called for the present

purposes special commando units, still controlled the western portions of Sam Neua and Phong Saly Provinces at the time of the cease-fire. These were the resistance networks established in the final months of the war under the command of Colonel Trinquier, 1,800 men in Sam Neua and 1,600 men in Xieng Khouang, composed of one-third Lao, one-third Meo, and one-third Khmu.<sup>245</sup> The Pathet Lao–DRV delegation, for its part, argued that its forces controlled the whole of these provinces and that "pirates" had been parachuted into some areas in violation of the armistice. The Pathet Lao and the DRV also argued that the reference to "provinces" in the armistice agreement meant that the Pathet Lao fighting units were entitled to station themselves throughout the provinces, not merely in limited areas thereof. Both delegations as early as August 18, when the Joint Commission held its second meeting at the Plain of Jars airfield, turned over the problem to the ICC for its recommendation; the ICC had convened in Vientiane and had proceeded to set up the fixed and mobile teams provided for at Geneva.

Meanwhile, Souvanna Phouma lost no time in contacting his half-brother Souphanouvong for an initial meeting to discuss the political and military situation. The two princes met at Khang Khay on September 6 after a slight delay owing, Crown Prince Savang told the visiting Heath, to Souphanouvong's need to return to the DRV zone of Vietnam for briefing and instructions. Souphanouvong provided his brother with a written statement declaring his loyalty and submission to the constitutional government of Laos. Souvanna Phouma believed the statement was sincere and his brother was not a Communist. <sup>246</sup> Souvanna Phouma's resignation as prime minister in the wake of the Kou Voravong affair interrupted these conversations. His successor, Katay Don Sasorith, who formed a government that was to last until February 1956, was just as eager, however, to continue the talks with the Pathet Lao.

The main sticking point was the interpretation of Articles 14 and 19 of the armistice agreement dealing with the status of the two provinces pending a political settlement. The unfortunate wording of these articles had introduced ambiguity because the armed forces of the two sides were enjoined to respect each other's territory, which was not otherwise delineated. Behind differences of interpretation of these two articles, however, lay the question of the principle of the sovereignty exercised by the royal government. On this question the text of the armistice agreement had not spelled it out in so many words. But the totality of the signed armistice agreement, the Final Declaration, and the unilateral declarations of the royal government on July 21, 1954, taken together clearly implied that the royal government's sovereignty covered the whole of the territory of Laos.

Just as the State of Vietnam was having difficulties obtaining recognition of its sovereignty by the French, the royal government of the Kingdom of Laos was having difficulties of the same order. Thailand reluctantly normalized its relations with the Vientiane government once Katay, a friend of Phao's, came to office. But the royal government's sovereignty found little support from India, a country that was called upon to play a key role by virtue of its chairmanship of

the ICC. India did not raise its consulate in Vientiane to diplomatic level until January 28, 1956.

The first ICC chairman in Laos, Dr. Jagan Nath Khosla, avoided taking a categorical position on the sovereignty of the royal government over the two northern provinces until his departure from Laos in May 1955. "While the two sides are conferring together," Khosla wrote in the ICC's first report to the cochairmen, "the International Commission feels that it should avoid taking any decision or step which may tend to disturb the atmosphere." He then went on to deplore the evidence of increasing tension in the two provinces locally. He opined: "This is perhaps inevitable when two forces, after six years of open and violent conflict, are now situated so near to each other."247 This short-sighted view, which failed to take into account the facts that the Viet Minh and their Pathet Lao protégés had not taken control of the parts of Sam Neua they controlled until their invasion of 1953 and that the royal government had administered the entire province continuously up until then, holding elections to the National Assembly in the province in 1951, effectively placed the rebels on an equal footing with the government and led to the substitution of an endless series of temporization and evasions for adherence to principle.

Already at Geneva, the Lao delegation had been sorely disappointed by Nehru's special representative, Krishna Menon, who, while not officially a participant, sought to involve his country in everything possible to do with the final settlement. It was Menon's lack of any serious information about the situation in Laos, or for that matter Cambodia and Vietnam, coupled with his admiration for the Viet Minh, that particularly irked the Lao. What it boiled down to was that "the weak must accommodate themselves to the strong," as Menon told the Lao minister in Washington. This at least had the merit of being a frank statement of India's policy based on the acceptability of violence. Nehru visited Vientiane for a few hours in September 1954. Crown Prince Savang's visit to New Delhi in September 1955 did nothing to improve the situation, and the royal Lao government continued to bear the burden of lack of Indian support in addition to that of warding off the mortal challenge to its authority from the former rebels and their foreign backers.

The Polish delegation to the ICC in Laos made the most of the situation created by the Indian chairman's unwillingness to take a stand on principle by immobilizing the Commission in endless circular arguments. For example, when the Canadian delegation submitted a resolution on May 24, 1955, on the question of re-establishment of the royal administration in the two provinces, the Polish delegation stated that while it was not opposed to the re-establishment of the royal administration in principle, it was of the opinion that the parties themselves should decide the issue without any direct intervention of the Commission. The Polish delegation stated that the resolution might encourage the royal government to bring the two provinces under its administration by force. The Indian delegation was prepared to treat the resolution as a basis for discussion, but considered that in view of Pathet Lao military control of the two provinces the immediate re-establishment of the royal administra-

tion, as recommended by the Canadian delegation, was impracticable.<sup>250</sup> One was left to wonder why the ICC had been established in the first place. These circular arguments reached a fine degree of perfection under the Polish delegate, Dr. Marek Thee.

The issue was skirted for the time being with the Pathet Lao, at ICC urging, issuing an ambiguous statement (but probably the best that could have been expected in the circumstances) at a meeting of the ICC and the Joint Commission on November 4 that the Pathet Lao fighting units recognized the royal government and that in principle the Pathet Lao administration in Phong Saly and Sam Neua "is classified under the Supreme Authority of the Royal Government."251 Nowhere was it more clear that the weak Indian leadership of the ICC placed the burden of proof in every instance on the royal government than in the debate over the royal government's right to a presence in the two provinces. Even after the ICC had accepted by a majority vote the fact that the French Union forces had held positions in the provinces at the time of the cease-fire, the Pathet Lao claimed they had no right to be there, and they should therefore withdraw, a position that amounted to a unique interpretation of Article 14 of the Geneva Agreement. "The Commission decided that in the face of these two conflicting interpretations of the Geneva Agreement, there was no possibility of either the Commission agreeing on a common interpretation or both the Parties accepting it."252

## Two Competing Conceptions of Sovereignty

On July 18, 1954, Vietnamese Workers' Party Secretary Truong Chinh wrote an internal report calling for the creation of revolutionary parties in Cambodia and Laos as well as the "development of friendship and mutual assistance on the part of the Vietnamese with the peoples of Laos and Cambodia." <sup>253</sup>

A clandestine party branch for Cambodia had existed since 1951.<sup>254</sup> This party appears to have been ordered not to engage in overt revolutionary activities in the aftermath of Geneva. In Laos, according to first-hand accounts, the decision to form a new party led to considerable discussion among the Communists and nationalists in the Pathet Lao leadership (there is no evidence the rank and file were consulted), and the establishment of the party branch was delayed. In the second half of 1954 an important meeting of Pathet Lao leaders was held at Ban Nha Luong in Nghe An near the Sam Neua border. According to a participant in this meeting, Nouhak explained the need to establish a new party to ensure success of the struggle in the postwar period. He was supported by Kaysone, Khamtay Siphandon, Sisavath Keobounphanh, and Maisouk Saisompheng, all of whom, many years later, were rewarded with the highest positions in the people's democratic republic. Souphanouvong, Phoumi Vongvichit, and Faydang agreed that a leading party was necessary but said it must be independent. Sisana Sisane acted as leader of the group that strongly opposed the idea of setting up a new party. Serious argument went on for three days, and the meeting ended informally without any decision. The proponents of the new party then held another meeting in secrecy ten days later in another location not far away.<sup>255</sup>

The new party, the Lao People's Party, was formally established on March 22, 1955, barely a month before the Bandung conference. The ICP's Laotian members were "transferred" to the new party, whose name would reflect its Laotian constituency but which would still be tied to the two other successor parties of the ICP in the new triad. The very existence of the party was kept a secret from non-party people. The secretary-general of the Lao People's Party was a half-Vietnamese named Kaysone Phomvihan who had acted as Ho's party man in Savannakhet in 1945, who had joined the ICP in 1949, and who had held the post of defense minister in Souphanouvong's 1950 "resistance government."

Kaysone appeared in public only intermittently (he had participated in the work of the Joint Commission alongside the Viet Minh), in keeping with the party center's strategy of operating in secrecy and using a variety of nationalist fronts to achieve its revolutionary goals. This facade was carefully preserved by every means possible, including the readiness of the top leaders to tell the most bald-faced lies to foreign diplomats about the revolutionaries' Communist affiliations and the external assistance they were receiving<sup>257</sup> and a practice of denying and disowning Vietnamese cadres killed or captured on Laotian soil.

When it came to matters of the party's strategy, however, the leaders often indulged themselves in self-praise that revealed their arrogant, elitist mindset. Kaysone, describing the Laotian revolutionaries' innovative use of varying legal and illegal tactics against their adversaries, later wrote about the party's fundamental dedication to violence:

The thirty years of our revolution have witnessed a continuous struggle involving the revolutionary violence of the masses, a struggle waged in various forms. And although in the course of the revolution we had to change our tactics depending on the respective stages of the struggle, to utilise its different forms and methods, and to show flexibility, the fundamental principle of our Party was always that of *violent revolution* and an *offensive strategy*. In this lies the "secret" of the past and future victories of our revolutionary struggle.<sup>258</sup>

It was the dedication of the Pathet Lao to the use of violence, obviously illegal under the laws of the Kingdom of Laos, that more than any other factor separated them from the other members of the Laotian national community. Later, when they formed a political party, the Lao Patriotic Front (Neo Lao Hak Sat, or NLHS) to contest legal elections, the Pathet Lao were still tied to the secret Lao People's Party with its dedicated use of violence in conformity with the successors of the ICP.<sup>259</sup>

In Vientiane, the twentieth anniversary celebrations in December 1995 of the party's seizure of power and the abolition of the monarchical and parliamentary regime culminated in a revolutionary ballet staged in the large main hall of the new National Assembly building. The party and military leaders of the people's democratic republic and their guests watched pirouetting soldiers in slippers dancing with bayonets. The strident voice of a defense ministry diva

commanded soldiers to throw their grenade launchers in the air like Cossacks. Women in knee-length black boots goose-stepped across the stage with revolutionary fervor. The members of the party's politburo watched the performance seated on brand-new overstuffed pink sofas. <sup>260</sup> Under the old regime, soldiers never entered the diminutive National Assembly building, which was the exclusive preserve of the civilians who were elected deputies or who were members of the government.

The difference between the two National Assemblies marked a gulf in the conceptions of democracy of the old regime and new regimes that required a fuller explanation than the passage of time. The difference was embodied in Prince Souphanouvong's statement on November 20, 1954:

On the day of the armistice liberated zones controlled by the Pathet Lao Resistance Government occupied half the territory and included half the population, from the north to the south, from the east to the west. The sovereignty and influence of the Resistance Government and the Pathet Lao forces was taking root more and more deeply throughout the whole country.<sup>261</sup>

Because this statement, like many others, was broadcast over the Voice of Vietnam in Vietnamese, one is led to wonder if Souphanouvong was its author or if it was written and broadcast in his name by the party center's propaganda department. Whatever he may have thought privately of the party's theses about class struggle and the dictatorship of the proletariat, which would have left little future for him, one can be sure that the prospect of seizing power and overthrowing the king and princes who held power in the kingdom was one that appealed to Souphanouvong the rebel and may have justified in his mind the mercenary use to which his credentials were put. In this mindset, consequently, there was little apparent contradiction between actions that were illegal according to the established order and the sovereignty of the "liberated zones."

This sovereignty was the kind that grew out of the barrel of a gun, and from Souphanouvong's point of view, judging by the statements that were made in his name, it was just as legal as the one conceived in Luang Prabang and Vientiane. In this, the Pathet Lao were immensely helped by having Sam Neua and Phong Saly as regrouping areas which they could transform into territorial and administrative sovereignty, just as the Viet Minh had done by taking over Hanoi. In the pursuit of this objective, they placed all obstacles in the way of any manifestation of the royal government's sovereignty over the population and substituted symbols of their own. They imprisoned four teachers sent to Sam Neua. <sup>262</sup> The Pathet Lao administration issued passes to merchants traveling to Xieng Khouang and acted in every way as the sole governing authority. <sup>263</sup>

Quinim Pholsena, who had been elected a deputy from Sam Neua in 1951, was named governor of Sam Neua Province. With the provincial capital in the hands of the Pathet Lao, Quinim landed at Nong Khang 35 kilometers north of the capital, where there was an airstrip. At the time of his arrival on December 28, there was an ICC team present which remained for a few days during which

the team members talked to both sides and advised the Pathet Lao to remain at least two kilometers distant from the nearest royal government posts, as had previously been agreed. When the ICC team departed, the Pathet Lao almost immediately began to move nearer to the Nong Khang posts and airstrip, which were protected by only 58 royal army soldiers. They moved nearer the water point, thereby denying water to the occupants of the post.

By January 2 it was clear to Quinim that the Pathet Lao intended to encircle Nong Khang completely, as they had established posts on the main trail to Houei Thao and were moving nearer to the airstrip. By January 13 the Pathet Lao had fired at some of Quinim's entourage and had seized the heights commanding the airstrip on three sides. Quinim sent a note to the Pathet Lao commander reminding him of the ICC decision that both sides were to keep a minimum of two kilometers apart and that the Pathet Lao had already violated that provision.

Rather than risk capture, Quinim decided on January 13 to move his civilian staff to Houei Thao. Houei Thao, also held by the royal army, was four kilometers outside Sam Neua town. Though the trip between the two outposts normally required ten hours, it took the party two and a half days by a roundabout trail, as they had been warned by friendly villagers that the direct trail had been cut and ambushes had been set up by the Pathet Lao. The party reached Houei Thao only to find that it, too, was being surrounded and one Lao soldier had already been killed by automatic rifle fire. However, an ICC team arrived in time to prevent further bloodshed. On January 16 or 17, Quinim, at the suggestion of the Indian team leader, accompanied the team back to Nong Khang, where they discovered that all huts and stores had been destroyed and the royal army personnel had withdrawn. The Pathet Lao, who were in possession of the place, claimed they had merely walked into a deserted place. At that point, Quinim returned to Vientiane, where he was told to remain for the time being by Katay.<sup>264</sup>

Unlike the clandestine Lao People's Party, the political parties represented in the National Assembly in Vientiane did not have recourse to violent means to achieve their objectives. Kou Voravaong's assassination proved the truism that violence was brought into the political life of Laos only because of outside intervention. Not a single member of the National Assembly from 1953 to 1975 became a victim to violence. Civilian members of the police fell victim to violence on occasion; but violence was the exception rather than the rule in the life of the Lao who did not live in the "liberated zones" during these years.

The conference of Afro-Asian states held at Bandung, Indonesia, in April 1955 allowed the royal governments of Cambodia and Laos to reaffirm their sovereignties and test the sympathy they enjoyed in the greater community of nations. King Sihanouk led the Cambodian delegation and Katay, seconded by Foreign Minister Phoui, the Lao delegation. Both Vietnamese governments were also represented, a fact that allowed Katay to make the point that the DRV's representation of the Pathet Lao, a rebel movement in a sovereign nation, constituted a violation of international law.<sup>265</sup> Diem's government was surprised to receive an invitation,<sup>266</sup> which coincided with cabinet resignations and (unknown to Diem at the time) the plotting by Ely and Collins to "replace" him with someone more suitable; the Saigon delegation played a low-key role at the conference.

### 316 The Indochinese Experience of the French and the Americans

Ho Chi Minh had pledged in September 1954, in an interview with the New China News Agency, to reinforce the bonds of friendship with Cambodia and Laos on the basis of non-interference, non-aggression, and respect for territorial integrity.<sup>267</sup> On April 23, 1955, a meeting between Pham Van Dong and Katay was brought about in the presence of Chou En-lai and Nehru. Chou and Dong gave verbal assurances of non-interference in Laos. Further, Dong concluded a written agreement with the royal Lao delegation covering future relations between their two governments. The text of this agreement read:

First, the Government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam considers that the settlement which is due to take place between the Royal Government of Laos and the "Pathet Lao," by virtue of the Geneva agreements, is a question of internal order which the Royal Government of Laos and "Pathet Lao" are entirely free to solve in the best way possible in the higher interests of the country and people of Laos.

Second, the Government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam and the Royal Government of Laos will develop and harmonize the good neighborly relations which tie and should tie these countries to each other, within the framework of the Five Principles defined in the Sino-Indian Agreement of April 29, 1954.<sup>268</sup>

Chou also proposed to Katay that he and Souphanouvong meet with him in Peking to seek a solution to the Pathet Lao problem. This meeting was never held. It seems clear that the DRV insistence on the Pathet Lao problem as "a question of internal order" made the negotiations between the royal government and the Pathet Lao the focal point of the promised, but elusive, political settlement. This is why Dong could invite Katay to Hanoi in June if the Pathet Lao problem were not settled by then.<sup>269</sup> In this matter, Hanoi's views differed from those of Peking.

With the benefit of hindsight, it is possible to see that Dong's pledges were less hypocritical than would appear at first sight (and they were taken with a grain of salt at the time by the Lao). Dong was speaking in the name of the DRV government, which stood at the service of the party in its historic struggle to liberate Indochina and transform it into an advanced outpost of the international socialist movement in Southeast Asia. In the full knowledge of the party's aims, Dong was at liberty to address these words to the bourgeois and feudal remnants of the colonial order, and once the latter were swept away by the inevitable victory of the revolution Laos, and indeed Cambodia, would no longer be foreign countries. The party center was obliged for tactical reasons for the time being to preserve correct government-to-government relations with Cambodia and Laos and would continue therefore to deny its involvement in their affairs.

Diligent historical research has revealed the secret links of the party center with its agents in both kingdoms which were the true flag of the party's future strategy. As usual, it is because of the imperatives of organization that we know as much as we do about the once-secret activities of the party center, a bureaucracy like any other. On August 10, 1955, the party center established an organi-

zation secretly referred to in party documents as the Commission on Lao and Cambodian Affairs (Ban Lao Miên Trung Uong) of the Central Committee of the Vietnamese Workers' Party. This commission was headed by Le Duc Tho, with Nguyên Thanh Son acting as his deputy; Tho thus held important decision-making positions with respect to the Central Office for South Vietnam (COSVN) and Cambodia and Laos. The commission's guidelines were: (1) to follow closely the situation in Laos and Cambodia in order to inform the Central Committee of appropriate policy; (2) to follow closely and to help the Central Committee lead the implementation of the cease-fire in Laos and Cambodia; (3) to conduct propaganda so as to consolidate a spirit of friendship among the three nations; (4) to conduct research aimed at establishing good relations with the people and governments of the Kingdoms of Laos and Cambodia; (5) to follow closely the training of cadres in the Lao and Cambodian battlefields and within the areas where they have been relocated; and (6) to follow closely and to study the matter of economic assistance to Laos and the economic relations among the three nations.<sup>270</sup>

### DEALING WITH THE AMERICANS: SIHANOUK

King Sihanouk had received a letter of support from President Eisenhower on October 2, 1954. It stated:

Your Majesty:

The people of the United States have watched with concern and admiration the struggle of Cambodia against unwarranted Communist aggression. The United States is happy that Cambodia has reaffirmed its independence and that your Kingdom is in a position now to undertake a course which will secure that sovereign freedom for which your people fought.

At this time when Cambodia has so convincingly demonstrated its independence and its stern determination to maintain that independence, I desire Your Majesty to know that my Government will be pleased to consider ways in which our two countries can more effectively cooperate in the joint task of stemming the threats facing your territories and maintaining peace and prosperity in your Kingdom.

With assurances of my personal esteem and high regard,

Sincerely, Dwight D. Eisenhower<sup>271</sup>

Eisenhower's evocation of securing the sovereign freedom for which the Cambodian people had struggled appeared to be confirmed when Cambodians expressed overwhelmingly in a referendum in February 1955 their satisfaction with Sihanouk's crusade. But the rivalry for political power and positions among the Cambodian elite was becoming greatly intensified. In particular, while there was a shared feeling of pride in the manner in which the Cambodian delegation at Geneva had obtained the unconditional withdrawal of the

Viet Minh from Cambodia and preserved the country's territorial unity, the credit for having won independence from the French was still disputed. Sihanouk believed that this situation made it more necessary than ever that Cambodia should have a strong leader and not depend on parliamentary procedures. He was supported by those who saw their own fortunes dependent on the monarchy. Opposition leaders, mainly drawn from the civil service but including a few members of the royal family, favored strict adherence to the 1947 constitution.

Thus, it is puzzling why Sihanouk embarked on proposing revisions to the constitution that only would have made parliamentary rule more problematic. His suggestion that women be given the right of vote was unimpeachable, but his other "reform" proposals would have created popular assemblies at the provincial level that would have had veto power over the National Assembly and initiated a complicated procedure whereby constituents would have been empowered to recall their National Assembly deputies at any time.<sup>272</sup> Not surprisingly, once these "direct democracy" proposals and his plan to make them effective by decree were known they drew heavy criticism from most of the diplomatic corps, including the ICC, which had legal grounds for supervising political developments in Cambodia by virtue of Article 6, and from the Democratic Party. Sihanouk was apparently disturbed by this adverse reaction to "reforms" he believed would be beneficial to his country and by reports that the February referendum had been rigged by his followers.

On March 2, Sihanouk abdicated the throne so that he would have a free hand to engage in politics; at his wish (Article 26 of the 1947 constitution gave him the power to designate his heir) the Great Council of the Kingdom decided on his father, Norodom Suramarit, who had not previously reigned, as his successor. Sihanouk knew he would continue to enjoy the exalted status among his people that he had enjoyed as king; as he himself later wrote, "Whatever I do, I will always be identified with the Throne."273 His parents, Suramarit and Kossamak, gracefully took up the royal responsibilities he had abandoned. Later, as head of state, Sihanouk would achieve much the same operation of "direct democracy" by holding regular open audiences in the palace.<sup>274</sup> It was the threat of an election victory by the leftists of the Democratic Party that induced Sihanouk to take the major step of founding the Sangkum Reastr Niyum (Popular Socialist Community), which was billed as not being a party at all but a movement, one which was to guide Cambodia under Sihanouk's baton for the next 15 years.

While Sihanouk was in Bandung, recruitment drives for the Sangkum swept through provincial departments and government offices. To be a member of the Sangkum, people had to abjure membership in any political group. One after another the existing political parties except the Democrats were dissolved. Their former leaders were suitably rewarded; Prince Sisowath Sirik Matak, for example, was made defense minister in the interim government charged with preparing the elections. In accordance with Sihanouk's wishes, the elections were to pit the non-political Sangkum and his national police against the Democrats and the Pracheachon, the only survivors.

The fact that the Cambodian government's pledge at Geneva to reconcile all those Cambodian citizens who had borne arms during the war was embedded in Article 6 of the armistice agreement embroiled the ICC in conflict over its role for supervising the implementation in internal politics; this was not the case in Vietnam or Laos. The situation was to cause numerous frustrations for Sihanouk, who wanted to have a clean record of implementing the Geneva Agreement but who at the same time was in no hurry to integrate demobilized resistance fighters whom he regarded as agents of the Vietnamese Communists. His repeated attempts to gain some measure of control over the ICC's interference in Cambodian politics, as he saw it, was to be one of the leitmotifs of the evolution of the political situation.

Moreover, Sihanouk's attempts to gain security guarantees of Cambodia's sovereignty from the Americans were frustrated by procrastination on the part of the relevant bureaucracies in Washington in establishing a military assistance mission (MAAG) in Cambodia. The process, begun with goodwill in the immediate aftermath of Geneva, dragged on for more than a year, becoming an embarrassment to the American Embassy and a political liability to Sihanouk. When the agreement for military aid was finally signed on May 16, 1955, it was immediately pounced upon by the Indian and Polish members of the ICC, who picked it apart, pointing to wording that seemed to tie Cambodia into the "defense of the free world," wording that was due to the normal requirements of American legislation originating in the Mutual Security Act of 1951, but which was unfortunate in the circumstances, and which obviously was in conflict with Geneva and with Sihanouk's proclamation of neutrality.<sup>275</sup> A little more circumspection would have helped avoid this needless tempest in a teapot. The DRV's formal note of protest against alleged violations of Geneva, received by the ICC on June 21,<sup>276</sup> seemed almost superfluous; Sihanouk had still not forgiven the DRV for having attempted to seat a rival Cambodian delegation at Geneva. Sihanouk needed little encouragement from Nehru, whom he visited in March 1955, to foreswear military aid and conclude that

the best guarantee for peace in the world and for friendship between countries is to adhere to the principles of the recognition of each other's sovereignty, the independence and integrity, of non-aggression, of equality and mutual respect and non-interference in the domestic affairs of each other or of other countries and on the promotion of conditions for peaceful coexistence.<sup>277</sup>

As the September 11, 1955, date for the National Assembly elections approached, the full weight of the state's security apparatus, the royal family, and the media was mobilized in defense of a slate of candidates. Opposition newspapers were shut down. Opposition candidates were intimidated or imprisoned without trial by the police, now headed at Sihanouk's order by Dap Chhuon, who did not hesitate to beat up campaign workers, tear down posters, and break up meetings. A junior member of the royal family, Prince Norodom Vakrivan, distinguished himself prominently in the breaking up of a Democratic rally

with strong-arm tactics and gunfire on the eve of the elections.<sup>278</sup> As the foremost observer of the politics of this period has written, the mixture of favoritism, propaganda, terror, and contempt for the elite that was to continue under Sihanouk for many years was heavily documented in 1955.<sup>279</sup> The Sangkum won every seat. Sihanouk formed a new government on October 2 with Colonel Lon Nol as minister of national defense in addition to his post of chief of staff of the royal army. The post of minister of national security, which had been held by Dap Chhuon, was abolished.<sup>280</sup>

In February 1956, Sihanouk paid a state visit to Peking. The public emphasis during Sihanouk's stay in Peking was on closer cooperation in the economic and cultural fields, although there were the usual ritualistic denunciations of SEATO. China's support for Cambodia's neutrality and the prospects for Asian peace in accord with the "Bandung spirit" were stressed. "The time is ripe for us to have direct relations with the Chinese People's Republic," a visibly pleased Sihanouk said at a press conference. Sihanouk presented the Grand Cross, Cambodia's highest decoration, to Chou and Mao Tse-tung.<sup>281</sup> On a more substantive note, Chou provided some guarantee that China would act as Cambodia's protector against the DRV.282

The fact that Cambodia had extended diplomatic recognition to neither Peking nor Taipei, to neither Hanoi nor Saigon, failed to impress Assistant Secretary Robertson as evidence of a policy of neutrality when the latter expressed regret to the Cambodian ambassador in Washington about the visit.<sup>283</sup> Later, Sihanouk would use Cambodia's recognition of both Peking and Hanoi as steps to demonstrate on the world stage his independence from the United States.

Relations with the United States were rapidly going sour, pushed by adroit Communist propaganda in the Phnom Penh press and by incidents such as Ambassador McClintock's ill-timed walkout from the Third Sangkum Congress in April 1956 prior to a two-hour speech in Khmer in the course of which Sihanouk spoke in uncomplimentary fashion about American aid. Sihanouk took the walkout as a personal slight, and interpolated in his speech, as was his wont, a remark to the effect that at one time he had been accused of wanting to sell his country out to the Americans (as the Democrats had said in reference to the unhappy episode of the military aid agreement), <sup>284</sup> whereas at present his relations with the Americans were such that they didn't even want to listen to his speech.<sup>285</sup>

Sihanouk, much as he complained about foreign intervention in Cambodia, was not loath to interfere in the internal affairs of his neighbors. Thus, the communiqué after his Peking visit in 1956 repeated China's call for a reconvening of the Geneva conference to discuss the Vietnam situation. Sihanouk's policies as enunciated by the Sangkum also led him ever more into conflict with the Americans. In spite of an auspicious start with a military aid agreement signed in May 1955 and the establishment of a MAAG, American military aid to Cambodia was publicly opposed by the Democrats, secretly backed by the Prachaechon. Sihanouk's room for maneuver on this issue grew narrower as he felt the pressure internally, as his ambitions on the world stage compelled him to adjust

to the postures of Peking and Moscow, and as he came to perceive that the only enemies that directly threatened Cambodia were Thailand and South Vietnam, increasingly identified with the actions of the Americans.

# THE ROYAL QUEST FOR SECURE BORDERS

For the Laotians, the memories of the civil war that had raged in 1945–1946, pitting family members against one another, were still fresh; they hungered for unity and reconciliation. Foreign Minister Phoui Sananikone had resisted pressures for an immediate coalition government at Geneva and now worried that Katay might be misled into acceptance of such an arrangement. The United States, as a loyal ally and one that had consistently fought for the independence of Laos since 1949, backed the royal government in its frustrating early dealings with the Pathet Lao. The American minister in Vientiane was Charles W. Yost, who had been chargé d'affaires in Bangkok in late 1945 and early 1946, had seen at first hand the venality of the big powers in the region (Thailand and Vietnam). He was sympathetic to the Laotians and was quick to defend them.

With the imminence at the end of 1954 of talks with a high-level Pathet Lao delegation led by Prince Souphanouvong aimed at reintegrating the nationalists who were still on the opposite side, however, Yost on December 3 delivered the first of what would be many homilies on the subject of the adverse attitude of the United States toward any moves to include the Pathet Lao in a coalition. "I also said very earnestly," Yost reported, "I was sure my government would feel obliged to reconsider the entire question of aid to Laos if Communists should participate in [the] Lao Government."<sup>286</sup>

Yost's warning was backed up by officials of the State Department's Office of Philippine and Southeast Asian Affairs. <sup>287</sup> This was the origin of a fundamental difficulty concerning the political settlement envisaged at Geneva that was to cause the Laotians many difficulties in obtaining the understanding and cooperation of the Americans. The question of relevance here was not whether Communists were to be invited to participate in the royal government along with other duly constituted parties (which was not the intention of the royal government, but was seen as such by the Americans), but whether Communist control over the Pathet Lao could be foiled in such a way as to deprive the latter of the patriotic support it had won by fighting against the French and place the blame for secession where it belonged.

By setting the rule that the Pathet Lao could not be accepted into the national community of Laos because they were Communists, the Americans were committing a basic error. The problem for the nationalists was to accommodate the Pathet Lao into the national community on the condition that the latter foreswore violence. As violence was the basic rule of the Communist party, imposing this condition would effectively result in the separation of the nationalists from the Communists within the Pathet Lao and deprive the Communists of the ability to appeal to the people at large by pretending they were nationalists. Quite apart from the substantial assistance that would be required to fight the Pathet Lao and their foreign backers by force, the American falsification would prevent

the nationalists among the Pathet Lao from taking part in the politics of the nation and therefore hand the Communists behind the Pathet Lao front a weapon in propaganda, recruitment, and imposition of a policy of violence based on the well-known Marxist-Leninist dictum that violence begets violence.

Yost repeatedly warned the State Department that the Pathet Lao, with the DRV's help, were consolidating their positions in Sam Neua and Phong Saly at a time when the government crisis continued in Vientiane. As soon as Katay's government was approved by the National Assembly, it opened negotiations with the Pathet Lao at Khang Khay. The initial government delegation was chosen on the basis of its members' prior familiarity with the Pathet Lao rather than on the basis of seniority. However, as time passed and no agreements were reached, the delegation was upgraded in rank. Meanwhile, the contest in the two northern provinces continued. The royal army's isolated outposts there were dependent on aerial resupply, straining to the limit its fleet of three C-47 transports with their French pilots, who were under strict orders not to become engaged in combat operations. Even this vital link would be cut off when the French Expeditionary Force finally withdrew from Indochina. The United States helped out to some extent by making available planes and crews belonging to Civil Air Transport, a proprietary CIA company, to fly rice and relief goods to the region, whose population was suffering from a particularly cold winter.<sup>288</sup> People such as Quinim believed the only solution was to provide arms to the population so they could defend their own villages against the Pathet Lao, and this was done to some extent with the Meo. The on-again, off-again negotiations between the royal government and the Pathet Lao broke down completely in April.

In spite of the promises made at Bandung, the royal government received the impression in these early contacts that the opposite party was not only behaving like a sovereign entity but also like one that was subject to the orders of a foreign country. There was, to begin with, the support for the Pathet Lao by Hanoi, which was not only confirmed by evidence from the battlefield (which the royal government made public in its white book) but also in propaganda output over Radio Hanoi in Lao and other languages prepared by a team led by Sisana Sisane. The royal government protested to Hanoi that these broadcasts, which commonly referred to the royal government as "lackeys of the U.S. imperialists," constituted a flagrant interference in the kingdom's internal affairs. 289 There was also the noticeable delay in any decision required from the Pathet Lao, which did not escape Prince Savang. Souphanouvong had not immediately accepted Souvanna Phouma's invitation to meet and feigned illness as an excuse because it was necessary for him to be briefed and receive instructions from the party center before agreeing to the meeting.<sup>290</sup>

As the evidence grew of the Pathet Lao's subordination to the party center in Hanoi, the royal government showed signs of frustration that its efforts to reintegrate the Pathet Lao on acceptable terms were not supported by the Indian chairman of the ICC. Finally, in a letter to the ICC dated April 8, 1955, the prime minister stated that the Pathet Lao did not have a proved understanding of the meaning of the Geneva agreements and that what had been decided there could not be negotiated anew. The political talks were being impeded because the Pathet Lao "consider themselves still under the authority of the Viet Minh High Command, and as having conquered the provinces of Phong Saly and Sam Neua." The Pathet Lao responded by making propaganda claims and further demands in the negotiations.<sup>291</sup> The leaders of the royal government were convinced that the Pathet Lao were delaying and obstructing the political settlement with the aim of expelling the royal government from the two provinces and using them as a base for action against the rest of Laos.<sup>292</sup>

In its declaration of July 21, 1954, the royal government committed itself not to request military aid in personnel, instructors, or matériel "except for the purpose of its effective territorial defence and to the extent defined by the agreement on the cessation of hostilities." The question was what kind of and how much military equipment and personnel did this mean? The Pathet Lao occupation of the two provinces, where, pending an elusive political settlement, they were receiving aid in advisers and materiel from across the DRV border for the training and arming of thousands of new recruits that had been mobilized since the cease-fire, posed the issue for the royal government of "effective territorial defense" in a direct way.

As Robert F. Randle has pointed out, the royal government was completely within its rights to make the determination of what was required for its territorial defense on its own.<sup>293</sup> The defense of their country was a subject that preoccupied the members of the royal government in Vientiane as well as the royal house in Luang Prabang. A royal army numbering 23,650 and adequately equipped and trained would be in a position to contain the Pathet Lao fighting units, who were estimated in March 1955 to number 5,000 men organized in 10 infantry battalions and one support battalion. But the threat to Laos's sovereignty posed by the much stronger forces of the DRV was beyond the means of the Lao to cope with, as was pointed out in a staff study completed in May 1955. In the event of attack from outside its borders, Laos would not be able to defend itself with its own resources and would have to depend on the concerted action of its friends. Only when there is a clear understanding of what these friends can contribute, the paper concluded, can an effective plan of defense be drawn up.<sup>294</sup> Under the October 22, 1953, treaty, the armed forces of France or of the French Union were to support the royal army in defending the frontiers of Laos.<sup>295</sup> But France no longer had an army in Laos and the French Union had fallen into desuetude. Accordingly, the royal government had to turn to the United States to fill France's absence.

The king of Laos, who was absent from his country at the time, had not received a letter from Eisenhower, as had Diem and Sihanouk, but it was not long before the royal government asked the United States for military aid. In the light of the experience with the MAAG in Cambodia, the Americans demurred at setting up a MAAG in Laos which would be open to question by the Indian and Polish members of the ICC and subject to attack by leftist politi-

cians. A different solution had to be found. If American military personnel were not legally allowed to be in Laos, then suitably qualified American civilians would have to do the job of keeping Laotians trained in the use of American military equipment and in accounting for its disposition to the satisfaction of the Department of Defense. And the place to find such personnel was among the rosters of retired military personnel. This was the origin of the "civilian" military assistance group attached to the country team in Vientiane that was known as the Programs Evaluation Office (PEO).

The PEO was activated on December 13, 1955. It was initially staffed by reserve, retired, and former military personnel who were given State Department Foreign Service Reserve Officer rank. In taking this step, the United States was embarking on an enterprise that would create a commitment to the Laotian military that had not existed before. The embassy on occasion had to remind the military not to address messages to MAAG Laos, a supposedly non-existent unit. <sup>296</sup> Pay of the Lao armed forces soon generated a flood of kip, the Laotian currency, necessitating a program to import goods concurrently to sop up the kip and prevent runaway inflation. This program became a major component of the American economic aid program to Laos, which had begun in January 1955 with the setting up of a separate aid mission. <sup>297</sup>

The terms of reference of the PEO contained no mention of the defense of Laos against any foreign country.<sup>298</sup> The defense of Laos against foreign aggression, accordingly, was a matter that went beyond the competence of the PEO. Yet, in the opinion of Crown Prince Savang, at least, guarantees against external aggression were insufficient against Communist tactics; there should be guarantees of constitutional government of Laos against Communist-provoked internal disorders.<sup>299</sup> From this time on, Savang sought repeatedly to obtain American guarantees of action, either unilaterally or through SEATO.

To counter subversion of the kind feared by Savang, the royal government established a special service for political propaganda, the SSPP, that was separate from military control. This service, operating on a shoestring budget, gathered intelligence on the Pathet Lao, including the Pathet Lao negotiating delegation in Vientiane, and countered the main Pathet Lao propaganda themes, using an assortment of secret agents, newspapers, leaflets, theatrical troupes, medical aid teams, and a radio station broadcasting to Sam Neua. As a result of these efforts, civil servants and military personnel were less likely to be misled by Pathet Lao promises of a peaceful, democratic, egalitarian, neutral society. The service succeeded in undercutting the Pathet Lao's pretense at a nationalist character by constantly reminding its audience of the Pathet Lao's dependence on Hanoi. The effectiveness of this service is proved by the fact that in a little less than a year it succeeded in provoking the defection of 300 Pathet Lao followers, in fomenting several anti-Pathet Lao demonstrations, and in persuading large numbers of voters in several areas under Pathet Lao influence to defy a Pathet Lao call for a boycott and vote in the December 1955 elections. Through its infiltrated agents, this service also kept the government informed of the leadership of the Lao People's Party.

# DEALING WITH THE AMERICANS: SAVANG, KATAY, SOUVANNA PHOUMA

Negotiations between the royal government and the Pathet Lao resumed in July 1955 and went on without progress until September, when, largely due to the efforts of the new Indian ICC chairman, Samar Sen, a summit meeting was arranged between Katay and Prince Souphanouvong in Rangoon in October; significantly, a neutral capital was chosen instead of Peking, as Chou had offered at Bandung. The main result of this meeting was announcement of yet another cease-fire, this one coupled with a pledge by both sides not to reinforce their positions, representing a significant fallback from the position won by the royal government in Geneva. It seemed that, to avoid further violence and as a sign of goodwill, the royal government was obliged to renegotiate cease-fires and other armistice provisions over and over again, each time conceding a little bit more to the opposing side.

Ambassador Yost, meanwhile, perhaps stimulated by the Geneva summit meeting between President Eisenhower and Nikita S. Khrushchev and the latter's line of "peaceful coexistence," which he would likely demand that other Communist parties adhere to, submitted a proposal to the State Department in September 1955 to enlist the cooperation of the Soviets in Laos. Laos would be presented to the Soviets as Austria in Europe as a test of Communist sincerity. If the Soviets responded by facilitating a political settlement in Laos, the United States might respond favorably elsewhere.<sup>300</sup>

Yost's proposal was not acted upon by the Department, which was not anxious to open discussion on any Indochina issue with the Soviets in view of the impasse over the putative 1956 elections to reunify Vietnam. 301 In a letter to Yost, the director of the Office of Philippine and Southeast Asian Affairs, Kenneth T. Young, Ir., reported that "the sheer strain and difficulty of dealing adequately with non-agenda items during an international conference" outweighed the merits of the proposal as far as Laos went. He added, however, that "we are trying to do some long-range thinking here" on Laos. 302 Thus, the opportunity that the Lao would have welcomed for a great-power initiative on their behalf was lost, and this at a time when the Soviets, as well as the Chinese, exerted a restraining influence on the DRV in its pan-Indochina ambitions.<sup>303</sup> The Department's Office of Philippine and Southeast Asian Affairs was not prepared to risk dialogue with the Soviet Union or the People's Republic of China (with which ambassadorial-level talks had opened in Geneva in August 1955 led by Ambassador U. Alexis Johnson) on matters affecting Indochina, even taking into account the strong diplomatic stance of the United States on both Vietnam and Laos, and preferred instead to let things drift in the eddies of the ICC deliberations and the inconclusive meetings of Western ambassadors in the Indochinese capitals, where, of course, they had no dialogue with either the Soviets or the Chinese or the DRV.

In view of the renewed burst of optimism surrounding the meetings with Souphanouvong that summer, the royal government decided to postpone the elections to the National Assembly that had been scheduled for August until December 25, the last date on which they could be held under the constitution.

But in view of a reversal by the Pathet Lao in their earlier favorable attitude, the royal government went ahead and held the elections without them. The Pathet Lao may have been stringing out the negotiations in hopes that the royal government would accommodate their demands for a more "democratic" election law. Also, Pathet Lao participation in elections would automatically bring to an end the period specified in the royal government's statement of July 21, 1954, at Geneva defining the period during which the Pathet Lao would be represented in the temporary administration of the two provinces. This was a strategic advantage the party center was loathe to relinquish, and thus it was simpler to boycott the elections on grounds they were "undemocratic."

The elections were a huge success. Some 239 candidates were registered to contest the 39 seats at stake. For the third time since 1945, the Laotians did their civic duty and voted at the 384 polling stations in record numbers and in the total absence of violence. 304 Voter participation in the roughly half of the provinces of Sam Neua and Phong Saly under government control was relatively high—70 percent of registered voters voted in the former and 50 percent in the latter—considering the conditions of insecurity and Pathet Lao propaganda for abstention. 305 The results gave Katay's Progressive Party 20 seats, Phoui's Independent Party 9 seats, the Democratic Party 4 seats, the National Union 2 seats, and non-affiliated candidates 4 seats. 306

The meeting of the new National Assembly was put off until mid-February. Then a political crisis ensued that lasted five weeks during which various combinations of a new cabinet were presented and rejected. Katay met with sufficient opposition from Phoui, other opposition party members, and dissidents within his own Progressive Party that he was unable to form a cabinet on his own, and finally Prince Souvanna Phouma returned to office as prime minister on March 21, 1956. In his investiture speech on March 20, 1956, he called the settlement of the Pathet Lao problem "preoccupation number one" and "the gravest and most urgent question" before the country. To the time-consuming task of negotiating the reintegration of the Pathet Lao into the national community, he believed, he had an advantage in that the nominal Pathet Lao leader, Prince Souphanouvong, was his half-brother. In Laos where family ties count for a great deal, Souvanna Phouma thought it was natural that he and his half-brother, who he did not believe to be a Communist, would arrive at an agreement restoring peace to the kingdom.

The failure of the Pathet Lao campaign to portray the National Assembly elections as illegal; the admission of Laos as a member state of the United Nations on December 14, 1955; the relative success of the SSPP in countering Pathet Lao propaganda; and the passage in the ICC on January 7, 1956, of a resolution whose opening paragraph affirmed that "the sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity of Laos were recognized in the Geneva settlement" were important factors in inducing the Pathet Lao to cease their stalling. The ICC resolution was again the work of its chairman, Samar Sen, with strong support from the new Canadian commissioner, Paul A. Bridle.<sup>308</sup> Having obtained satisfaction from the ICC, Souvanna Phouma adopted the

principle cited in the resolution as the basis of his government's program for action.<sup>309</sup> So the Pathet Lao responded quickly to the prime minister's invitation to resume negotiations with an acceptance in April.

Meanwhile, the Lao continued to press American diplomats for more concrete assurances about the nature of the aid Laos could expect to receive in the event of a Communist invasion. A memorandum on this subject by outgoing Ambassador Yost<sup>310</sup> elicited a message from Dulles to Crown Prince Savang containing reassurances that the full weight of U.S. military power stood ready to intervene should the Communists attack Laos.<sup>311</sup> In his reply, Savang said Laos had confidence "in the immediate intervention of SEATO in the event of foreign aggression."<sup>312</sup> At a meeting in Washington in September 1956, Prince Savang received assurances from President Eisenhower that he was working to strengthen SEATO.<sup>313</sup> Savang, however, worried to Dulles about the rather cumbersome process by which Laos would be expected, in case of need, to appeal to SEATO for help.<sup>314</sup>

Souvanna Phouma received an invitation from Chou En-lai on May 29 to visit Peking. Lao Presse, the government news agency, immediately announced that the cabinet would discuss the invitation. Souvanna Phouma replied at the beginning of June that the visit could take place in August, but at the insistence of the Western ambassadors he included a proviso that internal problems, namely the reintegration of the Pathet Lao and the revision of important laws such as the election law, would have to be settled beforehand.<sup>315</sup>

Souvanna Phouma had invited Prince Souphanouvong to a new meeting, and after several exchanges of messages regarding such matters as venue and security, Prince Souphanouvong arrived in Vientiane on July 31. In an intense period of conversations lasting from August 1 to 10, the two princes arrived at a series of understandings, which were given substance in two communiqués. 316 In a radio address on August 10, the prime minister announced the "longawaited great news of the return of the Pathet Lao into the national community." He said the two communiqués would be given the widest possible diffusion so that Laotian citizens could see that every solution adopted rested on the declared desire to "consolidate peace, democracy, unity and independence of the Lao homeland." With regard to foreign policy, Laos was determined not to admit any foreign interference in its internal affairs, and any attack on its sovereignty would find all Lao determined to defend themselves resolutely.317 This was all in complete conformity with the ICC resolution of January 7 that Souvanna Phouma had made the keystone of his policy. Having thus met his own commitment to settle internal problems beforehand, Souvanna Phoum set off for his visit to China on August 19. This was somewhat premature as the details of agreements with the Pathet Lao were to be worked out by two mixed commissions, one political and the other military, and the legislative body discussing revision of the election law had not concluded its work, but it demonstrated good spirit.

Chou En-lai assured his invitee a grand welcome. In the royal Lao government delegation's visit to Peking the main theme stressed was Laos's neutrality

and its wish to live at peace with its neighbors. In view of Laos's inability to defend itself against foreign aggression from its more powerful neighbors, such a good neighbor policy made eminent sense. In a short stopover in Hanoi, Souvanna had discussions with the DRV leaders, whose attitude toward him was rather cooler than that of the Chinese.

It was thus at a critical moment that the new American ambassador, J. Graham Parsons, arrived in Laos in late July 1956. Parsons told Souvanna Phouma the United States objected to his trip to Peking, and, on instructions, was conspicuously absent from the well-wishers at the airport to see the delegation off. The incident marked the beginning of an antagonism between the two men that was to have disastrous consequences for Laos. The Lao passed it off as a show of pique unworthy of a great power and said the Chinese would never have behaved so. Matters were not helped when Parsons's presentation of his credentials was delayed until October 12 by a snafu in the Department's mail room, which sent his letter of credence to Lagos, by which time the negotiations with the Pathet Lao were well under way.

Parsons inherited several points of tension. One was the American military's effort to involve the royal army in closer cooperation with Thailand. This, too, in its own frustrating way, was tied to the negotiations with the Pathet Lao. The Thai, as ever, were watching Laos and the royal government's reliance on the United States to assure its security in the event of aggression. The American Embassy in Bangkok had warned about "latent neutralist tendencies" in the Thai government as early as September 1955. 318 Once the royal government had started its negotiations with the Pathet Lao, against American advice, it did not escape the Thai that the United States was able to exert singularly little direct influence on the government of a country seen to be largely dependent on American aid, and this fact tended to push the Thai even more in the neutralist direction. Instead of making the best diplomatic capital out of this situation and informing the Thai that Laos was a sovereign country and not subject to American dictate, the State Department in fact encouraged the continuation of joint Thai-Lao military contingency planning as a means of tamping down "latent neutralist tendencies" in the Thai government.

Souvanna Phouma made it clear in a July 28 conversation with Admiral Arthur W. Radford, the visiting chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, alluding to "a difference of viewpoint between the Lao and the Thai on several important matters during their joint staff talks in Thailand earlier this month,"319 that he was concerned to avoid creating the appearance of involving Laos in a foreign military alliance. He had intimated to Parsons that this was his condition for agreeing to the Laotian military's holding the bilateral talks. The revelation of any Thai-Lao alliance would provide grist for the propaganda mill of the Pathet Lao, Hanoi, and Peking. With his usual precision of language, Souvanna Phouma said that Laos could not accept Thai-Lao planning if it took on the aspect of "an alliance." On the other hand, he wished to continue "staff talks on the basis of what it would be necessary to do for defense in case of emergency and Laos had to call upon its friends."320 Souvanna Phouma's thinking on the

practical aspect of the talks was in perfect agreement with what the king was seeking and was consistent with the Laotian staff paper on defense of May 1955.

Illustrative of the increasing tensions between Vientiane and Washington was the flap over a communiqué issued in Peking after the prime minister's visit stating that Laos did not accept SEATO protection since the provisions relating to Laos had been decided without Laos's participation. In subscribing to this statement, Souvanna Phouma was technically correct; the SEATO treaty had been only cursorily discussed in Washington between Robertson and the Laotian chargé d'affaires and in Vientiane between Heath and Phoui Sananikone, and there had been no full discussion of the matter in the National Assembly as would have been normal in the case of such an important policy of state. The point was that SEATO was of little relevance to Laos's security, as was becoming evident already in 1956. As it turned out, the Chinese had made no demand that Laos reject SEATO, and Souvanna Phouma in his actual words had made no concessions to justify the American irritation. Even Parsons and his staff had to admit that the prime minister had adhered strictly to a public stance of neutrality.

In Washington, if Laos had been a low priority up to then, Souvanna Phouma's visit to Peking jarred the Office of Philippine and Southeast Asian Affairs into action. It warned that it did not wish to express "understanding" of Laos's neutrality policy, as the British, with much common sense, had done. Expressing even sympathy with a policy of neutrality might tempt the Lao to some dangerous action (such as renouncing American military aid). "We consider [that] there [is] no need now [to] give up trying [to] keep Laos clearly on [the] side [of the] West." It was in any case unrealistic for the Lao to believe their country could be neutral in the absence of big-power agreement to this effect, as Austria had done. 322 Thus, the result of the "long-range thinking" Young, the director of this office, had mentioned in his letter to Yost a year previously, apparently, was to keep Laos divided indefinitely and the two northern provinces a base area from which the party center could stage-manage the revolutionary takeover of the country. Yost's proposal of September 1955 for an Austrian-style initiative to sound out the Soviets about making Laos a test case of Communist good faith in Asia remained pigeonholed. Meanwhile, in U. Alexis Johnson's talks with the Chinese in Geneva, Laos was not mentioned.

It was therefore small wonder that the Lao nationalist leaders detected a tendency on the part of the Americans to treat their country like a pawn in the struggle between the United States and China rather than like a sovereign nation, small or otherwise. In point of fact, Washington's preoccupations with perceived Chinese threats, as was the case with Cambodia's policy of neutrality, were to result in actions that imploded on the Laotians with the destructive force of a bomb. Previous warnings to them regarding the folly of their course of action were notched up in frequency and tone. The embassy was instructed to undertake a review of options available to counter what was now being described as "the current adverse trend in Laos." 323

The Americans were in a dilemma, however; cutting the large aid program to show displeasure at the royal government's actions would make Laos less dependent on the United States. In terms of diplomacy, they were on the defensive. They discovered that the Western ambassadors' démarche to Souvanna Phouma (regarding settlement of internal problems prior to his visiting Peking) in which they had taken the lead, rather than resulting in a postponement of the visit as they had intended had instead encouraged the prime minister to reach agreements with Souphanouvong that could be presented as settlement of the Pathet Lao problem. Parsons, perhaps because this tactic afforded him the greatest immediate leverage over the royal government, warned that the Congress was unlikely to approve appropriations for the pay of Communist soldiers integrated into the royal army. In fact, this was the last part of any negotiated settlement to be tackled and was recognized by the Lao as the most difficult step, one that was still far off in the future. Delays in release of the monthly Lao military budget were quickly seen by the Lao for what they were, blackmail. See 10 of 10

On another front, Parsons began paying attention in his reporting to alleged divisions within the ranks of the nationalists; there was worry and uncertainty among the Lao elite over Souvanna Phouma's course, he said, particularly among those who considered U.S. aid as indispensable to Laos's survival, and anxiety for their own political future. <sup>326</sup> Such anxiety, of course, could easily be quietly encouraged. Thus, almost from the moment of his arrival in Laos, Parsons was sowing the seeds of disunity among the nationalists that would lead in short order to the rise of figures on the political scene who were willing to do anything for the sake of American largesse.

Souvanna Phouma tried his best to ignore these American admonitions and threats, and pursued his own policy agenda. The revisions to the election laws which his government had proposed and which a committee of the National Assembly and the King's Council was studying would institute women's suffrage for the first time, increase the number of deputies in the National Assembly, and lengthen the election campaign.<sup>327</sup> He continued doggedly, however, to try to explain to the Americans what he was doing. In a talk with Parsons on August 1 he said he had told Souphanouvong that the Pathet Lao would be under parliamentary rule; if they observed the laws, they could do what they wanted without trouble, but if they set out to overthrow the government that was against the law and they would be arrested. 328 But the lack of support on the part of Laos's traditional friends for the government's reconciliation policy, foreseen at Geneva, was clearly beginning to worry him. At a banquet on August 11, he alluded to doubts felt by some of Laos's friends and asked: "Representatives of large democratic countries seated at this table, tell me if there is any people on earth who would shrink from consecrating its own unity?"329

With the mixed commissions continuing the work of negotiation, an agreement for cessation of hostilities was signed on October 31. On November 2, an agreement was signed on implementing a policy of peace and neutrality. On December 24, an agreement was signed on measures to guarantee civic rights and non-discrimination to former Pathet Lao members and to integrate Pathet

Lao cadres. This was followed on December 28 by issuance of a joint declaration on matters remaining to be negotiated.<sup>330</sup> This joint declaration was forwarded to the ICC the next day with a joint letter requesting the ICC to inform the co-chairmen that once the general supplementary elections had been held the political settlement foreseen in Article 14 would have been realized.<sup>331</sup> On November 16, in Souvanna Phouma's presence, Souphanouvong and other members of the Pathet Lao delegation took the oath of allegiance to the king.<sup>332</sup>

Souvanna Phouma's position was based on the premise that national unity was the priority objective. On this, everything else hinged. In the first instance, this unity took a territorial form. In a memorandum transmitted to 30 foreign embassies on January 16, 1957, he declared "It is intolerable to remain any longer in a situation where two provinces of the Kingdom are amputated territorially and demographically." National unity was also essential politically in the sense that the Pathet Lao should not be allowed to play the game by their own minority rules but should be made to play by the majority rules. Unity implied that the political party of the Pathet Lao be allowed to contest elections along with other nationalist parties, on condition that its members accepted the monarchy and the constitution.

The acceptance of the Pathet Lao's political party into the national community was the surest guarantee against a Communist takeover of the country, so feared by the Americans and seemingly so improbable to the Laotian nationalists. Souvanna Phouma was astute enough to recognize the ever-present danger of a resumption of armed conflict. What he could not accept, however, was the fact that the Americans refused to see that the Pathet Lao was made up of a majority of nationalists subject, in present circumstances at least, to Communist control. This was proved by defectors and refugees from the Pathet Lao zone who were disaffected by the evidence they had seen of Communist control in terms of their everyday lives and the constant propaganda beamed against the royal government. Excluded from the national community, the Pathet Lao were tightening their hold, militarily and politically, on the two northern provinces, whose reintegration, it seemed to Souvanna Phouma and the Lao elite, should have been accomplished long ago. To break off the negotiations now would mean postponing the achievement of national unity for years, decades, perhaps indefinitely. At the very least, it would mean a resumption of fighting. Accordingly, the royal government would go far in its search for a solution other than by military force. This decision was not subject to criticism or blame from any outsider: the matter concerned a difference among Laotians. 333

Souvanna Phouma's note frankly said that his efforts to cultivate correct relations with the DRV and China were intended to isolate the Communists in the Pathet Lao. He did not rely only on assurances of goodwill from Hanoi and Peking. Correct relations depended on the refusal of these governments to support the Communists in the Pathet Lao in attempts to subvert the royal government. Even so, the extent to which Souvanna Phouma was willing to go was limited; he had obtained that the agreement on the government's foreign policy signed between the royal government and the Pathet Lao on November 2, 1956,

was modified by secret minutes that precluded the establishment of diplomatic relations with China until the Taiwan question had been settled and with the DRV until the outstanding border dispute between the two countries had been settled and the Pathet Lao problem had been settled.<sup>334</sup> Laos had established diplomatic relations with the Republic of Vietnam, but this was normal in view of the past relationship of the two governments within the French Union.

On January 21, 1957, in an effort to firm up the framework of the negotiated agreements, the cabinet decided to demand written guarantees from Souphanouvong that committed the Pathet Lao to place the two provinces under royal control, to dissolve his movement, and to integrate his civil servants before or simultaneously with the entry of two Pathet Lao ministers into the government. This move may have been suggested by Katay, deputy prime minister. On February 4, 1957 the negotiations resumed with the return of Prince Souphanouvong to the capital.

The attitude of the United States was hardening; from one of threatening a reappraisal and even a possible suspension of aid to Laos, made in a State Department memorandum dated November 7, 1956,335 and conveyed by Parsons to Souvanna Phouma on November 13,336 it had gone to one of threatening, in a letter dated January 25, a reassessment of American policy toward Laos in toto.<sup>337</sup> The Department was now expressing its satisfaction that the prime minister was worried by the American threats and was signaling to the embassy its intention to avoid enhancing his position by inviting him to Washington or otherwise moving toward a reconciliation that the prime minister was seeking.<sup>338</sup>

In the State Department, the situation in Laos was perceived increasingly as a Chinese plot. Thus when the Pathet Lao put forward a demand that the royal government accept aid from neighboring states, in particular China, alarm bells went off in Washington, and Parsons was told to read the government the riot act. Like a Greek chorus, the responsible officials in the Department, who were led by Assistant Secretary Robertson and included William J. Sebald, Eric Kocher, and Patricia M. Byrne, intoned dire consequences, but their preoccupation with the perceived Chinese threat betrayed a failure of analysis. The massive aid provided by China to the Viet Minh during the war had been in response to Ho's 1950 plea to the Chinese party. This had placed the DRV in China's debt, certainly. The two parties saw a mutual interest in consolidating an outpost of socialism in Southeast Asia. What was not appreciated in Washington was that China and the DRV acted out of national interests as much as did the United States and its neighbors. If Mexico, for example, threatened a takeover of one or more of the Central American states, it was not automatic that the United States would support this move; in fact, it might wish, on the contrary, to encourage good bilateral relations with these states. To see the takeover threat as evidence of the aggressive designs of the United States in the region would then be false. China was able to maintain not only correct but cordial state relations with the princes of Cambodia and Laos out of similar national interests. Out of this failure of analysis in Washington came the selfdefeating policy of penalizing the Indochinese leaders for their cultivation of China when in fact they faced a threat from the DRV. Little thought was given in Washington, or indeed at the American embassies in Cambodia and Laos, to helping them meet this threat. On the contrary, deliberate American steps aimed against China made their predicament worse.

On February 21, an agreement on modalities for holding elections was signed. With his room for maneuver narrowing, Souvanna Phouma decided to confront the Western powers directly on the question of whether or not they supported his government's policy toward the Pathet Lao. Accordingly, he sent a note on February 22 to the embassies of the United States, Britain, and France expressing the wish that a joint declaration of their governments would emphasize the interest they attached "to the effective reunification of the Kingdom of Laos, respecting the full sovereignty of the Royal Government and the integrity of the national territory."<sup>339</sup> In a broadcast appeal for national unity on April 8, Souvanna Phouma chided his critics for producing no constructive solution and defended the continuation of the negotiations as the only alternative to civil war or the abandonment of the two provinces.<sup>340</sup>

Parsons seems to have kept an open mind on the question of a coalition as late as November 1956. He was not above pointing out, in private exchanges with Washington, that flat-out opposition to a coalition would place the embassy in an untenable position, not only with respect to the Lao but also with respect to the Western allies. He was willing to admit that some reasonable people in Vientiane thought that not all Pathet Lao were by definition Communists. What exactly was American policy with regard to the solution of the Pathet Lao problem?<sup>341</sup> His exchanges with the prime minister involved him in arguments over the constitutionality of a coalition government. Parsons had started out by opposing a coalition without an election in which the NLHS would have won seats in the National Assembly. In fact, the Lao constitution did not require members of the government to be members of the National Assembly. The position was papered over in the American reply to the royal government's tripartite note which, after much discussion in the chanceries of Washington, London, and Paris, was finally submitted to the royal government on April 16; ignoring legalization of the NLHS, it said the American government hoped the royal government would not allow its political future to be dictated by "dissident groups enjoying no constitutional status."342 On receipt of the note, Souvanna Phouma said that a coalition government was constitutional.343

Prince Phetsarath returned to Laos from Thailand in March 1957. His title of viceroy was restored to him, and he was shown great deference in view of the historic role he had played in the Lao Issara. Although he traveled extensively in different parts of the country and spoke of his desire for reconciliation among the Lao, he was never again to enjoy a political role in the central government of the kingdom. There were still many who distrusted him, and he made too obvious a figurehead in Communist propaganda for him to assume leadership. Whether he took any active part in the actual smoothing out of differences that was well under way by the time he returned from his self-imposed exile, as he claimed to Parsons, or whether such differences were the figments of an imagined role for him-

self, the question of whether he would have handled the Pathet Lao question better than his brother, Souvanna Phouma, must remain a matter of speculation. He died in October 1959 within a fortnight of King Sisavang Vong.

In the National Assembly, which opened its usual session on May 11, Constitution Day, under the chairmanship of Pheng Phongsavan, Souvanna Phouma outlined his policy<sup>344</sup> and defended it in three days of debate at the end of the month. The Pathet Lao had already attacked his démarche in seeking the support of the Western powers as an intervention in Lao affairs, and this criticism was taken up on the Assembly floor by Bong Souvannouvong, the leader of the National Union Party. But the issue that troubled most of the deputies was the continued skirmishing in the northern provinces despite the cease-fire. Phoui Sananikone asked the deputies to stand for a minute of silence to honor the dead who had fallen while fighting for their country. The debate demonstrated again the capacity of the Lao elite to debate grave questions affecting the survival of their country in a reasonable manner. These were realistic individuals who were in touch with the people in their home villages and who harbored no doubts about the fact that the Pathet Lao were Communists or dominated by Communists, as even the American Embassy admitted.<sup>345</sup>

A series of questions was posed following the debate on May 29. A question "Is the Assembly satisfied with the past agreements signed between the royal government and the Pathet Lao?" was approved by a show of hands without opposition. A second question "Is the Assembly satisfied with the implementation of these agreements already signed?" was disapproved unanimously by a show of hands, reflecting worries about the cease-fire and the sincerity of the Pathet Lao. A third question, this one voted on in secret with cabinet members abstaining, "Does the Assembly want the government to carry on with the policies outlined by the prime minister?" resulted in 11 votes for the government and 13 votes against. The government immediately resigned, although the question had not been intended as a formal vote of confidence. Public reaction to the resignation varied from surprise to a feeling on the part of many civil servants and townspeople that the government had been obliged in honor to resign. In some quarters, the reaction was that the fall was regrettable since the government had not been considered unsatisfactory. The same provides the surprise to a feeling on the part of many civil servants and townspeople that the government had been obliged in honor to resign. In some quarters, the reaction was that the fall was regrettable since the government had not been considered unsatisfactory.

In any event, Souvanna Phouma was probably not reluctant to resign. The indefatigable ICC chairman, Samar Sen, who departed in July, had succeeded in bringing the opposing sides to the table to reach agreement instead of merely vying for tactical advantage. But the agreements were the fruit of Souvanna Phouma's efforts. He had brought the negotiations almost to the desired result, and the Assembly showed itself pleased with the course pursued so far. Agreement with the Pathet Lao on the key issues surrounding the setting up of a coalition was still ahead, as was restoration of the royal administration in the two provinces. Another factor that influenced Souvanna Phouma's thinking was that by resigning he avoided having actual negotiations with Communists injected into the annual congressional debate in Washington over aid appropriations for Laos. The American aid program had grown to such massive proportions (the

program ranked first in the world in per capita terms) that the abuses it generated had begun to attract the attention of a critical Congress, in spite of official attempts to keep news stories of corruption out of the American press.

The ensuing cabinet crisis finally came to an end in August when the king invited Souvanna Phouma to make a new attempt at forming a government. He did so with a slimmed-down cabinet that would not deprive him of supporting votes in the Assembly. In his investiture speech on August 8, Souvanna Phouma reiterated that the re-establishment of territorial unity through the settlement of the Pathet Lao problem was the top priority, and he sought to reassure those who felt strongly that the re-establishment of the royal administration in the two northern provinces should come before the entry of the Pathet Lao into the government. The vote was favorable. The crucial test was approaching. The Pathet Lao intelligence in the field was very good, as evidenced by a 14-page list of alleged violations of previous agreements by the royal government sent by Souphanouvong to the chairman of the ICC, Dr. Shaukatullah Shah Ansari, on August 12, 1957. The strong str

Once again, Parsons (who had retreated behind the diplomatic position that had been adopted with the State Department's agreement that whether Souvanna Phouma's government was refused confidence in the National Assembly was "no affair of ours and that we are interested only in [a] government which will vigorously defend Lao independence thus affording us [a] chance [to] continue [to] support efforts of [the] Lao [to] build their country,"350) sought by all means to delay the negotiations, questioning the concessions the royal government was preparing to make and arguing the unenforceability of the commitments offered by the Pathet Lao. Souvanna Phouma remained unconvinced by Parsons' arguments, saying in effect that achievement of the final goal was worth some risk-taking. Parsons, in turn, was unconvinced by Souvanna Phouma's counterarguments. The two men were thus at loggerheads. It was a disturbing aspect of their relationship that not once did Parsons pause to consider seriously the Lao point of view on the Pathet Lao issue but restricted himself to passing on the threats from Washington and reporting, in his telegrams, on ways to halt, or at least stall, the political settlement. The Lao rapidly concluded that Parsons was a talker, not a listener. In a conversation lasting one hour and a half with Prince Phetsarath, Parsons did most of the talking, telling Phetsarath of American policy and action in Laos and launching into numerous digressions such as comparing the American and French systems of government; the prince hardly got a word in edgewise.<sup>351</sup>

## LEGALIZATION OF THE LAO PATRIOTIC FRONT

The statutes of the Lao Patriotic Front (Neo Lao Hak Sat, or NLHS), as amended on September 20, 1957, were accepted as legal by the ministry of interior in Vientiane, and the Front opened its Vientiane office on November 26. To all appearances, it was modeled on the patriotic popular fronts set up by Communist parties in Eastern Europe at the close of World War II to enable them to infiltrate and subvert the non-Communist majority. The Front would

mount a formidable challenge to the established nationalist parties. What distinguished it from the others was not its program, which was as innocuous in its own way as that of the other parties, but its grassroots organization in the countryside, which consisted of the dedicated and disciplined cadres of the secret party. In the embassy's opinion, the Front was the "best organized political party in the country," which was putting it mildly.

A reading of its statutes reveals the Front as more a movement than a party, one that appealed to as wide a nationalist audience as possible. Its stated goal was to unite all Laotians in the defense of peace, fatherland, religion, and throne with a view toward building a peaceful, neutral, united, democratic, independent, and prosperous Kingdom of Laos. The word communism was not mentioned. Nor was Marxism-Leninism. No mention was made of the secret Laotian Communist Party or of its links to Hanoi or of its revolutionary program.<sup>353</sup>

Organizationally, the Front hardly differed from the other parties, with the exception that its grassroots units were real, not merely on paper. The statutes of the Front were in fact modeled on those of the Vietnam Fatherland Front. The While at the top the Front's Central Committee was tightly controlled by Communist party members such as Kaysone who sat on the standing committee of the Central Committee, the grassroots units made the Front eminently susceptible to being subverted from within. Grassroots units were democratically elected by majority vote. The operational decision-making body in the Front was the congress, which, theoretically at least, could be convoked by an initiative from below. However, no Congress of the Lao Patriotic Front met between 1956 and April 1964, and then it met in secrecy in Sam Neua. The Front was an organization geared for war as much as for peace.

Apart from the relatively feeble efforts mounted by the government's special service for political propaganda and its successor, the Information, Documentation and Socio-Political Action Service (SIDASP),<sup>355</sup> which operated on shoestring budgets and exploited fortuitous events such as the defection in September 1955 of the secretary of the Pathet Lao negotiating delegation in Vientiane, Major Kavinh Keonakorn, no one and no agency on the government side attempted to turn the Front against its Communist controllers by creating doubts, dissension, and disobedience. This task would have required a patient, long-term effort, and it was the lack of this as much as the issues that proved decisive in the Front's electoral success in the 1958 elections.

The Front banked heavily on the personal popularity of its leader, Prince Souphanouvong, for getting votes. But more substantive issues such as the corruption associated with American aid played into its hands as well. Embassy officers traveling in the provinces reported the concern of local government officials that no serious effort was being made to counter the Front's propaganda. The feeling was widespread that in spite of its large dollar amounts, American aid was hardly visible outside Vientiane and was going to enrich a small minority, and leaders such as Savang and Phetsarath mentioned it in their conversations with the ambassador.<sup>356</sup>

### THE ADVENT OF THE FIRST COALITION

In spite of Foreign Minister Phoui Sananikone's assurances during a visit to Washington in October that a coalition was still a long way off,<sup>357</sup> the negotiations in Vientiane began to move rapidly that month. Parsons was later to blame the rapidity with which the final agreements were concluded on the fact that Souvanna Phouma no longer felt the restraining hand of Phoui,<sup>358</sup> but it is probably closer to the truth that Souvanna Phouma took advantage of Parsons's absence accompanying Phoui in Washington to speed the negotiations toward a conclusion.

Also, it should not be assumed that Pathet Lao desire for an agreement was a constant in the equation; some evidence suggests that the Pathet Lao negotiating team under Souphanouvong and Phoumi Vongvichit was under orders from the party center to conclude an agreement rapidly because defections and other manifestations of discontent were appearing in areas under Pathet Lao administration at the time. To Groups of refugees numbering as many as 250 had been fleeing from Sam Neua, having seen through the empty promises of a better life under the "Lao Patriotic Forces" and watched their sons being conscripted for military service and sent to North Vietnam for indoctrination. The royal government made the most of these groups, sending them food and clothing and publicizing their plight. In this the Lao social welfare service acted with commendable speed and initiative.

On October 22, final agreement was reached on re-establishing the royal administration over the two provinces and integration of Pathet Lao cadres. The agreements reaffirmed the full sovereignty of the royal government over the two provinces and provided for a government of national union to be presented to the National Assembly for investiture and supplementary elections to the National Assembly to be held four months later.<sup>361</sup> Yet another warning from Washington to the effect that the United States would "closely examine each step in execution in order to ascertain whether RLG [Royal Lao Government] remaining in effective control situation and defending position recognized at Geneva"<sup>362</sup> fell on deaf ears. The only concession Souvanna Phouma was willing to make was to hold up public announcement of the agreements until after Parsons's return to Vientiane.

A joint communiqué signed by Souvanna Phouma and Souphanouvong on November 2 announced the agreements. Agreement on the re-establishment of the royal administration in the provinces of Sam Neua and Phong Saly and agreement on the integration of Pathet Lao personnel into the national army were signed on November 12.363 Article 1 of the former stated:

From the date of publication of the Declaration of handing over of the two Provinces to the Royal Government, the two Provinces shall effectively be placed under the dependence of the Kingdom. All the laws in force in the Kingdom shall be applied there. They shall be governed by the Constitution and the laws of the Kingdom.

As the first concrete step, in a symbolic ceremony on November 18 Souphanouvong formally returned to the royal authority in the person of Crown Prince Savang the administration of the two provinces, together with all the troops, civil servants, and war matériel belonging to the Pathet Lao. On the afternoon of the same day, the crown prince opened an extraordinary session of the National Assembly to approve the national union government, which included Souphanouvong as minister of planning, reconstruction, and urbanism and Phoumi Vongvichit as minister of cults and fine arts. The debate on the following day was characterized by a relaxed atmosphere and a general feeling of goodwill. Souvanna Phouma was in full control. All 16 speakers representing all the political parties in the Assembly congratulated the government for bringing the negotiations to a successful conclusion. The prime minister stressed that the government requesting investiture was merely temporary until the holding of supplementary elections four months hence. Khamsing, an independent deputy, asked what the government would do in the event some Pathet Lao refused to re-enter the national community. The prime minister requested that Souphanouvong be allowed to answer this question. Souphanouvong replied that the Pathet Lao wanted to execute 100 percent of the agreements that had been signed.<sup>364</sup> A draft anti-Communist law that had been before the Assembly for consideration for some time seemed inappropriate to the circumstances and was allowed to die quietly.

Ignoring Souvanna Phouma's pleas to give the government one or two months in which to demonstrate the workability of the agreements,<sup>365</sup> Parsons cabled the State Department his recommendation for an interim policy pending a re-evaluation in Washington. He urged that in the meantime American military and economic aid not be reduced, but that the government not be permitted to assume that aid would continue regardless.<sup>366</sup> The Department cabled its concurrence with Parsons's recommendations the next day, noting that the last point would present a major difficulty.<sup>367</sup> On November 23, Parsons handed Souvanna Phouma the official notification that the re-evaluation of American policy which had been impending since the letter of November 13, 1956 was now at hand.<sup>368</sup> Fearing an abrupt cutoff of aid in reaction to the coalition, Canada, Australia, France, and Britain all urged a continuation of American aid to Laos, the last particularly arguing that the supplementary elections would provide the real test and that Laos's foreign friends should do their utmost to help the royal government assure victory.<sup>369</sup>

In a letter to the ICC on November 26, Souvanna Phouma stated that the agreements constituted a preliminary political settlement as envisaged in article 14 of the Geneva Agreement and that the activities of the ICC were therefore nearing an end.<sup>370</sup> Only oversight of the elections remained to complete the mission of the ICC.

On December 8 in the little town of Sam Neua, composed of about 50 thatched houses and 10 masonry houses, many of which still showed damage from the fighting, and in the presence of ICC observers and of some 50 Pathet Lao soldiers and 200 civilian spectators who provided applause, authority over the province was ceremonially transferred to the royal government. Prince Souphanouvong spoke first, followed by Souvanna Phouma. The next day, in a simple ceremony lasting 15 minutes, the new governor of the province, Thong

Savath, a career civil servant who was director of administration in the ministry of interior, was installed.<sup>371</sup> Similar ceremonies were held in Phong Saly a few days later.

The Embassy reported that the reoccupation of the two provinces by the army had gone off without incident. The government's writ ran up to the borders of North Vietnam and China. Integration of Pathet Lao troops was begun; 6,129 men reported for processing and over 3,500 weapons were turned in by January 31, 1958.<sup>372</sup> More ominously, certain Pathet Lao units were reported to have crossed over into North Vietnam with their arms. But Laos was at last reunified. It was to be the last time until 1975, when the Communists took over in Vientiane.

# Class Struggle in the DRV

In North Vietnam the food situation was not good. In addition to the dislocations of production due to the war (and not least the flight of tens of thousands of rural refugees to the cities), the rice harvests of 1954 were poor. Rice imports from Nam Bo, the customary way of bridging the gap between harvests, were no longer possible. The situation was to some extent alleviated by Chinese aid in the form of rice shipments. After settling in Hanoi, the DRV government imposed an austerity program involving the imposition of new taxes (ad valorem merchandise tax, stock tax, tax on goods in private hands in excess of stated quantities, and continuation of collection of land taxes payable in rice) and the institution of a new rice rationing and distribution system (8 kilograms of rice per month for children under the age of 8 and 15 kilograms for persons 9 years and over) through state outlets.<sup>373</sup>

The new and steep taxes were designed to weed out the commercial class as a forerunner to nationalization of the economy. However, the most drastic changes in the structure of the economy and the society came in the countryside, where the land reform measures that had been initiated in 1953 on a comparatively timid scale were applied with draconian effect to the 80 to 90 percent of the population who lived there.<sup>374</sup>

Certainly there was an objective of rehabilitating food production behind these measures; large-scale famine as had occurred in 1945 would have been a heavy political blow for the regime to sustain in view of its propaganda in favor of the revolution. Before March 1955 the rent reduction and land reform measures had affected mainly regions under permanent Viet Minh control; now the regime applied these measures to the densely populated Red River Delta. As Pham Van Dong had already told the third session of the National Assembly in December 1953, "Land reform is a revolution, a class struggle in the interest of the peasants." Now the Permanent Land Reform Committee, a dependency of the party's Organization Bureau, was given responsibility for implementing the land reform.

A propaganda campaign designed to awaken class consciousness drummed the terms cruelty (gian ác), slavery (nô lê), savage exploitation (bóc lôt da man),

valets of imperialism (tay sai cua dê quôc), and enemies (dich) of the revolution, of the people, and of the nation into the heads of the peasants. The peasants were to be liberated not only from exploitation at the hands of their former landlords, but also from their old ways of thinking (giai phóng chê dô tu tuong cua nông dân). The basis of this land reform, as Bertrand de Hartingh notes on the basis of his examination of the contemporary speeches in the National Assembly archives in Hanoi, was hate; it was hate that would regenerate the vital energy of the peasants, make them a fundamental revolutionary force, and, in the words of one deputy in the National Assembly sitting of March 25, 1955, "give back the shine to their faces, put in the mouths of the peasants words that would bend the heads and lower the eyes of the landlords." 375

The regime had recourse to encouraging the formation of mutual aid teams to stimulate production, a traditional method dating from the early part of the century. This would serve as a stepping-stone on the path to the collectivization of agriculture clearly in the minds of the DRV leaders from September 1955 onward. The process of eliminating big landowners created a great deal of confusion, however, for in the relatively narrow range of landholdings in North Vietnam (once the few large plantations, usually owned by the French or the Catholic Church, had been expropriated) it was not easy for the party's cadres to apply the guidelines making distinctions between big, medium, and small. Moreover, as time went on, the land reform campaign was made increasingly to serve as a tool to weed out supposed agents of Diem's regime in the south, with whom the large landowners were identified. This identification in turn caused the campaign to increase in violence when the cadres responsible for its implementation interpreted resistance on the part of those who felt they had been unjustly treated as evidence of a concerted counter-revolutionary plot by enemy agents. The political confusion was compounded by the fact that there was no correlation between the identities of landlords and former mandarins.

According to a former cadre of the land reform campaign, 12,000 members and cadres of the party and 20,000 ordinary civilians were executed during the campaign.<sup>376</sup> In the autumn of 1956, as these excesses became known, the regime launched a "rectification of errors of the land reform" (*sua chua nhung sai lâm cua cai cách ruông dat*) campaign. This campaign led to a further wave of killings as scores were settled in villages affected by the land reform.

In December, the sixth session of the National Assembly turned into a debate in which criticism of injustices committed in the course of the land reform program was surprisingly outspoken. De Hartingh's research into the proceedings of the National Assembly has yielded documentary confirmation of many of the criticisms made by contemporaries of the events described such as Hoang Van Chi, an intellectual who joined the Viet Minh in 1945 and whose family experienced the land reform at first hand. Chi described, for example, how at one stage the campaign pitted the older party cadres with their bourgeois backgrounds against new young cadres from worker or peasant families in a deliberate party policy to ease the transition from an anti-colonial position to an anti-feudal one.<sup>377</sup> De Hartingh cites one deputy, a former cadre who had been

arrested, who at the sitting of January 15, 1957, severely criticized the government for demanding gratitude for what was simply retribution due.<sup>378</sup>

Releasing older party cadres from unjust imprisonment did not solve the problem, because the younger cadres, wishing to preserve their newfound power and prerogative, attacked the older ones. Many older cadres were simply killed as soon as they returned to their villages, but others acted in self-defense and engaged in retaliation, secure in their rehabilitation and emboldened by the support and sympathy of the villagers. These older cadres began apprehending those who had accused them falsely and carried out against them the very crimes they themselves had been accused of during the land reform. Those who had been accused of forcing poor peasants to eat excrement now avenged themselves by forcing their accusers to do the same. There were instances of lynchings watched by large crowds and of slanderers having their mouths split or their tongues cut out, a form of punishment deemed appropriate in Vietnamese village life. The most serious incidence of spontaneous violence occurred in Quynh Luu District of Nghe An Province, where 20,000 peasants armed only with sticks and other crude weapons fought against an entire division of regular troops sent to restore order.<sup>379</sup>

Faced with widespread uncontrolled violence, the DRV ministry of justice issued a special memorandum on December 1, 1956, in an attempt to remedy the situation:

The interest of the state, the life and property of the people have been violated, in many instances, very seriously. In some areas there is no regard for the Law, while in others it is openly flouted. This grave situation is greatly damaging the moral and material life of the population as well as the prestige of the government.<sup>380</sup>

In Hanoi, far removed from the villages where class struggle was being waged with bloodshed, Sainteny was encouraged by the fact that the DRV had requested France to provide teachers for the Lycée Albert Sarraut in Hanoi. The French sought to meet this request by sending teachers from Saigon. One of those who volunteered was Gérard Tongas, a leftist professor of history and geography at the Lycée Chasseloup-Laubat in Saigon. Tongas and his wife taught at the Chu Van An secondary school in the capital. Appalled at what he found in North Vietnam, he wrote a book filled with evidence that contradicted Sainteny's statements about the French presence exerting a restraining influence on the Hanoi regime. This book was so displeasing to the Communists that the French Communist Party, out of solidarity with its Vietnamese comrades, ordered all possible copies of it stolen and destroyed.<sup>381</sup>

Tongas's observations about the situation in schools, where indoctrination had replaced education, were unique in that he was one of the rare foreigners to have an inside view. The children of cadres were placed in schools reserved specially for them, where they had practically no contact with the rest of the population. Their studies were not on a higher level than those of other children, but they were more strongly influenced by party directives because the

goal was to make them the cadres of the future. In all schools, political meetings were accorded great importance. In such meetings, the students sat in a semicircle out of doors around the microphone. The meeting was opened by the principal of the school and usually concerned subjects treated in the party newspaper *Nhan Dan*. Meetings lasted from half an hour to two hours and disrupted the normal teaching schedule. Tongas observed that the campaign against illiteracy, which received much praise from foreigners who had occasion to see young and old alike at evening classes repeating phrases, consisted essentially of teaching the students to repeat and write some 20 slogans—"Long live President Ho!" "Long live the Vietnamese Workers' Party!" "Long live Peace!" "The Imperialism of the Americans and their lackeys will be defeated!"—and thus was merely more indoctrination. Those who completed this phase successfully were enrolled in "complementary classes," where they learned an elementary vocabulary of "political language" that enabled them to read *Nhan Dan*. <sup>382</sup>

Instead of demobilization, the DRV's army underwent an extensive reorganization and reinforcement in the aftermath of Geneva. By October, 25 new infantry battalions and four artillery or mortar battalions had been formed, according to French intelligence estimates. By the end of the year the army counted 10 or 11 infantry divisions and 2 artillery-engineer divisions plus general reserve elements. This represented a doubling of the pre-armistice order of battle but was accomplished by upgrading units: independent battalions and regiments were amalgamated into the new divisions, regional companies were upgraded into new battalions, and militia forces were upgraded to regional and regular status. The upgraded units were armed by continuing secret arms imports from China. French sources estimated that Chinese aid had resulted in a 50 percent increase in artillery weapons and included enough mortars and recoilless rifles to equip five infantry divisions. Ammunition shipments were also heavy.<sup>383</sup> The reinforcement in this period was detailed in a postwar publication of the Vietnam Military History Institute. Two-thirds of the weapons were modernized. "The modernization of the army to a large extent had to rely on assistance from the Soviet Union, China, and other fraternal socialist countries."384

It is little wonder that the effects of the misdirected land reform campaign, the general politicization and enforced austerity of life, and the destruction of Vietnamese traditional values and even language caused the party to become so unpopular with the common people that by 1956 its secretary-general, Truong Chinh, had to resign and Ho himself committed his prestige to the task of rehabilitating the party by assuming the post himself. If in July 1954 Ho's popularity was such that he would have won an all-Vietnam election, two years later there can be little doubt that he would have lost in a free and fair contest with Diem for the loyalty of the Vietnamese North and South.<sup>385</sup> This reversal may explain why the DRV held no elections to its National Assembly in the postwar years from 1954 to 1960; the old National Assembly, which had long since lost any representational quality, continued to deal with all business, but it was in reality its standing committee, controlled by the party leadership, that passed on all legislation.

American relations with the DRV gradually faded away. On July 26, 1954, the Bureau of Foreign Commerce of the Department of Commerce had announced that all outstanding export licenses had been suspended for Communist-controlled areas of Indochina. Consul Corcoran had carried on as best he could under restrictions imposed following the Viet Minh takeover of Hanoi. His dealings with the government were through the Military and Administrative Council of Hanoi, which was in effect the municipal government. When he was told he could no longer use his radio to communicate with the outside, he attempted to send telegrams through the telegraph office, but they were returned. Finally, he evacuated his staff and closed the two buildings owned by the consulate on December 12, 1955. Thus, the last official American link with the DRV was severed.

# The Question of Elections to Reunify Vietnam

The question of the reunification of Vietnam as it developed in 1955–1956 is one of those questions for which viewpoint is everything. Perhaps on no question in the entire post-independence period of Vietnam have the viewpoints been farther apart. The question, indeed, has become a sort of polemical divide. As with much of the writing on Vietnam in the aftermath of the American war, discussion of these putative elections has been based on an assumption. In this case, the assumption has always been that everything the DRV government did after the armistice was justified while everything the State of Vietnam government did was unjustified, not to say illegal.

As partition emerged in the negotiations at Geneva,<sup>388</sup> the participants all agreed that the division of Vietnam was to be temporary and the country was to be reunified. In their discussions leading up to the final negotiations, Dulles had told Mendès-France that American acceptance of the final agreement depended, among other things, on its not excluding the possibility of the ultimate unification of Vietnam by peaceful means.<sup>389</sup> Mendès-France told Dulles that he would do all he could to obtain a settlement within a framework that included this stipulation.<sup>390</sup> The unity of Vietnam was recognized in the French government's statement of July 21, 1954. The way in which this was to be accomplished, however, was left unspecified in the armistice agreement and was only mentioned in passing in the reference contained in Paragraph 7 of the Final Declaration to "general elections" to be held in July 1956. During the two years following Geneva, sporadic efforts to address this issue, and even to initiate discussions on reunification, were made by various of the participants.

It is necessary to look at the viewpoints of both Vietnamese governments, as the parties most directly concerned, to achieve understanding.<sup>391</sup> The government of the State of Vietnam based its stand on the Geneva election issue on the fact that it had won de jure recognition from France "as a fully independent and sovereign State" through the treaties of June 4, 1954;<sup>392</sup> on the fact that its representative on the military commission had been excluded from the negotiation of the armistice agreement;<sup>393</sup> on the reservations that had been entered

at the final plenary session in Geneva by its foreign minister, Tran Van Do; and on the de facto sovereignty it exercised over South Vietnam after July 20, 1954.

Article 2 of the treaty of independence obliged the State of Vietnam to "take over from France all the rights and obligations resulting from international treaties or conventions contracted by France on behalf or in the name of the State of Vietnam or all other treaties and conventions concluded by France in the name of French Indochina, insofar as these affect Vietnam." The Vietnamese army was fighting under the command of the commander of French Union forces. The State of Vietnam contested neither the contractual nature of the armistice agreement signed by General Delteil and Ta Quang Buu nor the fact that it was bound by Article 2 of its treaty of independence with France to assume the obligations of this signed agreement. In this position, the State of Vietnam was adhering more to the letter of the law than was Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru of India when he answered a question at a press conference about whether by the same argument he would consider India bound by the Treaty of 1472 between Britain and Portugal in the negative.<sup>394</sup>

With respect to the Final Declaration, on the other hand, the name of the State of Vietnam appeared in the heading as a participant on an equal basis with that of France and not merely in the form France (and its dependency or successor the State of Vietnam). Because the Final Declaration was an unsigned document, the State of Vietnam adopted the position that the date of July 1956 mentioned in its paragraph 7 was not binding on it. Moreover, its delegation had protested in the conference against the partition and against its exclusion from consultations among other delegations on the question of elections. Therefore, it viewed the Final Declaration as having no binding force; to the State of Vietnam it was more in the nature of a final communiqué issued by the participants.

Although Do's statement at the final plenary session had not said that the State of Vietnam would not recognize various elements of the settlement, in Randle's opinion such a construction could be placed upon it.<sup>395</sup> Diem's government, however, faced with the stark fact of partition, stated its intention to work for the peaceful reunification of the country and indeed was willing to admit that the elections referred to in Article 14(a) might be held one day. "We do not reject the principle of elections as a peaceful and democratic means of realising this unity," Diem stated in his broadcast address of July 16, 1955.<sup>396</sup> But it was not bound by the July 1956 date. It viewed the issue of reunification as being entirely separate from the Geneva agreements, and indeed by July 1955 it succeeded in persuading the Americans of the correctness of this view.<sup>397</sup> It was not for nothing that the foreign minister in Diem's government of May 10, 1955, Vu Van Mau, had graduated from the Faculty of Law at Hanoi University.

Diem felt that his government was not in a position to consider the question of consultations and elections until after a National Assembly had been elected and convoked and had declared its views. He felt he had no mandate to talk with the DRV about elections until he had the backing of some elected body that represented the people. Furthermore, in view of the fact that the armistice agreement had entrusted certain responsibilities south of the 17th par-

allel to the commander of the French Union forces, the status of the French Expeditionary Corps and of the French High Command would have to be settled before Diem could determine his policy on consultations and elections. Diem felt very strongly that South Vietnam had to have unquestioned and complete sovereignty prior to adopting any public position on elections for reunification.

Be that as it may, the schedule for consultations leading up to carrying out the elections north and south posed in an acute way for Diem's government the matter of its relations with the DRV. From the fundamental viewpoint of the State of Vietnam, indeed, the DRV, rather than being a legal government, was a de facto authority that had seized power by an illegal coup d'état against the nationalists, with the complicity of the Japanese, and remained in rebellion against the legal and legitimate government of Vietnam even after the cease-fire negotiated in a foreign country to which the DRV delegation should not even have been granted visas. This entirely domestic consideration explains why Diem found it impossible in 1955 and 1956 to communicate directly with the DRV government; to do so would have meant a serious loss of face. The Americans had difficulty understanding this at first. To Ambassador G. Frederick Reinhardt's suggestion that Diem address his letter to "Mr. Dong, Hanoi," a formula that would avoid any implication of recognition, Diem replied, with much tact, that "such subtlety might be valid in international law and understood by Westerners but would certainly not be understood by Vietnamese people."398

Even the simple matter of transmitting texts between Saigon and Hanoi assumed importance, as there was no longer any direct postal or telegraphic service between the two cities. Messages had to be broadcast on the radio or entrusted for delivery to third parties. This was a matter for lengthy cabinet debate. 399

The question of consultations with the DRV to prepare the way for elections involved Diem's government in innumerable tractations with its allies, first of all, with the French, who, because of their two-faced policy toward Vietnam, showed themselves to be particularly sensitive to the form of address in such communications. The French objected, for example, to the fact that Diem's message of August 9, 1955, was addressed to "Vietnamese people north of the 17th Parallel" instead of to Dong by name. 400 This desire to speak to the non-Communist majority rather than to the tiny handful of party leaders who governed them also was characteristic of the man; unlike the leftist French intellectuals around Mendès-France, Diem did not believe that the Communists necessarily knew what was best for the Vietnamese. He had seen the Communist revolution close up in 1945 and had talked with Ho. But in the eyes of the French it was bad form for Diem to address his compatriots in the north over the head of their government, although no one had protested Pham Van Dong's address to his compatriots in the south over the head of their government in the final plenary session at Geneva. Then Diem had problems with the Americans, who had a disconcerting habit of advising him to approach the 1956 elections as if they were to occur in the United States. The British, who were mindful of their continuing responsibilities as co-chairmen of the Geneva conference, and

were accordingly solicitous about their good relations with the Soviets, also created difficulties for Diem.

What was the viewpoint of the DRV government? In its own way, given the assumptions on which it was based, it was as consistent as that of the State of Vietnam. As a signatory with France of the military armistice agreement, the DRV considered that the entire agreement should be carried out, and it interpreted this to mean Paragraph 7 of the Final Declaration regarding elections as well as the clauses of the military armistice agreement. In its various statements on the issue, the DRV did not make a distinction between the two. It counted on France, which had accepted at Geneva the position that the Final Declaration was an integral part of the agreements reached at the conference, 401 to implement the agreement in the south, not only with respect to the conduct of civil administration pending the general elections, as stipulated in Article 14(a), but also with respect to the carrying out of preparations for those elections, as this would legally be one of the responsibilities of said civil administration. In this approach, the DRV's task would be facilitated by the de facto recognition of the DRV government implicit in France's signature of the armistice agreements with the DRV representative, a point accepted by the French. 402 In point of fact, the March 6, 1946 preliminary convention between France and the DRV had never been repudiated by either side. All this made for considerable ambiguity.

Viewing itself as the only legal and legitimate government of Vietnam, the DRV government used the phrase "the competent representative authorities in South Vietnam" in Pham Van Dong's press conference statement of June 6, 1955, expressing readiness to hold a consultative conference. 403 The DRV government's statement of July 19, 1955, was the single instance where it addressed the chief of state and the prime minister of the State of Vietnam. 404 Its message of May 11, 1956, was addressed to President Ngô Dinh Diem of the Republic of Viet-Nam, a considerable concession insofar as the status of the two governments went. 405

As time went on and it became apparent that it could no longer count on the French to exercise the responsibilities it ascribed to them, and finding the Southern authorities unresponsive to its efforts to open consultations, the DRV shifted its emphasis to preparing unilaterally for reunification through the Vietnam Fatherland Front, which included Southern representatives and by extension became its instrument of all-Vietnam affairs until the final reunification took place in 1976.

In communicating with "the competent representative authorities in South Vietnam" the DRV faced the same sort of constraints as did the former. This, as well as the propaganda value of such statements, explains why the DRV broadcast these statements over Radio Hanoi almost as soon as they were issued. Pham Van Dong's letter of July 19, 1955, addressed to Bao Dai and Diem was handed by Giap, with his own covering letter, to the French commander in chief, General Pierre Elie Jacquot, Giap's counterpart, for onward delivery. <sup>406</sup> A copy of Diem's broadcast reply of August 9 was all set to follow the same route back<sup>407</sup> until the French government opposed its objection on the grounds that it was not properly addressed.

In a similar way as it did with the government of the State of Vietnam, the question of consulting about the holding of elections involved the DRV government in numerous tractations with its allies, the USSR and China. The USSR assumed a particular prominence by virtue of its holding of the co-chairmanship of the Geneva conference. At a moment of great Chinese influence in Hanoi, there may well have been some Chinese pressure behind the DRV's statement of July 19, 1955. Thereafter, the DRV government habitually referred to "the authorities of South Vietnam."

Thus, in trying to sort out the historical facts of this question, we are confronted once again, as with August 1945, with a problem of logical inconsistency. The lack of sovereignty attributed by the DRV to the State of Vietnam, a position going back to DRV's claim to exercise sole sovereignty as from 1945, was explained in Marxist-Leninist dogma by defining the State of Vietnam as a dependency of France. But the DRV at Geneva in 1954 signed the armistice agreement with France, and once France had withdrawn its Expeditionary Corps from South Vietnam in 1956 and established normal bilateral relations through embassies, France was no longer in a position to implement the Geneva terms. And the United States, which had supported the State of Vietnam position at Geneva, was certainly in no position to dictate to the State of Vietnam, as the successor government to France, insofar as following the DRV's interpretation of what the correct implementation should be. In other words, the DRV, having excluded the State of Vietnam's member of the military commission, Colonel Le Van Kim, from participation in the negotiation of the armistice, was in no position to demand the implementation of the agreement by the State of Vietnam. In short, the DRV could not have it both ways.

This certainly created problems for the other participants in the Geneva conference. The acceptance by the French military negotiators of Colonel Kim's exclusion from their secret talks with the Viet Minh military negotiators, while expedient at the time, created the problem of responsibility for carrying out the signed agreements (and, in the DRV's view, the unsigned Final Declaration) after the French Expeditionary Corps was withdrawn from Vietnam in accordance with the French Government's expressed willingness to do so at the request of the Associated States. This problem was debated without any result in the Council of the Republic on February 23, 1956, with Foreign Minister Christian Pineau answering for the government; it was virtually impossible, he said, to reconcile three principal facts: the Geneva agreements, the independence France had granted to Vietnam, and the agreements France had concluded with the Americans.

Nor did responsibility for ensuring the holding of elections lie with the ICC, since the political settlement did not form part of the signed agreement, whose supervision was the ICC's only responsibility. Under the signed agreement, the ICC's jurisdiction in the political settlement was restricted to ensuring that there prevailed, before the elections, conditions of freedom as specified in Articles 14(c) and (d), particularly the prohibition of reprisals against former resistance participants. The actual supervision of the elections was not the

ICC's responsibility but was that of a special commission drawn from the member states constituting the ICC.<sup>409</sup> It was in this sense that India indicated its willingness to assist the parties in holding elections.<sup>410</sup> This wording accounts for the fact that the ICC did not condemn South Vietnam for the failure to hold consultations on elections, which would undoubtedly have been the case had the ICC held responsibility in the matter. In attributing to the ICC responsibility for the organization of the elections, Philippe Devillers and Jean Lacouture are in error.<sup>411</sup>

In the end, the situation adjusted itself to reality. The French Expeditionary Corps was withdrawn, but even before that the ICC was reporting that it no longer had the basis of cooperation in South Vietnam mandated by the Geneva Agreement. By August 10, 1955, the end of its fourth reporting period, the ICC was reporting that the French high command was no longer able to carry out its obligations under Article 25. 412 This was a logical consequence of the transfer of sovereignty from the French to Diem's government. The government of the Republic of Vietnam continued to give its cooperation to the ICC as an agency for peace.

Finally, there was the not unimportant question of who was to be considered eligible to vote in the elections. Although in its statements dealing with the question of reunification, Diem's government referred quite legitimately to the lack of freedom that prevailed in the north, it was careful not to make the existence of such freedom a condition for participating in consultations. Paragraph 7 of the Final Declaration had not specified any political or human rights conditions under which the "general elections" were to be carried out. Thus, the existence or non-existence of such conditions could not be used as a legal argument for or against the holding of elections. Pham Van Dong's statement at Geneva on May 10, 1954, appeared to contain an important qualification in proposing "all measures to guarantee the free activity of patriotic parties, groups, and social organizations."413 This would have allowed the DRV to exclude those it chose to call "non-patriots," which in the absence of foreign supervision might have been anyone who had cooperated with the Bao Dai government. In Pham Van Dong's note to President Diem of May 11, 1956, this qualification was cannily reworded: "It is beyond doubt that every Vietnamese patriot would approve the position of the Government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam."414 This phrasing suggests, not with any great subtlety, that, were the electorate limited to "patriots," the DRV would poll 100 percent of the vote.

The test of any historical hypothesis lies in the facts, and usually the facts speak eloquently enough. The date of July 1956 passed without an earthquake. Anthony Eden may well have said that "Diem was against the Geneva agreements, but if there had not been any Geneva agreements there would not be any Mr. Diem," but Dulles was quite wrong to reply to this that "Diem was not always logical." The issue of reunification of Vietnam remained an open issue, and the Southern government was willing to discuss it outside the framework of Geneva, while the Northern government clung to this framework right up to the peace agreement it signed with the United States in January 1973. 416

# 6. The Decline of the Nationalists

1958-1960

At the end of 1957 and the beginning of 1958 two events occurred abroad which were to have profound effects on the countries of Indochina.

First, on September 16, 1957, General Sarit Thanarat, who held the position of deputy minister of defense in the Thai cabinet, carried off a bloodless coup d'état in Bangkok, forcing Prime Minister Phibun and his government to resign. Phibun was given asylum in Cambodia. He himself had acceded to office in 1948 by a threat of military action and by a coup d'état in 1951 had dismissed the Assembly and replaced the constitution. Thus, extra-parliamentary changes of government were not new in Thailand.

Following the takeover of the government, Sarit pledged the allegiance of the "Revolutionary Council" to the institution of constitutional monarchy, and it was announced that a Constituent Assembly would be created to draft a new constitution. By a letter addressed to Sarit, the secretary-general to the king indicated the latter's acquiescence, provided the "Revolutionary Council" lived up to its stated objectives. The king dissolved the National Assembly and ordered national elections to be held within 90 days. Sarit made every effort to maintain law and order, to justify his actions, and above all to gain the support of the king. In a telegram drafted by Joseph A. Mendenhall, the State Department, ignoring the embassy's observation that Sarit's actions were obviously unconstitutional, took the position that the question of recognition did not arise in view of the fact that the king remained chief of state and argued for the constitutionality of the actions of Sarit and the king.

In Laos, Souvanna Phouma took satisfaction in the eclipse of Phao as a result of the coup.<sup>4</sup> Another person who had reason to be satisfied with the coup and with American acceptance of it was Lieutenant Colonel Phoumi Nosavan, a cousin of Kou Voravong who had been chief of staff of the royal army between September 1954 and April 1956 and who was a cousin once removed of Sarit and addressed him, as a measure of respect, as "Uncle." Sarit himself had been raised by an ethnic Lao mother in northeastern Thailand.

The elections held on December 15 failed to provide a clear majority and instead produced a proliferation of parties in the National Assembly. The new government was headed by former Defense Minister Thanom Kittikachorn. Sarit, dissatisfied with the trend of events, suddenly flew home from England on October 19, 1958, and the following day troops surrounded public buildings and Thanom resigned. A public announcement was made of the formation of a new "Revolutionary Council" consisting of Sarit as chief and Thanom as his deputy, with two other military members. The Council declared martial law, abrogated the constitution, dissolved the National Assembly, abolished the political party law, and rounded up suspected Communist agents.6 These and other steps were proclaimed in a series of numbered "announcements and directives" of Sarit's Revolutionary Party. Once again, the State Department did not demur at these illegalities. After three months of ruling Thailand without benefit of an elected assembly or constitutional procedures, Sarit restored normal procedures by promulgating an interim constitution with the king as head of state, establishing an appointed constituent assembly, and having the king appoint a cabinet led by Sarit as prime minister "elected" by the Assembly.<sup>7</sup>

Second, on April 2, 1958, President Eisenhower directed that a "Statement of Policy on U.S. Policy in Mainland Southeast Asia" drafted by the National Security Council be implemented by all appropriate U.S. departments and agencies. This statement of policy was a revised version of a similar document approved in 1956 and contained the following

Cambodia. 39. In order to maintain Cambodia's independence and to reverse the drift toward pro-Communist neutrality, encourage individuals and groups in Cambodia who oppose dealing with the Communist bloc and who would serve to broaden the political power base in Cambodia.

Laos. 44. In order to prevent Lao neutrality from veering toward pro-Communism, encourage individuals and groups in Laos who oppose dealing with the Communist bloc.

[South] Viet Nam. 54. Assist Free Viet Nam to develop a strong, stable and constitutional government to enable Free Viet Nam to assert an increasingly attractive contrast to conditions in the present Communist zone.

[North Viet Nam]. 70. Treat the Viet Minh as not constituting a legitimate government, and discourage other non-Communist states from developing or maintaining relations with the Viet Minh regime.<sup>8</sup>

### American Diplomacy in Indochina Begins to Unravel

The document known as NSC 5809 would govern American actions in the relations that the governments of Cambodia, Laos, South Vietnam, and North Vietnam would have with the United States in the years ahead. Aside from its wooden bureaucratic wording, its substance is notable by the absence of any mention, apart from South Vietnam, of an intention to support the constitu-

tionality of government or preserve the sovereignty of either Cambodia or Laos, as would be considered normal in a policy document intended to guide diplomatic relations with these countries. Indeed, the State Department's contribution to the drafting of this document is not clear. It seems not to have been informed by input from career Foreign Service officers such as Gullion, Corcoran, Yost, Rives, and Herz. Perhaps the guiding theme behind the document is summed up by this statement: "The United States is likely to remain the only major outside source of power to counteract the Russian-Chinese Communist thrust into Southeast Asia."

Neither Prince Sihanouk nor Prince Souvanna Phouma, of course, whatever their judgment was of neutrality as a policy, was "pro-Communist." The Communists in Cambodia and Laos in April 1958 were quietly engaged in legal affairs or were deep in hiding at the orders of the party center. In Phnom Penh, the members of the Pracheachon, having been shut out of the National Assembly, eked out a living running their newspaper, taking care not to attract the attention of Sihanouk's feared police. On the Vietnam border, on the other hand, there were indications that some armed Vietnamese units that had been evacuated in 1954 had moved back into jungle camps intent on stirring up trouble between Cambodia and South Vietnam by creating border incidents; the first of these occurred at the beginning of June 1958. In Laos, the Laotian Communists were striving to create a patriotic image for the Lao Patriotic Front in preparation for the elections to the National Assembly set for May 4 and to have people forget the earlier militant stance of the "fighting units of Pathet Lao."

Thus the situation in Southeast Asia was considerably more complicated than a "Russian-Chinese Communist thrust," which would have been a relatively straightforward matter to counter. The reference made in NSC 5809 to reversing trends to "pro-Communist neutrality" is problematic. The emphasis is on encouragement of individuals and groups, whose relationship to the legal and constitutional institutions of those countries is not specified. If the latter were the repository of "pro-Communist neutrality," then the action to be expected from the individuals and groups to be encouraged would logically be the replacement of said institutions. In short, the document, as was soon to be seen, provided the cover for the provision of covert support to individuals and groups proclaiming themselves to be anti-Communist in attempts to overthrow or subvert existing legal governments whose leaders were themselves anti-Communist.

Prince Sihanouk and Prince Souvanna Phouma found in the coming months that in matters of national security they had to deal not only with the American ambassador in their capital but with shadowy figures who had at their disposal what for the Indochina countries at the time were generous sums of money, as well as radio transmitters and arms, and who seemed not to be accountable to their ambassadors. The professions by the latter of ignorance about these covert activities left the Cambodians and Laotians, at best, unconvinced or, at worst, feeling they were being made dupes. Finding such interviews useless, Sihanouk wrote a long letter to President Eisenhower, hoping to obtain some action from that quarter.

The disappearance from the scene in May 1959 of Dulles deprived the nationalists of Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam of a trusted friend. Dulles's conversations in impeccable French left a lasting impression on Sihanouk. To what extent the subsequent, often bizarre, convolutions were due to the rising influence of Dulles's brother, Allen Dulles, the director of the Central Intelligence Agency, remains for the time being a matter of speculation, as the CIA has not made its records public.

The ties between American intelligence agencies and the government of Thailand had, of course, been well known to the Cambodian and Laotian leaders since Donovan's tenure as ambassador in Bangkok. As early as February 1955, an American official from the Bangkok embassy was chastised by his ambassador for having reported the existence of a semi-military camp supported by the Thai containing some 2,000 followers of Son Ngoc Thanh installed just inside the Cambodian border. After Sarit's coup, the aims of the Bangkok government and the CIA meshed as never before, and in 1958 the station chief of the CIA in Bangkok, Robert J. Jantzen, made it his business to be as close as possible to Sarit, even if it involved giving the nod to Sarit's meddling in Cambodia and Laos.

Who were these individuals and groups? The known recipients of aid in various forms were, in Cambodia, Son Ngoc Thanh, Sam Sary, and Dap Chhuon and his brother, Slat Peou, all veteran actors on the Cambodian scene who did not need much persuading to become sworn enemies of Prince Sihanouk, and in Laos, the Committee for the Defense of the National Interests (CDNI), an ad hoc group made up of ambitious young civilians and military men without political experience but who stood for what the Americans saw as anti-Communism, whose rising star was Phoumi Nosavan.

An important common feature of these individuals was that they had all lived outside their country for varying amounts of time for various reasons, and this may have made them susceptible to foreign recruitment. Phoumi Nosavan cut short his stay in France and returned to Laos to precipitate a cabinet crisis, a pattern of behavior that bears a curious resemblance to Sarit's rushing home from England to topple his country's government. They were all, certainly, nationalists, but nationalists who were willing to be disloyal to the legal and constitutional order in their countries. This feature makes them seem unlikely people for any agency of the U.S. government to have supported, but it must be pointed out that the CIA and its allies in the Pentagon during this period, like the OSS in 1945, acted as a law unto itself abroad and with little consideration of the traditional values that had underpinned American foreign policy. The nationalists were men who eschewed violence on principle, and so the violence ushered in by the American operatives in their countries was particularly confounding.

Sam Sary had studied in France, but unlike many Cambodians there he had avoided left-wing circles. Sary became a skilled diplomat at Geneva and helped Sihanouk in the founding of the Sangkum and in the 1955 elections. He visited the United States and served as ambassador in London. Despite a warning from

Queen Kossamak to avoid politics when he returned to Phnom Penh, Sary started a free newspaper that published anti-Sihanouk materials. As he had no visible patron, it was widely assumed he was being financed by the United States. The January 9, 1959, issue of his newspaper published a letter from him to Sihanouk requesting permission to form an opposition political party. The letter stated that Sary's political and ideological ideas differed from those of Sihanouk and that he could not therefore hope to resume their former collaboration in the Sangkum.

On January 10, Sihanouk said in a speech at Kampot that the military chief of a neighboring country was trying to stop the progress of the Khmer nation, and three days later in a speech in Kompong Cham, Sihanouk made it specific by referring to a "Bangkok plot" against his government, allegedly set in motion by Sarit and involving Sary. Sary escaped arrest by fleeing to Bangkok, where he was provided with a house by Major Chana Samudvanija, Son Ngoc Thanh's contact in the Thai government.

Invited to the State Department by Robertson on January 16 to discuss these events, Sihanouk's ambassador in Washington, Nong Kimny, heard Robertson deny that the United States was involved and say that Ambassador Carl W. Strom was being instructed to present the denial to Sihanouk as soon as the occasion arose. 11 Nong Kimny was called back five days later and heard Robertson say that he was by no means certain that broadcasts over Radio Hanoi and Radio Peking represented an accurate version of Sihanouk's speeches on the subject of the "Bangkok plot" but that if they were correct the United States would be constrained to lodge the strongest official protest over such an implication of interfering in Cambodia's affairs. 12 Robertson said he would be deeply shocked if Communist propaganda were accepted in Cambodia as true. In fact, far from making propaganda, the correspondents of the Vietnam News Agency and New China News Agency in Cambodia were merely reporting Sihanouk's words in their cables sent through the well-run Cambodian PTT, a perfectly legal activity. However, on January 24 Robertson had something firmer to go on. In an interview published that day in *Réalités Cambodgiennes*, Sihanouk stated that the Americans, in view of their active and well-supported information services and the vast facilities which they were accorded in neighboring countries, probably knew about the plot "but did not think themselves bound to inform us of it." And in a prophetic statement, Sihanouk said "A government of Sam Sary, Son Ngoc Thanh and others, for example, if put into power by foreign aid and arms would face total opposition, cadred by Communists using the name of Sihanouk to rally the people. It would face a monarchical-Communist revolution."13

On January 26, Nong Kimny carefully laid out the evidence he had been furnished from Phnom Penh suggesting that the United States had been involved in the plot. Robertson protested that any such implication was "a complete falsehood." Robertson also expressed concern that Sihanouk had refused to receive Strom despite repeated requests. <sup>14</sup> It may be true that Robertson was genuinely not aware of the extent of American involvement in the "Bangkok plot" when he made these remonstrances to Nong Kimny, for it is difficult to

imagine an official of Robertson's seniority telling such bald-faced lies. The object of the "Bangkok plot" is unclear even to this day. The important thing is that it was nipped in the bud by the vigilance of the Cambodian government, with assistance from its friends. Sary formed a loose alliance with Thanh and continued to figure as a favorite target of Sihanouk's ire, but his career was effectively over; he disappeared in 1962.

In the case of Dap Chhuon, the covert aid was more considerable and the threat to Sihanouk more serious.<sup>15</sup> Chhuon was the governor of Siem Reap, from which he kept up the contacts in Bangkok that he had had since the 1940s. In a harebrained scheme supported from both Bangkok and Saigon, Chhuon became a dissident in February 1959 and after a complicated sequence of events was killed by the security forces on Sihanouk's orders. Thus vanished one of the nationalists most feared by the party center, 16 killed by an anti-Communist army. Soon, the Americans would be re-learning the lessons of successful guerrilla warfare that Chhuon carried with him to the grave.

In Chhuon's case, the evidence included two powerful radio transmitters to be used in making propaganda broadcasts and 270 kilograms of gold in small ingots to pay rebel forces and bribe Cambodian officials, which had been provided from Saigon; two Vietnamese prisoners; and documents implicating Ngô Trong Hieu, Saigon's diplomatic representative in Phnom Penh. All this was shown to the entire diplomatic corps, including Hieu, by Sihanouk personally on a guided tour of Chhuon's villa on February 26.17 The confessions of Slat Peou, whom Sihanouk later claimed had been recruited by the CIA while serving as a member of Cambodia's delegation at the UN General Assembly in 1958, 18 and the other prisoners attributed the plot to the CIA. Sihanouk, apparently at French instigation, at least suggested that Lansdale was involved, but Lansdale later said he "never worked with Dap Chhuon and the story the Cambodians tell is a complete fabrication." Indeed, it is difficult to believe that someone as independent-minded and politically savvy as Lansdale would have allowed himself to become involved in such a harebrained scheme.<sup>19</sup> Dap Chhuon was described in an intelligence summary given President Eisenhower as "a war lord in Western Cambodia."20

The emergence on the scene of such individuals and groups benefiting from American covert aid was to provoke expressions of alarm and dismay from the American ambassadors in Cambodia, Carl Strom and then William C. Trimble, and in Laos, Horace H. Smith. Strom, who was convinced from his more than two years in Cambodia that Sihanouk was anti-Communist and was acting in good faith, as proved by his letter to Eisenhower, complained that he was given little information with which to answer the insistent questions of the Cambodians: "Did you know about the plot?" and "If you did, why didn't you tell us?"21 The case of Chhuon's rebellion was even more embarrassing, and Strom informed the State Department that many people knew about the shipment and unloading of the transmitters and gold in Siem Reap.<sup>22</sup> Security had been so lax in the preparations for the rebellion that the French and Chinese ambassadors had competed to be the first to inform Sihanouk. Strom's discomfiture was increased when prisoners' confessions directly implicated a CIA agent in the embassy, Victor Matsui, in the scheme.<sup>23</sup> Sihanouk stopped granting Strom's requests for interviews altogether, apparently wishing to spare him further embarrassment; he felt Strom was an honest man. From this point on, Sihanouk accepted as truthful little of what he was told officially by the embassy. The CIA's covert backing for the CDNI in Laos led Prime Minister Phoui Sananikone to appeal to Ngô Dinh Nhu to intercede with the Americans in Saigon to desist from continuing pressure to take more CDNI members into his cabinet because Ambassador Smith, with whom he was on good terms, seemed powerless to do anything. Ambassador Elbridge Durbrow expressed his surprise that Nhu's request should be necessary,<sup>24</sup> and it seemed as if American diplomacy toward its friends in Indochina was on the verge of a complete breakdown. Strom, Trimble, and Smith were in effect placed in the position of cuckolds by the actions of the CIA members of their staffs that were planned and carried out without their knowledge or approval.

Both plotting foreign governments had motives. Bangkok was, as ever, ready to meddle in the internal affairs of its neighbors to the east, and Chhuon's continued popularity in Siem Reap raised the specter of secession in the event that his plot succeeded. (The threat of secession figured again in Cambodia in 1993.<sup>25</sup>) The territorial dispute over the Preah Vihar temple in the Dangkrek Mountains was a constant irritant in relations between Phnom Penh and Bangkok. As for Saigon, aside from the old hard feelings over Kampuchea Krom and the border, relations were soured by Saigon's ceding to the temptation of destabilizing Sihanouk's regime by any means available. The previous November, Nhu had tried to persuade Durbrow, himself no admirer of Sihanouk, of the interest their countries would have in giving support to Prince Sisowath Monireth as a replacement for Sihanouk should the latter decide the time had come to resign and name a scapegoat to take the blame for Cambodia's current difficulties. <sup>26</sup> At the very least, Saigon wanted to see a government installed in Phnom Penh that would be willing to cooperate with it in cleaning up the DRV's provocations along their common border, as manifest in the June 1958 Stung Treng incident, instead of exploiting them for anti-Vietnamese propaganda purposes.

Despairing of obtaining any sense out of American diplomats in his country about what schemes were being hatched in Bangkok and Saigon, Sihanouk made a direct plea, "which may be too impassioned," to Eisenhower on February 23. He quoted the president as having called for a world "community of strong nations, stable and independent, where the ideas of liberty, of justice and human dignity can thrive" and said Cambodia approved of such a concept. Then, turning to the dangers he saw on Cambodia's borders as a result of American support for Thailand and South Vietnam, Sihanouk wrote:

The Ambassador of the United States of America in Cambodia did not believe—and rightly—that he was interfering in our affairs when he pointed out to us that his country would not permit us to use arms which we had obtained from it against our neighbors. I ask you to have your representatives to our neighbors take the same position.<sup>27</sup>

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An interim reply was sent to Sihanouk on February 26, the day the prince took the diplomatic corps on a guided tour of Chhuon's villa at Siem Reap.<sup>28</sup> No substantive reply was made until March 28, when changes in the draft sought by the embassies in Bangkok and Saigon in consultation with the two governments had been incorporated.<sup>29</sup> The assurances toward Cambodia by these two governments contained in Eisenhower's reply were carefully worded. Moreover, the letter continued:

I trust that these views of the Governments of Thailand and of the Republic of Viet-Nam, if combined with an attitude of conciliation and good will on the part of the Royal Cambodian Government, will provide the bases for an improvement in mutual understanding and confidence between your country and its neighbors, which in turn will permit the three nations to develop sound, direct relations through normal diplomatic channels.

The letter said that the United States attached "the utmost importance" to its obligation to ensure that recipients of American military aid not to use this aid for intervention in other countries, which Sihanouk had drawn attention to. However, it contained no categorical assurance of American respect for the sovereignty of Cambodia, saving only that the government continued to recognize Sihanouk as prime minister of the kingdom, 30 a weak endorsement if there ever was one. Sihanouk and Foreign Minister Son Sann were disappointed with this reply from the author of the bold words quoted.<sup>31</sup> They could see immediately that its thinly veiled suggestion that Cambodia was to blame for the problems with its neighbors stemmed from the changes made in the draft in Bangkok and Saigon, and they were shocked that Eisenhower endorsed this thesis. In an accompanying statement intended to be delivered orally (thus minimizing, as the State Department saw it, the likelihood that Sihanouk would exploit it for propaganda purposes), Eisenhower repeated that primary responsibility for maintaining harmonious relations rested on the countries concerned and said he wanted it to be clearly understood

that actions taken in this instance by the United States to help Cambodia and its neighbors improve friendly relations do not constitute an assumption of responsibility on the part of the United States for these relations or for the actions of any of the three countries concerned.<sup>32</sup>

This last was a point that the State Department was particularly concerned about. Trimble, the new ambassador in Phnom Penh, never made this oral statement to Sihanouk because the latter departed for France.<sup>33</sup> It would in any case have had little effect on Sihanouk's attitude toward the United States; publicizing the details of subversive plots against himself and his government through radio broadcasts, press interviews, and perhaps at the United Nations proved an effective weapon, perhaps the only one he had at hand, to defend Cambodia's sovereignty.

In Laos, the search for individuals and groups likely to reflect an anti-Communist outlook focused on the CDNI, a group formed in the immediate aftermath of the 1958 supplemental elections to the National Assembly.<sup>34</sup> The CDNI did not take the position that it constituted a political party but appeared to act more in the nature of a political lobby. Its three-point program was simple: (1) an anti-Communist policy; (2) a purging of corruption from public life; and (3) the rehabilitation of the country. The CDNI lacked grassroots support, and it had no coherent program for dealing with the Pathet Lao. Many of its leading lights and candidates for office were not even in Laos when the CDNI was established; these included Sisouk na Champassak, deputy permanent representative to the United Nations; Leuam Insisiengmay, ambassador to Cambodia; Khamphan Panya, ambassador to India; and Inpeng Suryadhay, director of SIDASP and secretary-general of Souvanna Phouma's cabinet. Colonel Phoumi Nosavan had made a tour of military installations in the United States in early 1957. As had been the case with Sam Sary in Cambodia, the telltale signs of foreign support were there. The CDNI members were not people who commanded any wealth of their own. Their weekly newspaper, Lao Hak Xa Xat, printed on glossy paper unlike anything seen before in Laos, where newspapers were crudely mimeographed four-page sheets, bespoke of their access to financial resources; in fact it was printed at the Le Than Thu Xa printing shop at 119 Tran Hung Dao Boulevard in Saigon.35

When the political crisis provoked by the CDNI's demand for cabinet seats came to a head in August 1958, the month Colonel Phoumi returned to Vientiane, Ambassador Smith was immediately confronted with a problem: he did not know what encouragement the CDNI leaders were being given by the CIA station chief, Henry Hecksher, with his unvouchered funds. 36 Phoui Sananikone gained the impression, Smith reported, that internal decisions among the CDNI candidates for cabinet posts were being dictated not by Prime Minister Souvanna Phouma but by the predicted acceptability of these candidates as negotiators with Washington over pending questions, of which monetary reform was a major one. Phoui asked Smith to drop a word in the right places if this was not the case.<sup>37</sup> The instructions Smith was receiving from the State Department were to accommodate the CDNI candidates to the maximum extent possible without actually precipitating a coup d'état. "Since young elements represent [the] best hope [for the] future [of] Laos [we] would not wish [to] risk either weakening their potential or lessening their confidence in [the] U.S. by failing [to] coordinate with them at this juncture," a telegram read that was drafted by Corcoran and approved by Parsons in his new capacity of deputy assistant secretary of state for Far Eastern affairs. 38 Smith decided to put the matter to the State Department bluntly:

If my analysis is correct, aside from possible opposition by Katay supporters, [the] major obstacle to Souvanna [Phouma] succeeding in his present efforts [to form a cabinet] is [the] refusal [of] young elements to participate in his cabinet. Under these circumstances it [is] important to know whether it is really U.S. policy to in any way encourage young elements to refuse to participate in this government in [the] be-

lief it is U.S. intention, unless CDNI gets at least one or two more young people into a legally invested government, to support the CDNI and ANL in establishing, by methods of at least doubtful constitutionality but more probably inevitably requiring an outright coup, a government composed entirely or clearly controlled by these young men. . . .

I hope that [the] wording [of the] first sentence [of the] final paragraph of DEPTEL 168 does not indicate that we intend to encourage younger elements to attempt [a] coup at this time rather than enter [the] government as [is] now suggested by Souvanna.<sup>39</sup>

The sentence of the telegram Ambassador Smith referred to had instructed him to "avoid taking [a] position directly opposed to them and in favor of Souvanna [Phouma]" in the event he found that the CDNI candidates were adamantly opposed to Souvanna Phouma's lineup. The State Department immediately cabled Smith assurances that it was not American policy to "encourage younger elements [to] attempt [a] coup at this time." Smith's position was sufficiently well known that there is a suggestion he was ordered to absent himself from Vientiane at about this time. According to a document in the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library, Smith "was ordered in an informal and personal communication from the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Far Eastern Affairs, that did not go into the record, to hand over charge to his deputy, who was secretly supporting those planning the coup, and to leave the country" temporarily. Smith did leave Vientiane between January 2 and 16, 1959, but no coup took place. On his return, he was able to continue his dealings with the Lao, and his relationship with Phoui, who succeeded in forming a cabinet, remained one of trust.

But in December 1959 the issue was no longer the relatively simple one of accommodating the CDNI in the cabinet; rather, the issue was the demand of the CDNI for the overturning of the legally constituted government. It was the lack of any consideration for such constitutional niceties on Hecksher's part that led to a remarkable confrontation between Hecksher and John B. Holt, the counselor of embassy, in the course of which Hecksher said he had never received instructions making the CIA's support of the CDNI conditional on the latter's support for the legal government. Smith's staff officers, such as Holt, Julian P. Fromer, and Françoise G. Queneau, felt sufficiently committed to seeing the survival of a democratic government that had faithfully cooperated with the United States that they were willing to risk their careers to support their ambassador's actions, sometimes in defiance of instructions from Washington.<sup>42</sup>

But the fundamental problem of the dichotomy of American representation to these governments remained. Colonel Phoumi Nosavan's ambitions were such that after seeking tacit Western acceptance of his use of the army to cow the king into giving him a ministerial position, he eventually managed to maneuver his backers in the CIA (and in the Pentagon by that point) into furnishing him the means to overthrow the legal government to which the American ambassador was accredited and precipitate full-scale civil war in Laos. When Souvanna Phouma was brought back into the picture by the Kennedy administration to pull the chestnuts out of the fire, his nationalist position was so weak-

ened that he could no longer deal with the Pathet Lao on his terms but had to accept their terms for the formation of an unstable coalition government.

In Cambodia, the effect of the encouragement given Sam Sary, Son Ngoc Thanh, and Dap Chhuon (whose usefulness as symbols to Sihanouk outlived their own careers) was not so much to weaken Sihanouk, the major nationalist figure in Cambodia, as to strengthen his hold on his people as the indispensable defender of the throne. Thus, when the Communists moved in behind Sihanouk, the beneficiaries of covert American encouragement found they had been outflanked. The irony was that when Sihanouk was eventually overthrown, it was not by the CIA and the Pentagon but by his own parliament, which had finally had enough of his one-man democracy, stimulated to action by two of his most trusted lieutenants, one a member of the royal family.

The covert and not-so-covert activity opened up by NSC 5809 was to involve the United States also in various duplicities concerning information withheld from Diem's government, which was considered a staunch ally in Washington. Thus, the damage was done on many fronts; the only people who profited were the Communists. At the time, no one saw this. No one foresaw the cost in terms of the discrediting of the nationalists that took place and the trampling on the rule of law and constitutionality that ended up placing the anti-Communists and the Communists on the same footing. This situation lasted from April 1958 until May 29, 1961, when President Kennedy, alarmed by the reports he was receiving about the autonomy enjoyed by CIA agents in the field, issued an executive order reaffirming the traditional position that the ambassador exercised authority over the CIA station chief as well as over other members of the country team.

#### Cambodia

#### SIHANOUK'S GROWING AUTHORITARIANISM

The final demise of Western-style democracy in Cambodia, if it had ever existed, came in August 1957, when the Democratic Party, which had survived up to then, came out the worse in a climactic confrontation with Sihanouk. The arrests of opposition figures who spread views in the media considered to be blasphemous of Sihanouk and his family had continued. The Democrats had already decided against putting up any candidates in the next elections, but they hoped to bring influence to bear on Sihanouk on such issues as corruption in the administration.

The prince had returned to Phnom Penh from one of his stays at Siem Reap and invited his enemies the Democrats to a debate on national issues to be held on August 11 in the palace grounds. The debate was broadcast on the national radio, and thousands gathered outside the enclosure to listen to the proceedings over loudspeakers. Sihanouk did nearly all the talking and demanded that the Democrats provide specific evidence, at once and in public, of any malfeasance by his regime.

Cowed by the setting and by Sihanouk's belligerence, the Democrats murmured that preparing accusations would take time, but they said they were loyal to him and had not intended to cause any trouble. Sihanouk told them they were insincere and demanded that they join the Sangkum on the spot. Their hesitation, overheard by thousands of people, was made to seem tantamount to treason. After Sihanouk adjourned the meeting, soldiers from the palace guard pulled some of the attendees from their cars and set upon them with fists and rifle butts. <sup>43</sup> Over the next three days, more than 30 instances of violence against persons suspected of supporting the Democrats occurred in Phnom Penh.

The experiment in Western-style democracy was at an end, and in its place was the "authentically popular democracy" of the Sangkum with its obeisance to the leader, who was in direct contact with the masses, traveling indefatigably around the country inaugurating development projects, making speeches, and rhetorically asking his audiences, both live and over the air, if Cambodia and Sihanouk were not on the right track. The battering of the Democratic Party showed Sihanouk's willingness to see violence used against those who dared to oppose his conception of democracy with another.

In the campaign for the elections on March 23, 1958, Sihanouk adopted a tough line against the Cambodian Communists, accusing them of stirring up resentment among ordinary people. Campaign posters for the Sangkum printed by the Ministry of Information showed wounded men in hospitals, captured arms, and destruction of buildings and trains caused by the Viet Minh. Anti-Communist slogans appeared on banners, walls, streets, and sidewalks. Some of them were "The Pracheachon are traitors to the nation, religion, and the throne"; "The Pracheachon party ruins the nation and sells the country to foreigners"; "The Pracheachon is not part of the Sangkum, it is outside the Sangkum." All but one Pracheachon candidate had withdrawn by election day, and he, fearing arrest, took temporary refuge along the Vietnam border. The results gave the Sangkum's candidates, running unopposed in most cases, 700,000 votes. But absenteeism was high.

In connection with the elections, Sihanouk published four articles on communism in Cambodia, tracing its history and stressing its dependence on Vietnam. He articles are full of insight into the tactics of the Communists and how Cambodia could best defend itself against them. In discussing these matters, Sihanouk revealed a great deal about himself; his view of the Vietnamese Communists at this stage of his career was no different from that of Ngô Dinh Diem.

In the third of his articles, Sihanouk claimed for the Sangkum the great merit of having prevented communism from "overwhelming us." The elite and the opposition youth had, in the great majority, rallied spontaneously to the Sangkum, thereby reinforcing the strength of the nation to resist subversion. Second, the success of the Sangkum among the people had obliged the Communists to look for new means of conquering the country at a time when they were suffering the defection of some of their best militants. Although Sihanouk did not mention him by name, he had in mind here Sieu Heng, the ICP member who had secretly returned to Cambodia after 1954 and become the secre-

tary of the "temporary central committee" of the KPRP inside Cambodia. Heng, considering that the struggle was over, secretly contacted Defense Minister Lon Nol in 1955 and turned informer against his party comrades for four years before retiring to take up farming in Battambang. Several regional party officials also defected to Sihanouk's government at this time.

In his fourth article, which he wrote before the elections but which was published the week following, Sihanouk catalogued what he saw as the failings of Cambodia's Western friends that were playing into the hands of the Communists both at home and abroad. The Western press, which had a tendency to ridicule Sihanouk as a playboy, and Western diplomats, who liked to lecture him on the dangers of communism, made it that much more difficult to hold the Communists at bay. The Communists, shrewdly, did not attack him, and the Pracheachon, in point of fact, "take me as their leader," he wrote. "What characterizes the Anglo-Saxons' policy toward us is their total ignorance of our mentality, of our situation, and of our aspirations."

American aid was generous, but it came with strings that set it apart from Communist-bloc aid. Moreover, with American aid there was the constant anxiety that it might be cut off at any moment, as the embassy was always saying how difficult it was to get the Congress to go along with aid to a small neutral country. While the United States maintained normal diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union and the United Kingdom with China, Cambodia was reproached by the Anglo-Saxons for attempting to stay on friendly terms with just these countries, revealing a kind of double standard. Worse, Cambodia had to be constantly on guard against attempts at subversion from the West and from Cambodia's two anti-Communist neighbors. This was dangerous, Sihanouk wrote, because such subversion might create the disorder, coups d'état, rigged elections, military rule, and foreign intervention that the Communists were adept at exploiting. Beneath Sihanouk's words glossing over the grave deficiencies of Cambodia's own Sangkum-style democracy, there was a great deal of truth about Communist tactics and aims; it is a pity so little attention appears to have been paid to the articles in Washington, which was assuredly Sihanouk's intended audience.

There was one other aspect of Sihanouk's articles that bears noting in the light of subsequent history. Writing of Cambodia's weaknesses before the Communist menace, Sihanouk listed the large Sino-Vietnamese minorities living among the Khmer, which he called "a grave danger." He wrote: "We can expel them, but our neighbors send them back. And international law and other UN-type regulations forbid us to establish concentration camps in which to park them."

Within a few months, Sihanouk's anti-Communist rhetoric would disappear, to be replaced by increasingly frequent favorable comments about the Communist bloc, especially China, but also starting to include even the DRV. For the moment, however, the party center was willing to allow the Chinese the diplomatic limelight; its main concern was to keep its agents unnoticed by Sihanouk's police or by the Americans. There is evidence that Le Duan was in

Phnom Penh in early 1958, if not earlier. <sup>47</sup> It would have been time-consuming, but a relatively easily arranged matter, for him to have trekked the unmarked trails south through Laos to reach the Cambodian border, where he would have blended in with the Vietnamese residents of towns along the Mekong such as Stung Treng and Kratié to reach Phnom Penh. Once in Phnom Penh, he would have been able to travel to border areas discreetly without attracting the attention of the police. It is natural to suppose that Le Duan, like Nguyên Binh before him, would have concluded from these observations that Cambodian territory represented too valuable an asset from several points of view for the party to jeopardize by some foolish move such as a public criticism of Sihanouk. Little wonder that years later the Communist Party of Kampuchea would criticize the Vietnamese for not supporting its doctrinaire struggle against "feudalism."

The signs that the border areas of Cambodia were being used for subversion against the Saigon government could not entirely escape notice, however. On the morning of February 22, 1957, as President Diem was walking down a path between crowds of onlookers at Ban Me Thuot, a young man dressed in tan trousers and a jacket fired a single shot at the presidential party from a MAT 49 automatic pistol from a distance of about four yards. The fact that Diem was surrounded by photographers and aides made the would-be assassin's aim erratic, and his pistol then jammed; he was set upon by the crowd and only prevented from being beaten to death by the intervention of members of the presidential guard. Diem had just cut a ribbon opening a fair and was to hear speechmaking. According to an eyewitness in the assembly of members of the diplomatic corps and government officials, Diem walked to his chair with almost no hesitation and waited calmly for a speech to be made by one of his ministers who had been wounded by the shot and had to be substituted for. Afterward, Diem remained in the fairgrounds for almost two hours, walking through the crowds, visiting various exhibits, and chatting affably with the exhibitors.<sup>48</sup>

Subsequent investigation revealed that the would-be assassin was acting on behalf of the Cao Dai. Diem's government was having more than its usual amount of difficulty with this sect; earlier in the month the filming of a scene for *The Quiet American* in Tay Ninh had been the occasion for a demonstration by Cao Dai adherents demanding the return of Pope Tac from Cambodia. Acting Foreign Minister Nguyên Huu Chau told an American diplomat that any government respecting religious liberty had difficulty taking effective measures against a religion like Cao Daism and observed that the United States would face a similar problem if American Quakers were plotting against the government. Diem had no doubt the Communists were behind the attempt and privately held Sihanouk responsible for allowing exiled Cao Dai members to use the border for subversion and terrorism. He mentioned his concern to several persons, among them American diplomats had no Nehru. He sent Chau to Siem Reap in March to discuss the situation with Sihanouk.

Whether by coincidence or not, there were a series of incidents along the border in the summer of 1958.<sup>53</sup> The most serious of these occurred on June 18, 1958, at the village of Ban Pak Nhay in Stung Treng Province. The incident

was caused by a raid of armed Vietnamese Communists, probably members of a special commando unit, across the border into Pleiku Province in order to rescue 92 prisoners. The raiders returned to Cambodia with the prisoners, pursued by South Vietnamese troops. The South Vietnamese penetrated at least 4.3 miles into Cambodian territory, according to an announcement in Phnom Penh. The incident was made more serious by the fact that the South Vietnamese moved the border marker in that area some 200 meters into Cambodian territory and surrounded it with mines, apparently as a defensive measure. The Phnom Penh press portrayed the incident as an unprovoked invasion of Cambodia, which was sheer exaggeration, but in a speech at Kompong Cham on July 5 Sihanouk complained bitterly that his request for help addressed to the United States had been of no avail. Strom urged the embassy in Saigon to take up the issue with Diem.

When Sihanouk formally recognized the Chinese People's Republic two weeks later, he told Strom that "continued aggression on the part of the Republic of Vietnam" had been a factor in his decision. The Stung Treng incident had served to convince Sihanouk that the Republic of Vietnam had designs on Cambodian territory. When the Saigon government offered to replace the marker in its original position if the local Cambodian commander concurred and witnessed its replacement and ordered the captain in command of the pursuing unit to replace it and punished him for his action, the tension subsided; a visit to Phnom Penh by Nhu also helped calm things down.

Sihanouk paid visits to India, Burma, and China in August. In China, Chou En-lai gave him the public assurances of support for Cambodia's territorial integrity that he had not obtained from the United States. These visits were followed by a cordial visit to Secretary Dulles in Washington on September 30. Because he had obtained assurances concerning the main problem on his mind, Sihanouk was able to tell Dulles he had no problems to present and thanked the United States for its friendship and aid to Cambodia. Dulles's remarks about the dangers represented by international communism were not in the line of a lecture, and Sihanouk took them with good grace, agreeing with Dulles at several points in their talk.<sup>59</sup>

In Phnom Penh, Strom found that Queen Kossamak reacted sharply to his expression of worry over her son's move on China and strongly implied it was not Strom's business to concern himself with the dangers of Chinese Communist subversion in Cambodia. "We know that if the Communists come the throne goes," she told him, adding, in a somewhat unhistorical aside, that there had been 80 kings on the Cambodian throne and the Cambodian people were united in defending it.<sup>60</sup>

As 1958 turned into 1959, the Bangkok plot and the Dap Chhuon affair intervened to worsen relations between Sihanouk and his neighbors. In spite of a visit by Sihanouk to Bangkok, tensions mounted and diplomatic relations were suspended. At the instructions of the State Department, the ambassadors in Bangkok and Phnom Penh offered to transmit messages between the two countries, but they still remained at an impasse. Sihanouk was still hopeful of

reaching an understanding with Saigon. On his departure from Tan Son Nhut on August 5, 1959, following his talks with Diem, he said: "These talks have established between us an understanding which I hope will last for many years."

On the afternoon of August 31, 1959, however, a package bomb addressed to Queen Kossamak blew up in the palace. Moments before, the king and queen had left the room. The only persons killed were Prince Norodom Vakrivan, the director of protocol, and a servant.<sup>61</sup> He had been a prominent organizer of the breakup of a Democratic Party rally prior to the 1955 elections, and so it was a case of divine retribution, and perhaps a warning to meddling in politics by the royal family. Sihanouk, probably correctly, held the Saigon government responsible for this attempt on his life and for anti-Sihanouk broadcasts from a clandestine transmitter located in South Vietnam. These were the doings of Nhu, in the opinion of Vice President Nguyên Ngoc Tho.<sup>62</sup> Ambassador Durbrow attributed virtually all Saigon's anti-Sihanouk provocations to Nhu.<sup>63</sup>

#### SIHANOUK NAMES HIMSELF HEAD OF STATE

An institution of singular importance that enabled Cambodia to survive the intrigues mounted by its neighbors in this period was the monarchy. Mao himself had told Sihanouk during his visit to China: "You, Prince, you faithfully serve the people and fulfill their aspirations. The court of Cambodia is really the symbol of the Khmer Nation." As Sihanouk and his family fully realized, the throne united the Cambodian people in opposition to foreign enemies working within or without. Queen Kossamak and Prince Monireth could discourse for hours on the traditional perfidy of the Thai and the Annamites and the deep animosity that remained to the present. The small royal army which had begun as a minor adjunct of the French had come into its own. The army had no hope of coping with internal security problems or meeting incursions from across the border unless it enjoyed the confidence of the people. Everything that was done to build such confidence was done in the name of the monarchy. This explained why villagers were volunteering information on arms caches hidden by the Viet Minh during the war.

On April 3, 1960, King Suramarit, Sihanouk's father and the heir he had designated in 1955, died. Suramarit had not designated his successor, as he was permitted to do under Article 26 of the 1947 constitution. In case the throne was vacant, Article 27 vested the designation of a new sovereign in a Crown Council, to be composed of a senior member of the royal family, who would be the chairman; the heads of the two houses of parliament; the prime minister, who was Sihanouk at the time; the heads of the two Buddhist orders; and the president of the high court of justice (Article 28).

In April 1960, Sihanouk dominated the Crown Council by virtue of his having been king, and it was he who in effect decided that no successor from among the 183 eligible princes would be designated.<sup>66</sup> This preempted the views of the other members, including his uncle Prince Sisowath Monireth, the chairman, who was thought to favor placing his sister, Queen Kossamak, on the throne, which would itself have required an amendment to Article 25 of the constitution.

The constitution had not foreseen the case where designation of a successor would be difficult for reasons of state, and so a special bill was rushed through parliament in one hour on the afternoon of April 4 to enact Article 30 bis (Article 30 having to do with the Crown Council's responsibility for declaring the throne vacant) giving the Crown Council power to establish a Regency Council of three members pending the choice of a new king. The Regency Council had no executive powers but only authority to "represent" the throne, and its term was limited because it had to be prorogued by the Crown Council at the beginning of each legislature. The Crown Council met on April 6 and chose the members of the Regency Council, who were Prince Monireth as chairman and Pho Proeung and Truong Cang as members.<sup>67</sup> They took the oath of office before the National Assembly that was called into special session on April 9.<sup>68</sup>

On April 7, Sihanouk gave a long broadcast speech to explain his position on the succession question to his countrymen. In this speech he stated "As for myself, I am tired of the throne, and I swear before 'angels' and the entire nation that throughout my life I will never accept the throne and will strictly prevent my children from acceding to the throne."69 Sihanouk gave no inkling of the scheme that he had reportedly cooked up with the help of his trusted adviser, Penn Nouth, on the night of April 2.70 He now proceeded to mount a mise en scène designed to retain for himself political power, which he planned to exercise through the Sangkum. The National Assembly opened its regular session on April 10, re-electing Chuop Hell as Assembly president. The following day, Sihanouk submitted the resignation of his cabinet to the Regency Council and then watched for a week as politician after politician, among them Lon Nol and Nhiek Tioulong, declined to assume the post. On April 13, Radio Phnom Penh carried the text of a letter from Sihanouk to the two houses of parliament and the people saying he did not feel he could serve in the government but was willing to serve the nation outside the cabinet. The following day the radio broadcast a letter from the Regency Council to Sihanouk informing him that all five of his nominees had declined and had stated that only Sihanouk could form a government. An editorial in the newspaper Echos over the signature of publisher Long Boret said that the majority of people could not conceive of any leader other than Sihanouk.71 Finally, on April 17, the aging Pho Proeung agreed to form a new government and resigned from the Regency Council.<sup>72</sup>

At the end of April, Chou En-lai visited Cambodia for the second time, setting off a fresh outbreak of incursions across Cambodia's borders by supporters of Son Ngoc Thanh, who now called themselves Khmer Serei (Free Cambodians), and even more vitriolic criticism of Sihanouk by the Thai and South Vietnamese press. The tension was increased when the trial was held during May of those accused of complicity in the Dap Chhuon plot of 1959, and all 21 defendants were convicted; nine of them were sentenced to death.<sup>73</sup>

The stage was now set for the referendum Sihanouk had in mind, which was announced at the end of May, in which he offered his people the choice between himself and his enemies, Thanh and the Communists. Balloting, of course carefully observed by his supporters, took place on June 5. The results,

announced two days later, showed that Sihanouk had won 99.98 percent of the vote. A On June 10, the parliament, members of the cabinet, the armed forces, and various government departments issued statements calling on Sihanouk to assume leadership of the country as head of state. By now, the embassy had seen the purpose of all Sihanouk's maneuvering since April and reported that he would become head of state again one way or another. The next day, well-organized demonstrations by some 50,000 persons took place before the National Assembly to give voice to the same demands. Motions asking Sihanouk to become head of state were handed in to Assembly president Chuop Hell for forwarding to Kep, where Sihanouk was residing. The Assembly then met in extraordinary session, and 15 minutes later Chuop Hell announced to the crowd that their wishes would be carried out.

Sihanouk had retreated to Kep on the seashore after reportedly offering the crown without power to his mother in a stormy scene witnessed by the members of the Regency Council and the Crown Council. This had been followed by initiatives by Pho Proeung, Nhiek Tioulong, and Lon Nol begging Sihanouk to become chief of state. 77 On June 13, the radio announced that the Regency Council had resigned the previous day. The statement, signed by Prince Monireth, called attention to the departure of Truong Cang on an extended mission abroad and the lack of an alternate to replace him, thus incapacitating the council. The statement also noted the motions of the people on June 11 and said it joined itself to the people, commending the preservation of the throne and the monarchy to Sihanouk.<sup>78</sup> From his seaside retreat at Kep, Sihanouk graciously acceded to his people's wishes, providing the parliament acted to amend the constitution to create this new post. In his message, Sihanouk did not fail to mention that "this national disarray has been exploited intensely for more than two months by traitors to the country, lackeys of foreign imperialism, and by imperialist governments hostile to our neutrality which are threatening our independence, territorial integrity and the very existence of our nation."<sup>79</sup>

A hurried meeting of the parliament (the National Assembly and the Council of the Kingdom) on the same day added the suitable article, number 122, allowing "in the case where circumstances permit the designation neither of a new sovereign nor of a Regency Council," appointment to the new post of head of state of an individual "incontestably and expressly designated by the vote of the nation." This appointment was made the prerogative of the parliament. Article 122 also provided that the president of the National Assembly could assume the powers of the head of state if the latter was temporarily absent from Cambodia or unable to exercise his powers. Sihanouk himself set the precedent for this procedure by engineering the nomination of Chuop Hell, the president of the National Assembly, to become head of state pro tem and promulgating the constitutional amendment allowing Sihanouk to assume the post of head of state.

The parliament unanimously elected Sihanouk head of state on the morning of June 17, and he acceded to the new office on June 20.80 Addressing the parliament, after taking his oath of office and swearing loyalty to the throne as

called for in Article 122, he said that he would work to reform the administration of the royal palace in preparation for the eventual appointment of a new king. 81 A High Council of the Throne was created on June 17 by a decree stating that it was to replace the High Council of the King and to serve as an advisory body to the head of state on all matters concerning the throne, the royal palace, and the royal family. As it was headed by Prince Monireth, it was believed that its creation was part of the bargain struck by Sihanouk with his mother and his uncle over the future of the throne. 82 It was noted that Queen Kossamak and Prince Monireth absented themselves from Phnom Penh during Sihanouk's assumption of the position of head of state with a leisurely royal tour through Battambang Province. 83 Pho Proeung offered the collective resignation of his cabinet to Sihanouk on June 29 "in conformity with the tradition of democratic countries whereby a change in the head of state entails the resignation of the government."84 He was asked by Sihanouk to form a new cabinet, which he did on July 1.85 In ceremonies at his Chamcar Mon Palace, his new official residence in Phnom Penh, on August 7, Sihanouk decorated all active members of the National Assembly for services rendered.86

In his speech of April 7, Sihanouk dwelled on the disorderly affairs of the royal family, saying its unity was jeopardized by "indescribable jealousies and hatreds" and giving reasons why neither his mother nor any of his children should be placed on the throne. He may have wished to spare his sons the pressures he had experienced when he ascended the throne at a young age. But he also made no secret of the fact that he considered his sons unworthy, referring to them on occasion as "good-for-nothings" and stating publicly that the people of Cambodia were his "real children." Sihanouk criticized the freewheeling amoral adventures of his eldest son, Prince Norodom Yuvannath. He sent two sons, Princes Norodom Ranariddh and Norodom Chakrapong, to France to pursue their studies, but there they learned only how to dance the twist and the cha-cha-cha. He had decided to be tougher with his four younger sons, he told a public meeting, and send them to Communist countries where discipline was more strictly enforced. Princes Norodom Naradipo and Norodom Khémanourak went to Peking, Prince Norodom Sihamoni went to Prague, and Prince Norodom Narindrapong went to Moscow.<sup>87</sup> These last two were the sons of Monique Izzi. In the dark month of November 1963, at a point when he felt most insecure, he named Naradipo to be his heir as head of the Sangkum and head of state, although this last position was not hereditary.

His orchestration of events in April through June showed Prince Sihanouk at the height of his power. He was, however, still accessible to his own people, as well as to the foreign press, offering champagne at the Chamcar Mon Palace to foreign journalists such as myself. His mother continued to live in the royal palace as a symbol of the monarchy with the court regalia, the Brahmins, the astrologers, and the corps de ballet, but she did not reign. Sihanouk went on cultivating the court atmosphere around his person, however, and increasingly around his consort Monique and her family, especially her mother and her half-brother, Oum Mannorine. The prince was addressed as Samdech, which was

rendered into French as *Monseigneur* as if he were some high dignitary of the Church. His close circle included his trusted advisers Penn Nouth and Nhiek Tioulong, who had signed the Geneva armistice agreement. Others whom he saw almost daily were General Lon Nol and Son Sann. He also saw foreigners in his employ, particularly the Frenchmen Charles Meyer, speechwriter, press spokesman, and public relations factotum, and Jean Barré, editor of *Réalités Cambodgiennes*. But in a sense the entire senior Cambodian civil service, the diplomatic corps, and representatives of the major non-Cambodian communities in Phnom Penh constituted a kind of court who lived at his beck and call and in constant fear of offending him.

Sihanouk's personal style of government was chaotic in the extreme. The cabinets over which he presided certainly held meetings, whose proceedings filled the official media. More fundamental policy decisions, however, were often reached at informal meetings at one or the other of his residences amid a jumble of meals and film showings. There was no fixed agenda for these meetings, and Sihanouk might summon his advisers at any hour of the day or night to discuss an idea he had had.<sup>88</sup> Herein lay the seeds of Sihanouk's later self-destruction, awaiting the time when a more pragmatic leadership took control of the National Assembly and provided the fertile ground.

The solution of the succession crisis afforded relief to the Cambodians. In diplomatic circles, however, a new period of tension in Cambodia's relations with its neighbors gave immediate scope to Sihanouk to use an office in which he enjoyed the freedom to both reign and rule. On June 20, the foreign ministry sent a circular note to accredited diplomatic and consular missions in the capital notifying them that "any attack, or any incursion in force by rebels coming from the territory of one of those countries where they openly find aid and asylum, will formally be considered by the Royal Government as an act of pure aggression committed by that country against Cambodia."89 It was a strong warning, and it showed that Sihanouk was determined to meet what he perceived as the main challenge to his authority. A fresh round of diplomatic and press exchanges followed, the upshot of which was that Sihanouk once again, as had happened in the past, found that his government was being blamed for a situation he saw as created by others. The American chargé d'affaires in Phnom Penh was instructed to express surprise that Cambodia felt endangered, as the United States was unaware of any threat, and to suggest to the foreign minister that Bangkok and Saigon might take offense at Cambodia's accusations.90

By August, however, Sihanouk had put aside these frustrations with American diplomats and reaffirmed his basic links with the West by telling Malcolm Macdonald, the British high commissioner in Southeast Asia, that he attached importance to the sending to Cambodia by the United States and the United Kingdom of professors and teachers to combat Communist influences to which Cambodian youth were being exposed through their studies in France and through French teachers in Cambodia inclined toward communism. <sup>91</sup> At the General Assembly of the United Nations that autumn he was treated as a world statesman (although he was overshadowed by Khrushchev's antics), and he paid

a visit to Kent State University, where he was received "with enthusiasm and great courtesy" at a special convocation, which provided him with the occasion for another of his speeches. Sihanouk afterward wrote to President Eisenhower to tell him of his "deep satisfaction of finding among the American intellectual elite and youth a very good understanding of the legitimate aspirations of the Cambodian people and the policy of my country. SI twas a honeymoon, all too brief. For when Sihanouk returned to Phnom Penh he found Prince Souvanna Phouma, who told him at an audience on December 28 how he had been betrayed by the assistant secretary of state for far eastern affairs, acting in league with the Pentagon and the CIA station in Bangkok. Also, on September 30, the leaders of the tiny clandestine Cambodian Communist party had met in a room at the Phnom Penh railway station and elected Saloth Sar as the party's secretary-general and Long Rith as its deputy secretary-general; these men would later become better known under their adopted names, Pol Pot and Nuon Chea.

#### Laos

#### Laos Reunified

In an effort to reassure friendly powers that Laos was not going Communist as a result of the coalition, Prince Souvanna Phouma embarked on visits to a number of foreign countries early in 1958. In Washington, American officials were prepared to adopt a correct, but reserved, attitude toward the prime minister on his unofficial visit, in view of the imminent re-evaluation of American policy. "To avoid having the discussion bog down in fruitless argument on the character of the PL," a briefing paper prepared by Byrne for Dulles suggested, "it would be better to bypass the point by stating that dissidents, whether Communist or non-Communist, are inimical to Souvanna's aims of fostering nationalism and true unity for the progress and prosperity of Laos."

Prince Souvanna Phouma could take comfort from the fact that Dulles, when they met at the State Department on the afternoon of January 13, congratulated him on having brought about the reunification of Laos, while other countries such as Vietnam, Korea, and Germany remained divided. Souvanna Phouma recalled the dismemberment of Laos at the hands of the French and the Thai and said that Laos could not accept the loss of Sam Neua and Phong Saly to the DRV; the fate of the inhabitants of these provinces could not be sacrificed to the one or two hundred Communists in the Pathet Lao. As for Laos's neighbors, it was necessary to appease China and the DRV in order to be able to solve internal problems.

Dulles avoided being drawn into an argument about the nature of the Pathet Lao but said, according to Byrne's record of the discussion: "Since we each approached the problem [of international communism] from a different viewpoint, we perhaps reached different conclusions. We respected those of the Prime Minister and hoped he would ours, each recognizing an element of rightness in the views of the other." This phrasing did not accurately describe the

prime minister's relationship with Ambassador Parsons, who had consistently refused to accept any validity in the former's views of the Pathet Lao. As for the "nationalism and true unity" that were, in the words of Byrne's briefing paper, being impeded by dissidents, it behooved the Lao government to know whether said dissidents, "Communist or non-Communist," were armed, and this point was not taken up. 96 The conversation, friendly in all respects, thus ended with the lack of a meeting of minds that had come to characterize relations between Laos and the United States. On January 15, Souvanna Phouma lunched with Allen Dulles at the Alibi Club in Washington; as no record of this meeting has been found, it is impossible to say whether the director of the CIA questioned the prime minister about the means to be used to detach the nationalists in the Pathet Lao from their Communist puppet-masters, a subject on which the prime minister had a wealth of knowledge, or whether he did all the talking, repeating the litany of Communist takeovers in Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and so on.<sup>97</sup>

Under the terms of the November 1957 agreement, integration of two battalions of Pathet Lao troops was to be completed within 60 days of the formation of the coalition. However, the process hit a snag when the Pathet Lao demanded the acceptance into the royal army of 112 officers, 191 non-commissioned officers, and 95 corporals. The royal government offered to accept the normal complement of officers for two battalions, plus some senior staff, totaling 36 officers, 154 non-commissioned officers, and 208 corporals, later raising this to 43 officers and 171 non-commissioned officers. This dispute was not resolved, and thus integration was effectively stalled.

Seeking to end abuses of the aid program due to differences in exchange rates between official bank transactions and the open market rate, the United States demanded a devaluation of the kip and set a deadline of the end of June for the beginning of negotiations on the issue. On March 11 the embassy reported that since the United States refused to fund the army and police unless some form of escrow arrangement was in effect for the dollars sold to the National Bank, only army officers and some enlisted men had so far been paid.

> Delay in paying ANL [army] and police had created malaise in government circles and members [of the] government claim U.S. is playing into hands of dissatisfied elements with leftist opposition reaping benefits. Economic aid program is also being seriously hampered and work on certain projects has been temporarily halted.98

It was not until mid-April that the scheduled March and April funds for the army and police were released to the government. 99 The Lao Patriotic Front, for its part, was reportedly being well financed by Soviet funds in advance of the elections; Ngô Dinh Nhu told Ambassador Durbrow that a reliable source had reported transfer of 8 million kip through Bangkok. 100

The supplementary election provided in the coalition agreements had been set for May 4, 1958. A total of 21 seats were to be contested, bringing the size of the National Assembly to 59 deputies. Since the election law provided for each voter to vote as many votes as there were seats being contested in the voter's

province, the nationalist parties had an obvious interest in limiting the number of candidates they presented. Although the embassy lobbied hard for an election agreement between the major nationalist parties limiting the number of candidates running, no such agreement prevailed in the end.

The results came as a distinct shock to the royal government. A combination of skilful propaganda on issues of real substance; discontent among soldiers and civil servants over the pay issue, with many soldiers voting for candidates of the Lao Patriotic Front; and vote-splitting among the non-Front parties all redounded to the benefit of the Front and its electoral allies, who won 13 of the 21 seats. Of the total 1,276,101 votes cast, the Front and its allies won 449,452, or 35 percent, but their 13 seats represented 62 percent of the total. The Front and its allies had captured one of two seats in Thakhek with barely one-quarter of the vote and three of four seats in Luang Prabang with less than one-half the vote. <sup>101</sup> Immediately after the elections, the Front's propaganda began demanding the holding of general elections.

Somewhat belatedly, the leaders of the Nationalist and Independent parties met and decided to merge their parties into a new Rally of the Lao People (Lao Hom Lao). Souvanna Phouma was elected president, Katay first vice-president, and Phoui second vice-president. There remained the issue of the composition of the new cabinet once Souvanna Phouma had gone through the formality of submitting his government's resignation.

Politically, Souvanna Phouma had to deal now with demands being pressed by a new grouping, made up of mid-level civil servants for the most part, calling itself the Committee for the Defense of National Interests. This grouping, which was formed in June in the immediate aftermath of the election, claimed to stand for sweeping reforms and a strong anti-Communist policy. 103 Although the CDNI did not single out Souvanna Phouma personally for attack, the presence of the CDNI forced him to accommodate their political demands as far as he could in view of the fact that they did not hold seats in the National Assembly.

The election results came as a shock to the American Embassy as well. The State Department's reaction, however, was not to address the issues raised by the large popular vote for the Lao Patriotic Front, but to demand the formation of a "broadly-based conservative cabinet excluding NLHS [Lao Patriotic Front]." Congressional and public reaction, the Department informed the embassy, made it difficult to justify continued aid to Laos. Citing a telegram from the embassy in Saigon, the Department said, "We agree with [the] Vietnamese that Souvanna should if possible be eliminated as candidate [for] Prime Minister." <sup>104</sup>

Militarily, while benefiting from the cease-fire he had negotiated with the Pathet Lao, Souvanna Phouma had to bear in mind the intransigence the Pathet Lao had displayed on the army integration issue, which showed no signs of softening. In an atmosphere of heightened insecurity due to the continued threat posed by the still intact and autonomous Pathet Lao armed units and reports of PAVN maneuvers in the Dien Bien Phu region, Crown Prince Savang once again brought up with Smith the question of American guarantees in the event of invasion.<sup>105</sup>

As if to mark the turning point in Laos's international obligations represented by the May 4 elections, Souvanna Phouma demanded the withdrawal of the ICC from Laos. The ICC voted to adjourn sine die, a compromise solution that allowed the Geneva powers to maintain the fiction that it could be reactivated in case of need, although there was no procedure for doing so. In a reply to a letter from Pham Van Dong that "peace in Indochina is indivisible," and that Articles 39, 46, and 25, respectively, of the armistice agreements in Laos, Vietnam, and Cambodia determined relations among the ICC in the three countries and that the ICC in one of them could not be dissolved independently of the other two, Souvanna Phouma replied that there was no longer a single Indochina and that the last of the obligations the royal government had incurred at Geneva concerning the ICC had been fulfilled. The ICC held its last meeting on July 19.

The United States was now overtly exploring ways to upgrade the effectiveness of its military aid. Ambassador Smith had already approved in May an increase in the number of Programs Evaluation Office (PEO) personnel. <sup>107</sup> An agreement worked out with the French reduced the role of the French military mission and enlarged that of the PEO. Thought was also being given to the possibility of transforming the PEO into a MAAG along the lines of the MAAG in Saigon. <sup>108</sup> Political considerations dictated caution, however, in the State Department's view.

On the economic front, the negotiations over financial reforms had still not resumed, with the result that the American aid appropriation for Laos for fiscal year 1959 was held up. On this issue, Washington had assumed full control, relegating the embassy to the status of a reporter in transmitting the royal government's position. <sup>109</sup> This question was to drag on without resolution into October. Smith analyzed the corruption problem and attributed it to the manner in which American aid had been handled during the previous three years. <sup>110</sup>

After the validation of the new deputies to the National Assembly was completed on July 21, Souvanna Phouma tendered his resignation the following day and was immediately asked to form a new government. Crown Prince Savang stressed the urgency of speedy formation of a new cabinet to avoid a prolonged political crisis such as had ensued in 1955.<sup>111</sup>

Even though the new Rally of the Lao People counted on 36 deputies, the largest single bloc in the National Assembly, it was not a unified party either within itself or with respect to the participation in the government of the CDNI; Katay was against including the CDNI, and his newspaper, *L'Avenir du Laos*, castigated the "hotheads." Souvanna Phouma, as always in search of the middle way, was willing to give the CDNI a share of the cabinet posts but also held out for inclusion of the old-line politicians, namely Katay and Phoui. The CDNI, with its eye on the general elections due to be held at the end of 1959, tailored its exact demands to the prospects opened by the disunity of its rivals and, apparently, in accordance with the sub rosa advice it was receiving from its friends in Saigon, Bangkok, and the American Embassy in Vientiane. The Lao Patriotic Front, with its nine deputies, alternately supported a Souvanna Phouma cabinet without any representation of the CDNI and a government of national union with inclusion of elements of all parties.

But the tide of sentiment was definitely swinging to anti-communism. Souvanna Phouma, sensing the shift, and on the advice of the French ambassador, tailored the draft of his planned investiture speech to an anti-Communist tone stronger than was his custom. <sup>112</sup> The goal of safeguarding Lao independence "requires a new kind of government," he wrote in his draft, which he shared with Smith. "It is for that reason that political parties which do not fight communism will be excluded from [the] next government." <sup>113</sup> There was renewed talk among the more anti-Communist elements in Vientiane, as there had been in 1957, of getting the National Assembly to pass a law outlawing Communists.

Smith, who was sensitive to Lao susceptibilities on all three of these interrelated issues, political, military, and economic, carefully avoided giving the Lao the impression that any cabinet list had to be cleared with him before presentation to the National Assembly. On August 2, he cabled the State Department that he did not consider it wise to try to force Souvanna Phouma "to mold [the] cabinet more closely in accordance with our desires." Smith harbored doubts about the young, untried men of the CDNI and about the extent of the support they could muster among the civil service and the army if the time came for that. "I continue to consider," he went on, "that any effort at a military coup at this time would almost certainly play into Communist hands and hasten or make truly inevitable the day of Communist control of this country." He added: "The two northern provinces might again split off in open rebellion and in the other ten provinces with aid and 'volunteers' from the Viet Minh, all but the few central points covered by the 300 paratroopers and such additional ANL units as are effectively armed, supplied and trained might be openly taken over by the NLHS [Lao Patriotic Front]. If the ICC returned it might even find evidence after such debacle leading it to conclude that the NLHS has the support of the majority of the population."114 "The choice of ministers is for the prime minister to make," Smith cabled on August 5.115

After several more days of fruitless discussions, Souvanna Phouma realized that it was futile to go on trying to meet the insatiable appetite of CDNI members for a share of power and gave up trying to form a new government. He said he was going to take a rest from politics and shortly thereafter departed to France as ambassador. The crown prince then asked Phoui to form the new government. When it eventually took office on August 18, Phoui's government included three former ministers, four deputies, and four CDNI members.

Senior army officers had shared with Smith their desire to see a number of serving officers participate in the cabinet. Feeling that sentiment was swinging their way, they, too, wanted a greater share of power. In a show of strength, they placed army and police forces in Vientiane on alert, leading to rumors of a coup, either by the army or by the Lao Patriotic Front, rumors that were quickly picked up and published by the Bangkok press, which was as irresponsible as usual.

#### THE END OF THE COALITION

That the anti-Communist sentiments being expressed by the nationalists in Laos in the summer of 1958, both civilians and military, represented their true

feelings there can be little doubt. As Souvanna Phouma never tired of pointing out, communism was an alien doctrine to the Lao, and the class struggle and violence that were the terms in which Lao Communists such as Kaysone saw their mission were completely antithetical to the Buddhist middle way as known by the lowland Lao and even by those who propitiated the spirits of the forest.

The French ambassador in Vientiane, Olivier Gassouin, tried without success to convince his colleague Smith that including Prince Souphanouvong in the new cabinet would be a good thing for the Lao to do. 116 There, he would of necessity be constrained to act in the national interest, and the retention of an armed faction, the Pathet Lao, would be incompatible with his participation as a loyal citizen. Furthermore, Souphanouvong's ties with the party center in Hanoi would not redound to his credit or the credit of Souphanouvong's followers. Sooner or later, they would find it necessary to choose between doing the will of the nation or doing the will of the party center.

Washington, however, had demanded the formation of a government that excluded the Lao Patriotic Front. This demand had to be satisfied by the Lao if they were to go on receiving American aid, which by 1958 had become a large factor in the monetized sector of Laos's economy. Accordingly, relieved of the responsibilities that go with membership of the government, the Front used the summer to reinforce its network of cadres in the countryside. The government's self-defense forces and village chiefs became the prime targets of the Front's campaign to extend its control, thereby compounding the problems facing the new government. In this, the direct threat of force from the Pathet Lao (which was still not integrated into the national army) and behind them the DRV played a significant part, according to the letters of resignation from district and village chiefs received by the ministry of interior. Moreover, a severe rice shortage in Sam Neua Province in the summer of 1958 caused discontent among the Meo and played into the hands of the Front's propagandists. 118

Souvanna Phouma had been very careful in his anti-Communist rhetoric to avoid offending any of Laos's neighbors. Phoui, however, had allowed himself to be persuaded to authorize the opening of a Nationalist Chinese diplomatic representation in Vientiane as one of his first acts as prime minister. Phoui's step broke with his predecessors' avoidance since independence of according diplomatic recognition to either Chinese government. Informed observers in Vientiane attributed the move to pressures from Bangkok, where the CIA's Jantzen was stepping up its support for sending guerrillas into southern China. The effects of this CIA-backed program and the Chinese reaction it induced were already being felt in Phong Saly and Luang Prabang, where thousands of Lu tribesmen were reported to have crossed over from China since the spring to escape the repressive measures of the Chinese security forces.<sup>119</sup> Phoui's move meant that the Taipei government would have a base from which its agents could operate with relative impunity into China, given the inability of Laos's army to exercise effective patrol of the border. This was added to the long-standing problem of the remnants of the 93rd Chinese Nationalist Division, which for years had moved back and forth between Burma and northwest Laos carrying on a trade in smuggled opium.

Their openly anti-Communist stance both internally and externally gave the Lao the feeling they were entitled to receive guarantees from the Americans about the security of their country. On September 28 Phoui called on Smith at his residence to present him with a memorandum on this very concern.

As you know, the present Lao Government has taken a clear anti-Communist position which exposes it to strong opposition and real dangers not only to the government but also to individuals included in [the] present cabinet. Thus, [the] government desires and requests therefore with insistence that the government of the U.S.A. give this government its entire guarantee on the following points:

- A. Guarantee of support of [the] present regime (constitutional monarchy).
  - B. Strategic guarantee in event of war against Laos.
- C. Guarantee that American aid will continue as long as this government pursues its fight against all subversive elements.
- D. Guarantee of receiving steadfast moral and material support in the anti-Communist action undertaken by [the] present government until its full success.<sup>120</sup>

#### In reply, Smith was authorized to tell Phoui that

The present government of Laos has clearly proclaimed its determination to protect the national interests of the Kingdom against Communist subversion and its actions to date augur well its success in achieving that high purpose. The United States is prepared to continue its wholehearted moral and material support to such a government.<sup>121</sup>

There was no mention of guarantees under points A and B of Phoui's memorandum.

The Lao feeling of insecurity was heightened on December 14 when a company of the 263rd Battalion of the 270th Border Security Regiment of the DRV established three posts near the villages of Ban Travigne, Ban Taroua, Ban Laoeun, and Cobai in Tchepone District in close proximity to the western extremity of the demilitarized zone between North and South Vietnam. The battalion commander rebuffed attempts by the local Lao civil and military authorities to meet with him. The DRV force captured two royal army soldiers on December 30. 122 A company of royal army troops took up forward positions on the south bank of the Se Bang Hieng River, from which they continued to observe the intruders. The royal government immediately protested the flying of the DRV flag on Laotian territory and demanded the evacuation of the posts. In reply, Hanoi claimed the villages had historically been part of the canton of Huong Lap, Quang Tri Province.

What had happened, according to the best information available, was quite simple. When the presence of the intruders was discovered by the Lao, Hanoi immediately accused the royal government of violating its border. <sup>123</sup> The unusual activity in this densely forested area, quite unprovoked by the Lao who were patrolling their own territory, and the readiness with which Hanoi cited

alleged historical records to justify its occupation showed that this was not a haphazard incident but part of a well-laid plan. Indeed, all the evidence pointed to its being connected with the opening, in accordance with the party center's decisions, of a trail or trails around the western extremity of the DMZ. The timing of the incident suggests also, in retrospect, that it may have been related to Le Duan's trip to the South, which was unknown at the time. The DRV created an incident in the eastern portion of the DMZ on December 23 when its soldiers painted the Hien Luong Bridge over the Ben Hai River, proceeded to paint several meters of the southern half of the bridge over the objections of the southern police, and provoked the ICC's fixed team at Gio Linh to intervene<sup>124</sup> (and possibly also distracted the ICC's Mobile Team 76, which had been in the DMZ since July 12, 1955).

The royal government, well informed and well prepared, published an information note refuting the DRV's claim by pointing out that the border in that area had been the subject of a treaty as early as 1364 between the king of Lan Xang and the king of Annam defining the border as being the watershed and that the occupied villages were on the western side of the watershed. The note recalled the seventeenth-century treaty that King Souligna Vongsa had signed with the king of Annam defining Lao territory as being that in which houses were on stilts and Annam territory as being that in which houses were constructed on the ground. The border, the note continued, had been delimited by the French résidents in Laos and Annam in a procès-verbal on March 21, 1914, and formalized in a decree by the governor general on October 12, 1916. Furthermore, the French map used by the Trung Gia Armistice Commission in the summer of 1954 to draw the demilitarized zone showed the border line, against which the end of the DMZ abutted, in accordance with the above decree. Finally, the note added that the DRV's actions violated the communiqué of April 23, 1955, signed at Bandung between Katay and Pham Van Dong, and the joint statement issued in Hanoi on August 29, 1956. 125

The failure to evict the DRV rankled the Lao nationalists, not least Crown Prince Savang. Parsons, who ascribed the Tchepone incident to the DRV's campaign to get the ICC in Laos reactivated, was concerned that the royal government "not appear hasty or nervous in reacting to Vietnamese Communist military and diplomatic pressure." A good part of the problem was that the well-informed Kenneth Young had left the post of director of the Office of Southeast Asian Affairs, and his successor, Eric Kocher, seemed to be uninformed. Indeed, Arthur J. de la Mare, the counselor of the British Embassy in Washington, found it difficult to do any business with the Office since Kocher had taken over. "The sad fact is that he hardly seems to know what is going on," de La Mare wrote to R. P. Heppel at the Foreign Office. "A number of my foreign colleagues are having the same difficulty with him as I am: they find it not worth their time to go to see him." <sup>127</sup>

Savang was feeling nervous. He approached Smith with a sense of urgency. He wanted to know where the United States, which had often spoken of its support for Laos in the event of aggression, stood. In view of the grave risks for

Laos entailed by its anti-Communist policy, Savang wanted formal American guarantees that it would protect its borders against attack. When the State Department finally got around to providing a textual reply, it was so hedged that it could hardly have reassured the government or the head of a friendly state, certainly not one facing a violation of its border by a hostile neighbor. Its substantive portion read:

[The State] Department wishes [to] reassure [the] RLG [of its] continued U.S. support heretofore but in view [of the] imprecise nature [of the] demarcation [of the] Lao frontier with North Vietnam and [the] complex history [of] border problems [in] this area considers it impracticable [for] either U.S. or SEATO [to] undertake [a] specific frontier guarantee.<sup>129</sup>

In the light of recent American pressure on the royal government to exclude the deputies of the Lao Patriotic Front from the cabinet, this reply was a patent cop-out. It showed the United States inventing a "complex history" to avoid engagement in the case of a territorial violation. The expressed American unwillingness to "undertake [a] specific frontier guarantee" was hypocrisy in that the United States, in spite of repeated requests over the years, had not even been willing to undertake a general guarantee of Laos's borders, which might easily have been couched in suitably vague diplomatic language such as "guarantees the territorial integrity of Laos within its present borders."

Upon receipt of this message, Savang told Smith bluntly he was dissatisfied with the reply; the maps establishing Laos's borders were precise and definite, but he accepted it was the right of the United States to decide whether or not to act. <sup>130</sup> But from this time on, Savang ceased to believe in American protestations of being ready to defend his kingdom in the event of outside aggression.

It is interesting to note that not even the Front's deputies in the National Assembly accepted Hanoi's claim publicly or even tried to contend that the border was "imprecise," as the American statement maintained. Prince Souphanouvong told the National Assembly in debate that maps of different dates are not alike and thus produce misunderstandings; he argued, therefore, that the border problem should be settled through negotiations. <sup>131</sup> This instance of the Front's deputies demonstrating their nationalist sentiment by rallying to the defense of their country offered proof, if proof were needed, of the absolute lack of understanding on the part of high American officials of Laos and the self-defeating nature of their policy demanding that the Front be excluded from the government on the grounds that all its members were Communists.

The Chinese response to the incident was very restrained. Peking (where Ho happened to be visiting at the time) published a commentary urging a peaceful resolution of the border issue. Although the commentary, on the whole, came out in support of the DRV, the Chinese were noncommittal about which party was in the right. 132

After consulting with the 28 deputies of the Rally of the Lao People present in Vientiane and obtaining a favorable vote from 26 of them on January 8, 1959,

Phoui asked the Crown Prince to convene a special session National Assembly at which he would ask for special powers to reorganize his government. On January 14, by a vote of 28 to 16 (with 3 abstentions) the National Assembly approved the extraordinary powers for one year to deal with the crisis.

The government decided that the final clauses of the coalition agreements covering the integration of the 1,500 Pathet Lao would be implemented on May 11, Constitution Day, and even conceded the Pathet Lao demand for 105 officers. The Pathet Lao officers were under orders from Prince Souphanouvong to go through with the integration on schedule. However, a disagreement over a minor detail, the participation of civilian officials of the Front at the ceremony, caused last-minute uncertainties, and on May 11 the battalion at the Plain of Jars did not show up for the ceremony. The government was twice rebuffed by the Pathet Lao, once in the case of Colonel Singkapo's failure to attend his commissioning ceremony, and again by the failure of the Pathet Lao battalion to appear for the May 11 ceremony. 134 Prince Souphanouvong, whose orders to the Pathet Lao battalions appear to have been countermanded by the party center, had been invited to attend the May 11 ceremony, according to the ministry of defense. After the failure of the Pathet Lao battalion to appear, the government extended the deadline for integration until 7 A.M. on May 15. 135 Clearly, responsibility for the breakdown of implementation of the final clauses of the coalition agreement of November 1957 lies with the Front and its organization, not with the government.

Instead of ceremonially being integrated, the Pathet Lao battalion, taking advantage of a monsoon storm, left its encampment and disappeared into the night. The other battalion camped near Luang Prabang disappeared likewise. The event signaled a resumption of hostilities. Phoui's government, after indecisive cabinet deliberations, ordered the arrest of the Front's deputies in Vientiane, Prince Souphanouvong, Nouhak Phoumsavan, Phoumi Vongvichit, Phoune Sipraseuth, Sithon Kommadan, Singkapo, and others. Tiao Souk Vongsak managed to escape. 136

## THE RISE OF PHOUMI NOSAVAN AND THE SPLIT OF THE LAO NATIONALISTS

Phoui now put the handling of the crisis in the hands of the defense ministry, where Colonel Phoumi Nosavan, the deputy minister, vowed to settle the Pathet Lao problem "once and for all." The involvement of high-ranking army officers in the CDNI had gradually increased over the summer of 1958. The names of several army officers had figured in the tractations and speculation that had gone on during July and August over the composition of the new government. General Sounthone Pathammavong, the army chief of staff, had canceled a planned trip to France at the beginning of August. Colonel Phoumi's name had also figured. That summer he was away at the Ecole Supérieure de Guerre in France to begin a two-year course. Alerted by friends and supporters in Vientiane, and completely aware of the possibilities opening to his career, Phoumi cut his course short and returned to Vientiane on August 14.<sup>137</sup>

It was well for his future career that he did so. Phoumi played his cards well, showing himself to be an "able, cool-headed and reliable negotiator," in the embassy's words, and winning the confidence of the CDNI leaders and Phoui. On January 24, Phoui rewarded him by including him in his reshuffled cabinet as secretary of state for national defense, directly under General Sounthone as minister. Sarit also, in November 1951, had entered the Thai government as deputy defense minister. The appointment meant Phoumi now had one foot in the door. The embassy's judgment was that Phoumi was in a position to be the "best instrument through which U.S. military advice and aid can bring about maximum results." The "instrument" that Phoumi was expected to be was to turn out far different from what the embassy had in mind. But Phoumi would learn to his cost what it meant to be an instrument of the United States.

The matter of security guarantees grew more urgent when fighting broke out along the border with the DRV farther north in Sam Neua following the escape of the Pathet Lao battalions, compelling the government to declare a state of emergency there on August 4, 1959. Savang's immediate reaction was to instruct the government to mobilize the necessary forces to expel the invaders and to request the United Nations to dispatch an observer to Laos. <sup>139</sup> The small Laotian garrisons in the border area had given a good account of themselves in the initial fighting, withdrawing from exposed positions along rivers now in spate due to the summer monsoon in accordance with sound military doctrine. They had subsequently managed to reoccupy a number of these positions. But the fighting took a turn for the worse at the end of August, a number of border posts were lost anew, and the government extended the state of emergency to the entire country on September 4.

The royal government, meeting in cabinet session, also decided to address a formal appeal to UN Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld for dispatch of a UN emergency force. Smith, who saw Savang's hand behind this unexpected move, expressed his amazement to Foreign Minister Khamphan Panya that a decision of such importance had been reached without even minimal consultation with Laos's allies, the United States, France, and the United Kingdom. <sup>140</sup> Eventually, a subcommittee of the Security Council visited Laos to look into the royal government's charges of aggression, providing some satisfaction, but its report was inconclusive. The subcommittee sympathized with the royal government's plight, but its Japanese and Italian members privately advised Phoui to improve his country's relations with Hanoi and Peking. <sup>141</sup> Hammarskjöld himself visited Laos twice, in March and November 1959.

The military operations in the border area in the summer of 1959 established a pattern of concealing from view the DRV presence. Forces belonging to the People's Army of Vietnam (PAVN) led the attack on a strong point, then fell back, letting the Pathet Lao remain in place once resistance had been broken. The fact that PAVN regular army units participated in attacks on July 28–31, 1959, is attested to by eyewitnesses. Have Rumors of the PAVN in the vicinity often had a terrifying effect on the defenders. Among the men who heard them in the mountains of Sam Neua that summer was a young royal army captain named

Kong Le. Kong Le had two companies of his Second Paratroop Battalion out on patrol almost on the North Vietnam border. When they returned to Sam Neua without encountering the enemy, the two companies found that the garrison had decamped, leaving the town defenseless. Kong Le also noted the habit of generals such as Ouan Ratikoun of making brief flying visits to the front which were not of much use in shoring up the morale of the local population.

More extensive direct DRV involvement in Laos took the form of logistical support for the Pathet Lao forces. As early as two months after the Geneva conference, the DRV established a small support group on the Thanh Hoa-Sam Neua border at Ban Na Meo. This unit, known as Group 100, provided logistical and other support to the Pathet Lao forces. It was headed by two experienced men. Colonel Chu Huy Man, younger brother of General Chu Van Tan, was its commanding officer. Its political officer was Colonel Dao Viet Huong, who had been a member of the Joint Commission. 143 In view of the switch back to a fighting strategy, however, the Vietnamese and Lao parties decided to establish an upgraded unit. The new unit, known as Group 959, began operating in September 1959. According to an official history, its personnel had the mission "of serving as specialists for the Military Commission and Supreme Command of the Laotian People's Liberation Army and organizing the supplying of Vietnamese material to the Laotian revolution and directly commanding the Vietnamese volunteer units operating in Sam Neua, Xieng Khouang, and Vientiane."144 Group 959 was headquartered at Na Kay, just inside the border of Sam Neua.

With the deputies of the Lao Patriotic Front in a Vientiane prison and renewed fighting going on in the countryside, the political scene verged ever more on extra-legality. Key army officers, having been initiated into politics, were emboldened to take things into their own hands in the capital. In doing so, they showed an increasing tendency to assume the United States would back them regardless of constitutional niceties, which indeed were being openly challenged not only by the army leaders but also by the CDNI. As reports were circulating that the royal army and the Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) had worked out a secret agreement in the wake of the Plain of Jars events to allow each other's forces to penetrate 10 kilometers inside each other's borders in pursuit of dissident elements, Smith had thought it wise to warn Phoui and Khamphan Panya of the dangerous implications of the royal government's enlistment of assistance from the Republic of Vietnam without prior consultation with him. 145

Phoumi maintained a certain distance between himself and the CDNI, but he shared the latter's contempt for the parliamentary system and especially thought that the Rally of the Lao People's concept of countering the Front by winning elections was ineffective, as he told Smith. 146 In June, in the wake of the escape of the Pathet Lao battalion from the Plain of Jars, Phoumi had approached the Army attaché at the embassy and proposed that he and the senior officers of the royal army should meet with PEO Chief Brigadier General John A. Heintges and his deputies "to formulate plans for [the] possible commitment of U.S. forces in Laos in [the] event [of] major hostilities such as invasion [by] Viet Minh and/or Chicom [Chinese Communists]." When asked when such discussions, if approved, should commence, Phoumi replied "At once." <sup>147</sup> As the National Assembly's mandate, and consequently also that of Phoui's government, approached its end and considering the impossibility of holding elections during the state of emergency, Phoumi saw a loftier place for himself than inspector general of the army. He needed the king's support, however. Savang had been proclaimed king on November 1 on the death of his father.

Savang was disposed to get rid of the present National Assembly, come what may. He judged it had treated him with insufficient deference. "I do not like these deputies who are hated by the people as much as if they were members of the Lao Patriotic Front," he had shouted at a nonplussed Phoui in October. <sup>148</sup> But every evidence shows that during 1959, despite the king's aspersions, and contrary to Phoumi's impression that political action was proving ineffective against the Front, the Lao political system was functioning well.

The Assembly deputies had started to shun the pleasant living in Vientiane and go out into the countryside to meet their constituents. In debates, some Rally of the Lao People deputies were critical of certain "excesses" committed against the population by the military, which had wide powers under the state of emergency.<sup>149</sup> Intra-party differences within the Rally of the Lao People had been largely patched up. The main split that remained was between the deputies and outsiders contending for power, namely the CDNI. Even the Democrats, consisting of the Voravongs of Savannakhet, who had voted against Phoui in January, seemed to be reconciled. Furthermore, the issue of monetary reform, which many Lao saw as having been imposed by the Americans, stirred a rise in nationalist pride in Vientiane, as did the humiliation many Lao felt at reports of hearings held in Washington by Congressman Porter Hardy's subcommittee, in the course of which the American aid program in their country had been picked over, with consequently much derogatory comment in the American press. These "nationalistic stirrings should be a warning to us," Parsons reported after a visit to Laos. 150

As Phoui prepared for a trip abroad, the CDNI demanded the collective resignation of the government. Nevertheless, Phoui carried through with his planned trip to Washington (he had originally wanted to go to the UN General Assembly but had been advised that the timing was inopportune in view of the subcommittee's imminent issuance of its report). He returned to Laos discouraged by what he saw as a lack of support and convinced that the Americans were still directing their efforts toward building up the CDNI instead of maintaining democratic and constitutional government. Economic aid officials had proved especially disappointing with their "extremely tough" but astonishingly ignorant approach to Lao problems. Smith would have to work hard to buck him up. <sup>151</sup> Smith sent off a long telegram complaining of the difficulties the dichotomy of his and Hecksher's policies was causing in American relations with the Lao and the representatives of friendly governments such as Britain, France, and India. <sup>152</sup>

In early December, Savang received Ambassador Smith and Vice Admiral Herbert D. Riley, chief of staff to the commander in chief, Pacific (CINCPAC). The king's comments on internal and external affairs were as blunt as ever and made music to the ears of Colonel Phoumi, who indeed had arranged the interview. Phoumi was scheming with the king to have himself promoted to general and made sure that in his general staff position, which he held concurrently with his cabinet duties, he had responsibility for relations with foreign general staffs. The king's remark to his visitors that Laos was perfectly capable of choosing the proper time and manner of appealing for foreign assistance, since he knew any advice he got from the United States on such an appeal would be negative, worried Smith. The king had learned the lesson of January well.

The Assembly's mandate was due to expire on December 25 under the constitution, which set a four-year term for the Assembly. Thirty-four deputies out of 59 (of whom eight were in prison) signed a request for convocation of a National Congress (a joint meeting of the Assembly and the King's Council) to approve a six-month extension of the Assembly's mandate in view of the impossibility of holding elections immediately. The army chiefs and the CDNI opposed this move. The king having rejected the Assembly's request, Phoui won his cabinet's approval on December 3 for applying the 1957 election law, which set the first Sunday of April as election day.

On December 11, the Assembly's standing committee decided, in keeping with the constitution, to convene an extraordinary session and addressed the proposal to Phoui, who forwarded it to the king on December 14 along with a covering letter stating his wish to end his special powers before their official expiry on January 14. The king signed two ordinances on December 15, one convening an extraordinary session of the Assembly from December 17 to 22, the other approving a cabinet reshuffle, made necessary by the opposition to Phoui of its CDNI members, especially Khamphan Panya. Panya's rapid rise in the career civil service had been favored by Savang, who had protected him against charges of collaborating with the Japanese during the occupation of Vientiane in 1945. Thereupon, all the CDNI ministers resigned. Phoui's new government was entirely composed of Rally of the Lao People deputies. In approving Phoui's request for an extraordinary session, the king made termination of the prime minister's special powers on December 17 a condition.

The next day, the leadership of the CDNI issued a statement to the effect that any extension of the Assembly's mandate was unconstitutional and that the 1957 election law could not supersede the constitution. The statement also said the cabinet reshuffle was also inopportune in view of the above facts. <sup>157</sup> The extraordinary session, which was opened by the king on December 17, approved on December 19 the extension of the Assembly's mandate until April 1960. The CDNI meanwhile was working behind the scenes to have the king dismiss the Assembly. The CDNI also was spreading rumors of a plot against the monarchy.

On December 24, on the pretext of rumors of a Pathet Lao attack, General Phoumi Nosavan on his own initiative set in motion the plan of defense of Vientiane. Guards were posted at the residences of ministers, and tanks encircled the royal residence. The King's Council, influenced by Khamphan Panya's father, Phao Panya, asked the king on December 27 to pronounce him-

self on the constitutionality of the extension of the Assembly's mandate. He replied in a letter made public on December 28 that, the constitution having fixed the term of the deputies at four years, the Assembly stood dissolved. This confronted the deputies with a royal challenge, since they considered that under Article 44 it was incumbent upon the Assembly to have the final word on interpreting the constitution. (The Office of Southeast Asian Affairs was in error when it cabled the embassy that the constitution was silent on which institution had the final power of interpretation and that accordingly a hands-off attitude was indicated. Smith lost no time in correcting this error. Smith also noted that the statement that "responsibility of [for] division must be shared [with the CDNI] by Phoui" was contradicted by the facts. Phoui refused to redraft his letter.

Katay's untimely death on December 29 deprived the remaining cabinet at one stroke of its deputy prime minister and minister of interior, justice, and of cults and one of the strongest voices against the CDNI; large crowds attended his funeral, and a statue of him was erected in his native Pakse. With the intention of warning the army against taking illegal action in view of the show of force in the city, which now extended to tanks in front of the Assembly, Phoui summoned the army chiefs to a meeting on the afternoon of December 31. On learning of this, General Phoumi immediately went to the royal residence and obtained a letter in the name of the secretary of the palace addressed to Phoui accepting his resignation in view of "the explosive situation." He had it signed by the king and delivered to the prime minister. Phoui bowed to this and canceled the meeting of army chiefs.

The army high command that same afternoon issued Communiqué No. 1, drafted by Phoumi. It said that Phoui's government had resigned and that the army was taking all dispositions to meet the situation in keeping with its mission of maintaining order and security. Army units immediately occupied the radio station, the telegraph office, and the electric generating station and reinforced the units around the National Assembly. On the evening of December 31, Communiqué No. 2 stated that the king had received the five generals, Phoumi, Ouan, Sing, Sounthone, and Amkha, and entrusted to them the maintenance of order and security in the kingdom. There was, in fact, not the slightest resistance to the army or any disturbance of public order.

On January 2, as Phoui was preparing to submit to the king the draft of a royal ordinance charging his government with caretaker duties in accordance with customary practice, General Phoumi hastened to the royal residence, with all the other generals present in Vientiane, to inform the king that caretaker duties could not be entrusted to ministers "who have shown themselves incapable of maintaining order." He then convened a meeting of civil servants to inform them that the army high command had assumed responsibility for "handling current affairs." This statement was broadcast on the radio as well, under General Phoumi's name as "permanent delegate of the army high command" (previously he had used the title inspector general of the army). <sup>161</sup> Another statement announced that all the acts of the Assembly after December 25 were

considered null and void. Generals Sounthone, Sing, and Amkha Soukavong discreetly stayed in touch with Phoui, who advised them to avoid any action that could trigger bloodshed and to try to calm General Phoumi. 162

In view of the dispute over the constitutionality of the government, Smith had requested guidance on the issue of American recognition of any government that might result. <sup>163</sup> In reply, the State Department pointed out the parallel with the change of government in Thailand in September 1957 and the Department's position that the question of recognition did not arise because the king remained chief of state. It suggested that Smith follow this precedent by continuing normal relations with the new government. <sup>164</sup> As a new government had not yet been formed, these instructions amounted to giving General Phoumi, who, with Sarit's precedent equally in mind, assuredly saw himself as dominating a new government to be acquiesced in by the king, a blank check.

The king was obviously the key, but Smith's requests for a royal audience had been censored by Chao Sopsaisana. The king's presence in Vientiane afforded an opportunity that was not to be lost, however, and Smith urged on his colleagues the desirability of their making a joint démarche. The king had decided to hold a reception for the diplomatic corps on New Year's Day, thereby setting a precedent for the tradition-minded Lao, whose custom had in the past obliged the diplomatic corps to journey to Luang Prabang for the fifth-month new year's celebrations. Kou Abhay, the head of the King's Council, and Phoui advised patience in making the démarche, however.

Smith thereupon drafted a mild and polite statement in which he expressed, on behalf of his government, the hope that moderation would prevail. On receiving the text of Smith's statement, however, the State Department, in view of the concerted solidarity among the Western ambassadors, replied that it had no objection to Gassouin's presenting the démarche to the king, in his capacity as dean of the diplomatic corps and for which he had received authority from Paris to do, <sup>165</sup> but that on no account should Smith allow Gassouin to present a statement on behalf of the United States. <sup>166</sup>

The four Western chiefs of mission met at Smith's house with members of their staffs the following morning for discussion of the situation. These discussions went on until the morning of January 4, when the chiefs of mission received word at quarter to ten that the king would receive them all at ten. Gassouin, Smith, Lincoln of the United Kingdom, and Richard H. Gardner of Australia went together to the royal residence to present a united front on the side of respect for constitutionality. By prior arrangement, the case was put by Gassouin in a half-hour private audience, in the course of which he notably asked the king what the Western powers were to make of the actions of the five generals, to which the king replied that the generals were obviously acting illegally, thus contradicting their radio communiqués. The king spoke very highly of Phoui, describing him as "good and intelligent." He referred to the deputies as "rascals." <sup>167</sup>

The other three chiefs of mission then joined the audience, and Smith was able to read the statement he had prepared. Gassouin gained the impression that a noticeable change came over the king as the conversation progressed; from ini-

tially acting flustered and protesting that it was all out of his hands, His Majesty had calmed down and listened carefully to the arguments he was given regarding the necessity, for a number of reasons, of preserving due process. A request during the audience by General Phoumi to see the king was turned aside. <sup>168</sup>

Having heard the ambassadors make their point, it did not take the king long to inform General Phoumi of his wish to see a new government formed immediately. General Phoumi could be a part of it, but constitutionality was going to be preserved, come what may. The following afternoon, the general was received in audience and afterward, through General Sounthone in a face-saving gesture, the army announced it also hoped to see the formation of a government. The king thanked General Sounthone for the army's understanding in making this turnabout.<sup>169</sup>

The American diplomatic correspondence makes it clear that in Washington there was no appreciation of the degree to which General Phoumi at each stage took the initiative to steer the course of events, acting against the prime minister, against the National Assembly, and against even his own colleagues in the army. General Sounthone had confided to PEO Chief Heintges that he had tried unsuccessfully for weeks to keep the other generals from getting involved in politics. Heintges had said something to the effect that if the generals took over he would have to pack his bags and return home. Also Prince Boun Oum na Champassak made it known at a critical moment that he was against a military dictatorship. Favorably disposed to the CDNI's ambitious program of "cleaning up politics" in Laos, the Office of Southeast Asian Affairs, with Parsons approving all along, may have accepted at face value press reports of statements by the CDNI's spokesman, Sisouk na Champassak, to the effect that "public opinion" had forced the army to act, which was complete nonsense, and may have been willing to see constitutionality bent, as the record shows. But General Phoumi needed firmer backing than this for his quest for dictatorial power, and there was only one place where he could find it. His backing came directly from Sarit and his acolyte Jantzen in Bangkok and from Hecksher and the CIA in Vientiane. In fact, the events of December 1959 and January 1960 may properly be described as the CIA's coup. It was only due to the good sense displayed by Phoui, by Ambassador Smith and his diplomatic colleagues, and in the final analysis by the king himself that the attempt failed. This only became known long after the events, however, and the CIA records still have not been made public.

A provisional government headed by Kou Abhay was invested by the king (as there was no National Assembly or King's Council in existence) on January 7 and charged with preparing the next elections. It included three deputies of known capability who had not been in the previous cabinet, Tiao Somsanith, Nouphat Chounramany and Phoui's brother Ngon Sananikone; they had no illusions about how they were being mobilized to meet the needs of the moment. Despite their vehement protests, Khamphan Panya, enjoying the royal favor as usual, was retained as foreign minister. The government also included General Phoumi as minister of defense.

The crisis created by General Phoumi had been defused, but the breach in the nationalist ranks remained "profound," as the embassy reported. To General Phoumi was receiving financial support from Sarit on a lavish scale, which allowed him to pay off his fellow generals. The was from this time that Phoumi and other high-ranking officers began constructing for themselves expensive homes in Vientiane, which testified to the corruption of the army leadership and would later lead to trouble. Phoumi's sudden wealth was the subject of talk by many nationalist politicians. Phoui's newspaper *L'Indépendant* pined the death of liberal democracy in Laos on December 31 and said "it would be vain to talk still of legality," but this obituary proved to be premature.

Behind the scenes, General Phoumi exercised the considerable pressure he was able to bring to bear due to his dual positions in the government and the army to stage-manage the elections to be held on April 24, 1960. Ignoring the sentiment of people such as Interior Minister Somsanith and Deputy Prime Minister Nhouy Abhay, who favored allowing candidates of the Lao Patriotic Front to run, Phoumi had changes made to the electoral law to their disadvantage, gerrymandered electoral districts, bought off strong and inconvenient candidates, and enlisted civil servants as his campaign workers. In the weeks preceding the voting, the army launched Operation Cleanup, a vast security campaign that had all the earmarks of a political intimidation effort. The Front's imprisoned deputies were not able to campaign; they got word through their wives to their supporters to vote for any Front candidates who dared run, or else for their ally, the Santiphab (Peace) Party. On election day, 676,804 out of a total 873,318 registered voters went to the polls, 174 but the balloting was fraudulent in many places (particularly in the south where Operation Cleanup had been most active), and the results were unbelievable, as the officials on the Laos desk in Washington discussed in frank terms with their Western colleagues. 175 Quinim, the Santiphab leader, received 721 votes in Paksong, and the Front's Som Phommachanh received 58 votes in Sam Neua. Nang Khampheng Boupha, who had had the temerity to complain to the UN secretary-general's representative about difficulties placed in her way in securing the necessary papers, received 434 votes in Muong Kassy, and Soth Phetrasy received 2,117 votes in Vang Vieng-Sanakham. The Front's "legal" leaders were now out of the Assembly as well as out of the government.

The possibility that General Phoumi and the young CDNI supporters might form their own government in disregard of the Rally of the Lao people, which still mustered a not inconsiderable following in the Assembly when it opened its session on May 11, produced another round of diplomatic consultations and worrying over whether the Western ambassadors should make a new démarche to the king. General Phoumi had been diligently spreading the word that he would favor a cabinet headed by Tiao Somsanith, a civil servant untainted by corruption who possessed impeccable nationalist credentials, but meanwhile he continued lobbying behind the scenes to secure the prime ministership himself. The CDNI followed up its election victory by forming a new political party, the Paxa Sangkhom (Party of Democracy and Social Progress), whose tactics immediately became to lure deputies away from the Rally of the Lao People and to

block either Phoui Sananikone or Prince Souvanna Phouma, who had returned from Paris and been elected without fraud in Luang Prabang, from securing the necessary support to form a government. General Phoumi was elected president of the new party, and Somsanith was elected its legislative leader. They were in no mood to have their plans upset this time by the Western ambassadors. The CDNI weekly newspaper *Lao Hakxa Sat* published an editorial, written by Khamphan Panya, qualifying such interference as "going beyond the limits of courtesy and esteem we have always displayed toward them."

It seemed that the way was clear for General Phoumi to assume the prime ministership legally when the 11 deputies of the Lao Patriotic Front who had been held in prison since July 1959 escaped on May 23, taking their guards with them. The event earned General Phoumi a royal dressing down and spoiled his chances of being called by the king to form a government. The Assembly elected Souvanna Phouma as its president on May 25. The new government, announced on June 3, was headed by Somsanith. The escape of the Front's deputies had all the hallmarks of careful preparation. The escape route had been prepared by the Front's chief for the province of Vientiane, for which he later was awarded a medal by the Front's central committee.

The idea of neutrality was not quite dead, however, and the Lao went on debating, in the National Assembly and in their press, what form of neutrality best suited their situation, whether "neutral but pro-West" or "genuine neutralist." The cabinet seriously considered sounding out Peking and Hanoi as to possible conditions for a modus vivendi. The government did sound out Hammarskjöld about sending it an "expert on neutral conduct," preferably a Swiss or a Swede. But the secretary-general was not enthusiastic about the idea.

The embassy was well informed about the insurgency in the countryside, which now threatened to resume on a larger scale; the embassy's archives contain several detailed reports of the effectiveness of the Pathet Lao organization and proselytizing in the villages. 180 Talks between the Americans and the French on measures to improve the training program for the royal army had gone on in bureaucratic fashion in 1959, and the PEO had been increased in size. Under a new agreement, the PEO program was to expire in September 1960. At the beginning of June 1960, the director for Asia and Oceania at the Quai d'Orsay, Etienne M. Manac'h, informed Parsons that the French had taken a decision to hold substantive discussions with the Americans on the program in Paris. Manac'h said the French intended to resume their traditional role in Laos, and Parsons drew the implication that this meant that they would demand the withdrawal of the PEO.<sup>181</sup> Ambassador Alphand made clear to Secretary of State Christian Herter on June 30 that France expected all PEO officers engaged in training the royal army to be withdrawn by September 1 and their functions to be transferred to the French. 182 The point was repeated by Manac'h to Ambassadordesignate Brown when he stopped over in Paris on July 12.183 After further talks, the United States agreed with the French to phase out its field training teams, which were the focus of the dispute, by June 30, 1961. 184

Ambassador Smith departed in June, much to the relief of the CDNI stalwarts who had resented his tireless defense of constitutionality and his enlisting of his diplomatic colleagues in démarches to the king, and a new American ambassador arrived in Vientiane in the last days of July 1960. Like Parsons, Winthrop G. Brown was a New Englander, tall and spare, and a Yale classmate. The two could not have been more different in outlook, however. Brown was willing to listen and learn, which got him off to a good start with Prince Souvanna Phouma. As Brown later recalled:

I must say I was very impressed. He took the line that the only proper role for Laos was to be completely neutral. He stressed the fact that he was a sincere and vigorous anti-Communist, but he did not want to be tied up in alliances with the West any more than he wanted to be tied up with alliances with the Communist world. He seemed to be pretty well persuaded that he would be able, if he were in charge, if the country followed a neutral policy, to maintain its independence.

. . . Now, I took a lot of this with substantial grains of salt, both because of the past history I had been told about in Washington and because of the fact that I didn't think the Communists were quite as gentle and accommodating as he seemed to think that they would be. But nevertheless, the way in which he presented his thesis of trying to unite the different elements in the country into a national and a neutral leadership and to pursue a course of real neutrality for the country seemed to me to be very sincere. The impression I got of the man, as such, was that he had qualities of leadership and that he was likely to appeal to his people. <sup>185</sup>

Souvanna Phouma told Brown the exclusion of the Front from the National Assembly had been a great error. He said the Assembly could have absorbed 10 Front deputies without creating a danger. This would have been the limit of the available candidates and would have pacified the country. <sup>186</sup> On August 6, General Phoumi in his capacity as defense minister presented an ultimatum to the commander of the French training mission, General Daillier, that unless he received satisfaction on the French contribution to the program he would request the withdrawal of all French instructors. French Ambassador Pierre-Louis Falaize immediately communicated this news to the Quai d'Orsay. <sup>187</sup>

## KONG Le's COUP D'ETAT AND ITS AFTERMATH

Three days after General Phoumi's ultimatum to the French, on August 9, when the entire cabinet was in Luang Prabang conferring with the king, Captain Kong Le, a 26-year-old Phou Thai tribesman from Muong Phalane, led his Second Paratroop Battalion in taking over all essential installations in Vientiane and placing all senior officers under house arrest. Radio Vientiane broadcast communiqués in the name of the High Command of the Revolution, signed by Kong Le as chief. 188 The action went off like clockwork, and there were only two dead.

There exist several versions of what Kong Le's intentions were. Kong Le's own explanation, given in April 1963 on the Plain of Jars to the English journal-

ist Estelle Holt, seems plausible. He was a man filled with grievances, most of them justified, which he summed up in the phrase "Why should Lao fight Lao?" He had originally only intended a military rebellion on a small scale. He said that he, Captain Kamlong, and Lieutenant Deuane Sunnalath had for a long while discussed the idea of playing a bigger role in military command, but he had not intended to take over power when he did. When his battalion was brought to Vientiane for a rest period, however, his men had been billeted in a mosquito-infested swamp. He complained to General Phoumi about the inadequacy of their quarters. When he was told that there was nowhere else to put them, he insisted that they take over a large house on the road to the That Luang that was momentarily unoccupied, although belonging to a general. Phoumi said he would see about it, and then went off to Luang Prabang, where he assured the king that Kong Le's grumbling was not a serious matter. Kong Le marched his men to take over the house, and on the way across town they took over the radio station as well. Once he had announced the takeover of the capital, he began looking around for a leader. He first approached Prince Boun Oum, who told him "You have rolled in shit and still smell of it." Quinim Pholsena suggested he approach Souvanna Phouma. 189

There seems to be general agreement that Kong Le, as Boun Oum suggested, had within hours of taking over the capital found himself in a situation that the loyalty of soldiers to their commander no longer sufficed to control. Indeed, while it became Kong Le's coup d'état, there were others prepared to exploit the situation who had perhaps known about Kong Le's intentions all along. An alternative explanation of the events of August 9 allows for the disjointed nature of the takeover but also accounts in a more satisfactory way than Kong Le's version for a number of other aspects that emerge from a careful reading of the contemporary reports, none of which, be it noted, offers any definite proof.

The virtual coincidence of the coup with General Phoumi's ultimatum to the French training mission, missing from Kong Le's version and now usually overlooked by historians, is the first aspect that the alternative version accounts for. The planned absence from Vientiane of the cabinet on August 9 to consult with the king would have been known, of course, to all the cabinet members. The question arises: Was Kong Le informed of this ahead of time, and did he plan accordingly? And who would have been better positioned to inform him than General Phoumi himself? Afterward, it was suggested (without definite proof) that Phoumi had not only informed Kong Le of the absence of the cabinet but had urged him to take over the capital and had told Kong Le he would then return himself to assume control. Kong Le and Phoumi were close, and Kong Le's battalion was known as "one of Phoumi's units" and had received its pay for the month of June on July 22, according to an audit by the PEO comptroller. 191

The initial communiqués broadcast over Radio Vientiane, as distinct from some of the pamphlets that appeared, were not anti-American. <sup>192</sup> There was no concern for the safety of Americans, <sup>193</sup> Americans were unharmed during the

takeover, and the removal of American technicians from the radio station was done at the behest of the embassy, not the Lao. 194 The broadcast communiqué No. 2 said the High Command of the Revolution "will struggle against foreign intervention and will ask the foreign troops established on the national soil to leave the country." These words could have been written with the French in mind; France was the only foreign country to have troops in uniform in Laos as members of the French training mission. It was not until later, when the American decision to support General Phoumi became apparent, that the statements of the High Command of the Revolution and its auxiliary groups turned anti-American in tone and banners reading "PEO Go Home" appeared at demonstrations.

General Phoumi also, like Kong Le, had his reasons for being disgruntled. The king had held him responsible for the escape of the Front's leaders from Vientiane. He was facing the threat of a withdrawal of American military advisers at the very time he was seeking an increase in American military aid. 195 Prime Minister Somsanith had picked a cabinet of moderates, in accordance with his investiture speech, who did not look on the Pathet Lao as a military threat and who were planning a shift of emphasis from military to civilian administration to deal with the security problem. 196 The only development in which General Phoumi could take comfort was the fact that in July the CIA had assigned him his personal liaison officer, John ("Jack") F. Hasey, a former French Foreign Legionnaire.

General Phoumi was in Luang Prabang with the other members of the cabinet when the takeover in Vientiane occurred. He immediately left in a C-47, eventually landing in Ubon to the surprise of everyone, not least the Thai, at 5:15 P.M. on August 9.<sup>197</sup> Phoumi told an emissary from the American Embassy in Bangkok who met him in Ubon of his determination to "straighten things out."198 His plane had not been able to land at Séno or at Pakse, according to a member of Phoumi's party. 199 Had it also attempted to land at Wattay airport? The paratroopers were in full control of the airport, as the embassy's Army attaché was able to ascertain.<sup>200</sup> According to the alternative version, this is where Phoumi's plan went awry. Who prevented his returning to Vientiane to put himself at the head of the High Command of the Revolution, a choice of words that, together with the numbered communiqués, sounded like Sarit's in 1957 and 1958? A simple message, or threat, would have sufficed. It is clear who prevented him from landing at Séno: the French military, who were in control there. Moreover, the French would have been informed of Phoumi's movements through their monitoring of military communications (which later caused embarrassment to Phoumi's American supporters at Savannakhet).

General Phoumi, of course, would have kept his plan secret even after the plan fell through, and this may help explain why the alternative version has been given so little credence over the years, except by a handful of members of the American military and intelligence services who were there. One of these was told by an intelligence agent who had good connections with the French whom he trusted that the French had seen in Kong Le's action an opportunity to double-cross General Phoumi and put Prince Souvanna Phouma in power. The agent related that Phoumi's wife had been placed under house arrest in Vientiane and was later escorted to the river crossing by Kong Le himself. "Madame Phoumi," Kong Le reportedly said, "I am sorry for what happened; believe me I had nothing to do with it. I had no control over what happened. Tell the General that I am very sorry." It is likely, however, Laos being Laos, that word of Phoumi's plan had reached the ears of those meeting in Luang Prabang. If it did, it may explain the Somsanith cabinet's about-face in deciding to resign, considering that one of their members had dishonored their king, and Savang's immediate acceptance of this decision, equally surprising to Americans and others at the time. A note to British Prime Minister Harold Macmillan surmised that Somsanith had "panicked"; but would a man who had fought valiantly against the Japanese have allowed himself to panic at the takeover of the capital by an army officer well known to everyone? The alternative version may also explain why the king was reported to be "scared stiff" of Phoumi. 203

There were other indicators as well. Prince Souvanna Phouma's return to Vientiane in the spring was a development so unexpected that Savang closely questioned Phoui about what he knew about it, if anything; the king "was convinced he had been given a special mission for the French Government," Phoui later recalled, and Savang suspected Souvanna Phouma wished to see the French protectorate restored. Moreover, Kong Le had written in 1959 to de Gaulle, who advised him to adopt a policy of neutrality; the correspondence would have brought Kong Le to the attention of the French. Kong Le made no secret of his intention to rid his country of those who lived off foreign aid and to return to a policy of peace and neutrality, and he had reportedly discussed his plans for the coup d'état with Prince Souvanna Phouma, Tiao Sisoumang, Pheng Phongsavan, Quinim Pholsena, and Chan Pao Vanthanouvong, a police official and a Santiphab supporter, swearing them to secrecy. Thus it must be accepted that the French may have learned of Kong Le's actual plans through their numerous contacts in Vientiane.

On the day after the coup, the French ambassador in Vientiane was found to be outwardly unconcerned and counseling an attitude of watchful waiting. Falaize had alerted the Quai d'Orsay barely a week after the escape of the Front's deputies, on the basis of a radio intercept of a message, that Marshal Sarit had advised General Phoumi to seize power at all costs. The likelihood that French advisers had had a hand in helping Kong Le with his plans and in drafting the communiqués initially broadcast by Radio Vientiane, which were in perfect French, was openly discussed among journalists in Vientiane at the time. An article of August 17 in the Paris newspaper *L'Observateur* titled "Laos—Neutralist Victory" commented that "the Revolutionary Committee, above all, benefits from discreet but effective sponsorship of Prince Souvanna [Phouma] and of the French Embassy."

On August 10, in communiqué No. 10, the High Command of the Revolution announced the formation of an executive committee of the revolutionary movement with the names of Souvanna Phouma, Quinim, and a variety of

other political and military individuals; Souvanna Phouma said his name had been included without his permission and asked that it be removed. Souvanna Phouma told Falaize that Kong Le had asked him as president of the National Assembly to declare the Assembly dissolved, which the prince refused to do unless so instructed by the king. Souvanna Phouma, like Boun Oum, refused to become head of the rebel movement, stating he would consent to be prime minister if the king requested him. He gave counsels of moderation to Kong Le and forbade the High Command of the Revolution to call in Prince Souphanouvong. Souvanna Phouma convened a special session of the Assembly on the afternoon of August 9, about the time General Phoumi was landing at Ubon.

General Ouan Ratikoun arrived from Luang Prabang. He was sent back on August 11 carrying an agreement signed by the executive committee, Prince Souvanna Phouma as president of the Assembly, and several deputies as witnesses. The executive committee asked the government to return to Vientiane. If it did so, the paratroopers would withdraw to specified locations and return the police to their regular duties. There would then follow negotiations among the government, the executive committee, and the Assembly to ascertain whether the government would continue in office on giving certain assurances or would be replaced under regular constitutional procedures. There was as yet no formal demand that Souvanna Phouma assume the prime ministership.<sup>209</sup>

At a rally in the city football stadium that evening, Kong Le declared his goals: an end to the fighting among the Lao, an end to corruption, and a policy of peace and neutrality.<sup>210</sup> These were goals that struck a chord with many people and elicited support in Vientiane from students and other groups. Egalitarian sentiment swept through Vientiane; owners of Mercedes were seen to leave them parked in their garages. The State Department, however, took no account of this aspect of the situation, in spite of the fact the embassy pointed out the legitimacy of some of the grievances expressed in the revolutionary rhetoric.<sup>211</sup> Instead, Parsons cabled the embassy: "Prospect of neutralist government (under Souvanna Phouma or anyone else) dedicated to another fruitless round of negotiations with Pathet Lao would be one fraught with greatest danger to independence of country and its preservation with free world."212 When informed by the embassy of the possibility of negotiations between the Revolutionary Committee and the Somsanith government, Parsons instructed Brown on what he should tell Souvanna Phouma about the American position. This was that "there is a legitimate government of Laos and a rebel group which whatever its motivation is no more than a rebel group." He warned Brown against implying approval "of any views which sacrifice principles which [a] sovereign government should uphold."213

On August 13, General Ouan returned from Luang Prabang with the message that the government was prepared to resign if censured by the Assembly, but on condition the paratroopers withdraw to the outskirts of town and the government have a chance to present itself before the Assembly. As this news spread, demonstrators gathered outside the Présidence du Conseil demanding Somsanith's immediate resignation; they then marched to the Assembly, where

Souvanna Phouma met them and, startled by their vehement tone, attempted to moderate their demands.<sup>214</sup> Inside, the 41 deputies present voted unanimously to censure the Somsanith government. The crowd knocked down the doors of the Assembly building and broke some furniture but was ejected on Souvanna Phouma's authority. But in Luang Prabang, no doubt alarmed by the news from Vientiane, Prime Minister Prince Somsanith and Foreign Minister Khamphan Panya declared that the government considered the vote of the Assembly illegal, as a motion of censure could only be voted 24 hours after its introduction and after the prime minister had had an opportunity to debate the motion. Khamphan Panya also stated that the government had reversed its acceptance of the compromise formula carried by General Ouan.<sup>215</sup>

A delegation of the Assembly itself led by Oun Sananikone carried the news of the Assembly's censure vote to Luang Prabang and asked the king to name Souvanna Phouma to form a new government. On the morning of August 14, a telegram was received in Vientiane from Oun in Luang Prabang stating that Oun had seen the prime minister and some other ministers and that the meeting had resulted in complete understanding. The government was presenting its collective resignation to the king at 5 P.M. All members in Luang Prabang intended to return to Vientiane the following morning.<sup>216</sup> The government, whether out of fear of violence in Vientiane, as its members said, or for other reasons, had reversed itself, and the king accepted this decision. The embassy confirmed the king's acceptance of the collective resignation.<sup>217</sup> The king thereupon named Souvanna Phouma. In his discussions of these events, the king did not use the term coup d'état but only referred to a conflict between the Assembly and the cabinet. 218 Souvanna Phouma's government was invested unanimously by 34 deputies on August 17.<sup>219</sup> The next day, Kong Le declared that his coup d'état was over and vacated the Présidence du Conseil. However, the draft royal ordinance for the king's signature installing the Souvanna Phouma government did not reach the king.

In a meeting in Bangkok on the evening of August 11 with Marshal Sarit, Leonard Unger (the American chargé d'affaires), Jantzen, and the chief of the Joint United States Military Assistance Advisory Group (JUSMAG), General Phoumi outlined plans, "for implementation when supplies, equipment and men [are] all in order," for recapture of the Vientiane airport by parachute drop followed by ferrying in additional forces by air to oust the revolutionary group. He then outlined the assistance he required of the Thai and the Americans: air transport, fuel, pay for his troops, and two radio broadcasting units. Supplies ordinarily destined for Vientiane were to be diverted to Savannakhet, Phoumi's base. A PEO channel was to be opened between Savannakhet and JUSMAG Bangkok, short-circuiting the PEO in Vientiane. The participants decided it would be better to keep their dealings with General Phoumi secret. <sup>220</sup> A notable absence from the meeting was that of Sarit's foreign minister since October 1958, Thanat Khoman, who had his doubts about Phoumi and harbored a greater awareness of constitutional niceties.<sup>221</sup> The next day, the Thai instituted a blockade of Vientiane.

These steps received immediate approval in Washington. The Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS), who were more concerned with the fate of the royal army than with politics, met on August 17 and recommended that a memorandum be sent to Secretary Herter urging support for General Phoumi.<sup>222</sup> The JCS met again on August 19 and urged immediate and continuing aid to him.<sup>223</sup> The JCS directed that a PEO channel be established between General Phoumi's headquarters in Savannakhet and JUSMAG in Bangkok. Laotian troops in training at bases in Thailand were to be returned as soon as possible to Savannakhet.<sup>224</sup> Three landing craft were being sent up the Mekong by the PEO for the planned operation against Vientiane.<sup>225</sup> Jantzen ensured that a steady stream of supplies reached Savannakhet aboard aircraft of Civil Air Transport (CAT), a CIA proprietary company. All this aid General Phoumi readily accepted; whether or not he had in mind attacking the Pathet Lao, he was determined from the start to drive Kong Le out of Vientiane.

The hasty acceptance of General Phoumi's "requirements" by the Department of Defense and the CIA without any recorded objection from the State Department shows to what degree these agencies assumed the leading role in American policy-making in Laos in the aftermath of Kong Le's coup d'état. Assurances that the United States was working urgently to fill General Phoumi's requests and that all future reasonable requests would be met were conveyed to Marshal Sarit in a letter on August 24 by Unger. The importance the United States attached to keeping Sarit happy with its actions in Laos can easily be judged from the tenor of this letter, which is couched in personal terms without any reference to American policy interests in the situation in Laos. <sup>226</sup> Brown's suggestion that Sarit not be given the impression that the United States was giving Phoumi a "complete blank check" was apparently not acted on. <sup>227</sup> Brown had warned as early as August 11 of the dangers of American encouragement of overt Thai support for General Phoumi. <sup>228</sup>

General Phoumi rapidly enlisted the support of the commanders of the four military regions outside Vientiane and appealed to all military to rally to him and, acting like a traditional warlord, promised to ante up their pay. On August 15, he announced the establishment of a Counter Coup d'Etat Committee, which he said had been authorized by Somsanith. But Somsanith's resignation at approximately the same time left this committee in legal limbo. Facing the prospect of civil war, Souvanna Phouma flew to Savannakhet on August 23<sup>229</sup> and proposed that General Phoumi and he convoke the entire National Assembly to meet in Luang Prabang on August 29. There, the deputies would invest a new government in which Phoumi would have a place. The general accepted, and on August 28 flew to Luang Prabang accompanied by 22 deputies. Souvanna Phouma, accompanied by 34 deputies, arrived from Vientiane on August 29. After a meeting that morning, Souvanna Phouma and Phoumi announced they were "in agreement to bring peace and harmony among all Lao citizens within constitutional legality."230 The Assembly met in plenary session that evening, and Somsanith resubmitted his resignation.

A new government with Souvanna Phouma as prime minister and Phoumi as deputy prime minister and minister of interior was formed after considerable negotiation on August 30<sup>231</sup> and sworn in on August 31. This time, the king signed the royal ordinance. Phoumi's announcement of the dissolution of his Counter Coup d'Etat Committee on August 31<sup>232</sup> might have averted civil war but for the fact that Kong Le took fright and at noon the same day made a radio broadcast protesting the presence of the general in the cabinet.<sup>233</sup> Souvanna Phouma convinced him to change his mind, which he did "for the sake of peace and reconciliation" on September 1.234 For reasons that have still not been satisfactorily explained, however, the general refused at the last minute to make the journey to Vientiane and returned to his base at Savannakhet instead. He reportedly was handed a message at the Luang Prabang airport that had arrived through American channels and that may have influenced his change of mind.<sup>235</sup> On September 2, the new government, minus General Phoumi and Leuam Insisiengmay, took the oath of office at Wat Sisaket in Vientiane. On September 5, General Phoumi reactivated his Counter Coup d'Etat Committee in Savannakhet and the following week announced formation of a Revolutionary Committee (Sarit's terminology) nominally headed by Prince Boun Oum na Champassak.

In spite of Parsons's admonitions against endorsing a government that was not in complete control of Vientiane (a reference to Kong Le), Ambassador Brown did not have to face the question of American recognition of the new government, as constitutional forms had been preserved; he dealt with Prince Souvanna Phouma, at first "informally" and then more and more formally. Souvanna Phouma's government was accepted as the legal government of Laos by every country except Thailand. Brown's task was made more difficult by the fact that he was sometimes not consulted by Washington, as when a Pentagon general announced in Saigon that American military aid to Laos was being suspended and Brown learned about it from the press. <sup>236</sup>

Once again, it was the question of General Phoumi that divided opinion among the Lao and among the foreign diplomats in Vientiane. The general was putting his American radio transmitters<sup>237</sup> to use broadcasting propaganda against Kong Le, whom he called a Communist, a tactic mainly directed to his Thai and American patrons, who justified their largesse on the grounds that General Phoumi was holding the royal army together to fight the Pathet Lao. General Phoumi also called General Ouan a Communist, a falsehood made patent by the fact that Radio Pathet Lao was branding Ouan as one of the "deceivers of the people," and the accusation was strongly resented by Ouan. It is significant that the only actions taken by troops of the royal army against the Pathet Lao between August and December 1960 were those taken by troops loyal to Souvanna Phouma in Phong Saly, Luang Prabang, and elsewhere. 238 General Phoumi did not take a single action against the Pathet Lao in this period while he was receiving lavish American aid<sup>239</sup> to fight the Communists in Laos.<sup>240</sup> When Colonel Houmphan Norasing, commander of the First Military Region, took action against the Pathet Lao without consulting Phoumi, Phoumi raised objections<sup>241</sup> and later mounted a coup in Luang Prabang that was directed as much against Houmphan as against the Souvanna Phouma government. Phoumi was not interested in chasing Pathet Lao guerrilla squads in the mountains and focused all his energy on preparing his campaign to recapture Vientiane. One of his first actions was to capture Paksane on the road to Vientiane.

The foreign diplomatic opposition to General Phoumi and his Revolutionary Committee was led by France, but it evoked sympathy from Britain, Australia, and New Zealand. General Phoumi's request to use the Séno air base was rejected by Ambassador Falaize; the base commander was ordered to defend the base by force if necessary to deny its use by any forces other than those of the legal government.<sup>242</sup> Falaize saw Phoumi's leadership of the army as weak and maintained that the only factor guaranteeing the survival of the non-Communists in the face of the Pathet Lao was Souvanna Phouma's prestige. Souvanna Phouma had three main sources of strength: the nationalist Lao; the Western countries France and Britain, upholders of the Geneva agreements; and the United States, willing to support Laos financially.<sup>243</sup> In the view of the Australian chargé d'affaires, John Gibson, by opposing the legal government, General Phoumi was responsible for its losses, weaknesses, and precarious position. Phoumi had no basis of popular support, his operations had not been of a type to acquire it, and his forces were not effective. Phoumi's opposition deprived Souvanna Phouma of the army strength required to oppose the Pathet Lao.<sup>244</sup> The New Zealand government communicated its views in Washington, and they were not favorable to American policy.<sup>245</sup>

Only in Bangkok and Saigon was Souvanna Phouma distrusted and General Phoumi viewed as something of a hero; American diplomats were under constant pressure for these governments to do more to support him. Ambassador U. Alexis Johnson in Bangkok opened one telegram by "regretfully" stating his impression of demoralization in Savannakhet, but ended by saying that the only way to avoid Phoumi's throwing in the towel might be to help him capture Vientiane, even with all the risks that policy entailed and "distasteful and tragic" as the prospect of Lao fighting Lao might be. <sup>246</sup> Nhu and Diem were more qualified in their support for Phoumi than Sarit. But the arguments made to Johnson and Durbrow carried considerable weight because of the fact that they came from Laos's immediate neighbors, whereas the French and the British could be pictured as far away with little or nothing to lose should Laos go Communist.

The Pathet Lao were content for the moment to watch the situation carefully, looking for opportunities to exploit that it offered them. They did not initiate attacks against the garrisons of the royal army but kept the latter tightly bottled up. Their propaganda maintained a militant line against Phoumi's rebel group, once again following the party center's tried and proven united front strategy. In a radio statement, Souphanouvong declared his full support for Souvanna Phouma's policies.<sup>247</sup> The prime minister reciprocated and invited Souphanouvong to come to Vientiane for discussions.<sup>248</sup> At Somsanith's request, Oun Heuan Norasing, a deputy to the National Assembly, drafted, for eventual submission to the Assembly, policy recommendations that the period

since the breakdown of the plan for Pathet Lao integration in May 1959 be erased for legal purposes, allowing both sides to start afresh; that Laos be neutral and accept aid from all countries without strings; and that if the Pathet Lao agreed to be integrated, elections would be held in the spring of 1961 for 24 additional seats in the Assembly with present deputies retaining their seats.<sup>249</sup> There was also an exchange of letters during this period between Souvanna Phouma and Pham Van Dong, initiated by the latter in congratulating him on assuming the prime ministership.

In mid-September, two companies of Kong Le's paratroopers routed the two battalions of General Phoumi's advance guard from their position at Paksane and installed a defensive line on the north bank of the Nam Ca Dinh. The situation on the non-Communist side led to much confusion. On September 28, when Kong Le dropped a handful of paratroopers near Sam Neua in order to explain the situation to the 1,500-man garrison, which was in principle loyal to Souvanna Phouma, rumors spread that the garrison's officers, some of whom had been in contact with Savannakhet, might be cashiered. The panicked garrison abandoned the town, which was immediately occupied by the Pathet Lao, accompanied by their North Vietnamese advisers from Group 959.<sup>250</sup> The Pathet Lao administration headed by Thao Ma was re-established. The withdrawing column surrendered its arms to the Pathet Lao near Muang Peun on October 2.

General Phoumi rebuffed Brown's overtures to him to give up his plan and return to the government, as he had rebuffed Souvanna Phouma's overtures. He replied that he feared for his safety in Vientiane, ignoring the fact that Somsanith himself had said he ran no personal risk if he returned to Vientiane. <sup>251</sup> With each of these overtures, Phoumi added fresh conditions for his return to Vientiane. He was not interested in negotiating, and his demands, like his propaganda about Communists in Vientiane, were intended merely to justify his rebellion. Parsons sent Brown a long message intended to dampen what he saw as the ambassador's favoritism toward Souvanna Phouma. <sup>252</sup> In Luang Prabang, King Savang Vatthana temporized, hoping to bring the military leaders together at least in a united stand against the Communists, leaving a political solution for later; he then retreated into a black mood of disgust with all concerned. <sup>253</sup>

The announcement in Vientiane of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Laos and the Soviet Union and attendant rumors of a large Soviet aid grant to Laos, may have precipitated the decision by the State Department and Joint Chiefs of Staff to send a high-level mission to see if differences between their representatives in Vientiane and Savannakhet could not be resolved. The mission consisted of Parsons, Assistant Secretary of Defense John N. Irwin II, and Admiral Riley from CINCPAC. It was put together so hurriedly that Parsons, recalled from leave in Massachusetts, got on the plane for Southeast Asia without even the benefit of catching up on his papers.<sup>254</sup> But a joint State-JCS meeting had formulated a set of demands to be made of Souvanna Phouma, including that he desist from negotiations with the Pathet Lao; that he move the seat of government "at least temporarily" from Vientiane to Luang Prabang, where he would be "out of danger

of the Kong Le threat"; and that he take all feasible steps to ensure that Kong Le "desist immediately from any threatening gesture or carrying out of hostilities against Savannakhet." Among those who expressed astonishment at this set of demands were the British and Australian ambassadors in Washington, who pointed out that removing Souvanna Phouma to Luang Prabang would only leave Kong Le more open to Pathet Lao influence. In any event, the prime minister was to accept none of these fantastic demands.

The State Department had not bothered to ascertain the prime minister's views on the American buildup of General Phoumi that had been going on since August 11. Now, however, in a letter to Ambassador Brown on October 8, Souvanna Phouma requested a clarification of the American position, particularly with respect to the furnishing of military aid. In spite of efforts at secrecy, so much was known about the military aid the Pentagon and the CIA were furnishing that Brown was in a delicate position. Souvanna Phouma pointed out that no legal government could finance a rebellion against itself. Furthermore, the imposition of such conditions would mean the alienation of Lao sovereignty.<sup>257</sup>

On October 12, Souvanna Phouma received the Parsons mission at his office.<sup>258</sup> He repeated the indictment of the provocative errors committed by his successors after the formation of the first coalition and said that the only course for Laos was to implement the 1957 agreements before the Pathet Lao presented even greater demands. <sup>259</sup> He had held a preliminary meeting on October 11 with the Pathet Lao delegation headed by Phoumi Vongvichit to discuss his proposals with respect to a supervised truce and the re-establishment of the royal government's authority in Sam Neua. As for General Phoumi, Souvanna Phouma said there was nothing to discuss, that he had only to acknowledge the authority of the royal government. He did not know what Phoumi wanted. If he were a real nationalist, why did he try to divide the country even further, thus serving the interests of the anti-national elements? He suspected General Phoumi might have some secret agreement with Sarit of which both he and the United States remained ignorant. Parsons replied that the United States had stressed to all its friends the importance of the unity of Laos and thought that Sarit understood this and had acted in a very restrained manner. Parsons said he doubted the existence of a secret agreement between Phoumi and Sarit.<sup>260</sup> For Parsons, it was mainly a protocol visit. He was, as usual, not interested in hearing what the Lao had to say or in listening to their grievances about American aid and American policy. Parsons apparently made no effort to arrange a meeting with Kong Le.

Ambassador Brown was left to patch together an understanding about military aid to General Phoumi as best he could while the Parsons mission continued its tour. In response to the prime minister's observation that if General Phoumi would simply acknowledge the authority of the legal government then he, Souvanna Phouma, would have the assurance that American arms would not be used against him, Brown said "We would use our influence to fullest and we could, we thought, assure compliance." This was surely to stretch things to the limit. Souvanna Phouma accepted this arrangement on October 19 on

the condition, as Brown notified the Department, that the aid should not be used against the royal government.<sup>262</sup> In the case of the three landing craft and much of the other American aid which Phoumi was to use in his attack on Vientiane the Americans could not even put up a pretense of respecting this condition. As for the Thai, they had made no promises.

At a luncheon Brown gave for Parsons on October 14 prior to the latter's departure from Vientiane, British Ambassador John Addis stated that his government felt Souvanna Phouma should be given full support, as no other leader or policy could save Laos. <sup>263</sup> This evaluation was based largely on the fact that Phoumi, while he could count on the support of the military so long as he paid them with his PEO funds, had no support whatever among the Laotian population. Even the Meo *macquis* in Xieng Khouang Province under their leader Colonel Vang Pao were managing to hold their own against the Pathet Lao, but their loyalty to Phoumi was doubtful. In Luang Prabang, the king's stronghold, 5,000 youths were reported to have volunteered for military service without pay to fight against Phoumi. <sup>264</sup>

Souvanna Phouma's negotiations with the Pathet Lao opened in earnest on October 18. The demands put forward by Phoumi Vongvichit were in line with the general program of the Front: a large united front against American intervention in Laos; formation of a government of national union comprising all parties, including repentant members of the Savannakhet committee; democratic freedoms and re-establishment of the 1957 election law, with general elections under that law; organization of a national army with integration of the Pathet Lao; adoption of a foreign policy of neutrality and establishment of diplomatic relations with neighboring countries; acceptance of aid from all countries without political strings; and development of the economy. In the immediate future, however, the Front demanded the outlawing of the CDNI and the establishment of relations with the DRV and the Chinese People's Republic. In exchange for this, it promised to put all its armed forces at the disposal of the prime minister and to put all the zones it occupied under the prime minister's authority.<sup>265</sup> The negotiations were to drag on.

## THE OVERTHROW OF CONSTITUTIONALITY—I

In Bangkok, Parsons discussed the situation with Irwin and Riley. He then sent a long telegram in which he also used the expression that Ambassador Addis had used: "to save Laos." But what he had in mind was something quite different, centering on continued covert American aid to Phoumi. Parsons placed his hope in erosion of support for Souvanna Phouma in the hope of leading him to give up as had happened in 1958, which would allow the United States once more to deal legally with Phoumi; he was undoubtedly encouraged in this view by his talk with the king, who had described, with considerable optimism, a countrywide popular uprising against the Pathet Lao that he expected to take place momentarily under Savannakhet's leadership. 266 Irwin spelled it out for Washington even more clearly: he favored "support and supply of anti-Communist forces in Laos," but what role any Laotian government or Laotian politi-

cal group might have he did not elaborate on; in Irwin's mind, the problem had none of the shades of gray that had so preoccupied the deputies to the National Assembly when they had debated what sort of neutral policy the government should follow.267

At the State Department, however, it was beginning to dawn on those running Laos policy during Parsons's absence on leave and travel to Southeast Asia that the awkward predicament in which continued aid to General Phoumi had placed the United States might be eased by some sort of political action. It occurred to the Department's officers that if General Phoumi and Prince Boun Oum could be persuaded to dissolve their Revolutionary Committee, which had no legal standing under the Lao constitution, General Phoumi could be represented as receiving the aid on behalf of the royal army rather than as leader of an overtly rebel group determined to overthrow the constitutional government. This might give some substance to Ambassador Brown's painfully arrived at understanding with the prime minister. Accordingly, getting General Phoumi and Boun Oum to dissolve their Revolutionary Committee was one of the tasks identified in a memorandum from John M. Steeves, acting in Parsons's absence, to Under Secretary C. Douglas Dillon on October 16.268 Unfortunately, Steeves did not get around to sending out instructions to the field until October 17, Washington time, by which time Phoumi had already been notified of American policy toward him. "As you know, we are urging Phoumi strongly to dissolve the 'Revolutionary Committee.' We believe he will do so," Steeves cabled the embassy in Vientiane, with an information copy to Bangkok.<sup>269</sup>

This was not the message General Phoumi received from the high-level American delegation when he met them on October 17 in Ubol, however. Parsons had remained in Bangkok, but he had sent the Department the terms of reference for the meeting with General Phoumi.

> Secretary Irwin and Admiral Riley [are] proceeding [to] Ubol [to] see Phoumi this afternoon. We have agreed [that] they should tell Phoumi that if he should receive [a] proposal from Souvanna [Phouma] for reconciliation, he must respond constructively. Unity in [the] face of [the] enemy is now [the] overriding consideration in Laos and his attitude toward such [a] proposal will show once and for all whether he is willing to put [his] country above self-interest. Should he not take immediate constructive attitude [the] US would at this juncture be forced reconsider its whole attitude toward him.270

Having received terms of reference for the meeting placing the onus of taking the initiative for a reconciliation on the prime minister (this is typical of the whole of the American dealings with General Phoumi), Irwin and Riley met with Phoumi and Boun Oum and their CIA political liaison officers for almost two hours. Also in attendance were two officers of the PEO. Since early October, Jantzen, who styled himself special adviser to Phoumi, had been pressing for appointment of "a full-time U.S. military adviser experienced in guerrilla warfare" to Phoumi. 271 This request resulted in the appointment of Colonel

Brownfield and Lieutenant Colonel Wood as personal military adviser and deputy adviser to General Phoumi, respectively. Wood had been in the OSS. They were authorized and directed to report directly to CINCPAC, informing Ambassador Brown and General Heintges in Vientiane "as appropriate."<sup>272</sup> What this meant was that the CIA and the Department of Defense had established a channel of advice and aid to General Phoumi completely separate from the Vientiane embassy and PEO headquarters and therefore beyond the purview of policy review in Washington much as the OSS teams had enjoyed in 1945 in their dealings with the Viet Minh.

According to the official report of the conversation by Irwin, the words "Revolutionary Committee" were not mentioned once.<sup>273</sup> General Phoumi opened the conversation with the usual boilerplate, thanking Irwin and Riley for generous American aid and expressing the hopes of "free Laos" for continuing assistance against communism. Later in the conversation, after outlining his latest plan, General Phoumi made his customary assessment that Pathet Lao attacks threatened every region of the country. His troops were ready for combat. His needs, which he had already given to American representatives in Savannakhet, were reasonable and austere.

General Phoumi's speech was persuasive to his visitors. After their formal conversation was finished (as Brown soon learned), Riley took the general aside and told him that the United States had completely lost confidence in Souvanna Phouma and was backing Phoumi to go back and clean up the situation. Irwin similarly told the general that while for the moment the United States was only supporting Phoumi in building up his defenses, in the long run the United States was supporting him all the way.<sup>274</sup> The message was not lost. If Phoumi had harbored any thought of returning to Vientiane except by force of arms, it now vanished. His reaction to efforts subsequently by Thomas J. Corcoran to get him to dissolve the Revolutionary Committee was "uniformly negative."<sup>275</sup> Any proposals from Vientiane would henceforth be dismissed out of hand.

Thus, with the assistant secretary of state for Far Eastern affairs in Bangkok, having taken "that particular day to attend to other business," two military representatives upcountry had made a major and open-ended United States commitment to a rebel general's plans for overthrowing by force of arms the legal government of a friendly country on the borders of China and the DRV. All this was done secretly, at the behest of the parties involved. Thus, when Secretary Herter told the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on January 6, 1961, that "we have been scrupulous from the point of view of working with the recognized government," his statement was not challenged, although in every sense except a narrow technical sense it was a lie, albeit one that left the Senators with a comfortable feeling that the United States had acted honorably.

Every detail of General Phoumi's preparations for seizing Vientiane was known to his PEO advisers and his CIA political liaison officers, but not to Ambassador Brown. Thus, Brown had to choose his words to Souvanna Phouma carefully. "I [Brown] have played fairly and openly with him [Souvanna Phouma] to the utmost that I could." Situation still complicated by

fact that we have given our word that we would do our best insure that no supplies given Phoumi would be used to attack Souvanna [Phouma] and that in reliance on this promise Souvanna [Phouma] has allowed us build up Phoumi's strength. We have loyally lived up to our word thus far."279 Brown was also determined not to be cowed by other American agencies operating in Laos; when he learned General Phoumi had been given funds by the PEO to pay his troops without his having been consulted, 280 he protested immediately and vigorously. 281 Souvanna Phouma later paid tribute to Brown as "a good, straight, honest man whose only tragedy was that he had to obey orders from his government."282

Nevertheless, Washington feared that Souvanna Phouma would bring charges before the United Nations that the United States was aiding a rebel movement in an effort to overthrow a duly constituted member government.<sup>283</sup> But Souvanna Phouma proved to be too much of a gentleman for that. American officials were particularly worried about a "bill of particulars" compiled by Colonel Hugh Toye, the British military attaché who was an expert on artillery fire, who claimed that Phoumi's American military advisers directed artillery fire at the Nam Ca Dinh, which would have constituted a violation of PEO regulations prohibiting advisers from taking part in military actions. The French at Séno were reported to have collected an impressive dossier of radio conversations and Morse code messages establishing the close working relationship between General Phoumi and the PEO.<sup>284</sup> Souvanna Phouma, perhaps fearing a collapse of the royal army even in its present state of passivity before the Pathet Lao, did not embarrass the United States by asking for the withdrawal of the PEO. He did, however, on December 3 order the government's delegate to the United Nations, Sisouk na Champassak, to ask for UN intervention in Laos based on the Thai intervention on behalf of General Phoumi. Sisouk took no action and said that if ordered to comply he would refuse.<sup>285</sup> Sisouk was given a ministerial post in the government formed by Prince Boun Oum.

Souvanna Phouma was still searching for a political solution to the crisis. He sent Quinim on a mission to Pathet Lao-controlled Sam Neua in an effort to reassert the royal government's authority. The Lao Patriotic Front could hardly protest the move, as its whole position depended on its proclaimed support for Souvanna Phouma's government, and Prince Souphanouvong was on hand, complete with military honor guard, to greet the visitors. But the Front had become a member of an organization founded in Vientiane at the end of October called the Committee for Peace and Neutrality, which Souvanna Phouma saw as a merging of existing political parties in an organization supportive of the government and others saw as a typical Communist front organization on the lines of the Lien Viet and the Fatherland Front. Pheng Phongsavan at this stage created his own party, the Party of the Five Principles, which was intended to be a party of socialist, though not Marxist, principles reflecting the communalism of the Lao village somewhat akin to the rural socialism of nineteenth-century Russia.

At a joint State-Defense meeting on Laos held, as usual, at the Pentagon (the State Department having long since abandoned any effort at strategic think-

ing about Laos) tactical matters involving the royal army dominated the discussion. The stationing of PEO personnel as military advisers at battalion level, an idea that had been raised by Irwin, again was proposed. The State Department roused itself to oppose this proposal on the grounds that this step could lead to the intervention of "volunteers" from the DRV. There was general disagreement by the participants along agency lines whether or not the Lao wanted American advisers. The disagreement then moved to the most basic issue: whether the United States should work through Phoumi or Souvanna Phouma, and who was more trustworthy. Parsons suggested that members of the Royal Thai Police Aerial Resupply Unit (PARUs), a creation of Phao, should be used as advisers in Laos. Parsons was moved at one point in the discussion to suggest that if Kong Le and the Pathet Lao attacked with DRV support, the United States would use SEATO and the United Nations; he also raised the possibility of unilateral American action.<sup>286</sup> Parsons appears at this stage to have become disabused of his confidence in General Phoumi and busied himself in Washington with trying to manipulate the Lao politicians to form a government that conformed to his conception of a pro-Western neutral Laos.<sup>287</sup>

Stimulated to action at long last, and in constant communication with Marshal Sarit, General Phoumi (after forcing the garrison at Luang Prabang and its commander to rally to him by the ruse of landing troops at the Luang Prabang airfield aboard a civilian airliner and capturing another general, Amkha Soukhavong, at Xieng Khouang) launched his campaign on the Nam Ca Dinh on November 21. Kong Le's two Neutralist companies pulled back, then sprang a strong counterattack on November 23. General Phoumi's troops fell back with serious losses. Kong Le's troops distinguished themselves bravely, holding ground against a force that was five times their size, equipped with heavier fire-power, enjoying sanctuary in Thailand, and advised by PEO officers. Many were wounded by artillery fire. They were under constant threat of being cut off from behind by General Phoumi's American landing craft, which, like the CAT aircraft placed at his disposal, enjoyed absolute superiority. They did this without any help from the Pathet Lao, Souvanna Phouma being unwilling to give substance to the propaganda Phoumi's radio was pouring out.

But the general moved up reinforcements and attacked again six days later, this time supported by artillery fire from the Thai side of the river, forcing Kong Le's four companies to retreat. On December 2, 16 weeks after General Phoumi had promised Sarit and Unger to retake Vientiane by a lightning parachute drop, his troops began crossing the Nam Ca Dinh, the last natural obstacle on the road to Vientiane. Ambassador Brown warned that aside from the loss of Lao life military action could have the disadvantage of leading to a situation of two governments, with the United States supporting one and everyone else the other.<sup>288</sup>

The capital was now bracing for an attack by General Phoumi's soldiers, who were seen landing on three successive nights by ferry at Thadeua downstream from the capital.<sup>289</sup> A last-minute and temporary switch of sides by Colonel Kouprasith Abhay, the commander of the Vientiane military region headquartered at

Camp Chinaimo on the eastern outskirts, was quickly neutralized by Kong Le, but tension heightened. The Pathet Lao delegation hurriedly left town. More of Souvanna Phouma's ministers disappeared and reappeared. The situation was becoming ungovernable. Seeing the battle as inevitable, Souvanna Phouma delegated all civil and military powers to the headquarters of the armed forces<sup>290</sup> and flew to Phnom Penh on the evening of December 9 accompanied by his ministers Boun Om (Boun Oum's nephew), Tiao Sisoumang Sisaleumsak, and Inpeng Suriyadhay. The following morning, General Sounthone Pathammavong, the commanding general of the armed forces, announced formation of a Supreme Committee of the National Army composed of himself as chairman, the veteran nationalist Lieutenant Colonel Tham Saysithsena as first vice chairman (a choice apparently dictated by Sounthone's belief that he would prove acceptable to General Phoumi as a negotiator of a standstill agreement), Kong Le as second vice chairman, and three other officers as members.<sup>291</sup> But at midmorning on December 11, Sounthone suddenly announced he had returned the powers that had been entrusted to him to Souvanna Phouma's remaining cabinet ministers in Vientiane.<sup>292</sup> This meant Quinim, and the move was probably due to pressure from Kong Le.

Armed with these powers, Quinim and Lieutenant Deuane Sunnalath, Kong Le's deputy, flew to Hanoi on a mission to seek military aid. This aid started to arrive in Vientiane the following day in the form of six 105-mm howitzers from the DRV's stocks of American equipment captured from the French, unloaded at Wattay from Soviet Ilyushin-14s flown by Soviet crews. Whatever may have been in Souvanna Phouma's mind when he fled to Phnom Penh, at least he could not be accused of the responsibility of seeking military aid from the DRV.

Kong Le remained with his troops to defend the capital. General Phoumi began his attack on December 13 at 1:15 p.m. Artillery and tank fire echoed through the deserted streets. From his command post near the airport Kong Le had positioned his men at key points on the outskirts, intending merely to fight a delaying action to allow the safe evacuation to the north of his men and their equipment in the best possible order. The massive display of firepower by General Phoumi's troops against an adversary that consisted of small mobile groups with light mortars was responsible for killing 400 to 500 civilians in the town, mostly Vietnamese residents, and wounding another 1,000 to 1,500. Seventeen of Kong Le's men were killed. General Phoumi's artillery also targeted the headquarters of the French military mission, for good measure. The regional command post of the Pathet Lao, situated at Nakhang 60 kilometers north of the capital, disposed of three guerrilla groups but did not take part in the battle. General Phoumi's armor rolled into town on December 16.

Marshal Sarit flew to Nong Khai on December 17 to meet General Phoumi and Boun Oum. He was reported to be pleased with Phoumi's success, but he felt that Phoumi was exaggerating his claims, was overly optimistic, was overly complacent about the future, and was reluctant to accept advice from the Thai. <sup>293</sup> Sarit assigned a liaison officer, Colonel Chamin, to Phoumi. In Hanoi,

officials called in diplomats of France, India, and Indonesia and told them that in view of the Thai intervention on behalf of General Phoumi the DRV now felt free to intervene.<sup>294</sup> This warning coincided with diplomatic reports from Hanoi of heavy troop movements in the direction of Laos and of aerial reconnaissance that reported Pathet Lao units crossing over into Laos from DRV territory.

Kong Le and his men retreated slowly northward up the road toward Luang Prabang. General Phoumi did not pursue; his response, as usual, was to ask for more equipment, intervention by Thai forces, and so forth. As Kong Le moved northward, his column received parachute drops from Soviet Ilyushin-14s of badly needed supplies—rice, salt, sugar, blankets, light arms, ammunition, and radios. With new recruits his ranks had swelled to 800 to 1,200 men. On December 23, at Phone Hong about 60 kilometers north of the capital, he received a visit from Kaysone, who had come in a light aircraft to settle the details about distribution of Soviet aid and coordination of Neutralist and Pathet Lao troops in future operations against Phoumi's troops.

Parsons cabled instructions to the king, to be delivered by Brown, stressing the importance of the early legalization of the new government, which had been formed with Boun Oum as prime minister and General Phoumi as deputy prime minister. But the king was powerless to act, because Souvanna Phouma had not resigned, as required by the constitution. The prince affirmed in a press interview in Cambodia on December 31, 1960, that although he was still the legal prime minister he would resign at once if Boun Oum's government were validated in accordance with the constitution.<sup>295</sup> When 41 deputies of the National Assembly were convoked by the king and voted confidence in Boun Oum's provisional government on January 3, Souvanna Phouma maintained that the king was not acting on his own free will but simply accepting a fait accompli.<sup>296</sup> In an interview published on January 20, he was bitter about his nemesis, Parsons. "What I shall never forgive the United States for is the fact that it betrayed me, that it double-crossed me and my government," he said. Parsons, he added, "understood nothing about Asia and nothing about Laos. The Assistant Secretary of State is the most nefarious and reprehensible of men. He is the ignominious architect of disastrous American policy toward Laos. He and others like him are responsible for the recent shedding of Lao blood."297

# The Coming Struggle for South Vietnam

## AN UNDECLARED WAR

By the end of 1958, the party center had reason to conclude that the nationwide elections for reunification of Vietnam foreseen at Geneva would not be held in the foreseeable future and that the possibilities for maneuvering the French into bringing to power a more pliable government in Saigon, either through Bao Dai's residual influence or by a coup d'état, had shrunk to non-existence. After the referendum, Hanoi made an unsuccessful attempt to enlist Bao Dai against President Ngô Dinh Diem, telling him that he was the rightful reposi-

tory of sovereignty in the South, not Diem. This was through Nguyên Van Chi. But such exercises were rather far-fetched. No intelligent nationalist took them seriously. Moreover, Diem had installed a vice president, Nguyên Ngoc Tho, so even if he were assassinated or otherwise removed from the scene, the constitutional succession of power in the Southern republic was provided for.

The party's reliance since Geneva on loose alliances with the various dissident groups, such as the Binh Xuyen and dissident factions of the Hoa Hao and Cao Dai, and its efforts to foster an urban opposition front under the cover of the ICC in order to destroy the claim to legitimacy of the Saigon government had come to nothing. The rule of law had been effectively re-established in the Republic of Vietnam following the withdrawal of the French Expeditionary Corps. Diem's denunciation of Communist campaigns at the village level had been effective in identifying the party's agents to the police. The only recourse left was to replace Diem, using the resources at the direct command of the party. The emphasis would be on the political aspect of the struggle, and again, as in 1945, the united front would be the main strategy, but this time, unlike in 1954–1958, it would be under tight party control and direction.

The strategy was implicit, if not explicit, in a report made to the Fifteenth Plenum of the Central Committee in January 1959 by Le Duan, who was shortly to assume the supreme party post of general secretary. As the resolution adopted at the plenum stated:

The fundamental path of development for the revolution in South Vietnam is that of violent struggle. Based on the concrete conditions and existing requirements of revolution, then, the road of violent struggle is: use the strength of the masses, with the political strength as the main factor, combined with military strength to a greater or lesser degree depending on the situation, in order to overthrow the ruling power of the imperialist and feudalist forces and build the revolutionary power of the people. <sup>298</sup>

The emphasis on violence was straight-out doctrinaire Marxism-Leninism. The basic united front strategy involved the use of force to bring about a change in the structure of power in the South so that the party's plans for reunifying the country by peaceful means, that is to say elections, could be implemented. Once a suitable government held office in Saigon, there could be negotiations between the insurgents in their liberated areas and Saigon for either a transitional coalition government, as in Laos, or by direct general elections in which the Communist-controlled front would be in a position to arrange everything using legal methods for compiling registration lists of "patriotic" voters and preparing the conditions of the election campaign itself, where a certain amount of illegal activity could be brought into play. This was the main content of the resolution as far as the party's agents in the South were concerned. The violation of Article 14(a) of the armistice agreement Ta Quang Buu had signed at Geneva concerning the conduct of civil administration north and south of the partition line pending the general elections for reunification would be camou-

flaged behind a carefully prepared propaganda campaign on the line that it was the Southern administration, by refusing general elections, that was responsible for violating the Geneva agreements. It would not be until 1962, following numerous protests by the Saigon government, that the ICC would formally take note of this violation by Hanoi.

Thus, while the emphasis on violence in the resolution foreshadowed the utilization of the necessary means, the ground in South Vietnam would be carefully prepared politically, psychologically, and with regard to personalities; the nationalists would not be allowed to come out on top, any more than they had been allowed to do so in 1946. According to William J. Duiker, a leading authority, there was apparently considerable optimism that victory in this undeclared war could be achieved either through a popular uprising or through negotiations without resort to a final stage of large-scale military offensive. Duiker cites no evidence for this statement. I am somewhat skeptical, as I doubt the party center would have been so ill-informed about its lack of popular support in the South, and the negotiation scenario, in the minds of party leaders, on the basis of their experience with the French, almost certainly involved bringing the Americans into the war, on a greater or lesser scale. In either case, military strength had to be prepared for commitment to ensure success, and this was the main message as far as the North was concerned.

By May, the party center had drawn up operational directives based on the decisions of January and communicated them to the party leadership in the South. Facilitating the return of Southern regroupees, who would provide the skills and discipline necessary, was obviously a major consideration. Some of the most dedicated of the 90,000 regroupees had undergone training since 1954 at the Xuan Mai training school near Hanoi. The trails from the North to the South through Laos had been secured by the armed occupation of the villages in eastern Tchepone District in December 1958,<sup>300</sup> and now infiltration began, in armed groups of 40 to 50 or more, the whole operation entrusted to a new organization, Group 559. On their arrival in the South, the regroupees were placed in leading positions within the Southern insurgent apparatus. About the same time, the Central Office for South Vietnam (COSVN), which had been disbanded in 1954, was re-established to coordinate the actions of the Southern guerrillas with the party center's incipient support in cadres, arms, and military units.

In the mobilization of the rural masses to oppose Diem's government the party used the agitprop tactics that had served it well against Tran Trong Kim's government in 1945. Latching on to a legitimate grievance (in 1945 the scarcity of food), the party adapted the action of its cadres (storming the granaries and distributing rice free) so as to collect the credit. Lacking serious grievances in 1959 (food was plentiful in the South compared with the North), however, the party had to mount a campaign of violence in the Southern countryside on the pattern of Nguyên Binh's campaign of terror and intimidation of 1946. The Saigon government's development and security measures in the countryside were certain to provide a number of routine grievances that could be exploited for agitprop purposes. Farmers did not like being moved into rural community

development centers, or agrovilles, where they had to build new homes and often had to clear new lands for farming. It was relatively simple for trained cadres to identify discontents and get them to sign petitions, protest, demonstrate, and so on. Notables, schoolteachers, and other symbols of authority were murdered in such a manner as to create the image in the people's minds that these were exploiters and lackeys of imperialism. Outposts were attacked by "the people's forces."

To take the minds of the Northerners off their own everyday difficulties, the DRV latched on to the idea of propagandizing 1960 as the "Year of Great Events."301 These events were four in number. First, on December 31, 1959, the National Assembly adopted a new constitution that, unlike that of 1946, made no effort to conceal its Communist character. Second, the party's thirtieth founding anniversary on February 3 was the occasion for a giant celebration. Third, on May 8, the DRV held elections for the National Assembly, the first since 1946; the terms of the deputies from the Southern provinces were simply extended, however. Finally, in September, the Third Congress of the Vietnam Workers' Party, following previous congresses in 1930 and 1951, was held in Hanoi. This congress was notable for its formalization of the notion that the revolution in North and South was at different stages; the former in the socialist construction phase and the latter in the national liberation phase. The embassy regarded these developments as primarily internal rather than external. "The Embassy is inclined to the view that the DRV's decision to launch a violent propaganda campaign first as a prelude and later as an accompaniment to a stepped-up program of internal subversion and terrorism originated from its own decision, perhaps endorsed but not dictated by either the USSR or Communist China."302

## DIEM TIGHTENS SECURITY IN THE SOUTH

Most of this was known to Diem's government, which protested these violations of the armistice agreement as revealed by the DRV leaders' thinly veiled threats to the ICC. Diem was taking such steps as he could within the general rule of law to improve security, but his government could not prevent terrorism altogether.

One of the first signs of Hanoi's more militant program in the South was a series of attacks against government installations in the important cinnamon market of Tra Bong in Quang Ngai Province beginning on August 28, 1959. There were similar attacks on government installations in Mo Cay District of Kien Hoa Province (formerly Ben Tre) beginning on January 17, 1960. Both these areas were traditional Communist strongholds.

The government stiffened legal measures by putting through the National Assembly stiff anti-Communist legislation known as the 10-59 law. This law increased the penalties for subversive activities and allowed anyone convicted of acts of sabotage or infringement of national security to be tried and sentenced to death by mobile military tribunals. Such a tribunal tried and convicted seven party cadres for participating in a July 8, 1959, grenade attack on a

MAAG billet at Bien Hoa in which two American advisers died;<sup>303</sup> the government requested the participation of American military personnel as witnesses at the trial, which was approved by the State Department.<sup>304</sup> Also, in an effort to improve security in the countryside, the government launched a program for building agrovilles at strategic locations.

On August 30, 1959, the Southern government held elections for the Second Legislature of the National Assembly. Candidates representing the National Revolutionary Movement, the Vietnamese Socialist Party, the Social Democratic Party, and the League for the Restoration of Vietnam (Phuc Qoc Hoi) were elected. The Socialists were originally affiliated with the French Socialists. The Phuc Quoc Hoi was the nationalist Cao Dai party which, despite much maneuvering and negotiation, never rallied behind Diem. In 1956, the government had removed the officers of these two parties and caused new leaders to be elected who supported official policies. The Social Democrats, formerly composed of Hoa Hao militants, had split into factions in 1955 and 1956; the faction that rallied to Diem was the sole surviving entity in the Assembly. The Was later generally agreed among informed observers that the 1959 elections were less free than those for the First Legislature. Among the controversies they gave rise to was the government's refusal to allow at least two deputies to take the seats to which they had been elected, on grounds of minor infractions of the election law.

From the very beginning, Nhu had been his brother's political strategist and organizer. In 1950 he had been one of the leaders of a group of intellectuals who formed a strongly nationalistic but intellectually tolerant debating society called the Tinh Than Spirit Group. Other members included Nhu's brother Luyen; Tran Van Do; Nguyên Thanh Nguyên, who became a minister of labor; and, after 1952, the labor union leader Tran Quoc Buu. The group was reportedly influenced by Father Parrell, a priest in Dalat, where the Nhus were living at the time. The group published a weekly newspaper, *Xa Hoi* (Socialism) in Saigon, and meetings were occasionally held in Saigon, Dalat, Hue, Hanoi, and Haiphong. In 1953, the group founded the Workers' and Peasants' Party (Cong Nong Chanh Dang). Nhu's youngest brother, Can, joined. Also, the group recruited Tran Chanh Thanh and Tran Trung Dung and Nguyên Dinh Thuan, two former journalists in Hanoi. In early 1954, the party changed its name to Can Lao Nhan Vi Cach Mang Dang (Revolutionary Labor Personalism Party).

The formal organization of the Can Lao dated from August 8, 1954, and emphasized its small, directive character. It was semi-secret because while its existence was widely known and members claiming affiliation with the Can Lao even ran in elections, it did not take public positions on issues. Its aim was to support Diem's government from behind the scenes and to control and direct the government and all other organized movements and fronts by infiltration into positions of responsibility. The similarity in this respect with the Vietnamese Workers' Party is evident, and it should not be surprising that the Can Lao was the creation of people such as Nhu and Thanh, who had an intimate knowledge of Communist methods.

By March 1959, the membership of the Can Lao was placed at 16,000, rather evenly divided between Central Vietnam, where Can was in control, and southern South Vietnam, where Nhu was in control. The Can Lao was well organized in several different departments, paralleling and overlapping those of the government. Nhu's former private secretary, Dr. Tran Kim Tuyen, acted as Nhu's executive arm in Can Lao affairs and at the same time was chief of the Service des Etudes Politiques et Sociales (SEPES), a national organization that carried on political surveillance and conducted and supervised clandestine political and propaganda activities on behalf of the Can Lao and government.<sup>306</sup>

It had been Nhu who had created the Mouvement d'Union Nationale pour l'Indépendance et la Paix in the summer of 1953. Nhu had also created the Front pour le Salut National on May 27, 1954. With his experience at creating front groups, Nhu now created a mass organization, the National Revolutionary Movement. This soon embraced all government departments.

An attack by several hundred guerrillas on a regimental camp outside Tay Ninh on January 26, 1960, apparently with the object of stealing arms and ammunition, marked a new level of daring on the part of the guerrillas. The clear evidence of inside intelligence about the layout of the camp and the movements of its occupants revealed by the attack thoroughly alarmed the government. On February 24, a government delegation (including Nguyên Dinh Thuan, secretary of state at the presidency; Tang Van Chi, the government's delegate for the eastern provinces; and Le Minh, an assistant to Dr. Tran Kim Tuyen) met with a Communist delegation (comprising Van Tien Dung, who had headed the Viet Minh delegation to the Trung Gia talks and was now promoted to general; Mrs. Cao Thi Nguyet, the widow of the Hoa Hao leader Ba Cut whom Diem had ordered executed in 1956; Tu Nho, a lieutenant of Bay Vien; and Giao Khoe, a Communist Party member and rebel leader in the Can Tho area) at Thu Dau Mot in order to prepare a meeting three days later, apparently to discuss the mounting guerrilla campaign and to see if some negotiated solution could be found.<sup>307</sup> There was no visible result of the secret meeting, and the guerrilla campaign continued to escalate. Schoolteachers, village officials, and militiamen were being assassinated in the countryside at an accelerating pace. This sort of warfare was brutal in the extreme, blurring the line between military and civilian personnel to enlist women and children in the struggle. In villages under Viet Cong control, villagers manufactured and set out crude but deadly booby traps. Wilfred G. Burchett, who was the first Westerner permitted to report from the "liberated area," described how two young boys "too young to be in the self-defence corps" ambushed an army patrol at a village in Darlac Province, killing twelve soldiers and two American advisers, using poisoned arrows. The boys told Burchett with pride that they had stabbed the bodies of the dead Americans. This was a group of people in whom the Communists had instilled a white-hot hatred of their "feudal" government and its "imperialist" ally.308

## AMERICAN DEMANDS ON DIEM

In April 1960, a group of 18 prominent anti-Communist politicians and sect leaders signed a manifesto raising a number of grievances and made it public at

the Caravelle Hotel.<sup>309</sup> The manifesto said that Diem had been hailed as a man to fulfill the people's hopes, but these hopes had been disappointed. It asked Diem to liberalize his regime, publish minimum civic rights, and recognize the opposition's right to speak out. Other criticism centered on the state of affairs in the administration, the military, and the economy. Significantly, the manifesto accused Diem of making loyalty to the Can Lao the basis of promotions in the military.<sup>310</sup> Two of the signatories, Tran Van Van and Phan Khac Suu, were Cochinchinese politicians who resented the influence of Northerners in Diem's government; Suu was an opposition member of the National Assembly elected in 1959.

At the American Embassy, concern centered on the activities of Frank Gonder, a resident American businessman who had made himself the spokesman of the Caravelle Group, as they became known. Gonder was known to the embassy for his hatred of Diem's regime, and, more to the point, for having supplied a visiting American journalist, Albert M. Colegrove, with damaging material about American aid to the Diem regime for a series of stories published in July 1959 in the Scripps-Howard newspapers. Ambassador Durbrow considered the Caravelle Group to be lightweights, no more than a momentary bother. But he had no liking for President Diem, and he liked Diem's family even less. He considered that Diem remained a mandarin with the autocratic attitude of "I know best." Durbrow began complaining about the rumors surrounding Nhu and his wife almost from the moment he arrived in Saigon. 311

Following the issuance of the Caravelle Group's manifesto, Diem felt he needed to talk to an American he could trust. He trusted Lieutenant General Samuel T. Williams, the chief of the MAAG, and the two saw eye-to-eye on Diem's military plans. Williams was sufficiently senior to command Durbrow's respect, and he was sufficiently unorthodox to do things such as inviting senior Vietnamese officers to briefing sessions for MAAG advisers to tell the latter exactly how they were viewed by the Vietnamese. But he did not have a good command of the subtleties of the Vietnamese political scene, and Diem needed someone who could give him advice. Lansdale, besides being a good friend, had probably the best grasp of the political war in Vietnam of any American. Diem requested through Chuong that Lansdale, who was vegetating in Washington, be assigned to Saigon. 312 Parsons and Steeves turned the idea down on grounds, in the latter's words, that "we were putting very heavy pressure on Diem [to enact reforms] and that if we acceded to his request to send someone to whom he could unburden himself, some of these necessary pressures would be diminished."313 It was a typical response from someone who discouraged the Indochinese from "unburdening" themselves until a crisis in relations arose.

Lansdale's enforced idleness in the soup of the Washington hot season at least allowed him to do some thinking about the problem in Vietnam. He felt, he wrote in a note to Sherman Kent, that the fact that the Communists' organization was in place and operating in South Vietnam, the result of 14 years of dedicated, professional work by them, was not being adequately factored into the American perception of the problem. Was it not possible, he wondered, that American reporting on Vietnam was being biased by Radio Hanoi's propa-

ganda? The Communists in South Vietnam were not only the occasional guerrillas and terrorists, which Hanoi expected the United States to see, but also the many covert skilled agents who were, it appeared, achieving a measure of success in denigrating Diem's government, exploiting the discontent of some intellectuals, sowing disaffection, disrupting effective administration, and promoting economic breakdowns.<sup>314</sup>

A particular piece of evidence Lansdale pointed to was a Special National Intelligence Estimate then under preparation, for which Kent had contributed an important memorandum to the director of Central Intelligence. This estimate, in the form in which it was distributed on August 23, 1960, devoted several paragraphs to the theme "Criticism of Diem's leadership within urban groups and government circles has been mounting." Perhaps because the embassy, when asked in May 1959 for concrete evidence of peasant discontent, 315 had been unable to provide any such evidence, 316 the estimate contained only one paragraph on the views of rural Vietnamese. Repeating the theme, dear to urban people, that peasants are politically apathetic, it nevertheless cited some of the supposed "grievances against the government" of such rural folk, of the kind that could be found in virtually any Radio Hanoi broadcast at the time. "As a consequence, Diem's government is lacking in positive support among the people in the countryside," the estimate concluded.<sup>317</sup>

In reality, as the embassy's own political reporting of a few months previously had made clear, the situation in the countryside with respect to the alleged "lack of positive support" was a good deal more complex than the sweeping generalization contained in the estimate led one to believe, and not at all in the same sense. In a perceptive piece of reporting, Theodore J. C. Heavner set down his observations during almost two years as American consul in Hue during which he had traveled around the countryside, sometimes on foot or by bicycle, and from many conversations with individuals at all levels of society in Central Vietnam.

The great mass of the population in Central Viet Nam still prefers the Diem government to a Communist regime, but the average peasant does not give the Republic his positive support and it is very doubtful that he would take any personal risks to defend the GVN [Government of Vietnam]. Ten years of Communist indoctrination followed by five years of intense anti-Communist propaganda have only reinforced the peasant's traditional fear of government and politics. He will accept whatever regime imposes itself on him, but he reserves his loyalties for his family.

Heavner pointed out that the peasants lacked the kind of responsibility to their community that would make democracy, as understood by Americans, feasible. Thus, he wrote, the authoritarian methods of Diem's government were not a cause for unpopularity; the peasant accepted political authority so long as it protected him and his family, but avoided identifying with it.<sup>318</sup>

Durbrow had now been in Saigon for three and a half years. My impression of Durbrow from having known him in Saigon is that the aspect of the regime that mainly caused him concern was the ruling family's business deal-

ings and the intrusion of the Can Lao into what seemed to him to be legitimate private business interests, such as the cassia trade in Quang Ngai. He could not understand, he once told me, why it was that South Vietnam needed to import from the United States even the lumber to build barracks when the country had an abundance of timber, which he suspected belonged to the ruling family. Durbrow had been stung by Colegrove's articles exposing waste, fraud, and high living in the American aid program. It is true that Americans lived well in Saigon, which at the time was a delightful and peaceful city. They had comfortable villas and staffs of servants.<sup>319</sup> The tone of the embassy's criticism of Diem took a turn for the sharper and more politicized with the arrival of a new counselor for political affairs, Joseph A. Mendenhall, the man who had drafted the telegram stating the argument for the State Department's recognition of Sarit's coup d'état.

Durbrow sent the Department a long telegram, apparently drafted by Mendenhall, on September 16 recommending that he be authorized to put directly to Diem the steps the embassy judged to be "required to preserve his government." Admitting that the measures "would be most impolitic for an ambassador to make under normal circumstances," Durbrow added: "Psychological shock effect is required to take [the] initiative from Communist propagandists as well as non-Communist oppositionists and convince [the] population [the] government [is] taking effective measures to deal with [the] present situation, otherwise we fear matters could get out of hand." The telegram concluded with the words: "If Diem's position in [the] country continues [to] deteriorate as result [of] failure [to] adopt proper political, psychological, economic and security measures, it may become necessary for [the] US Government to begin consideration [of] alternative courses of action and leaders in order [to] achieve our objective."320 Whether Durbrow realized it at the time or not, he had put his finger on the nub of the real problem, which was not Diem's failure to "adopt proper measures," but the widening gap between the perceived objectives of the Republic of Vietnam and the United States. The Department had no suggestion to offer for a more imaginative diplomacy than the crude form of pressure judged to be adequate to cope with this black-and-white presentation, and it approved Durbrow's plan subject to a few cautionary comments.

On October 14, Diem received Durbrow at the Independence Palace. Durbrow opened the meeting by informing the president that the Civil Guard would be trained by the MAAG, a step Diem had been urging the Americans to accept for three years.<sup>321</sup> Diem showed obvious pleasure. Durbrow then read a list of suggestions for specific actions that opened with cabinet changes to include the appointment of a minister of defense (since May 10, 1954, Diem had held the post himself) and went on for 14 pages, triple-spaced in French, to detail the inclusion of opposition figures in the cabinet, reorganization of government, removal of secrecy from the operations of the Can Lao, stiffer accountability for public officials, increased watchdog powers for the National Assembly, drafting of a press code, popular election of local officials, increasing farm paddy prices, liberalizing terms of credit for farmers, instituting govern-

ment payments for labor in agrovilles and other government projects, and paying compensation to village health workers. Diem said he would consider the suggestions made in the paper, which the ambassador, unwisely, left with him.<sup>322</sup>

Durbrow then proceeded to read from notes in French about "a most sensitive and delicate matter"—the Americans' wish to have Nhu and his wife, as well as Dr. Tuyen, sent abroad. Durbrow cited "the increasing discontent among various strata of Vietnamese society" with their role and alleged activities. The question was no longer whether the allegations were true or not, but simply that more people were believing them to be true. <sup>323</sup> Diem assumed a grim and slightly hurt manner, and after commenting that the rumors were spread by the Communists changed the subject.

Lansdale had warned that asking Diem to distance his brother would be asking him to cut off his right arm. He was right. There was no question in Diem's mind of complying with the American demand, then or later. He depended on Nhu for political advice. As for Madame Nhu, whose mother was a cousin of Bao Dai, the demand for her removal smacked directly of the Vietnamese experience of the French in manipulating Vietnam's royal family.

The suggestion of bringing opposition figures into his cabinet sounded to Diem like Ely's and Collins's quest for a "broad-based" government. The "broadbased" government was to prove one of the great figments of the imagination of the French and the Americans. Vietnam has never had a "broad-based" government, either in Hue or in Saigon or in Hanoi to the present day, except in Saigon for a few chaotic months in 1964 and 1965 when Southerners were in power. In reality, many talented persons had broken with the regime for reasons having little or nothing to do with politics, but rather with personal matters. These included Nguyên Huu Chau, who had rendered invaluable service to Diem as a troubleshooter and who had tried to divorce his wife, Madame Nhu's sister; and General Duong Van Duc, General Minh's brother and a brave soldier, whose love affair with a German woman had met with disapprobation from the regime. Durbrow justified putting forth this demand on the grounds of taking the "initiative" back from the Communists and the non-Communist opposition and of increasing Diem's popularity before the presidential election scheduled for 1961. Diem, not accustomed to American-style political campaigns, would have interpreted this last as an unfavorable comment on his standing among his own people and, regardless of the correctness or incorrectness of the remark, Diem would have been shocked at such an insult from the ambassador of a friendly country.

Moreover, Durbrow had ignored a number of the comments made by Wood, who was now the officer in charge of Vietnam affairs in the Department. Wood had notably observed that asking for the surfacing or abolition of the Can Lao at the same time as asking for the removal of Nhu and Tuyen would be too much. Drawing Durbrow's attention to the fact that in Vietnamese tradition political parties had the attributes of secret societies, Wood had advised raising this question separately and later. He had also said that the matter of Nhu and Tuyen, in view of Diem's sensitivity, should be "offered for Diem's consideration," rather than demanded. 324 A number of Durbrow's demands were totally new to the Department. 325

As if to soften the blow to Diem from Durbrow's démarche, the Department drafted a letter that President Eisenhower sent Diem on the occasion of October 26, the republic's fifth anniversary. The letter said in its last paragraph:

Although the main responsibility for guarding that independence will always, as it has in the past, belong to the Vietnamese people and their government, I want to assure you that for so long as our strength can be useful, the United States will continue to assist Viet-Nam in the difficult yet hopeful struggle ahead.<sup>326</sup>

## DE GAULLE RE-ENTERS ON STAGE

There had always been a link in French thinking among Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos.<sup>327</sup> Thus, there was the danger that American initiatives in one of the countries could provoke the French to react in another. Parsons was aware that the French had been thoroughly alarmed by General Phoumi's rise to power with American support, and American diplomatic reporting in early 1960 shows heightened concern for French susceptibilities with regard to Laos. The French certainly had reason to suspect the Americans of deliberately dragging out the negotiations over the relations between the French military mission and the PEO with the aim of completely replacing the French. Parsons's telegrams to Smith, after initially offering barely disguised encouragement to the schemes of General Phoumi and the CDNI in the wake of the April elections, revealed a sudden concern at the beginning of May that domination of the government by the army might lead to an intensification of the armed insurgency and the creation of a situation in which, as Parsons put it obliquely, it would be difficult to obtain the full international backing Laos needed, 328 that is to say, isolation of the Americans from the French, British, and others.

De Gaulle, who had returned to power as president of the Fifth Republic, was reported to have taken a direct personal interest in Indochina affairs since the summer and to have referred the question of French responsibility for training the royal army in Laos to the Ministerial Defense Council. 329 Possibly as a result of this renewed presidential interest, the French were making their own review of the situation in Indochina over the summer of 1960. They were in particular trying to ascertain the firmness of the American commitment to Diem.<sup>330</sup> The long-time French ambassador in Saigon, Roger Lalouette, was in Paris during June for serious consultations on the situation at the Quai d'Orsay. Manac'h told Parsons the French had not yet taken decisions on Vietnam, where the French felt less sure of what their position should be than in Laos and Cambodia, and would decide on their policy after these consultations. The political system in Vietnam had to become much more supple if Diem's government were to regain the confidence of the population. As a first step, certain gestures might be made, such as removing certain members of Diem's family from their positions of influence.331

Nhu told Durbrow shortly after the coup in Laos that he was convinced the French government, and not just French colonial elements in Laos, was behind Kong Le.<sup>332</sup> Kong Le's coup provided the French with an opportunity to

carry forward their well-known aim of returning Laos to policies of internal reconciliation and external neutrality without provoking the frontal attack on General Phoumi that they feared.<sup>333</sup> The idealism of Kong Le and his fellow paratroop officers, which bordered on naiveté, would have provided a natural cover for French manipulation, and their demand for ridding Laos of foreign intervention might even be made to seem directed against the Americans. In any event, General Phoumi's reaction to the coup and his Thai and American backing created an unwelcome complication for the French. Shortly after the coup, the Quai d'Orsay expressed concern to American officials that the South Vietnamese might be providing moral and material support to General Phoumi. 334 The French Embassy in Washington was loud in its criticism of what it termed an American policy based on the army and General Phoumi; the army was not the "element of order" the Americans believed it was, and Phoumi was essentially an ambitious opportunist who in his rapid rise had had a divisive effect on the army.<sup>335</sup> Paris felt that Souvanna Phouma's inclusion of General Phoumi in his revised cabinet would make things more difficult and that Phoumi was reaping the results of his action in trying to turn the army into a political instrument. 336 As the French watched American support for Phoumi's rebel movement grow, their opposition to American policy hardened. Officially inspired stories began appearing in the Paris press, as had been the case in 1954 and 1955, stressing France's scrupulous observance of the Geneva agreements and criticizing American policy as reckless. 337 At the Quai d'Orsay, Manac'h argued in polite yet strongly put words the futility of a policy based on armed confrontation rather than reconciliation. 338 Prince Boun Oum told a French correspondent who asked him about the accuracy of reports that the French had instigated the coup and directed Kong Le's artillery fire during the battle of Vientiane that "he had no proof of this but was convinced it was true." 339

In this manner de Gaulle, who had caused so much harm to the Vietnamese nationalists in 1945, now reappeared onstage. It had been the Gaullist URAS party whose National Assembly deputies had been the loudest in proclaiming the inviolability of French sovereignty in Vietnam and who had joined with the French Communists in holding up the signature of the independence treaties in 1954. De Gaulle had hovered in the shadows of the Hotel La Pérouse on the Left Bank in April 1955 reading approvingly Couve de Murville's anti-Diem telegrams from Washington and encouraging Edgar Faure to stand up to the Americans on Vietnam. 340 The treaties of independence and association remained a dead letter, so far as the ministry of foreign affairs was concerned.<sup>341</sup> Now he reappeared on the scene determined to give France a major say in the fate of Indochina. De Gaulle had no real interest in the Indochinese; he was interested in the problem in Indochina for the scope it gave him for creating trouble for the United States. For the moment, he had his underlings maneuver behind the scenes; if they could arrange for negotiations for the reunification of Vietnam, which in his view had been put off by American intervention, de Gaulle would achieve a signal diplomatic triumph.

The first step, if indeed that was de Gaulle's plan, would have to be to get rid of Diem and replace him with someone more amenable to negotiations for reunification. It had not taken Lansdale long to sniff the old French plotting hand behind the "reforms" advocated in reporting cables from Saigon.<sup>342</sup> It would have been a relatively simple matter for Durbrow's 14-page list of demands to find its way into the hands of French agents in Diem's palace and thence to Paris. Knowledge of Durbrow's list would have provided the answer to the question the French had been asking themselves. Indeed, barely three weeks after Durbrow left his list of demands with Diem, Manac'h sent the French Embassy in Washington a note titled, coincidentally, "The Department of State and the Deterioration of the Situation in South Viet-Nam" that gave the French interpretation, point by point, of the problems listed by Durbrow, and concluded that the measures contemplated by the Americans were "too little and too late." The Vietnamese armed forces were improperly trained to fight a guerrilla war, too many members of the army were playing politics, the command structure was badly organized, the baleful influence of Diem's family was still pervasive and was likely to remain so, and there was still no effective legal opposition in the country.<sup>343</sup>

In October, Diem's government had expelled a correspondent for the Associated Press, René-Georges Inagaki, for having reported that because of the increased Communist guerrilla campaign there were some in Saigon who thought Diem had to go.<sup>344</sup> The large Vietnamese community in Paris included a number of politically ambitious figures who saw themselves as representing a neutral third force between Hanoi and Saigon. When convenient, Hanoi sometimes encouraged these exiles in their unrealistic ambition of being called upon one day to play a role in settling the war. In the November issue of Le Monde Diplomatique there appeared a story by Georges Chaffard. The substance of the story, such as it was, was that the Americans were casting about for an alternative to Diem. The coincidence of a trip to Washington by Diem's former adviser on defense matters, Ho Thong Minh, to look up his old friend General J. Lawton Collins suggested, in Chaffard's story, that exile opposition circles were active in this regard; Chaffard's story hinted that the Americans might look favorably on a coup d'état in Saigon. Chaffard had no independent sources on American policy in Indochina and had not recently been in Vietnam, but he had been an avowed enemy of Diem ever since the failure of French plotting to have Diem ousted from power.<sup>345</sup> The Vietnamese embassy in Washington brought the story to the attention of the State Department, who sought information from the Paris embassy, who took it up with Manac'h at the Quai d'Orsay, who was very probably the source for the story. Manac'h claimed ignorance, but the Quai was always ready to stir the pot of innuendo and rumor.346

# ATTEMPTED COUP D'ETAT IN SAIGON

In Vietnam, the one substantive criticism of Diem that contained more than a germ of truth, as distinct from the personal carping about the influence of members of the Ngô family, the ceaseless rumors of business malpractice and alleged corruption in the administration, and unsupported generalizations about the unpopularity of the president in the countryside, was that Diem failed to demon-

strate respect for the professional army. Nick Natsios, the CIA station chief in Saigon, was telling foreign correspondents as early as May 1960 that centralizing the command of the army and appointing officers of high rank for merit rather than for political reasons was one of three steps Diem had to take in order to save his regime.<sup>347</sup> Thus, on the matter of reforming the command structure of the army, Durbrow's list of demands had a degree of validity; had Durbrow concentrated on his demand that Diem "issue firm directives to assure that there is adherence to channels of command both up and down and that firm action be taken to eliminate any feeling that favoritism and political considerations enter into the promotion and assignment of personnel in the armed forces" to the disregard of his other demands, he might have made a signal contribution to the nationalist cause in Vietnam.

There were many army officers who were fed up with favoritism on one score or another. One such score was adherence to the Can Lao. Another was place of origin. Another was the degree to which officers were willing to abase themselves in the presence of the president.<sup>348</sup>

The coup attempt that broke out in Saigon in the early hours of November 11, 1960, had nothing to do with democratic rule or with the supposed grievances of the peasants against the government or, initially at least, with the broadening of the cabinet. It was the work of mid-level career officers who were dissatisfied with the state of affairs within the military. These officers who had the experience of fighting the Viet Minh under French command felt that they were being passed over for promotion in favor of "political" officers who had joined the Can Lao and who were being offered lucrative positions as province chiefs. This situation created tensions that risked disorganizing the army, in the words of one of them, and plotting for a coup began. Lieutenant Colonel Vuong Van Dong had a meeting with Nhu during which he talked for an hour about the situation and felt optimistic that Nhu would take appropriate steps. However, two or three weeks later the coup plotters received orders posting them to separate commands. Their response was to accelerate the secret planning for the coup. It was originally set for October 6, but it had to put it off at the last moment because a military operation in northern Kontum Province intervened.<sup>349</sup>

To all intents and purposes, the coup attempt came as a surprise to the embassies in Saigon<sup>350</sup> and Paris.<sup>351</sup> Just how flimsy the whole thing was was shown in the opening stage when Marines who had been mobilized on the pretext of saving Diem, who they thought was being held prisoner in his palace, were let in the gates and then ordered to turn around and fire on their comrades still on the outside by those really in command inside—the president's men.

The only one of these military officers who had given any thought to the political setup in the event the coup succeeded was Lieutenant Colonel Nguyên Trieu Hong, who was director of training at the Joint General Staff School, and he was killed by a stray bullet while sitting in a jeep in the first minutes of the coup. The others shared a general feeling that Diem should be kept on as a figurehead and that a military man should become prime minister of a provisional government. They had in mind Brigadier General Le Van Kim, head of

the military academy at Dalat, who was not a member of the Can Lao. Once the coup had started, however, the officers lost control over the politics of the situation, both because of their lack of forethought and because of the free play the opposition politicians gave to their ambitions, just as Diem had always said. Lieutenant Colonel Dong and Major Nguyên Huy Loi soon found themselves tied up in inconclusive talks with Diem and Nhu. In the course of these talks, as Diem later related it, Diem pressed Colonel Dong to give him the names of key ministers for a new government. Dong said General Le Van Ty, the chief of staff, would make a good defense minister. Since General Ty was being held captive by the rebels, Diem asked to speak with him. When Diem asked Ty whether he would like to be defense minister, Ty categorically refused. Dong then suggested Major General Duong Van Minh. Diem had promoted Minh to the rank of brigadier general in November 1955, and the soldiers under his command had given a good account of themselves in putting down the last resistance of the Hoa Hao rebels in 1956, which had won him a further extraordinarily rapid promotion and a staff job as commander of the field command headquarters. Diem, knowing Minh was at the vice president's house, asked him the same question he had asked Ty. Minh, too, refused, stating that he would gladly lead troops anywhere for Diem, but because he was a soldier he had no interest in or capacity for a political job. 352

But a number of civilian politicians who had been excluded from a share of power attempted to cash in on the military's challenge to Diem. Hoang Co Thuy, who came from the same family of intellectuals as Hoang Minh Giam and who had been a member of the Revolutionary Committee in Saigon in the heady days of May 1955 and was now secretary-general of the Movement of Struggle for Freedom, a minor opposition party in the National Assembly, attempted to form an alliance of six nationalist parties which would have included the VNQDD, the Dai Viet, the Cao Dai, and the Hoa Hao. Another intellectual, Dr. Phan Quang Dan, a native of Vinh who had dabbled in Dai Viet politics in the north in the 1940s and who had been prevented on a technicality from taking the seat he had won in the National Assembly election of August 1959, seized the occasion to broadcast a number of anti-Diem statements.<sup>353</sup>

For Diem, the coup attempt provided a test of Durbrow's attitude toward the regime. In the face of feelers by the rebels for American pledges of support, Durbrow stated that Diem was still president and that the Americans supported him. Nevertheless, Diem knew that a CIA agent, Major Russ Miller, was still with the rebel units and suspected that the embassy might use this channel of communication to encourage the rebels. Although the CIA also had one of its agents, George A. Carver, assigned to the politicians associated with the coup effort, so far as is known, the embassy made no commitments to this motley crew. What appears to have roused Diem's anger in particular was Durbrow's appeal to him, made in panic at the approach of loyalist troops, to avoid bloodshed, which struck Diem as putting the loyalists and the rebels on the same footing. Mendenhall, particularly, urged Durbrow to avoid making a commitment to Diem during the coup on the grounds that when two friends are fight-

ing it is best to maintain a neutral position until one sees who is coming out on top. 354 When the coup attempt collapsed, its leaders fled to Phnom Penh aboard a commandeered Vietnamese air force C-47. The French government quietly allowed Lieutenant Colonel Dong, after he had lived in Phnom Penh a while, to settle in France.355 Hoang Co Thuy, who was Colonel Hong's uncle, was spirited out of the country by Carver, 356 an action that obliged Carver to leave the country under threat. Dr. Dan was arrested and spent three years in prison.

Once again, as had happened after the issuance of the Caravelle manifesto, Diem felt the need to unburden himself to a trusted American. On the afternoon of November 17, Diem telephoned Lieutenant General Lionel C. McGarr, who had replaced General Williams as the chief of the MAAG, and told him to come to the palace immediately. McGarr had come to Saigon with an introduction from Lansdale, and now Diem told him that he wanted him to know his feelings about the coup attempt and that he hoped McGarr would communicate these views to his superiors. Diem spoke critically of the so-called intellectuals and demagogues who circulated criticisms and clamored for reforms but had no useful suggestions to offer. He said he would like to send Thuan to Washington to apprise the American government of the exact situation and to defend him and the falsely accused members of his family, as this evidently had not been done by the embassy. However, he was unable to spare Thuan's services at this time. Diem also discussed with McGarr the capabilities and shortcomings of his senior military officers. In the course of this discussion, McGarr said that as an army officer he could not condone rebellion against a government, and said he felt that those who were actually guilty should be punished as provided for by law.<sup>357</sup>

Durbrow, who had been stung by the circulation in Saigon in the days following the coup attempt of a pamphlet alleging that the rebels and political profiteers had obtained the support of "a group of American, French and British colonialists and imperialists,"358 refused his approval for a draft message from President Eisenhower to Diem saying it was "extremely gratifying to me that as a result of your steady courage and the loyalty of the great majority of the military leaders, the attempt failed and that you are safe and sound."359 The pamphlet bore all the markings of the Can Lao, and Durbrow, probably correctly, felt it was mainly aimed at him.

Relations between Diem and the Michigan State University group in South Vietnam also began to sour at the end of 1960. This group had fielded a strong contingent of social scientists who, assisted by the professional staff of the National Institute of Administration in Saigon, with amazing freedom, probed into almost every aspect of public life in the country, producing papers, monographs, and books. Some of the American scientists, such as Gerald Cannon Hickey and James B. Hendry, used their research to write books of lasting value. Of more dubious merit, however, were articles that began to appear under the byline of MSU professors who returned to the United States on the completion of their tours in South Vietnam.

Some, such as Robert G. Scigliano, a political scientist, attributed the failure of South Vietnam to develop a viable two-party system on the American model to the country's woeful state of underdevelopment. In an article published in the

December 1960 issue of the respected journal Pacific Affairs dealing with political parties, Scigliano discussed the Can Lao, the National Revolutionary Movement, and other political groups, but omitted several of the minor parties such as the Movement of Struggle for Freedom that had elected members to the 1956 Assembly. Scigliano noted that "from a legal point of view there is no opposition in Vietnam," and then went on to treat the Vietnam Workers' Party as constituting "by far the strongest opposition to the regime." He added: "Its membership is more numerous than that of all the other opposition groups put together," and claimed that it "seems still to enjoy considerable support among the Vietnamese people for its record against the French."360 Aside from the confusion between legality and illegality betrayed by this discussion of the political opposition, Scigliano's putting the Vietnam Workers' Party, with its numerous membership and its alleged popularity in the South, on the same footing with other, legal, political parties without so much as indicating that party's complete allegiance to and identity with another state and a hostile government, one sworn to the use of violent methods that did not hesitate to violate international agreements in the achievement of its objectives, disturbed Diem.

At the end of 1961, another MSU professor, Frank C. Child, an economist, published an article suggesting that the military might provide an "alternative" to Diem's government. "A military coup," he asserted, might be "the only means by which [effective] leadership could be brought to the fore" and prevent South Vietnam from becoming Communist. 361 This was enough for Diem. He essentially concluded that if these were the considered opinions about our country of experts that the United States sent and funded to work in Vietnam, then Vietnam could do without them. He thought that the interest of his government would be served best by having foreign advisers hired by the National Institute of Administration, and he decided not to renew the MSU contract in 1962. 362 Although Scigliano could offer no useful advice to Diem, he felt he had some to offer President Kennedy, to whom he wrote in July 1963 that "a change of regime, in my judgment, would entail fewer risks than a continuation of the present one for putting down the Communist-led rebellion." 363

# THE NLF: THE COMMUNISTS' APPEAL TO SOUTHERN NATIONALISM

The campaign of armed violence against the government of the Republic of Vietnam escalated in the countryside in 1959, and in parallel with it, the party center moved to create a new front for political warfare. It was a shrewdly timed move. While most of the party's moves are shrouded in secrecy, we are fortunate in this instance to have an account of the formation of this front from one of its non-party founders.

What the party center needed was a Viet Minh-type front to enlist the support of the people of South Vietnam in a campaign to overthrow Diem's government. By the end of 1958 a number of figures who had worked for the Viet Minh in the past and were now leading lives of legality in South Vietnam had taken the decision to form an extralegal political organization, complete with a program and a plan of action. These were the very people who had the interest and the means with which to start rumors about popular disaffection with

Diem's government that the political section of the embassy was now keenly attuned to. They were people, nonetheless, who avoided overtly assuming opposition stands that might bring them to the attention of the police, preferring to work behind the scenes. Beginning with casual discussions, these people began meeting in more formal groups, sometimes only a few together, sometimes eight or ten at a time. The members of these groups included Truong Nhu Tang, who had a job as chief comptroller of a Saigon bank; two doctors, Duong Quynh Hoa and Phung Van Cung; a factory owner, Nguyên Huu Khuong; the Caodaist lawyer Trinh Dinh Thao; lyceé teachers Nguyên Van Hieu and Ung Ngoc Ky; Nguyên Xuan Long; and the veterans Tran Buu Kiem and Huynh Tan Phat, architect, whose party affiliations were kept secret.

The founders constituted a mobilization committee designed to reach out to opposition elements, political parties, the sects, and the Buddhists. The mobilization committee comprised Tang, Hieu, Kiem, Ky, Long, Cung, and Phat. What Tang and the other non-party people did not know at the time was the long-time party membership of some of the leaders of the committee. Phat had been a party member since 1940 and had worked under deep cover ever since, and Hieu, Kiem and Ky had secretly been party members since 1951. Phat had settled in Saigon after 1954, established an office as an architect, and become secretary-general of the Democratic Party. At this time, the mobilization committee decided to send Hieu to Hanoi secretly to begin working out a channel of support from northern compatriots, a move that seemed logical enough in the atmosphere of growing political rumor-mongering in Saigon which suggested the need at least of finding out what Hanoi advised in the way of action, if any. What was particularly notable was that the secret party members, while they always were careful to let the others take the lead in discussions, were involved in decisions at every stage. Thus, for example, the mobilization committee appointed, on the basis of their activist commitment and qualifications, a three-man leadership group made up of the party members Phat, Hieu, and Kiem to oversee the details of organization and bring together input from different groups; this put them in the key decision-making role.

The search for a leader led the mobilization committee to Nguyên Huu Tho, a lawyer who had been co-chairman of the Saigon Peace Movement and an old friend of Professor Roger Pinto. At some point, Tho was "liberated" from the house arrest he was serving in Tuy Hoa and spirited to safe haven on the Cambodia and Laos borders. The name of the front, its flag, and its anthem were decided upon. Meanwhile, Hieu was sent on another mission to Hanoi to seek guidance from Ho on the platform that had been drafted. The finished drafts he brought back impressed Tang as historical documents that could not have been the work of the leadership group alone.

Early on the morning of December 17, 1960, Tang, by his own account, rendezvoused with a colleague at the Saigon bus station as instructed, and in the company of a woman took a bus to Tay Ninh. Every detail of the trip was carefully prepared, and after a few more changes of transport and escorts he arrived long after nightfall at a cottage deep in the forest. The next day he spent poring over documents he was given for the forthcoming meeting to comment upon,

and that evening he was taken to an assembly hall for an evening's entertainment. The next morning he was again taken to the assembly hall, which had been decorated with flags and banners. Tang again sat in one of a row of curtained boxes along the left side of the hall where he could not be seen by the rest of the audience, which consisted of guerrillas who did not have to be protected from identification. On the dais sat Phat, Hieu, and Kiem, together with Ky, Cung, and others he did not know; Tang does not mention Tho as being present. The proceedings lasted past midnight, with statements being read, resolutions passed unanimously, and officers elected. Thus, on December 19–20, 1960, in Tan Lap Commune, Chau Thanh District, Tay Ninh Province, in a forest clearing situated in proximity to the sanctuary of Cambodia, the South Vietnam National Liberation Front (NLF) was formed, the newest application of the party's united front strategy. The formation of the NLF was not announced over Radio Hanoi until some weeks later. The service of the sanctuary of the NLF was not announced over Radio Hanoi until some weeks later.

The founding of the NLF was one of those marvelous stage productions of which the party center was capable, like the Tan Trao Congress of August 1945, in which serious political discussions take place, resolutions are voted unanimously, all amid singing, dancing, and acting troupes; foreign visitors, if present, are bedazzled, and everyone has a good time. These productions bear a resemblance to summer theater productions in the United States.

As a review of their biographies makes clear, the original leaders of the NLF were mainly lawyers or doctors or other professionally trained people. They included very few uneducated people, if any. The rank and file were originally drawn from the ranks of the Viet Minh; the Cao Dai and Hoa Hao; minority groups, primarily Cambodians and Montagnards; idealistic youth recruited from the universities and polytechnic schools; farmers' organizations from parts of the Mekong Delta; small political parties or groups or professionals associated with them; intellectuals who had broken with the Saigon government; military deserters; refugees of various sorts from the Diem government, such as those singled out by neighbors in the denunciation of Communist campaigns who had eluded the police. The NLF was a thoroughly elitist organization, although its mass components, whose separate leaderships were all subordinate to the central committee, swept up persons in all walks of life in the areas controlled by the guerrillas—farmers, women, ethnic minorities, and so forth—so as to lend credence to its claim to represent the people.

The establishment of the NLF, with its appeal to Southern nationalism, represented a risk for the party center in that it could become a breeding ground for separatist ideas. The party was the defender of the DRV's claim to sovereignty over the entire territory of Vietnam, a claim demonstrated in the May 1960 elections for the National Assembly, in which the handful of Southern deputies who had been elected in 1946 simply had their mandates extended, a move that the Saigon government lost no time in protesting to the ICC as a violation of the Geneva agreements. Thus the gesture toward a South Vietnam that had no juridical standing in the eyes of the party was strictly a tactical move. The party was willing to go so far as to provide this organization with all the trappings of a government from 1969 onward. But from the very start there was

not the slightest doubt about who was subordinate to whom—when we foreign correspondents asked DRV diplomats in Phnom Penh in the 1960s which, Hanoi or Saigon, would be the capital of a Vietnam reunified in accordance with the NLF's program, the answer was unequivocal: Hanoi. The party's appeal to Southern nationalism was bound to have repercussions when persons imbued with idealism who had enrolled under the NLF's flag—appropriately styled with a red top half representing the socialist North, a blue bottom half representing the still-to-be-liberated South, and a yellow star in the middle—saw themselves excluded from power, as happened after 1975, and even dared to protest this betrayal. But in the circumstances of the party's total victory this was judged to be no more than an embarrassment that the party obviously calculated it could put up with.

The NLF provided a cover for political, military, and diplomatic efforts to topple the Saigon government. From an objective viewpoint it is clear that its establishment and Radio Hanoi's broadcasting of its program for uniting the Southerners to overthrow the Diem regime constituted a flagrant violation of Article 14(a) of the armistice agreement signed by the DRV's deputy defense minister at Geneva. This article provided for the administration of each zone by each party pending the general elections for reunification and said nothing about the character of those administrations nor whether they were approved by the people. This new violation by Hanoi of Article 14(a) was not seen at the time as noteworthy in itself; there had been numerous prior broadcasts over Radio Hanoi calling for the overthrow of the Southern administration. 368 Radio Hanoi had broadcast news of so many alleged protests against the "fascist" administration in the South that the news of the congress of the founders of the NLF did not attract much attention at the time, and certainly no one had any inkling that this body was intended by the party center to be its primary instrument for carrying out the January 1959 decision to wage a violent campaign to overthrow Diem.

As the Military History Institute put it after the war, "In accordance with the policy laid out by the Politburo of the Party Central Committee, the revolutionary armed forces in South Vietnam were given the name of 'The Liberation Army of South Vietnam.' In putting into effect the instructions of the Politburo, in January 1961 the General Military Party Committee stated clearly that: 'The Liberation Army of South Vietnam is a part of the People's Army of Vietnam, having been established, developed, educated, and led by the Party . . . "369"

# **Looking Back**

The nationalists in Indochina found themselves unprepared to deal with the challenge posed by the American embassies with their huge monetary and other resources. As the key policymaker in Washington, Parsons cut them down with a wide swath. In Laos, he succeeded in weakening them in their political contest with the Lao Patriotic Front without at the same time giving them a viable alternative strategy for dealing with the Pathet Lao threat. It was under Parsons's benevolent eye during his ambassadorship that the military assumed dominance in the political life of Laos, and afterward, when Parsons was in Washing-

ton, as the documentary record shows, he based his approach to the Laotian situation on his fear of jeopardizing or placing undue strain on the American relationship with Sarit,<sup>370</sup> with all the benign protection of General Phoumi's maneuvering for political power that this approach implied.

The breach in Laotian political life caused by American largesse to the CDNI and the army leaders, allegedly covert but known to all in Vientiane, persisted until Kong Le's coup d'état, and indeed was one of its causes. This largesse aggravated the corruption issue, which had been there since the beginning of the illconceived American aid program in the 1950s, and worked to the advantage of the Communists, both as election propaganda and as divisive tinder among the nationalists, who were in their large majority uncorrupted. American diplomacy had become completely disengaged from the realities on the ground in Laos; the embassy in Vientiane was expected to implement policies that were motivated by the solicitous desire of the Americans to placate characters who loomed larger in their eyes, such as Sarit, while the reporting from the embassy had no impact on the formulation of meaningful policies. Major questions were simply eluded. Washington was not able to give the Lao the guarantees of the security of their borders they were looking for and was not even able to suggest guidance on the question of whether or not the royal government should still consider itself bound by the 1954 agreements, with all that followed therefrom. American policy, by hedging on the royal government's stand in 1958 that Laos had fulfilled the obligations assumed at Geneva, tied the role of the PEO in training the Lao military to the French military mission allowed under the Geneva Agreement, thereby not only antagonizing those Lao who felt their country should be free to defend itself with all the means at its disposal, but also provoking a conflict with the French over the issue of whether the Geneva agreements were still binding and still prevented an American military role in Laos.

With the ambassador in the Republic of Vietnam having lost the confidence of the head of state to whom he was accredited and the State Department able to offer nothing more than palliatives, American diplomacy in Vietnam did not distinguish itself, either. The direction of diplomacy would normally have been assumed by the assistant secretary of state for Far Eastern affairs, but Parsons was on a tour of Southeast Asia during the crucial exchanges on Durbrow's démarche to Diem. There can be little doubt that Parsons had no inkling of the crisis Durbrow's démarche would cause in relations with Diem. Quite apart from this crisis, Parsons made little or no effort after the coup attempt to get American diplomacy back on track with support for the legally constituted authority in Saigon rather than for the stronger of two friendly factions. The constitutional issue does not appear to have weighed heavily on him; he referred to Diem, in conversation with Ambassador Chuong, as "the head of the Vietnamese government."371 Chuong may have gained the impression from talking with Parsons that the Americans were prepared to support any government in Saigon, civilian or military, no matter how it was constituted, and regardless of whether it was legal or illegal, so long as it could fight the war.

It should not be imagined that Parsons, who talked a staunch anti-Communist line, was any great friend of the staunchly anti-Communist Diem. Par-

sons was known for backing Durbrow in all his quibbling about aid to Vietnam, such as a request for American support for a 20,000-man increase in the army, which was strongly advocated by the MAAG. After the coup attempt had been put down, Lansdale sharply criticized the Southeast Asia desk staff in the Department of State for the advice it gave Durbrow, which, he said, constituted an "invitation to engage in this badly-timed and demoralizing meddling in Vietnam's affairs." Parsons did not react when Durbrow, as usual taking military necessity for political leverage, quickly made the 20,000-man increase contingent on Diem's meeting his list of demands. Durbrow does not seem to have realized that his leverage with Diem was decreased by Diem's suspicions of him and that accordingly it would take ever greater amounts of American input to exercise such leverage. When Durbrow suggested to Washington that Diem might have to be deposed, Parsons did not demur or raise the question of how this might be effected or even ask who a suitable replacement might be.

One wonders what government, in the mind of the official most directly responsible for American diplomacy in the area, might have conceivably served American interests in any of the countries of Indochina; one supposes it would have been a mirror image of the government of the United States. What is certain is that the phrase "broad-based government," which was heard with increasing frequency on the lips of American diplomats, was an empty one, a kind of password for justifying pressure on any government of which Washington disapproved. This was demonstrated by Parsons's obstinacy until the beginning of May 1960 in supporting the claims of General Phoumi and the CDNI, who could not by any stretch of the imagination have been said to have any mass base at all among the people of Laos, while Ambassador Smith was trying his best, together with his Western colleagues, to stitch together a government led by the Phoui and Souvanna Phouma wings of the Rally of the Lao People, which would in the true sense of the term have been broad-based.

American diplomacy in Indochina was by now almost completely unraveled, the end result of a process that had begun in 1957. What people such as Durbrow and Parsons saw as a crisis in faraway Indochina was a crisis of American making. What was missing was the steadying hand of John Foster Dulles, who died in May 1959, and who would never have permitted General Phoumi to pull off his coup d'état in December of that year and who would have put the debate over support for Diem back on the traditional basis of an American foreign policy of dealing with sovereign governments, rather than on the basis of which faction was the stronger in fighting the war against the Communists, which was shortly to lead to disaster in Vietnam, as well as in Laos.

NSC 5809 led to a total disregard for constitutionality and legality, first in Cambodia in January 1959, then in Laos in December 1959, and eventually in South Vietnam in November 1963, that was to start the United States on the slippery slope to involvement in the war. In Cambodia and Laos, constitutionality survived this onslaught, and indeed survived against all odds until the Communist takeovers of 1975. In South Vietnam, however, it did not. The consequences were heavy for the United States.

# 7. The Nationalists Struggle against Great Odds

1961-1963

The most fateful events of the declining fortunes of the Indochinese nationalists coincided with the presidency of John F. Kennedy. This is not to say that responsibility for the quickening decline can be laid entirely at the feet of the American president, for the nationalists committed grievous errors, especially in their relations with one another and among their three countries, that played into the hands of their enemies, the Communists. The nationalists at the time were not familiar with all the details of the Kennedy administration's involvement with their countries, but we have enough materials at hand now to trace the story of the years 1961 to 1963 with some hope of exactitude.

Kennedy's victory in the 1960 presidential election came as a surprise to the Indochinese. Compared with Nixon, Kennedy was virtually an unknown to the Vietnamese, in particular. Reporters visiting the foreign ministry in Saigon after the election found officials there studying *Profiles in Courage* in search of clues to Kennedy's views on foreign policy. The Vietnamese in the cities, who listened to the BBC and the Voice Of America, had been disappointed by the failure of the Americans to go to the aid of the Hungarian freedom fighters in November 1956, and they hoped Kennedy would be disposed to take firmer action against the Communists.

The grim rhetoric in Kennedy's inaugural speech seems anachronistic in the post–Cold War era. "To bear any burden," he had intoned. Brown quoted the sentence about not fearing to negotiate to the king of Laos in 1961. Yet the speech was not out of the ordinary at the time. The Communists had taken over in China only twelve years before, and the Korean armistice was barely eight years old. Was Kennedy fallible in his reading of Communist intentions? Much has been made about his "misreading" of Chairman Nikita S. Khrushchev's speech two weeks before the inauguration and the subsequent attention Kennedy gave to counterinsurgency against what Khrushchev called "national liberation wars." Schlesinger maintains that Kennedy had believed ever since his visit to Vietnam in 1951 that "the characteristic mode of Communist military pressure was not direct confrontation but indirect aggression and especially

guerrilla warfare." At a time when the divergence of fundamental interests between Moscow and Peking was still masked from view, it fell to Kennedy's administration to devise an effective response.

# Kennedy and Khrushchev at Vienna: The Heart of the Matter

# THE BACKGROUND

A number of developments in late 1960 and early 1961 made Vietnam the locus operandi of the challenge to President Kennedy's credibility in just such terms. The Third Congress of the Vietnam Workers' Party in September 1960 adopted the thesis of the two revolutions in Vietnam. According to this thesis, the socialist revolution in the North would continue, while in the South the people's democratic national revolution would be pushed ahead. In plain terms, Hanoi was giving up its reliance on the diplomatic-political effort, carried on fruitlessly since the partition of 1954, to bring about reunification, and was now prepared to sustain a military campaign against Diem's government. The Congress also marked the rise to second rank, after Ho Chi Minh, of Le Duan. 4 In his address, later quoted by Kennedy in a letter to Khrushchev, Le Duan said notably: "There does not exist any other way outside of that which consists in the overthrow of the dictatorial and Fascist regime of the American-Diemist clique in order to liberate totally South Vietnam, with a view to realizing national unity."5 Thus, in typically veiled language, the party center signaled the acceptance and ratification by its highest body of Le Duan's virtually one-man decision to embark on war for reunification.

Two months later, the Vietnamese attended the Conference of 81 Communist and Workers' Parties, where amid lively debates the delegates attempted to prevent a widening of Sino-Soviet divergences on such fundamental issues of strategy as support for national liberation movements. As R. B. Smith notes in his multi-volume study of the international history of the Vietnam war, it is important not to underestimate the degree of genuine unity that emerged, which was none the less real for being short-lived. In return for concessions by the Chinese party on the issue of negotiating with the imperialists on such matters as trade and disarmament, the Soviets recognized national liberation wars as a distinct (and inevitable) form of warfare.6

The role of violence in this strategy was discussed by Truong Chinh in a report to a party conference on March 13, 1961, published in the April 1961 issue of the party's theoretical journal, Hoc Tap.

> Unable to endure the oppressive, exploiting and murderous policies of the enemy, the Southern compatriots have to rise up and group themselves under the fighting banner of the Liberation Front to destroy the U.S.-Diemist regime and set up a neutral democratic coalition government. Once established, this government will agree with the DRV Government about peacefully achieving national reunification under

one form or another, including the holding of free elections throughout the country. Thus, though South Viet Nam will be liberated by non-peaceful means, the party policy of peacefully achieving national reunification is still correct.<sup>7</sup>

### THE MEETING

This was the background to the meeting in Vienna on June 3–4 between President Kennedy and Chairman Khrushchev. There was no set agenda for the meeting. The crisis in Laos, in which both their governments were actively involved, obviously demanded attention, and the two men quickly agreed that diplomacy should be pursued. Kennedy came prepared also to raise the issue of Vietnam, at the urging of Walt W. Rostow, his deputy special assistant for national security affairs, who in a memo on May 26 called Khrushchev the third front on which the administration had to work, along with building up South Vietnam's strength and heightening the awareness of the international community on the border-crossing issue. It was Khrushchev's threats over Berlin that attracted public attention. Berlin was a flashpoint of East-West relations, and Kennedy knew that he had very little room to maneuver; if the Soviets crossed the sector line in Berlin, they would come face to face with American troops and it would mean all-out war—as simple as that. Kennedy, in fact, was to react with composure to the crisis over Berlin.

On the afternoon of June 3 at the residence of the American ambassador, the two men talked together for three and three-quarter hours with only their interpreters present. It was the most significant of their meetings, and the discussion ranged over the entire world. Kennedy, goaded by Khrushchev's presumption to lecture him on the issue of Communist support for national liberation wars, gave free rein to his thoughts. <sup>10</sup>

For Kennedy, with an awe of popularly elected government akin to Lincoln's, felt strongly that armed minorities supported from outside should not be allowed to seize power in countries with functioning democratic systems. Pluralistic politics was then a reality worth fighting for, although nowadays it is the exception in Southeast Asia, where rule by either the military or single parties prevails. In South Vietnam, while there was no significant formal party opposition in the National Assembly, the Buddhists and Catholics and the Cao Dai and Hoa Hao sects, as well as the vibrant Saigon press, gave free rein to expression of political opinion. In Cambodia, Sihanouk was gradually squeezing the opposition parties into conformity with his one-party Sangkum regime. In Laos, the traditional political parties continued to flourish, even in the circumstances of territorial partition imposed by the Pathet Lao, and were to do so right until 1975. And Kennedy, in assessing the situation in Indochina, had been helped in his research, of course, by his wife Jackie and her fluency in French, as she herself recalled.<sup>11</sup>

Kennedy and his younger brother Robert, the attorney general, were shrewd enough to see that insurgents engaging in terrorism and other criminal acts, by masquerading as "national liberation movements," could claim enough legitimacy to be treated as proto-governments and would then be in a position to decide who were the criminals and thereby thwart the will of the people. The repression that Truong Chinh had written about, which was the effect from the non-Communists' point of view, was transformed in Marxist-Leninist doctrine into the cause. With support from the Soviets, such fraudulent movements could capture power in one Third World country after another. Whatever reservations he may have had about Diem and the growing American commitment to his government, Kennedy had to match his words with action, had to show that national liberation wars could be defeated and democratic regimes preserved. To do this, he had to prevent such a war from winning in Vietnam. 12

"Kennedy came away concerned that Khrushchev blustered and thought he could bully the President of the United States," Rusk recalled. 13 In one of those moments of self-revelation of which he was capable, Kennedy showed the stress of his meeting with Khrushchev to James Reston of The New York Times immediately afterward. The scene is described by David Halberstam. Reston was waiting in a room at the American Embassy for an interview with Kennedy which he had been promised in advance. Reston remembers Kennedy pushing his hat over his eyes like a beaten man and breathing a great sigh. "Pretty rough?" Reston asked. "Roughest thing in my life," the President answered. He seemed to Reston to be genuinely shaken. About Khrushchev's blustering, Kennedy had this to say: "I've got two problems. First, to figure out why he did it, and in such a hostile way. And second, to figure out what we can do about it. I think the first part is pretty easy to explain. I think he did it because of the Bay of Pigs. I think he thought that anyone who was so young and inexperienced as to get into that mess could be taken, and anyone who got into it, and didn't see it through, had no guts. So he just beat hell out of me. So I've got a terrible problem. If he thinks I'm inexperienced and have no guts, until we remove those ideas we won't get anywhere with him. So we have to act." According to Halberstam's account, he added: "Now we have a problem in trying to make our power credible, and Vietnam looks like the place."14

This is the clearest expression, so far as I am aware, of Kennedy's view that events in Vietnam were moving in a direction that constituted a challenge requiring him personally to act in accordance with his responsibility as leader of the Free World. In a column in *The New York Times* in 1979, Reston reiterated his belief on the basis of what Kennedy had told him that the Vienna summit had been an event of historic significance, leading Kennedy to confront Khrushchev by increasing the American commitment in Vietnam. As William Bundy told a BBC interviewer in 1977, the effect on the Soviet belief in American firmness was a significant part of Kennedy's decision to escalate in Vietnam, "although it doesn't appear in so many words in the records of deliberations at that time." <sup>15</sup>

# Two Rival Governments in Laos

The military disaster that the French, British, and others had foreseen following on American support for General Phoumi in Laos exploded in the first days

of 1961. On January 1, Kong Le's troops took control of the Plain of Jars and Khang Khay after skirmishing with some of the 9,000 Phoumist troops and 9,000 Meo guerrillas in the vicinity and recovering large quantities of supplies. The following day, the Neutralists occupied Xieng Khouang. The PEO advisers with the Phoumist troops were evacuated from the Phong Savan airfield, which became the staging area for Soviet planes flying supplies to the Neutralists and Pathet Lao from Hanoi.

The early days of January saw the commitment of significant numbers of DRV troops to the fighting, exactly what Souvanna Phouma had feared. Kong Le had himself requested four battalions of DRV troops on January 7. Two of these battalions linked up with Kong Le's own forces on Route 7 and down Route 13. The third was engaged in military action at Tha Thom south of the Plain of Jars, while the fourth took up position north of the Plain. The entry into action of DRV troops was not announced publicly, any more than any of the advisory and logistical support activities the DRV had mounted on behalf of the Pathet Lao since 1954 had been announced. Subsequently, these troops were referred to by Hanoi as "volunteer Vietnamese troops." One after another, they picked off outposts in Sam Neua, Xieng Khouang, and northern Vientiane Province still in the hands of the Phoumists. The American supply to the Phoumists of T-6 trainer planes with rockets made only a marginal difference.

Tha Thom fell on January 18. In central Laos, Laksao, Nhommarath, and Mahaxay—vital gateposts on the roads from North Vietnam where the French had skirmished with General Giap's troops eight years previously—and Kam Keut—where U.S. Special Forces advisers, now in uniform, and the Phoumists identified the Vietnamese assault troops eye to eye<sup>18</sup>—fell in rapid succession during March to the Pathet Lao and the Vietnamese "volunteer troops." A Pathet Lao soldier at Kam Keut also later provided an account of the Vietnamese. At the end of April, an American adviser, Sergeant Orville R. Ballenger, was captured while going downstream in a boat south of Vang Vieng and was taken in a convoy of 65 Russian trucks, each driven by Vietnamese drivers and carrying 14 Vietnamese soldiers, from Vang Vieng to the Plain of Jars. Following his release in August 1962, Ballenger provided direct evidence of the extent of the DRV intervention. Place of the Plain of Jars.

The Phoumists on the road from Vientiane to Luang Prabang, ill-led by their officers, fell back in confusion. The entire length of the road from the Sala Phou Khoun junction south in the direction of Vientiane as far as Vang Vieng was in Pathet Lao–DRV hands by mid-March. A Pathet Lao soldier later provided an eyewitness corroboration of the Vietnamese presence in the attack on Vang Vieng. The embassy, after long and patient effort, had succeeded in breaking the radio code used by DRV military units in Laos, and so had good intelligence of their movements. The embass of the road from Vienge Prabang, and so had good intelligence of their movements.

General Phoumi, who himself went nowhere near the fighting front, was asking for a Thai regimental combat team. He was threatening to pull out of northern Laos altogether and set up a defense line at the Nam Ca Dinh to hold the south against the Communists, in effect abandoning Vientiane to Souvanna

Phouma's government unless he received assistance from his allies. The CIA station chief in Vientiane, Gordon L. Jorgensen, sent Brown two memoranda on May 1 recommending that American ground and air forces be moved immediately into Thailand with the announced purpose of being ready to move into Laos with speed if the enemy continued to inch forward. Jorgensen thought that if this were not done General Phoumi was capable of beginning a withdrawal to the south without giving the Americans advance notice; such a strategy was doomed to failure, Jorgensen thought, because it was not sustainable politically and would "merely prolong the death agony and our embarrassment and distress." Parsons's chickens had finally come home to roost. In an effort to put an end to the free-wheeling activities of CIA stations, Kennedy sent a letter to all ambassadors on May 29 stating: "You are in charge of the entire U.S. Diplomatic Mission, and I expect you to supervise all of its operations. The Mission includes not only the personnel of the Department of State and the Foreign Service, but also representatives of all other United States agencies."

After years of talking about his forward defense strategy and of the need to fight the Communists in Laos, Marshal Sarit finally committed some elements of the Thai security forces to the defense of Laos. They were members of the Police Aerial Reinforcement Unit (PARU), and they had a long history of association with the CIA. On January 1, PARU advisers accompanied by a CIA agent, James William Lair, helicoptered to Thavieng and made contact with the leader of the Meo guerrillas, Colonel Vang Pao, who had retreated from the Plain and requested arms—and quickly. Would the Meo fight? Lair asked, concerned that the arms might fall into the hands of the Communists. "We fight them or we leave," answered Vang Pao. How many men could he arm? "At least ten thousand." If the Meo were armed, would they try to become autonomous, or would they be loyal to the royal government? Lair asked. "I am loyal to the king of Laos," Vang Pao replied. Neither the royal government nor the United States could support a Meo independence movement, Lair observed. What did Vang Pao's people want to do? "They want to keep their way of life and follow their own leaders. They want to fight the Communists. They will follow me, and I am loyal to the king." Lair made no commitment, saying only he would see what he could do.

Back in Vientiane, Lair met with Jorgensen and Desmond FitzGerald, chief of the Far East Division of the Directorate for Plans of the CIA, who was visiting. Lair recommended furnishing arms to the Meo, on the basis of what Vang Pao had told him. The Meo would fight well in small-scale actions, he pointed out, but if the DRV kept on pushing them, they would probably lose, whether the Americans helped them or not. If the operation were to be run right, Lair said, a contingency plan should be prepared that provided the Meo with an escape route. Sayaboury Province suggested itself as the most likely place for such a fallback, he said. Northwestern Sayaboury, like the adjoining Thai province of Nan, was hilly and forested, except for wet rice valleys at Xieng Lom, Muong Ngeun, and Hon Sa. It was sparsely populated by Meo and other groups and, far from base areas in the DRV, would be more easily defended by Vang Pao's guerrillas than Sam Neua

and Xieng Khouang. CIA headquarters authorized the arming and training of 1,000 men as the first step. Lair would be in charge, but the operation would be funded directly from headquarters through a special account that Lair would control. Lair returned to Thavieng for another meeting with Vang Pao. Several of the clan chieftains were on hand and asked for a firm statement of commitment from the Americans. Lair pledged arms, supplies, and training if the Meo made a good showing against the enemy and a new place to live if they were defeated. Lair drew up an agreement that pledged the delivery within a few days of arms and ammunition for 500 men. Vang Pao, the PARU leader and Lair signed the paper. In time, many Meo came to believe that the signing of this paper constituted a treaty between themselves and the United States.<sup>25</sup>

Meanwhile, with the Revolutionary Committee, which had suspended the constitution, still in existence, the new leaders in Vientiane proved to be deaf to the urgings of the Americans to legalize their government by going before the National Assembly in a session convoked by the king. Two influential southern figures in the government, Prince Boun Oum and Leuam Insisiengmay, preferred to see the constitution remain suspended rather then presenting themselves for investiture before these deputies who, four months previously, had invested Prince Souvanna Phouma's government. General Phoumi, who was not about to do Ambassador Brown's bidding, and who felt he could afford to disregard urgent messages from diplomats in Washington, had in effect washed his hands of the question.<sup>26</sup> In three instances in a meeting with his top diplomatic advisers at the White House on December 31, President Eisenhower insisted on the importance of getting Boun Oum's government legalized.<sup>27</sup>

The procedures under which Prince Boun Oum's government had been formed had thrown its status into some confusion, and thus the process of restoring constitutionality was fraught with unanswered questions, which Brown proceeded to draw to Washington's attention even as the Lao were taking the prescribed corrective steps. Thirty-eight deputies of the National Assembly who had sought out the Revolutionary Committee in Savannahket over the preceding weeks had met in the chao khoueng's office there on December 11 and agreed to petition the king to dismiss Souvanna Phouma's government.<sup>28</sup> Unbeknown to many deputies, Leuam had flown to Luang Prabang on the morning of December 12 and appealed to the king to establish a government of the Revolutionary Committee headed by Boun Oum. The king thereupon accepted the "motion presented by 38 deputies meeting in Savannakhet" and the same day signed a royal ordinance dismissing the Souvanna Phouma government effective that day and giving powers of government provisionally to the Revolutionary Committee. A further ordinance nominating a provisional government under Prince Boun Oum was signed on December 14.29 Another petition that turned up later asked the king to convoke an extraordinary meeting of the Assembly in Luang Prabang.<sup>30</sup> Some deputies subsequently insisted the king had actually signed such an ordinance but was persuaded by Leuam to withdraw it.

All these actions were irregular in the extreme. The Assembly's secretariat in Vientiane had no record of any of the proceedings in the meeting in Savan-

nakhet, much less the texts of the petitions. Prince Boun Oum's solution of maintaining the constitution in suspense would have avoided a debate over the legality of his government. However, with the Americans prodding strongly to follow constitutional procedure so as to make the American support of the government less suspect internationally, the king agreed with Brown on December 28 that convoking the Assembly would be the wisest course, and he did so on January 3, disregarding thereby its previous suspension. The king, who was relaxed and in good spirits, told Brown that Souvanna Phouma could return to Vientiane, so far as he and a good number of members of the government were concerned, although there were "certain people" who were strongly hostile to him and were at the moment reviewing the government files of the past few months to determine which decrees had been signed by Souvanna Phouma himself and which had been signed in his name by Quinim.<sup>31</sup>

Brown noted that Boun Oum's investiture speech—a short and mildly worded one in which he sought to assure the king that the Revolutionary Committee harbored no designs against the monarchy and substituted a pledge (which had been suggested by the Thai) to follow a foreign policy of non-alignment for the original one of "adhere[nce] to defense pacts against all forms of imperialism"—and the vote of the deputies in the government's favor had preceded the vote of a non-confidence motion in Souvanna Phouma's government, which did not lay over the required 24 hours. However, Brown added, these points were moot if the censure vote of 38 deputies in Savannakhet was considered a valid Assembly act. Phoui Sananikone observed to an embassy officer with perfect logic that there were grounds for seriously questioning the legality of the deputies' actions in Savannakhet because their meeting had not been convoked by the king and the venue was a city under control of the Revolutionary Committee, which had declared the suspension of the constitution.<sup>32</sup> On January 4, by a vote of 41 to 0 (7 deputies in the cabinet were not eligible to vote and 11 deputies were absent), the National Assembly voted confidence in the Boun Oum government after a mild debate of only four speeches.<sup>33</sup> The next day Somsanith reviewed the events that had made the session necessary ("troubles created . . . by non-Lao armed elements"); he was careful to lay blame on the Lao Patriotic Front. The king thanked the Assembly for its crisis-resolving action and called on all Lao to work together for "peace, concord, and prosperity."34 For many intelligent Laotians, appalled by the disaster their foreign entanglements had gotten their country into, reconciliation seemed to be the better part of valor, and it was clear they were leaving the way open for Souvanna Phouma's return.

The fact that, in spite of American diplomatic efforts, only the United States and Thailand among the major foreign powers upheld the legality of the Boun Oum government in Vientiane played into the hands of Souvanna Phouma and his supporters on the international scene. The fact that Souvanna Phouma had not resigned allowed him to claim to be still the country's prime minister. Quinim and Tiao Sisoumang Sisaleumsak, two ministers who had fled Vientiane before the battle, set up a rump government at Khang Khay and urged the prince to join them.

The French position, which Foreign Minister Couve de Murville had made clear to Herter at tripartite meetings in Paris in December, 35 was that they were willing to work with the Boun Oum government as a de facto government but were unwilling to go to the extent of supporting that government as juridically the legal government.<sup>36</sup> The French retained their embassy in Vientiane and Ambassador Falaize treated the situation as one where the government had simply left town, which forced him to resort to extraordinary means to communicate with Souvanna Phouma, such as traveling from Vientiane to Khang Khay via Phnom Penh, as General Phoumi did not allow any direct flights. The French were in bad standing with both Phoumi and the Thai. The Thai were irritated that the French advisers assigned to Kong Le's troops had remained during the battle of Vientiane.<sup>37</sup> Phoumi's troops had in retaliation shelled the headquarters of the French Military Mission during the battle and many French residents, who were sympathetic to Boun Oum, if not to Phoumi, had left town. After the battle, Phoumi made no secret of his intention to expel the French mission altogether, a step he was dissuaded from taking by Brown. The mission discreetly continued its activities with Kong Le's troops at Khang Khay.

In a meeting at the White House on the crisis in Laos, President Eisenhower gave eloquent expression to the exasperation his top advisers felt over what they saw as "completely obstructive" French actions.

The French! The older I get, the more disgusted with them I am—not the French people but their governments. De Gaulle is as bad as any of the previous ones.<sup>38</sup>

The British remained equivocal, influenced strongly by their men on the spot. Lord Selkirk, the British commissioner general for Southeast Asia, expressed the view to the American ambassador in Bangkok that the government formed by Boun Oum was in reality a military government unrepresentative of popular opinion and in power only because of U.S. arms and support. It had no hope of establishing any degree of order or security within the country. A strong Communist reaction could be expected.<sup>39</sup> The UN secretary-general informed American diplomats that for reasons of preserving the influence of the UN he had to adopt a similar position as the British and the French.<sup>40</sup> The Soviet Union established an embassy at Khang Khay, soon followed by China and the DRV, which established aid missions. The situation of two rival governments that Ambassador Brown had predicted had come about.

In this imbroglio, the foreign ministers of the United States, Britain, and France met at the Quai d'Orsay on December 15 to discuss Laos and went round and round in circles from 10:30 p.m. to 1:10 a.m. <sup>41</sup> There was also the possibility of a split in SEATO between its European and Asian members. On the last day of the year Brown reported that the Boun Oum government, panicked by the alarming military situation, might appeal to SEATO for intervention in Laos, a course strongly advocated by several of the Revolutionary Committee members and encouraged by the Thai, with or without consulting him, and asked for instructions about what to do in such an eventuality. <sup>42</sup>

# THE ORIGIN OF NEUTRALIZATION

From his refuge in Phnom Penh, Prince Souvanna Phouma had sent a letter on December 30 addressed to diplomatic heads of mission there, including Trimble, appealing for the convoking of an international conference and supporting Prince Sihanouk's idea of neutralizing Cambodia and Laos. <sup>43</sup> The idea of finding an internationally negotiated solution to the Laos crisis was beginning to gain acceptance. Prince Sihanouk, in concert with his guest of the moment, proposed, in a letter addressed to heads of state on January 1, the convening of a 14-nation conference bringing together the participants in the 1954 Geneva conference, the ICC member states, and other states having a common border with Laos, namely Thailand and Burma.

Souvanna Phouma also wrote a letter on January 7 to Senator Mansfield, whom he had met on Mansfield's visits to Indochina. The letter was marked "Personal and Confidential" and gave the prince's address at the Villa des Manguiers, Phnom Penh. The embassy in Phnom Penh received a signed carbon copy. 44 He wrote:

I should like in this message of greeting to bring an action [procès] against the policy of your country regarding mine, a policy which is outmoded and which is not, I believe, that of your Party. But its consequences are so grave for the destinies of a nation which wishes to survive free that, as a patriot and sincere friend of the American nation, I will allow myself to address myself to you briefly.

No one, insofar as he puts himself in our place, can deny the unquestionable failure of this policy, so ununderstanding and illiberal. This failure consists in the dangerous deterioration of the present situation in Laos.

Souvanna Phouma said he placed his hopes in the new administration to choose qualified and responsible officials, and in this regard he noted that Parsons "cannot be classified in this category for he has never understood Laos and even less the other countries of Indochina." In any case, he added, "the moment has come for America to revise its Indochinese policy which is no longer adapted to events or to the development of the legitimate aspirations of the peoples of Southeast Asia."

On February 7, Souvanna Phouma wrote to another American whom he believed he could trust to see his viewpoint, even at this lowest ebb in his personal fortunes. In a letter to President Kennedy on paper with the letterhead "Kingdom of Laos, Presidency of the Council of Ministers," he wrote:

It is with deep satisfaction that I took note of your declaration to the press January 25 last, by which you informed the world that the United States under your high Administration desires "to see Laos live in peace, become an independent country, free of all domination and that it be a non-engaged country."

In your Presidential Inaugural Address, you also declared that the new American policy is to defend at all costs liberty and independence of weak countries, and to combat tyranny, poverty, sickness and war. These two statements, I can assure you, Mr. President, are approved by my compatriots who have been awaiting them so desperately since the 1954 Geneva Conference.

He went on to say that it was unthinkable that a people as peaceful and as fervently Buddhist as the Lao should wish to become Communist. But it was necessary to help Laos conserve its ancient traditions and the monarchical regime by restoring peace and security. This "the Savannakhet group" was not doing. To wish to suppress rebellion by force of arms was to sow the seed of communism. He urged a return to a political settlement along the lines that had been negotiated in 1957.<sup>45</sup>

Ambassador Brown had suggested in a telegram to the Department on January 7 that the creation of a neutral nations mediation group would serve the purpose of extricating the United States from an unmanageable commitment. Brown had an opportunity to put his ideas directly to Kennedy when he was called back to Washington for consultation. On February 2, Brown testified before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, where he avoided drawing attention to the extent of the American complicity with General Phoumi and hedged on Souvanna Phouma, Total Phoumi day with Kennedy in the Oval Office he was much more categorical.

Among the first questions he asked me was, "What kind of people are these people: Souvanna and Souphanouvong and Phoumi and the King and Kong Le?" And my heart leapt up when he asked that question, since I had long since come to the conclusion that the mistakes in our policy were fundamentally based upon a misjudgment of the characters and abilities and motivations and personalities of this small group of men. It seemed to me the President was going right to the heart of the matter when he said, "What makes them tick?" . . .

I told him . . . essentially that I thought that there was only one person in Laos who could be a unifying force in the country and I thought that that was Souvanna; that I thought we had pretty well emasculated him by our policies, that this had been wrong; I thought General Phoumi was greatly overrated, that he'd never been anywhere near a battlefield. He wasn't all that good a general, and he was a poor politician. I thought it was a terrible thing to be in a position where Phoumi was determining our policy and not the United States. I said I thought we'd misjudged Kong Le, that this was a disgruntled soldier, but a patriot, not a communist; that the King was a total zero, who was interested in only one thing, which was keeping on the throne. 48

In view of the alternatives among the major actors in Laos in the early days of 1961, Souvanna Phouma was indeed standing out as General Phoumi's troops suffered one reverse after another and Boun Oum's government proved it exercised little or no authority outside Vientiane and the major towns. Kennedy saw the desirability of some form of international intervention in the crisis, and he was reportedly influenced by Brown and Mansfield in this regard.<sup>49</sup> Any international solution implied the need to reconcile Souvanna Phouma, and this would come as a shock to General Phoumi, who did not like to be shocked.

In a memo to Kennedy, Mansfield supported the neutral nations commission idea,<sup>50</sup> and as a result Parsons and his staff at the State Department set to work on a plan to get the king involved in "saving" his country, since the Americans had not been able to do so. The king this time was not being asked to call for a countrywide uprising against the Pathet Lao as he had talked about in October, but merely to settle for sponsoring a neutral nations commission. This commission, in Parsons's version, was to be made up of Burma, Cambodia, and Malaya.

The king, who had no use at all for the interference of "neutrals" in his kingdom, was an unlikely sponsor for the Commission, and the plan showed Parsons's basic ignorance of the Laotians. Nevertheless, Savang made the speech that had been written for him by Christian A. Chapman, the State Department's desk officer for Laos. <sup>51</sup> After weeks of meetings in Washington and an intensive diplomatic lobbying campaign that involved all but the principals, two of the proposed member states, not having been consulted beforehand and suspicious of American motives, rejected the proposal out of hand. Thus, Parsons's plan for the Neutral Nations Commission came to naught; it must rank as a classic diplomatic fiasco.

# REJOINING TWO SOVEREIGNTIES

Parsons, intent on his Neutral Nations Commission project, quietly pigeon-holed Souvanna Phouma's letter of February 7 to President Kennedy, which had been dutifully translated by the embassy in Phnom Penh and forwarded through State Department channels.<sup>52</sup> Consequently, it was not until the end of March that the new administration at last made contact with the prince. After paying a visit to Khang Khay, Souvanna Phouma embarked on a world tour to firm up support for his government among Communist and neutralist countries, but not before he had received, rather coldly, a delegation consisting of Ngon, Leuam, and Touby, who had been sent to Phnom Penh by Prince Boun Oum.<sup>53</sup> The French Embassy in Rangoon ascertained Souvanna Phouma's willingness to receive an American emissary, and the idea was supported by Brown and Trimble,<sup>54</sup> although it was opposed by Parsons on grounds that "we have nothing new to say to Souvanna [Phouma] at this moment";<sup>55</sup> once again, Parsons was thinking in terms of telling the Lao what he wanted to, not listening to the Lao tell him anything.

Thus, when Souvanna Phouma found himself in New Delhi a few days later at the same time as W. Averell Harriman, whom Kennedy had made his roving ambassador, they met for tea at an Indian official's house. Souvanna Phouma recorded in his diary "I believe I made a good impression on him." Although Harriman was a veteran politician and diplomat, he had no experience in Southeast Asia. In the coming weeks, as he rapidly assumed command of the new administration's Laos policy in place of the discredited Parsons, who was dispatched to be ambassador to Sweden, Harriman acknowledged that he lacked the necessary information on American dealings with the prince in the previous year and depended on Ambassador Brown to fill him in. The two knew each other from earlier days and made an effective team. Harriman was to

adopt the prince with a vengeance, to the extent that in the end he imposed Souvanna Phouma on the luckless Phoumists.

In Luang Prabang, the king told Brown that he refused to leave his capital.<sup>58</sup> On March 23, in the midst of the Pathet Lao–DRV offensive, a somber Kennedy addressed the American people on television.

We are faced with a clear and one-sided threat of a change in the internationally agreed position of Laos. This threat runs counter to the will of the Laotian people, who wish only to be independent and neutral. It is posed rather by the military operations of internal dissident elements directed from outside the country. This is what must end if peace is to be achieved in Southeast Asia.<sup>59</sup>

Nevertheless, the Pathet Lao, with their allied "volunteer" shock troops from the DRV in action, pressed forward during April and recaptured Vang Vieng and Muong Sai and threatened Thakhek. In an effort to stabilize a fluid battlefield situation, Kennedy transformed the PEO into a Military Assistance Advisory Group (MAAG), thereby allowing advisers to wear uniforms and to accompany their units into battle. Kennedy was to increase the number of U.S. Special Forces personnel (the White Star Mobile Training Teams) from 154 in the spring of 1961 to 402 by October. On April 22, an American adviser, Captain Walter Moon, was captured north of Vang Vieng.

The CIA-financed program to arm the Meo was the single bright spot in the picture, as the small Meo bands held their ground against Pathet Lao–DRV artillery barrages and occasional ground assaults. But a commitment was being formed, one that was described eloquently by an embassy political officer who visited Padong on May 17 and 18, 1961, a fortnight after a cease-fire had been ordered on all sides.

It is quite evident from the aid we have contributed to the Meo and the encouragement we have given them that there exists a very definite moral commitment between them and the United States. As members of the Lao Army we have armed them and helped them fight the Communists, which means that in any settlement which would give the Bloc a preponderant voice in Lao affairs, the Meo would be in a very dangerous position. They are aware of this, as the state of their morale testifies, and the continued declarations made to us that they depend entirely on the United States were obviously meant to be taken as requests that we do not leave them in the lurch

The Meo are still most grateful to us, from what we could tell, and always treated us most hospitably. Vang Pao gave a sumptuous lunch for our party, considering the conditions at Ban Pa Dong, with several courses of rice, noodles, and meat, topped off with Martell and Hennessey cognac. We were seated under a leaky parachute tent in the pouring rain and got thoroughly soaked, but the cognac and ambiance were such that no one seemed to mind. Half-soused in a rain storm at 5,000 feet surrounded by heavily armed Meo tribesmen in the midst of an artillery barrage may not sound like the conditions conducive to draw-

ing politically important impressions. Nonetheless, it was evident to me that the Meo depended on the West, thoroughly detested the Communists, and needed our help. Without American support, they would have to flee or come to some sort of accommodation, but the loyal support they have given the West in resisting the advance of Communism in Southeast Asia clearly entitles them to a more favorable fate. Whether that fate can be found in Laos through fighting the Communists to a standstill at Ban Pa Dong, through re-establishing the Meo further from the Plaine des Jarres, or through such a drastic move as a transfer to Thailand, is not yet known. 60

Shortly after this visit, following an artillery barrage, an enemy ground attack succeeded in wresting the position from the defenders, and the Meo retreated to alternative positions. Hanoi and Moscow tried to portray the situation as one where the Meo had moved in after the cease-fire, but this lie was immediately exposed by the American delegation at Geneva.<sup>61</sup>

The main American concern was to obtain a cease-fire, and therefore the United States supported the call by the Soviet and British foreign ministers on April 24 convoking a conference accompanied by an appeal for a cease-fire. Prince Souvanna Phouma welcomed the Soviet and British messages in a joint statement issued with Prime Minister Pham Van Dong in Hanoi, where he had stopped over on his way back to Laos from his world tour, which blamed the crisis in Laos on "certain member states of the SEATO military bloc headed by U.S. imperialism." In the next few days there followed a complicated series of meetings which, in retrospect, are so important that it is possible to affirm that from them everything else followed. Prince Sihanouk journeyed to Luang Prabang at the invitation of the king to attend, together with the dignitaries of the Lao kingdom, the state funeral of King Sisavang Vong. Meanwhile, Harriman had been sent on his first mission to Southeast Asia to obtain an assessment of the situation and to offer support to American allies.

King Savang and Prince Sihanouk, whose relations had been further strained by the affair of the Neutral Nations Commission and Cambodia's rejection of the king's proposal, had two tense interchanges during the latter's visit to Luang Prabang. On the drive in from the airport, Savang told Sihanouk that he had never interfered in Cambodian affairs or permitted his government to do so; Sihanouk interpreted this to mean that the king resented his efforts to help solve the Laotian problem. This was reported to French Ambassador to Laos Falaize in Phnom Penh by Jean Barré, a Frenchman who served as Sihanouk's press adviser and accompanied the prince to Luang Prabang. Barré told Falaize that in one of their three conversations the king informed Sihanouk that two DRV divisions were operating in Laos. Sihanouk responded that if this could be proven, it would have a most important effect on world opinion. The king responded that he himself did not have proof, but the Americans did. However, they were unwilling to make it public because they "do not want to fight."63 In their last meeting, the king severely upbraided Sihanouk for offering hospitality to Souvanna Phouma, for having permitted Pathet Lao representatives to meet

with Souvanna Phouma in Phnom Penh, and for having permitted the Soviet aircraft bringing them to Phnom Penh to have landed there, all of which the king considered to be interference in Laotian internal affairs.<sup>64</sup> On his way back to Phnom Penh, Sihanouk stopped in Vientiane and gave a press conference during which he announced that he was withdrawing his sponsorship of the 14-nation Geneva conference on Laos.<sup>65</sup>

Harriman began his tour with a meeting with Thai Foreign Minister Thanat Khoman in Bangkok on April 29.66 Harriman then continued on to Vientiane that evening and to Luang Prabang the following morning. King Savang received him on April 30 in what was described as a "cordial, friendly atmosphere" after the conclusion of the royal funeral. There is every evidence that in this meeting the two men took each other's measure. Discussing Boun Oum's government, the king said he "intended to retain it as long as necessary in order not to weaken the position of the West vis-à-vis the enemy whom he personally knew well." Harriman informed the king that he would have an audience with Prince Sihanouk later that day and asked whether the king would care to give him any suggestions in this connection; he hoped that the prince realized that the future of his country depended on the maintenance of Lao independence. The king wished to set forth one idea—"The existence of Laos as a nation depended on the firmness of the U.S. attitude."67 Harriman met with Prince Boun Oum and General Phoumi in Luang Prabang on April 30 and stressed to them "the U.S. view that it would be a serious error to negotiate with Souvanna Phouma on the future of Laos," but he eluded a plea from General Phoumi for a pledge of American assistance should the enemy capture the "crucial points," meaning the towns on the Mekong River.<sup>68</sup>

That evening, Harriman met with Prince Sihanouk. He confirmed the American evidence of North Vietnamese intervention in Laos and asked Sihanouk to use his influence with Souvanna Phouma and Kong Le to bring about an immediate cease-fire. Sihanouk said he would be very glad to do this, and in fact he had already communicated with both Khrushchev and Souvanna Phouma. The prince thought the outlook for Laos was gloomy. He was very much afraid of having a Communist Laos on his borders and did not want to see this happen.

On May 2, President Diem received Harriman at Independence Palace in Saigon together with General Lyman L. Lemnitzer, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Diem revealed himself to be fully aware of the various conversations in Luang Prabang. Diem was skeptical of what the 14-nation conference could achieve and pointed to the failure of the ICC in Vietnam to protest the recent movement of Soviet supplies through the DRV to Laos as an indication of the degree of effectiveness in supervising the armistice that could be expected from its return to Laos. The Communists were solidifying their positions in Laos and building roads leading southward. When General Lemnitzer asked him what he needed to defeat the Viet Cong, Diem without batting an eyelash replied "Stop the Communists from taking over Laos" and then proceeded to expand on the problems posed for his government, particularly the need for more troops to patrol the borders. If the United States could save Laos and thus remove this threat to South Vietnam, the government could defeat the Viet Cong. 69

Sihanouk had arranged a meeting between Harriman and Souvanna Phouma in Phnom Penh on May 3, but the latter, held up by bad weather (the rains had begun at Khang Khay), did not arrive. However, as Harriman sat at the Pochentong airport waiting to take off for Bangkok, Souvanna Phouma and his party flew in. Thus, the two men were able to hold a 10-minute impromptu conversation. Souvanna Phouma was obviously gratified. Here he was, who six days before had lent his name to a joint statement with Pham Van Dong in Hanoi condemning "U.S. imperialism" for the war in Laos, talking with the "imperialist" Harriman about the most practical matters such as the likelihood of a cease-fire, which depended on neither of them. They agreed to meet again soon. To I saw the prince as his usual confident, ebullient self when I visited the Plain of Jars a few weeks later; he had not changed since Vientiane, and indeed seemed to relish being in the world's spotlight.

In Bangkok, Harriman met with Marshal Sarit, who opened by complaining that had SEATO acted promptly so many Lao positions would not have been lost to the Communists. The Thai government had all along pressed for such action and was disturbed by the fact, he observed sarcastically, that its proposals had repeatedly been blocked by other member states. In general, Sarit made clear several times his pessimism regarding prospects for keeping Laos unified and out of Communist hands. He referred to the approximately 500 Thai then serving in Laos in various capacities as proof of the Thai commitment; he only wanted to have a firm commitment from the United States.<sup>71</sup>

The upshot of this tortuous sequence of conversations between April 29 and May 4 was that King Savang concluded that the Americans did not intend to fight to save Laos. He had listened to four successive ambassadors and numerous visiting dignitaries over the years repeat the litany of the firm American resolve to prevent aggression against his country, and he did not need Harriman to tell it to him once again that such aggression was actually under way. The decision to turn the PEO into a MAAG did not impress him. Savang in turn persuaded Sihanouk that the Americans would not fight. As a realist, Sihanouk saw immediately what this portended for Cambodia, and from that time on he based his policy on accommodation with the Communist powers. The American policy of not fighting in Laos implied an American policy of further building up Thailand and South Vietnam, the very countries with which he considered himself to be virtually at war. Therefore, more than ever, he would need to rely on the support of the Communist bloc, especially China, for he had as yet not taken any steps toward a rapprochement with Hanoi.<sup>72</sup> Harriman, for his part, drew the implication from his conversations that General Phoumi was dangerous because of his wild actions such as suggesting that the population of Vientiane be evacuated across the river, and by his implicit threat to retreat to a fortified southern Laos. At the same time, Harriman was confronted by fresh demands for immediate American action in Laos from Diem and Sarit, which he knew Kennedy would be reluctant to meet in view of the recent disaster at the Bay of Pigs.

## NEGOTIATIONS

Boun Oum's government lost no time in suing for a truce. On April 28, it broadcast a cease-fire order to its troops and a call for truce talks near Ban Vang Khie, a point between the two forces on the road to Luang Prabang. The Neutralists had established a radio station at Xieng Khouang, which later proved important for distinguishing nuanced differences in their negotiating position from that of the Pathet Lao. Radio Xieng Khouang now broadcast a call for a meeting in the village of Ban Namone, further north. Like Kaesong in the Korean War, Ban Namone was 15 kilometers within Communist-held territory. The radio instructed the Vientiane government to send an emissary to meet a Pathet Lao emissary near Ban Hin Heup south of Ban Namone. At this first meeting under a white flag on May 1, a provisional local cease-fire was put into effect. Two days later, one formal cease-fire order to the Pathet Lao forces was signed by General Khamtay Siphandon and another to the Neutralists was signed by Kong Le.

The cease-fire left a far larger portion of Laos in the hands of the Pathet Lao–DRV side than they had controlled after the 1954 armistice. Significantly, their area of control now extended much farther south, and on the day before the cease-fire went into effect the 101st Regiment of the 325th DRV Division captured the town of Tchepone guarding the trails around the western end of the DMZ. The following month, South Vietnamese troops occupied reception centers across the border on Route 9 and captured records indicating that some 2,800 infiltrators had passed through them during a four-month period. Them's government asked repeatedly for American military action against the base the DRV had created at Tchepone, but all that was done was to mount occasional Special Forces forays across the border to try to keep track of what was going on.

With the arrival at the bamboo schoolhouse at Ban Namone of higher-level representatives on each side, the truce talks took on their definitive form. Representatives of the four groups—the Vientiane government, the Khang Khay government, the Lao Patriotic Front (Pathet Lao), and the ICC sat around a square made by four long tables that touched at the corners. The Khang Khay delegation, whose head Pheng Phongsavan acted as chairman of the meetings, sat facing the entrance, with the Vientiane delegation headed by General Sing Rattanasamay on their right and the Front delegation headed by Nouhak Phoumsavan on their left. The ICC contingent, which arrived on May 11, made up the fourth side of the square. A royal Lao flag hung on the wall behind Pheng's chair. Formal military and political talks began on May 14, with each delegation reaffirming the cease-fire; the Khang Khay delegation signed this document in the name of "the royal government whose Prime Minister is His Royal Highness Prince Souvanna Phouma," the Vientiane delegation in the name of "the royal government whose Prime Minister is His Highness Prince Boun Oum," and the Front in the name of "the delegation of the Neo Lao Hak Sat." The Vientiane delegation placed top priority on discussion of making the cease-fire effective, while the other side said there was no need to discuss the cease-fire as it had already been ordered, and insisted instead on discussing formation of a coalition government immediately.<sup>75</sup>

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The delegations flew in for the daily meetings by helicopter. The meetings began at 10:30 A.M. and usually lasted until midafternoon, when the delegations flew home. Newsmen carrying box lunches from the Hotel Constellation in Vientiane sought the shade of nearby trees as refuge from the 100-degree heat. Observers noted how the emissaries exchanged family and other news in a convivial atmosphere. But the bargaining would be tough.

Disagreement over seating the representatives from Laos delayed the scheduled May 12 opening of the Geneva conference. Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko, using the logic of precedent, insisted that as there were three Laotian parties discussing the cease-fire at Ban Namone, there should be three Laotian parties seated in Geneva. General Phoumi countered with a proposal to send representatives of five Lao political parties to Geneva on his side. This was an issue that had not been agreed to in advance, and, as the new secretary of state, Dean Rusk, noted in a cable to Washington, it was one loaded with political implications. The United States had only accepted an invitation to the conference to meet with 14 nations, of which Laos was one. The problem was, as a cable from the Department pointed out, the Communists had posed the seating issue in such a way as to leave the United States no grounds for making the case that the Communists were not in favor of a neutral Laos.

After receiving a somewhat testy message from Kennedy expressing frustration with the British, Canadians, Indians, and assorted others for leaving the United States isolated to confront Gromyko, Rusk signified agreement to a facesaving formula whereby the issue of Lao representation would be held in abeyance pending formation of an agreed government delegation, the conference would be allowed to go forward, and each party could go on recognizing the Lao government of its choosing. If the United States decided to withdraw from the conference altogether, in Kennedy's words, it would be "at the appropriate moment and on an appropriate issue."79 As usual, Ambassador Brown was left to explain away the unpalatable development to the Lao. In a meeting with the king at Luang Prabang he argued, rather weakly, that the Americans did not expect the conference to deal with the problem of forming a government.<sup>80</sup> The manner in which the seating issue had been handled also gave rise to complaints on the part of friendly governments in Bangkok and Saigon that the United States had been "snookered." They soon had another cause of unhappiness, however—the continued violation of the shaky cease-fire and the further territorial gains by the Pathet Lao and the DRV. At the old mountaintop fort at Muong Ngat, a single company of Meo, a six-man PARU team and a handful of Khmu, outnumbered fifteen to one, held off a two-day assault by 900 DRV troops and 400 Pathet Lao on May 12. The fighting was fierce, with Meo sharpshooters picking off Vietnamese officers standing tall in plain view and observing the action through binoculars, and involved hand-to-hand combat in the last stages. As night fell on May 13, the 23 surviving defenders escaped through a secret tunnel.81 For all that they lost the battle, it was a heroic action by patriots defending their ground against the invader, like those at Stalingrad.

At Ban Namone, the deadlock over the agenda was solved by agreeing to consider the formation of a coalition government first, to be followed immediately by an examination of questions connected with the cease-fire, with the proviso that "serious incidents" could be brought up at any time and discussed. On May 26, a military subcommittee was formed to deal with cease-fire matters concurrently with political talks. The Front insisted, however, that the military subcommittee could bring reports of cease-fire violations to the attention of the main political committee only by unanimous vote of the subcommittee. 82 The Front also began a propaganda campaign against aerial resupply of Vientiane government outposts in the territory the Pathet Lao claimed to control. It termed these flights violations of the cease-fire, a position on which it received some support from Indian government legal experts. 83 The Front also continued to object to the ICC's making any inspection missions and rebuffed an attempt by the ICC delegates to obtain from each side a map showing the positions held at the time of the cease-fire. This attitude stood in sharp contrast with insistence of the Front's Geneva patrons on the reconvening of the ICC, again an illustration of differences between strategy and tactics on the Communist side.

In spite of the charges and countercharges at the conference table, a convivial atmosphere prevailed at Ban Namone. The Vientiane government delegates, in response to requests from the Neutralists, carried to Ban Namone soap, medicines, batteries, and other personal articles that were in short supply at Khang Khay. The delegates also exchanged letters, and one day the Vientiane delegation even took along Pheng Phongsavan's son so he could see his father, but that day the meeting was canceled. Neutralist delegates confided to newsmen that they hoped for "real neutrality" and intimated that there were "difficulties" with the Front at Khang Khay. During a break one day, Nouhak accosted the Vientiane delegates and proceeded to give them a propaganda lecture about the Front representing the people, while "the gentlemen of the Phoumi-Boun Oum clique" would one day pay for their crimes against the people; these statements were applauded by a small crowd of onlookers who had been gathered for the purpose by the armed Pathet Lao guards.84 Such efforts at intimidation were rare, however, and in July a more relaxed atmosphere characterized by an absence of militancy surrounded the talks.85 The American Embassy complained that the delegates at Ban Namone spent too much time drinking champagne. This was to misread the situation entirely; champagne was one product in which the West possessed undisputed superiority over the Russians and Chinese, and a wiser policy would have flooded the Front's delegates at Ban Namone with champagne.

As early as July, Ambassador Brown, contradicting his statement of a few weeks before, informed the king that in order to avoid the negotiations at Geneva from breaking down, American acceptance of a coalition to include the Lao Patriotic Front was "inevitable." This the king accepted without protest; he was resigned by now to seeing the Americans pave the way for the Communists to enter the royal government.

Souvanna Phouma maintained his belief in his half-brother's trustworthiness, but he had no illusions about his subservience to the party center. Sou-

phanouvong's evident willingness to lie to his brother on occasion did much to undercut his nationalist credentials, however; neither wished to publicize such incidents, and Souphanouvong still enjoyed the mantle of a nationalist with which he had been endowed since the struggles of 1945. In order to lessen Souvanna Phouma's almost total dependence on the Communists, the French provided him with 1,500 uniforms for Kong Le's troops, modest amounts of personal funds through the Bank of Indo-China, and air tickets. Souphanouvong was provided with his funds by Moscow. To enable the three princes to get together periodically to agree on the principles that would govern their internal accommodation, General Phoumi requested the French to provide spare parts for Souvanna Phouma's Dakota from the stocks of Air Laos. 87 In another proof that the nationalists were comfortable among themselves, in spite of the fact that they found themselves on opposite sides in the conflict, Neutralist troops of Souvanna Phouma's security detachment fraternized openly at the Luang Prabang airport with Phoumist soldiers; there were no Pathet Lao present to spoil the occasion.88

Choosing meeting places involved endless exchanges and weeks of preparation; yet when these meetings took place, they were invariably cordial. Some diplomats suspected that Prince Boun Oum was not always aware of the implications of what he agreed to with Souvanna Phouma and Souphanouvong; General Phoumi often went along to make sure Boun Oum did not give the whole show away. The National Assembly in Vientiane had been excluded from any role in the settlement in a communiqué issued at the end of a meeting of the three princes in Zurich in June, for example. While traveling on such missions, the general kept in touch with his staff on the battlefield situation using American diplomatic channels; transcribing map coordinates using the relatively primitive diplomatic communications gear of that time was not always easy, and it seemed an odd way to run a war.

General Phoumi, indeed, wherever he happened to be, began to view himself as indispensable to the future of Laos, a belief encouraged by his American handlers. Hasey, his CIA liaison officer, habitually referred to Phoumi as "our boy."89 It was only later that the irony in this was intentional. Phoumi's penchant for mixing private financial dealings with official business while Laotian soldiers were dying in isolated pockets resisting the attacks of the Pathet Lao and the DRV added a bizarre and jarring note; he was receiving large sums of cash on his travels abroad arranged through Hasey. 90 Brown reported that the general was still maneuvering to involve American troops in Laos to pull his chestnuts from the fire, 91 in spite of his having received a blunt warning in a visit to Washington that he could not expect the administration to state precisely and in advance under what circumstances it might find it necessary to intervene militarily; such a statement would amount to delegating to his government the responsibility for the decisions and the policy of the United States, Secretary Rusk pointed out. 92 What seems to have made the deepest impression on Phoumi was sitting in the Pentagon's War Room for two hours with the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and two dozen officers of flag rank, who

gave his explanation of the military situation in Laos a sympathetic hearing, asked questions of a military nature, and promised to make every effort to meet his request for speedier delivery of logistical supplies.<sup>93</sup>

By the autumn of 1961, the outline of an agreement on the neutralization of Laos had been worked out by the chief delegates at Geneva with the assistance of sporadic bursts of telegraphic exchanges with their respective capitals; officials in Washington, London, Paris, and Moscow were kept the busiest in this activity. The three factions in Laos, however, had made little or no progress toward forming a coalition government, the centerpiece of such an agreement. The Ban Namone talks had ended in September, and it was now up to the three princes to pursue the negotiations. Harriman laid the major blame for the delay on General Phoumi. He was not put off by Phoumi's pleas to Brown that he faced opposition at every concession from members of his faction, which Harriman was referring to in his cables to Washington as "the Savannakhet group," on sciously or unconsciously adopting the terminology of Soviet diplomats with whom he was spending more and more time, and which was just one step short of the Pathet Lao-DRV terminology of "the Phoumi-Boun Oum clique." Souvanna Phouma journeyed to Luang Prabang in October for a meeting with the king at which the king agreed that Souvanna Phouma would be the prime minister-designate of the new government. 95 A meeting of the three princes in Vientiane at the end of December, however, broke up amid acrimonious exchanges. On February 16, 1962, Souvanna Phouma went to Luang Prabang, and the king gave him a mandate to form a government of national union.

General Phoumi, whatever his failings, was astute at observing foreigners. From the American behavior at the time of the Tchepone incident in January 1959 and during the crisis of April 1961 he had concluded that when the chips were down the Americans appeared unwilling to fight to defend the territory of Laos. What had stimulated them to take precautionary military moves in 1961, he noticed, was the threat to Thailand and South Vietnam of Communist advances in Laos. Since the fighting in 1959, the royal army had virtually lost control of the border areas of Laos with South Vietnam. The long, exposed border with Thailand, on the other hand, remained an area in which Phoumi could manipulate events to his satisfaction. General Phoumi did not have access, naturally, to decisions reached at the top levels of the American government and therefore had to carefully read between the words of what American policymakers told him. His question to Harriman regarding the American guarantee if "crucial points" were threatened by the enemy advance 96 was an intelligent one intended to sound out the American statesman's reaction. His shrewd observations about the 1961 crisis were confirmed years later when these papers were made public. The memorandum Acting Secretary of State Chester Bowles sent to President Kennedy at the height of the 1961 crisis to argue for Harriman to make his assessment mentioned the threat to Thailand and South Vietnam from enemy actions in Laos at two points, 97 and Secretary Rusk observed that "we ourselves have no special national interest in becoming involved in large-scale fighting in Laos."98 Thus, Phoumi was correct in deducing that

his only hope of involving the Americans in Laos was to play on the perceived threat to Thailand and South Vietnam, and of these he could only manipulate the former.

A battalion of DRV "volunteers" was reported to be operating in the Beng River valley of northwest Laos in January 1962, probably using Muong Sai as a base. During that month, a mixed force of DRV and Pathet Lao troops captured Ban Na Mo, some 30 miles northwest of Muong Sai. Twenty miles further west along a rugged trail lay the town of Nam Tha, provincial capital of Luang Nam Tha Province, beyond the cease-fire line. Its inhabitants were Thai and Pu Noi tribespeople. Beginning at the end of January, with evidence of an attack in hand, General Phoumi began reinforcing the small garrison there. The Pathet Lao responded to the moves by charging that the Phoumists were deliberately provoking clashes in violation of the cease-fire and threatened "appropriate measures of self-defense when necessary." By the beginning of February, Nam Tha was under siege by the Pathet Lao and DRV "volunteers." 99 Sarit and his generals took the threat seriously enough to announce that Thailand was getting out of SEATO, a useless organization where military counteraction was effectively blocked by the European members. 100 The administration mollified the Thai by signing a joint communiqué with Foreign Minister Thanat on March 6 making it clear that the American obligation to defend Thailand was individual as well as collective. 101

Harriman had been urging that Brown pressure Phoumi to get back to his military duties and leave the government to conduct its business. But how to separate the military from the political? With the stresses imposed by the war, the nationalist political parties had fallen apart. 102 In an effort to force Phoumi to negotiate seriously, Harriman and Brown obtained agreement in Washington for the imposition of aid sanctions. "If he refuses," a cable to Vientiane said at the end of January, the United States "can no longer regard him as a man acceptable for us to work with and will immediately break off all contact with him." In view of Washington's strong suspicions about Phoumi's motives in reinforcing the Nam Tha garrison, the cable added: "In [the] event [the] country [is] overrun by [the] communists, [the] responsibility will fall squarely on Phoumi, if he fails to cooperate with us and causes breakdown of negotiation for [a] peaceful settlement." <sup>103</sup> Another cable said the actions against Phoumi would be made public. "Public disavowal of an individual by USG [U.S. Government] is [a] drastic form of sanction and we believe [it] cannot fail but make [a] strong impression on [a] country so totally dependent upon U.S. aid as Laos."104 These cables were approved by Acting Secretary George Ball; Rusk was away traveling. This was followed by the announced cutoff in the regular monthly cash grants to the Vientiane government at the beginning of February. Also, Brown sent Hasey away from Laos, depriving Phoumi of his main American contact. The Pathet Lao in their broadcasts welcomed the cutoff of aid to Phoumi. 105

In March, in the face of continued obstructiveness by Phoumi, Harriman enlisted Sarit to convince Phoumi that the game was up. Sarit was worried that

the United States would cut Phoumi off completely, which he thought would be a disaster leading to the collapse of the royal army. 106 Because Phoumi had declined Sarit's invitation to go to Bangkok to meet Harriman on the grounds that it was unseemly for the deputy prime minister of the royal government to negotiate secretly outside Laos with the American, the three men agreed to meet at Nong Khai on March 24, 1962. Sarit talked in low tones in Thai for about 20 minutes, explaining patiently why it was advisable for General Phoumi to accede to the coalition. He did not look at Phoumi. When he had finished, the general replied in French, enumerating the reasons for his reluctance. After several minutes of this, Harriman, apparently not realizing that the general's speech was the necessary prelude to his acceptance without loss of face of Sarit's advice, lost patience and interrupted him. He said flatly that the general was wrong and intimated that the Phoumist forces were finished if they did not agree to a coalition. In the opinion of the American Embassy's recorder of the meeting, Phoumi handled himself well. He was calm, soft-spoken, and composed even when Harriman attacked him directly. At one point, however, tears came to his eyes when he said he did not know what he would do without American aid. When he was told that he had lost the war, for a fleeting moment it was as if he had been hit across the face with a baseball bat. 107

A meeting the next day in Vientiane with the full cabinet in attendance, thereby fulfilling Phoumi's wish not to appear to be negotiating secretly, was tense as Harriman laid down the line. The conversations, according to Information Minister Sisouk na Champassak, were "animated and occasionally envenomed." Sisouk regretted Harriman's vehement tone, which did not seem designed to persuade because it was very close to an ultimatum. The Lao were particularly upset that Harriman insisted not only that Prince Souvanna Phouma be the prime minister of the coalition but also that he control the posts of defense and interior. "They do not only not permit us to choose our own prime minister, but they order us to cede key posts to the Neutralists," he said. The hurt was further deepened when Harriman's aide, William H. Sullivan, flew to Khang Khay to meet with Souvanna Phouma. The prince declined Sullivan's invitation to visit Washington, and Souvanna Phouma would accept only after the new government had been formed and the Geneva Agreement had been signed. 109

Meanwhile, on the battlefield in northwest Laos, the DRV "volunteers" were once again in action. Muong Sing was attacked and fell on May 3. The Pathet Lao radio claimed that the small garrison had mutinied, but extensive information in the hands of the American Embassy from persons present in Muong Sing showed there had been no popular action. This was a lie like many others. Nam Tha, which had withstood weeks of mortar fire, fell in turn on May 6. The Pathet Lao initiated the attack, which was seen by the MAAG personnel present as well planned. In their unanimous opinion, during the attack the defenders "gave a better account of themselves than during any previous engagement." This was, however, followed by a disorganized flight to Ban Houei Sai, some 100 miles away on the Mekong, and Phoumi resisted all efforts to get the troops to move back up the valley toward Nam Tha. Neither

Muong Sing nor Nam Tha had ever been on the Pathet Lao side of the cease-fire line. The participation of "substantial numbers" of Vietnamese troops in these operations could hardly be concealed and was reported by the embassy. Units from the DRV's 316th, 330th, and 335th Brigades took part in the Nam Tha campaign. According to the Vietnam Military History Institute, "A total of 12,000 Vietnamese volunteer troops carried out their internationalist duty on the battlefields of Laos during this campaign." <sup>113</sup>

The king made it clear to Brown, as well as to other Western ambassadors, even before the fall of Muong Sing and Nam Tha, that he had no confidence in the Geneva Agreement or in the idea that the Soviets really desired to have a neutral Laos. He agreed with Brown that there had never been any sincere negotiations among the three princes and he had become convinced as well that even those limited agreements which had been announced were not real agreements. Therefore, in his view, Geneva was based on a structure which, as far as Laos was concerned, did not in fact exist. He sent off a deeply pessimistic message to President Kennedy referring to cooperation in the past and Laotian confidence in American protection and support. He said the Laotians had more recently been disillusioned with American actions and attitudes toward the form of government being urged upon Laos. 115

The king was not alone in these expressions of disgust. President Diem, once again, shared his doubts about the negotiations in Geneva with Ambassador Nolting, who found his attitude sorrowful but realistic. "I have neither the means nor the desire to thwart the considered policy of the United States with regard to Laos, and I will not do so. But at the same time I cannot agree with it, because I have no confidence in Souvanna Phouma," Diem said in effect. "While I did not threaten him," Nolting reported, "I did say we felt we had [the] right to ask him to trust the leadership of the United States in this situation."

The king of Thailand was equally pessimistic. Ambassador Kenneth Young found him discussing Laos more starkly and somberly than ever before.

It appears to him that U.S. is destroying only people on whom Free World can count even marginally. Whatever Lao faults, Americans do not treat them even as children but as "master treats dogs" (in Asian meaning). Even if Lao leaders are weak, foolish, corrupt or impractical, they are all we have. Now they are so hurt and humiliated by our tones and gestures that they are "insulting" Americans back and cannot even hear what we are saying to them in their best interests. If we keep on this way, there will be no one left even to insult us.<sup>117</sup>

Marshal Sarit was threatening to send the Thai army into Sayaboury, with the permission of the Vientiane government.<sup>118</sup> Kennedy decided to send a contingent of Marines to Thailand as a show of force. In Washington, Harriman continued his tough talk with regard to General Phoumi, making sure it reached the ears of the Boun Oum government. He told the Laotian ambassador that Phoumi should not think that the presence of Americans in Thailand justified his personal idea that forces would therefore be sent into Laos to rescue him. Harriman also

said Boun Oum would be well advised to broaden his government by including non-Savannakhet people. 119

It was a quiet weekend in Vientiane with much of the cabinet out of the country traveling with Phoumi when Nam Tha fell. In Washington, Secretary Rusk had believed that he had assurances from Gromyko that the Communists would not violate the cease-fire if the Americans put pressure on Phoumi to resume the negotiations; he regarded the attack, coming when the Lao sides were on the verge of coming to an agreement on resumption, as a "complete double-cross" by the Soviets, as he told the British and French ambassadors. 120 Souvanna Phouma was in Paris when he received news of the attack on Nam Tha; he sent word to his ministers at Khang Khay reprimanding them for disobeying his orders to respect the cease-fire. Boun Oum sent him a telegram informing him that he agreed that Souvanna Phouma could appoint his own followers to be ministers of defense and interior. 121 Souvanna Phouma then made his leisurely way back to Laos. Brown once again, as in January 1961, managed to head off an appeal to SEATO by the Vientiane government, but it took the combined efforts of Brown, Falaize, and British Ambassador John Addis to persuade Acting Foreign Minister Sisouk to defer action on an appeal to the UN Security Council. 122

After making a tour of Asian capitals in a fruitless quest for aid to replace the withdrawn American aid, Phoumi and Boun Oum returned to Vientiane, and Phoumi asked Brown to call on him. Brown was not sure whether it was an act of contrition, but he noted that when he handed Phoumi the text of Kennedy's statement announcing the dispatch of troops to Thailand the general grasped it eagerly and read it attentively. Brown said the step had been taken in response to a request by Sarit "and under our commitments under SEATO because of [the] threat to [the] frontiers of Thailand." Brown then proceeded to lecture the general about the lack of confidence and exasperation with him in Washington because of his delay in seriously negotiating with Souvanna Phouma, the needless loss of Nam Tha and the misconduct of the retreat to the Mekong, and his absence from Laos at a critical time. Phoumi promised his cooperation. Brown dissuaded Phoumi from making the restoration of Nam Tha a precondition for talks among the three princes and suggested instead that the general insist on an agreement to maintain the forces in place, meaning in place as of the cease-fire of May 3, 1961, which would imply the Pathet Lao evacuation of Nam Tha. The only other insurance Phoumi wanted from Souvanna Phouma and Souphanouvong was agreement on unanimous tripartite decision-making on important points relating to defense and interior. 123

### THE FINAL ROUND

With Prince Souvanna Phouma returned to Khang Khay, Boum Oum and Phoumi finally agreed at the beginning of June to go to the Plain of Jars to negotiate seriously. Phoumi sent Sisouk to Brown to make what the latter described as an "impassioned plea" for the immediate restoration of American aid. <sup>124</sup> The additional banknotes the government had put in circulation as a stop-

gap measure had produced a 20 percent rise in the price of food in Vientiane as the dollar backing of the kip dropped from 90 percent in January to 60 percent in June. Harriman's point had been made. Souvanna Phouma was in a generous mood and looking forward to returning to Paris to attend the wedding of his daughter; the wedding day became the deadline the three princes set themselves for wrapping up agreement. He met with the king, who confirmed his previous mandate to form a government of national union. 125 Souvanna Phouma's ministers were overjoyed at the prospect of getting back to Vientiane at long last; they were tired of the Spartan living in Khang Khay and tired of the war. Prince Souphanouvong, having made his point with the Pathet Lao victories at Muong Sing and Nam Tha, was also receptive to winding up the discussions of distribution of ministerial portfolios. Thus, the outlook was more favorable for forming the coalition government than it had been in months.

The three princes met at the Plain of Jars and on June 12 signed an agreement fixing the composition of the Provisional Government of National Union (PGNU) and setting a 10-day deadline for the government's investiture; they also set the rules by which the PGNU would operate. 126 Concerned about the DRV's willingness to respect the agreement that was scheduled to be signed in Geneva as soon as the PGNU was constituted and had sent its delegation, particularly the provisions for withdrawal of foreign troops, Prince Souvanna Phouma flew to Hanoi to confer with Prime Minister Pham Van Dong on June 16-17. The latter told him that he would do nothing to make it difficult for Souvanna Phouma either internally or externally. 127

Souvanna Phouma arrived in Vientiane on June 18. There ensued a further series of arguments between the Phoumists and the Neutralists over the role to be played by the National Assembly, the status of which was not accepted by the Front and the Neutralists. These arguments were not resolved until late on the afternoon of June 22. Prince Souphanouvong and the other ministers from Xieng Khouang arrived in Vientiane on the morning of June 23, and the three princes paid a call on the king. Then, while Prince Boun Oum tendered his government's resignation to the king, Souvanna Phouma, completely calm and relaxed, and foreign minister-designate Quinim lunched informally with Ambassador Brown, who was preparing to leave Laos on the completion of his two years. That afternoon, Souvanna Phouma presented the PGNU to the king. In his speech of presentation he blamed the Lao themselves for permitting foreigners to interfere in Laos's internal affairs. 128 At 4:50 P.M. the PGNU was formally invested in the traditional ceremony at Wat Sisaket.

Constitutionality had been preserved, following the king's expressed wish, which was also the wish of all the Lao political leaders who would henceforth have to live under the constitution while governing the country under procedures that provided for a three-way coalition of factions. At the same time, sufficient leeway had been left so as to avoid offending the partisans of either of the two rival governments that had coexisted over the previous 18 months. In accordance with the needs of the moment, Royal Ordinance No. 218 (which accepted the resignation of Boun Oum's government) cited the constitution, the

royal ordinance of January 5, 1961 (which installed Boun Oum's government), the Zurich and Plain of Jars agreements, the motion of the National Assembly of June 15, 1962 (approving the latter agreement), and the Boun Oum government's letter of resignation. Royal Ordinance No. 219 appointing the PGNU cited the constitution, "royal ordinances concerning preceding governments," Royal Ordinance No. 218, and the Zurich and Plain of Jars agreements. Its preamble ended with the words "the conditions required by the constitution being met elsewhere." This unorthodox phrase had been resorted to in view of the need to avoid any mention of the National Assembly. <sup>129</sup> In point of fact, the compromise procedure for investiture that was finally agreed upon by the Lao factions was to have the PGNU take the oath of office in the presence of the members of the National Assembly and the King's Council, who were invited to observe the ceremony just like any other spectators.

On the morning of June 24 the PGNU held its first cabinet meeting. The matters discussed were the naming of a unified delegation to the Geneva conference, the establishment of civil and military commissions to study the means for unifying the administrative and military services, and the formation of a mixed committee to implement the cease-fire. Also, the cabinet fixed June 24 as the effective date of the cease-fire, which enabled the Pathet Lao to claim the large areas conquered by their troops and the DRV "volunteers" since May 3, 1961, including Tchepone and virtually the entire province of Luang Nam Tha, as lying within their zone of control. <sup>130</sup>

At 2 P.M. promptly, Souvanna Phouma and the rest of the government arrived at Wattay airport where the prime minister was to embark for Paris. Souvanna Phouma, followed by General Phoumi, reviewed the troops and took the salute. Souphanouvong, having avoided this ceremony, caught up with his halfbrother as he was making the round of the assembled diplomats. Then, at the foot of the boarding ramp, Souvanna Phouma spoke in a hearty, friendly and fatherly way to Phoumi and Souphanouvong. "Now, I am counting on you two to keep things quiet and not to let anything happen while I am gone," he told them. "I don't want to have to break up my trip and return to Laos all of a sudden." He then turned to Phoumi and gave him a friendly handshake and then, addressing Souphanouvong warmly as "mon petit," embraced him fondly, and they kissed on both cheeks. There was no popular excitement or the appearance of any crowds. Vientiane retained its usual dusty, sloppy, sleepy, yet pleasant air. On reflection it became obvious that the only people who had allowed themselves to get worked up about the formation of Laos's second coalition government were the Western diplomats. 131

The diplomats were still hard at work in Geneva bringing the conference to a satisfactory conclusion while Prince Souvanna Phouma was seeing to his daughter's wedding in Paris. Against a cacophony of the Communists' demand for a formal renunciation of SEATO protection of Laos, the French tried to concentrate on substance by giving Souvanna Phouma a draft of a statement of neutrality that the PGNU delegation was to present to the conference for incorporation in the final document. The draft was substantially the same as one

produced in January by a working group from the French, Canadian, British, and American delegations. <sup>132</sup> Souvanna Phoum drafted his own version, in consultation with Quinim. <sup>133</sup> The conference met for its 40th plenary session on July 1 in an atmosphere of a class reunion. <sup>134</sup> Harriman and the Soviet chief delegate, Georgi M. Pushkin, held a friendly meeting during which the latter read a personal message from Chairman Khrushchev to Harriman noting the importance of a Laos settlement in implementing the Vienna agreement. Quinim introduced a third version of the neutrality statement, leaving out a number of provisions, which he read at the 41st plenary session on July 9. <sup>135</sup>

Harriman's problems with the Thai and the South Vietnamese were coming to a head. Both, for different reasons, decided to boycott the conference sessions and threatened to withhold their signatures from the final agreement. The royal Thai government announced on June 19 that its delegation at Geneva had been instructed not to attend future meetings until further notice. 136 The Republic of Vietnam's foreign minister, Vu Van Mau, was instructed not to sign unless (1) he received suitable guarantees with respect to the withdrawal of DRV forces from Laos into North Vietnam, and (2) the question of the PGNU's diplomatic recognition of the DRV, which Mau had raised with Harriman in Paris, 137 was settled satisfactorily.<sup>138</sup> Finally, Harriman had to wield a big stick, and both delegations signed the agreement, along with the representatives of the other participants in the conference, on July 23. The agreement consisted of a Declaration on the Neutrality of Laos, which incorporated as an integral component the PGNU's statement and was signed by the foreign ministers of 13 participating governments, and of a protocol comprising 20 articles describing the nuts and bolts of the provisions for neutralization, which was signed by all 14 participating governments, including Quinim on behalf of the PGNU and both Rusk and Harriman on behalf of the United States. 139

President Kennedy characterized the agreement as a "solemn commitment" for the United States as well as the other signatories. He whether from failure to appreciate the nature of the commitment or from skepticism as to its workability, Congress greeted the agreement with general detachment. It had been kept informed of the progress of the negotiations by Rusk and Harriman. There was no hint of disapproval or disavowal. Expectations may have been unduly inflated by Harriman's portrayal of the commitments being assumed by the Communist signatories in his testimony before an admiring audience of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in February 1962; his testimony was interrupted at two points by Senator Wayne Morse's exclamation "It is remarkable." The only recorded protest at the decision of the administration not to submit the agreement to the Senate for ratification as a treaty came from Congressman Melvin R. Laird of Wisconsin. In his written reply, Harriman said "All the signatories at Geneva, including the Communists, have agreed to respect the sovereignty, independence, unity, neutrality and territorial integrity of Laos." Is a specific property of Laos." Is a spe

#### An Unworkable Agreement—I

The agreement for neutralizing Laos that had been negotiated over 14 months and finally signed in Geneva was structurally flawed at several points. These

flaws resulted in its breakdown almost from the moment it was signed. The first of these flaws concerned the mode of operation of the ICC, which was counted on to police the implementation on the ground in Laos. President Kennedy had been so interested in the powers to be given the ICC that he asked for details about its background from 1954 and how the present agreement differed with respect to ICC functions. 144 Yet the language governing operations of the ICC was so ambiguous that even before the agreement was signed the Indian and Canadian commissioners were urging that they be appraised of the negotiating history lest they set dangerous precedents of interpretation at variance with the intentions of the co-chairmen. 145

The fact that the ICC in Laos had worked reasonably well from 1954 to 1958, when it had adjourned sine die at the request of the royal government, 146 was due in no small measure to the fact that decisions about conducting investigations and other operational matters could be taken by majority vote. In the case of decisions which had to be unanimous (such as conclusions or recommendations on certain matters), a majority report and a minority report could be submitted. There had been some heated debates among the three delegations, but deadlock had been avoided. In contrast, in 1961-1962 Harriman faced strong opposition from the Communist-bloc delegates to allowing the ICC to operate on a majority basis rather than unanimity, which would effectively give one commissioner a veto over ICC actions. Despite Harriman's threat that the United States would not sign an agreement containing a unanimity provision, 147 the final text of Article 14 of the protocol required unanimity with respect to decisions by the ICC on questions relating to violations of the provisions governing the withdrawal of foreign troops, the prohibitions against introduction of foreign troops and arms, and the cease-fire, for conclusions on major questions sent to the cochairmen, and for recommendations by the ICC. It required a majority vote on other questions, including the initiation and carrying out of investigations. 148 This "compromise" proved unworkable from the start; even should the ICC initiate investigations into alleged violations by one side over the objections of one or more of the ICC commissioners, there was sufficient substance susceptible to veto that the accused party could never be indicted.

The ambiguity surrounding the ICC's responsibility for issuing reports on implementation of the agreement similarly made for unworkability. The issue became the subject of controversy at the highest level in the American government. As had been the case in July 1954 with the American insistence on impressing upon Mendès-France the fact that the willingness of the United States to issue a public statement that it would respect an agreement on Indochina was predicated on the assumption that the Associated States and in particular the State of Vietnam would agree to the terms of the settlement, <sup>149</sup> it was again U. Alexis Johnson whose experience of diplomacy alerted those in Washington. Johnson had talked with Harriman by telephone and was disturbed at the wording on issuance of ICC reports Harriman was preparing to accept; Harriman became emotional, saying if he pressed the issue he was afraid the Chinese would walk out of the conference. <sup>150</sup>

The wording in question called for the issuance of "agreed reports." Kennedy asked Harriman how it would be possible for the Canadian delegation to issue a minority view in the absence of an "agreed report" in which such minority views could be incorporated. It seemed possible that the Polish delegation could simply withhold their "agreement" and thereby forestall the issuance of the only document by which minority views could be expressed. By withholding their "agreement," the Polish delegation could even block the expression of views by the Canadian and Indian delegations, constituting a majority. Kennedy wondered whether the United States could rely on Pushkin's word on this point.<sup>151</sup> After Nolting's nitpicking about Soviet diplomacy at Geneva, this questioning by the president must have especially offended Harriman. He replied to the State Department for Johnson's benefit that he had assurances from Pushkin that the situation evoked in Washington was "imaginary"; the ICC members could not refuse to issue reports. Furthermore, he thought that complaints against signatories did not necessarily have to be substantiated by the ICC in order to permit the United States to take up the question of alleged violations directly with the co-chairmen if the evidence was compelling. 152

Another important difference from 1954 emerged in 1961–1962. In negotiating the basis of the relationship that the ICC would have to the Laotian government in initiating and carrying out investigations of the reported presence of foreign troops and other aspects of its mission, there were lengthy discussions in Geneva. The 1954 agreement had got around the problem, after noting that responsibility for carrying out the agreement lay with the parties themselves (that is, the French Union and the Viet Minh), by simply omitting any specific wording of this relationship. But the French Union share of responsibility was assumed by a sovereign royal government that spoke with a single voice, that of the prime minister backed by the National Assembly. In 1962, the PGNU spoke for three different factions, some of which did not recognize the National Assembly. Furthermore, a provision in the tripartite Zurich communiqué specified that "in the transition period" (of unspecified length) to the constitution of a non-provisional government the separate administrations under each faction would be maintained, allowing one faction, if it wished, to deny entry to its territory by the other factions or by the ICC. In other words, the Laotians had agreed to a form of coalition in which at the national level each faction had representation in the central government, while at lower levels each faction kept its own exclusive administration, even at the provincial level in the eyes of the Pathet Lao. Fromer asked Quinim about this at Geneva, especially with regard to the Pathet Lao governor of Xieng Khouang, who was known as a hard-liner. 153 But it appears no one demurred at this setup.

In 1954, there had been arguments within the ICC about which interpretation to give Articles 14 and 19 of the agreement on Laos with respect to the sovereignty exercised by the government. At Geneva, Harriman thought he had sewn up agreement on wording that implied, through its use of "concurrence" in Article 14, that the PGNU in signing the Declaration on the Neutrality of Laos agreed in advance with whatever actions the ICC decided to take under

the powers allotted to it in the agreement.<sup>154</sup> He explained the history of the drafting of this wording in a telegram to Washington. He said he had furthermore discussed the matter with Souvanna Phouma in Rangoon in September 1961 and had received a commitment that so long as he was at the head of the government, the ICC would have his fullest support and cooperation and that Lao government approval for ICC investigations would be pro forma.<sup>155</sup>

However, the troika arrangement for decision-making in the PGNU provided for in the June 12, 1962, Plain of Jars agreement considerably watered down the autonomy of the prime minister. This was an unexpected development, and it vitiated Harriman's original conception of the PGNU, in which Souvanna Phouma was to have enjoyed considerable autonomy in decision-making. This put the government's "concurrence" in an altogether different light, as Brown pointed out immediately to the State Department. <sup>156</sup> "It is clear that Souvanna [Phouma] will not be as free to request ICC actions as we had once hoped," George Ball wrote in a memorandum for Kennedy. <sup>157</sup>

If the experience of 1954 was any guide, when it came to implementing the 1962 Geneva Agreement, the British and Soviet ambassadors in Vientiane, as representatives of the co-chairmen, and the three ICC commissioners would depend on the instructions they received from their home governments for carrying out the responsibilities that had been assigned to them. The Soviet ambassador and the Polish commissioner could be expected to interpret their responsibilities in a manner that would favor the Pathet Lao-DRV position. The British ambassador and the Canadian commissioner generally would support the American position, which agreed in most cases, but not all (and so difficulties could arise here as well), with that of the rightist faction. The Indian chairman of the ICC, as always anxious to keep the Geneva mechanism from deadlock or stalemate, generally could be counted on to choose a middle way in any difference of opinion. The chairman's interpretation did not always match Harriman's understanding of what had been negotiated at Geneva, as when Avtar Singh gave Unger the impression in August 1962 that he felt "concurrence" of the Lao government meant one thing in the wording of Article 11 and another in the wording of Article 16, a distinction that amounted to splitting hairs. 158 On the basis of past experience, Prince Souvanna Phouma might adopt a position on any particular issue favoring any of these three alternatives, depending largely on the momentary state of his relations with his half-brother and with General Phoumi.

Particular importance attached to the interest the co-chairmen took to ensuring compliance with the agreement. This question had first been broached in a serious way by Pushkin, who took Harriman aside for an after-dinner chat on September 12, 1961, and told him that the Soviets truly wanted a neutral and independent Laos and were ready to come to an agreement that would not only establish a neutral government but would also ensure its continuation after an election. Pushkin was a veteran diplomat. He had had an assignment in Germany in 1940 when Moscow and Berlin were allies. He had served in Hungary as minister in 1945–1948 and as ambassador in 1948–1949, and knew everything there

was to know about Communist-style coalition governments and the gradual transformation of a Communist minority into a majority through re-negotiation of agreements under strike threats and the exercise of other democratic freedoms that is collectively known by the term "salami tactics." During his stay in Hungary he had reportedly been active in crushing the non-Communist political parties, in subordinating the Church to the state, and generally in expediting the establishment of a people's democracy. In reply to Harriman's direct questions, Pushkin said the Soviets could and would control North Vietnam and continue to support Prince Souvanna Phouma against possible Pathet Lao political or military aggression. Pushkin contemplated as a role for the co-chairmen that each should police the activities of the signatories on its side. Harriman's understanding was that while the Soviet Union would ensure compliance by the Pathet Lao, the DRV, and China, the United Kingdom would ensure compliance by the non-Communist signatories, namely the Laotian rightists, Thailand, and the Republic of Vietnam. The last two were particularly worrisome, Pushkin said. 159

Based on the facts known today, this was simply an understanding, and one that Harriman was chary of discussing even with his allies. As such, its substance could not actually be written into the agreement. The text of Article 8 of the protocol as finally agreed upon, therefore, stated only that "the Co-Chairmen shall exercise supervision over the observance of this protocol and the Declaration on the Neutrality of Laos." <sup>160</sup> Pushkin's suggestion was one whose appeal to the American negotiators could hardly be exaggerated, and by the close of the conference Harriman regarded the commitment as the primary way of enforcing compliance with the Geneva Agreement; he told Rusk to avoid placing "excessive emphasis" on the ICC as the enforcement mechanism of the agreement in his testimony to Congress. 161 He felt he had a commitment that went beyond the words in Article 8, one that was sewn up in the Kennedy-Khrushchev understanding at Vienna. With this, Harriman thought the agreements were substantially better than he would have thought possible, as he wrote to Brown shortly after the signing. "Perhaps the single most important one is the commitment of the Soviet Union as Co-Chairman to police the communist states."162 For the moment, Ambassador Frederick E. Nolting, Jr., was the only American to question the workability of this understanding. He took it upon himself to send a long comment "from the angle of the problem in South Vietnam" on Harriman's report of his talk with Pushkin. Nolting argued that the Soviets had done little after 1954 to restrain the DRV and suggested that a settlement in Laos along presently conceived lines would simply confront the United States with the need to face the alternatives of sending American forces to South Vietnam or backing down. 163

Some doubt about the actual value of Pushkin's commitment might have been provoked by the unwillingness of the Soviets to restrain the Pathet Lao after their violation of the cease-fire line and their capture of Nam Tha in May. In a memorandum to Harriman before the battle, Hilsman wrote, "We should make it clear to the Soviets that our moves in fact impose a further responsibility on them to hold the Pathet Lao in check, lest renewed warfare escalate."164

On May 4, Ball suggested Rusk ask the ambassador in Moscow to deliver a personal message to Gromyko saying "Secretary hopes Gromyko would be able [to] use his influence with Prince Souphanouvong to prevent aggressive actions by PL forces." And after the fall of Nam Tha, Ball suggested that Rusk ask Lord Home, the British co-chairman, to get in touch with Gromyko "in order to (a) effect immediate evacuation of Nam Tha by PL/Viet Minh and (b) to arrange for dispatching ICC team to Nam Tha for on spot investigation and re-establish cease-fire." There was no response to these messages.

The issues of regroupment, integration, and demobilization of the armed forces of the three factions was seen as a top priority for negotiation from the very beginning. Harriman had underlined for Kennedy the importance of an understanding with regard to the dissolution of the Pathet Lao forces. <sup>167</sup> The Western ambassadors in Vientiane had busied themselves and come up with their own plan for ensuring that the three factions disarm all soldiers who were not integrated into the army of the coalition. In Geneva, after months of argument back and forth in which the Communist delegations refused to be budged from their position that this was a matter of internal Laotian politics, the issue was settled at the last minute. How did this happen?

In Souvanna Phouma's initial draft of the statement of neutrality, the PGNU pledged itself to integrate the troops of the three factions into a unified army and to demobilize the excess men. However, after Quinim visited Souvanna Phouma in Paris in early July, the latter changed his position, saying this should not form part of the statement of neutrality and he would simply make a separate statement about it after the conference concluded. 168 At the same time, Pushkin, over Harriman's protest that he was reneging on a commitment, claimed that integration and demobilization was entirely a Lao affair, as if foreign powers should be at liberty to provide arms to one faction or another but should bear no responsibility for withdrawing those arms. 169 In spite of Harriman's expressed intention to have further discussions on this point, five days later he suddenly dropped his insistence that the question be included in the statement. "As concerns integration and demobilization," he reported, "I and my entire delegation have come to the conclusion that mention of this item in Lao declaration is no longer in our interest." 170 As the delegation leader, Quinim brought the other members into line, no doubt arguing that international supervision of demobilization would work to the disadvantage of the Phoumists, who had the largest army. Accordingly, once the American objection was removed, the conference adopted Quinim's version of the statement, which omitted any mention of the issue. Much to the consternation of Brown's embassy and the Canadian delegation in Vientiane, Harriman had already dropped his previous insistence that the ICC exercise supervision over integration and demobilization.<sup>171</sup>

Thus, without any real negotiation among the conference participants, and without any mandate of authority to the ICC, integration and demobilization of the 11,000 men of the Neutralist forces, the 14,000 Pathet Lao soldiers, and the 63,900 men of the Phoumist armed forces was thrown into the lap of the tripartite commission that the PGNU constituted to deal with it. If there were

any lesson to be drawn from the failure of the previous attempt to integrate and demobilize the rival armies in Laos in May 1959, it was that leaving the ICC out of the process was a recipe for disaster, and the lesson was simply ignored.

The integration and demobilization issue was one, however, that affected the vital interests of the Republic of Vietnam in view of the implications of the legalization of control by the Pathet Lao during an undefined transition period of virtually all the territory along South Vietnam's borders. The Diem reacted sharply to Harriman's fallback on the issue without so much as consultation with his allies in Indochina (the only consultation had been among the United States, the United Kingdom, the Soviet Union, France, India, and China). Thuan told Ambassador Nolting, up to this point Diem "had been persuaded to follow the 'realistic path,' but he now felt our side had conceded the point most vital to Viet-Nam's security and we were headed for an agreement at any price, acceptance of which he could no longer advocate." The South Vietnamese ambassador in Vientiane was reporting that General Phoumi, Prince Boun Oum, and Sopsaisana were demoralized and extremely bitter and that they had in effect given up and had no intention of trying to fight it out in a coalition government after having been deserted by their friends.

Thuan's conclusions [Nolting reported], contrary to his earlier views, were that we were headed for a complete sell-out in Laos. About a year ago, he recalled, our side had been considering how to strengthen the powers of the ICC in Laos so that it would be an effective policeman of an international agreement on demobilization and integration of the armed forces there. Now we are arguing that the ICC should not be seized of this problem, lest it confine its findings and citations to the anti-Communist forces. We had retreated, he said, from one position to another in such bewildering succession that he could find no means to defend against the charge that we had no policy other than to "wash our hands of the Laos problem." He said that if the demobilization and integration of forces in Laos (which formula was risky enough) were not made a matter of international agreement, morale among the Vietnamese people and armed forces would plummet, because of a lack of faith in U.S. intentions.<sup>174</sup>

Harriman simply dismissed these complaints. The officers in the State Department dealing with Indochina were, on the whole, more sympathetic to the cries of alarm coming from Saigon than was Harriman. One of them, Chalmers B. Wood, who had just left his post as the officer in charge of Vietnam affairs in the Office of Southeast Asian Affairs, scrawled across the cover of Nolting's cable "SEA has checked to see if there is anything we can say to show things aren't as bad as Thuan describes. They think Thuan is about right. Nothing we can say."

Nolting felt that Diem, Nhu, and Thuan were basically worried that the United States was about to apply the same neutralization formula to South Vietnam as it was applying to Laos. He told Thuan such was not the case but reported that a high-level message of reassurance to Diem would seem indicated. "I said I could tell him, in case there was any doubt remaining, that the U.S. was

committed to a policy of supporting SVN [South Vietnam] against Communist attack and there was no question of our advocating a neutralist policy here." Nolting was disturbed, however, by a telegram received from Paris that the British chargé had shown his deputy, William C. Trueheart, reporting that Souvanna Phouma had told the British ambassador that the only solution was for the United States to engineer a change of regime in South Vietnam and for the United States to withdraw from the country; he had discussed the matter with Pham Van Dong in Hanoi during his visit in June and had been told that under those conditions the DRV would cease its aid to the Viet Cong. <sup>175</sup>

But Nolting's suggestion of a presidential letter to Diem had been accepted in Washington, and the rather lengthy draft text of such a letter had been cabled to both him and to Harriman in Geneva. The letter stated: "I can assure you without reservation that this Administration is not seeking a neutral solution for Viet-Nam."176 Harriman and his aide Michael V. Forrestal, however, redrafted the letter so as to leave out this phrase. 177 The changes were explained on the basis of its being too general, and Harriman said "The President has therefore every justification to request Diem['s] cooperation now. Matter so urgent recommend that President's letter be despatched ASAP and that Geneva draft be used as basis."178 Nolting delivered the revised letter to Diem and had a two-hour discussion with him, during which he reported Diem was courteous but adamant against signing an agreement which he claimed would result in the communization of Laos by legal means: "He took [the] position, in essence, that it would be immoral to do so." However, one hour later, Diem had changed his mind and instructed Mau to seek clarification of the texts to be signed in Geneva. Apparently, Nolting's patient cultivation of Diem's confidence over the past year had paid off, although the president's letter lacked the key phrase of reassurance Diem had sought. Diem sent his sincere thanks to Kennedy for his letter.179

With respect to procedures for the withdrawal of foreign military forces from Laos, the gap between expectations and reality was just as wide. Throughout the negotiations, Harriman had considered troop withdrawal one of the most important guarantees of a neutralized Laos, but Pushkin had not responded at their reunion in early July to Harriman's observation that withdrawal of foreign military forces was a "vital step." 180 Due to objections from the Communists to the establishment of assembly areas for foreign troops and to allowing the ICC to set up and maintain fixed and mobile teams, as had been done in 1954-1958, a different procedure had been set up in the protocol. Article 2 provided that points of withdrawal would be determined within 30 days of the signing of the protocol. The ICC then had a further 15 days to establish its presence at the points of withdrawal. Within a further 30-day period the withdrawal itself would be completed. Thus, a 75-day withdrawal period was allowed. In Articles 2 and 3 it was stipulated that the points of withdrawal would be determined by the PGNU. Article 3 gave the responsibility for verifying the withdrawal of foreign troops to the ICC, but the exercise of this responsibility was, of course, dependent on the PGNU's prior decision. Moreover, the types of foreign military forces present in Laos and subject to withdrawal were never subject to a precise and comprehensive definition and became the subject of intense argument among the Laotian parties and their foreign sponsors. A proposal by the Saigon delegation that these foreign military forces should specifically include "volunteers" 181 was not acted upon, and as a result both sides continued to use this subterfuge for intervening in Laos without admitting responsibility for violating the agreement.

The ICC was indeed free to set up inspection teams as necessary, the functions of which were not limited to supervising the withdrawal of military forces. The initial French draft protocol contemplated both fixed and mobile teams as in 1954, but the adamant objections of the Communist delegations to establishing "operating centers" at all major points of entry and the principal communication centers throughout Laos deprived the ICC of any meaningful distinction between the two types of teams. The final protocol did not give the ICC free and unrestricted access to all parts of Laos, freedom to hear witnesses, or to inspect installations, units and organizations of a military nature as originally envisaged in French and Americans drafts.

The last structural flaw concerned the provision devised to ensure that the territory of Laos not be used for subversion or aggression elsewhere. Harriman's telegrams relating his friendly but at times animated discussions with Pushkin during their two-hour lunches in Geneva over the arcane purposes to be achieved by the precise wording of the instruments to be signed at Geneva tended to put the officers of the Southeast Asia desk at the Department to sleep. Therefore, no one in October 1961 had caught the implications of the difference in wording between the "their neighbors" proposed by the Saigon delegation 182 and the "other countries" proposed by Pushkin with respect to the prohibition on this score. 183 This last was the wording that was incorporated in the three successive drafts of the Declaration of Neutrality presented in the final rush to conclude the conference. Harriman, in fact, at the 41st plenary session congratulated Quinim on his draft, while the DRV delegation, to Harriman's surprise, made only a very brief and mild statement at this session.<sup>184</sup>

In signing the Declaration on the Neutrality of Laos the two Vietnamese governments gave away none of their freedom to use Laotian territory to intervene against one another in spite of their undertaking under Article 2(i) of the Declaration not to use the territory of Laos for interference in the internal affairs of other countries. They were both well aware that Vietnam was one country, even if it had two governments, and so, while they were enjoined not to use the territory of Laos for interfering in another country, they had not undertaken, from the strictly legal point of view, to eschew this use for interfering anywhere in Vietnam. And what the official report of the U.S. delegation to the Geneva conference described as the achievement of "one of the most important objectives sought by the United States at the Conference" was in reality no achievement at all, the meaning of this provision being based on a false assumption, that it prohibited use of Laos for the DRV's infiltration into South Vietnam. 185 The Department's legal adviser, Abram J. Chayes, wrote to Harriman to

congratulate him for "from the technical point of view, a masterpiece of diplomacy." This was an overstatement.

And what if the whole house of cards collapsed? What then? The American legal position with respect to the agreement was that if it was broken by one side, that relieved the other side of itself observing its provisions. Secretary Rusk testified to this possibility before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on July 13, 1962:

Senator [Alexander] Wiley [of Wisconsin]. If there is any violation of it, what is the responsibility?

Secretary Rusk. If there is a violation of this agreement there would undoubtedly be immediate consultation among those who are parties to the agreement through the cochairman, but also if there is a violation of the agreement that goes to the security of Laos or Southeast Asia, we would have to go into it to see whether such violations abrogated the agreement and we were back where we were before the agreement itself was reached.

Just as, for example, we have forces in South Vietnam that go far beyond the levels indicated under the Geneva 1954 Accords. But we have them there because the North Vietnamese have been breaking those accords, so we have not been willing to limit ourselves by those accords because the other side has broken them.

So, we do not consider ourselves in violation of the accords. We consider the accords themselves, to that extent removed by violation on the other side, have been abrogated by acts of the other side. <sup>187</sup>

In short, the only recourse was war. For this reason, there was a tendency on the American side to make the agreement work. This tendency went so far as to maintain the fiction that the agreement was being respected when it fact it was violated from the very beginning by both sides.

#### IMMEDIATE PROBLEMS

Problems arising from the structural flaws in the 1962 Geneva Agreement arose immediately and were faced gamely by Prince Souvanna Phouma and the handful of the faithful in his Neutralist faction. Brown's replacement as ambassador, Leonard S. Unger, established close rapport with the prime minister and proved to be his staunchest supporter.

There was no agreed map showing lines of control at any of the successive cease-fires, although Communist propaganda was quick to accuse the "reactionary" Neutralists and rightists of moving into areas the Pathet Lao and Neutralists claimed to hold. The absence of a map also allowed the Pathet Lao to portray the Meo and their families defending scattered outposts in the hills of northeast Laos as "bandits" who had infiltrated their "liberated area," a complete distortion of fact.

As there was no provision for ICC fixed teams, inspection of the withdrawal of foreign military personnel had to be accomplished by teams not yet fielded by the ICC. In the PGNU cabinet meetings that took up the matter, and faced with the deadlines prescribed, Souvanna Phouma quickly reduced the number of checkpoints he would ask the ICC to establish from nine, including one at the all-important Pathet Lao–DRV base at Tchepone, to three, without Tchepone. Article 3 was emptied of any meaning as early as August 1962 when Souphanouvong took the position that since there were no DRV troops in Laos there was no need to establish any checkpoints at all enabling the ICC to verify their withdrawal. In this he was supported by the Soviet ambassador, Abramov, and by Thee. Faced with this argument, the rightists and Neutralists fell back on assuming for themselves responsibility for the actual withdrawal of foreign troops within the 75-day period and, in view of the undoubted continuing ICC responsibility, to reserve the right to request investigation by the ICC in each case in which evidence of presence of foreign troops was received after the withdrawal deadline had passed. This fallback position was to place an immense burden on the PGNU's ability to mobilize the ICC to action. This ability very shortly proved to be next to nothing.

In Washington, Harriman and the Department attempted to shore up each new breach in the agreement signaled by the embassy. In view of the difficulties being encountered in implementing Article 3, the Department instructed the embassy in Moscow, over Harriman's initials, to take up the matter with Pushkin or Gromyko, reminding them of their responsibility under Article 8.<sup>190</sup> Harriman also reproached Souvanna Phouma for going back on his promise to him to ensure that the ICC would be able to operate with sufficient independence to carry out its verification responsibilities.<sup>191</sup> Pushkin received Harriman's message in a very relaxed manner and said the Soviet government had no information from its ambassador indicating any difficulties within the royal government over determination of checkpoints. Furthermore, there had been no report from the ICC to the co-chairmen. As for Article 8, the intervention of the co-chairmen at this point was not appropriate, as there was an established organization in Laos to handle the troop withdrawal.<sup>192</sup>

This enormous diplomatic pressure resulted in the PGNU's decision to designate three checkpoints for troop withdrawals, at Vientiane (for the MAAG), at the Plain of Jars, and at Nhommarath in the Pathet Lao zone. 193 On August 27, 15 men in khaki uniforms wearing pith helmets boarded an aircraft at the Plain of Jars airfield. The ICC team on the spot, which had been informed of the prospective departure by the Neutralist liaison officer, asked to see the identity papers, but the men refused. The Indian team leader then examined the aircraft manifest, which described the passengers merely as five officers and 10 NCOs and gave the destination as Hanoi. The plane took off without even waiting for the ICC commissioners to arrive from Vientiane. 194 An ICC team arrived at Nhommarath and was confined to a small compound guarded by Pathet Lao soldiers. They were eventually able to observe the departure by air of five uniformed personnel bound for Vinh. 195 Three battalions of DRV soldiers were reported to have left their base at Tchepone and crossed over into South Vietnam between July 7 and August 3.196 By a note verbale on October 9, the DRV chargé d'affaires informed the foreign ministry that the Vietnamese

military personnel sent to Laos at the request of the royal government had been withdrawn in accordance with the Geneva Agreement. 197

It was not long before the troika principle of important decisions by the PGNU was put to the test in the cabinet meetings of the royal government. As early as August 19, 1962, Prince Souvanna Phouma informed Ambassador Unger that "considerations of sovereignty prevent [the] RLG from accepting that [the] ICC will in all cases be able to proceed" on the basis of this blanket "concurrence." Harriman considered this position to be a breach of the promise Souvanna Phouma had given him, and he informed the embassy in Vientiane accordingly. If the Americans had any doubts as to the firm intentions of the Polish government to adhere to the narrowest possible interpretation of Article 14, meaning consent of all three factions to any investigation the ICC might wish to carry out, they were disabused by Ambassador Cabot's talks in Warsaw on May 9, 1963. In the principle of the province of th

Warsaw's man on the spot was a zealot so solicitous to attending to the needs of the party center that he made the Stalinists in Warsaw seem like moderates. Indeed, they had to call him to order on occasion. Polish ICC deputy commissioner Marek Thee had arrived in Laos with the first contingent of the revived ICC in April 1961 and settled down in Xieng Khouang; he was well known in Hanoi, whither he journeyed frequently to consult with its Laos specialists. He made no bones about acting as a party agent, and took pride in the standing the confidences he gleaned in Hanoi gave him over the Soviet ambassador at Khang Khay.<sup>201</sup> After the signature of the Geneva Agreement, Thee applied himself to taking the most restrictive interpretation both of the unanimity rule within the ICC and of that concerning advance approval by all the Laotian parties for any ICC initiative, and soon had the ICC tied in knots. Thee's must rank as one of the most extraordinary displays of Cold War sabotage of small countries' striving for independence and sovereignty. If upholding the position of the Pathet Lao on an issue required violating the agreement point-blank, Thee was up to the task, as when he left instructions that his deputy was not authorized to sit in for him during his absence from Laos for an extended period, a direct violation of Article 16 of the protocol which required members to ensure the presence of their representatives on the Commission.

Throughout this period of factional maneuvering and diplomatic confrontation, the Lao proceeded about their business wherever they could carry on without involving foreigners. The National Assembly met on August 16 for what seemed like a fairly routine matter, a request from the government for ex post facto approval of a 629-million-kip loan from the National Bank; the Assembly tabled the request until the minister of finance was able to appear to justify the request. On August 25 General Phoumi appeared before the Assembly, with Ngon Sananikone and Leuam Insisiengmay and a large number of deputies in attendance, to present an upbeat progress report on the PGNU. With his recent experience with the Americans much on everyone's mind, Phoumi was received with uncustomary respect and sympathy. In the lively question period after his report, Phoumi was asked if the Geneva Agreement

would be submitted to the Assembly for ratification, and answered that this matter was being debated in the cabinet. He assured the deputies that he would make every effort to maintain the integrity and authority of the Assembly until new elections could be held.<sup>203</sup> Prince Souvanna Phouma expressed himself pleased with the manner in which ministerial powers were transferred from the former government to the PGNU in ceremonies on August 27, followed by a lunch given by Prince Boun Oum for ministers of the old and new governments.<sup>204</sup>

## The Cambodian Monarchy in Abeyance

In the summer of 1962, when things were still going Sihanouk's way, although mismanagement of the economy and corruption were eating away at Cambodian society and foreign affairs triumphs depended on the intervention of a higher providence, such as the International Court of Justice, which decided in favor of Cambodia in its dispute with Thailand over possession of the temple at Preah Vihar, Sihanouk published a further series of four articles in his French-language semi-official weekly newspaper. The articles were intended, as he said, for the edification of visiting politicians, diplomats, and journalists, obviously those from the West first and foremost who, with a few notable exceptions such as Senator Mansfield, had little understanding of Cambodian realities. As Sihanouk had once written, "I have to acknowledge that I have had difficulties with all the ambassadors who have represented the United States in Cambodia." 205

The articles dealt with the question: What is the state of communism in Cambodia? He repeated his favorite theme that in abdicating the throne and founding the Sangkum as the principal nationalist organization he had made it impossible for the Cambodian Communists and their foreign supporters to divide the Khmer against one another, as the Communists had done in Laos, and thus had upset the Viet Minh plan to resume armed warfare in Cambodia, the existence of which was proved by the arms caches being uncovered by the royal army almost every day. The Cambodian Communists of the Pracheachon Group, returned from their studies in France, were forced to lie low, and consequently had little influence beyond their small circle of intellectuals. They were even afraid to contest elections, such as those that had been held on June 10, except when running as candidates of the Sangkum into whose ranks they had managed to infiltrate themselves.

Sihanouk wrote that this situation was due in no small measure to the good relations he cultivated with China, the Soviet Union, and other members of the socialist camp. Even the DRV was forced to maintain correct relations with his government. In this connection, the Chinese ethnic minority in Cambodia posed no problem, and he found it odd that Western diplomats were always warning him about Chinese subversion whereas they ignored the equally large Vietnamese minority. He had permitted Hanoi to send a commercial representative and a news agency correspondent to Phnom Penh, <sup>206</sup> but there were, as yet, no formal diplomatic relations. Sihanouk read the signs that Hanoi planned to settle the problems of South Vietnam and Laos, where the Americans were

deeply and certainly fatally engaged in their anti-Communist crusade by force of arms, before proceeding to the communization of Cambodia, and this was likely to afford Cambodia, with its monarchy and its solid nationalist base, a breathing spell. <sup>207</sup> Sihanouk was correct in his estimate of the impotence of the Cambodian Communists under present circumstances; he had co-opted some of them, and Khieu Samphan, one of those who had returned from France, did not resign his cabinet post until July 1963. But Sihanouk's calculation failed to take into account the fact that he would not be able to isolate Cambodia from the gathering storm in South Vietnam.

While Sihanouk did not maintain formal diplomatic relations with the DRV, nevertheless his relations with the South Vietnam National Liberation Front (NLF) grew closer as the latter played on Sihanouk's desire for secure borders. This was a potent issue in the hands of people skilled enough and brazen enough to play on it. The lack of a common border between Cambodia and North Vietnam, Sihanouk had told Tilman Durdin of *The New York Times* on December 16, 1958, was one of the reasons he did not maintain diplomatic relations with Hanoi. <sup>208</sup> But the establishment of the NLF changed that. Cambodia and Communist power in Vietnam now possessed a common border, and this created the need for Sihanouk to have a dialogue over border problems. In spite of attempts by both sides, establishing a meaningful dialogue with the Saigon government had proved impossible. Radio Free Khmer broadcast from a building at No. 38 Phung Khac Khoan in Saigon. <sup>209</sup> The Khmer Serei, a clandestine organization in the hands of Son Ngoc Thanh that was favored by Ngô Dinh Nhu, was bent on overthrowing Sihanouk.

By early 1962, the NLF was distributing leaflets in villages along the border condemning the Saigon government for "provoking its neutral neighbor Cambodia with the aim of creating enmity between the South Vietnamese and the Cambodian people." The leaflets stated that the United States was training members of the "treacherous Khmer Serei organization" with a view toward seizing control of the Cambodian government. "The NLFSVN Central Committee recently ordered its armed units to increase vigilance in order to exterminate in time the treacherous forces of the Khmer Serai under U.S. command." This was an extremely shrewd strategy. Knowing the traditional hatred of the Khmer population for the Vietnamese, it sought to make the NLF in the eyes of the Khmer population along the border the defenders of Cambodia against the Saigon government and "U.S. imperialism." In other words, the NLF would appear as a loyal ally of Sihanouk's army. Furthermore, it would create a situation in which, if the NLF soldiers operated on the Cambodian side of the border, as they were forced to do, they would appear in the eyes of the local Khmer population to be justified by their fight to protect Cambodia against the Khmer Serei bands making incursions from South Vietnam.

The NLF, on the orders of the party center, was preparing the ground for one of the biggest logistical operations of the war, in which, with the active connivance, if not assistance, of the local population, it kept the Viet Cong and DRV forces equipped to launch attacks into South Vietnam from secure bases

inside Cambodia. As Sihanouk publicized (for quite legitimate nationalist purposes) the violations of the border that periodically resulted from differing maps used by the armed forces of the two neighbors, the Viet Cong exploited a situation that the party center's specialists had studied attentively. Where the maps read differently, there the Viet Cong established a base for launching raids into South Vietnam, certain that retaliation would follow with its political windfalls. As for the territorial disputes along the border, they had still not been subject to a negotiated settlement by the governments of Cambodia and Vietnam in 2000.

Relations between Cambodia and the United States deteriorated after August 1962, when a friendly exchange of letters occurred between Sihanouk and President Kennedy.<sup>210</sup> In his address at the presentation of credentials by the new American ambassador, Philip D. Sprouse, Sihanouk expressed the wish for the success of Kennedy's "noble mission in [the] service of [the] great American people, liberty and peace" and asked that his most sincere wishes be transmitted to the president.<sup>211</sup> In part, the deterioration was due to Sihanouk's proposal for international neutralization of Cambodia which he made toward the end of the year and which he must have foreseen would meet with many thinly concealed objections. Initially, the proposal was for a conference on the pattern of the Lao conference and involved a modified Laos-type declaration of neutrality by the royal government, a multilateral responsive declaration by the other participants, and a protocol providing for enforcement by the ICC. American diplomats led by Harriman worked mightily to square the circle and find some formula that would please the prince without offending Bangkok and Saigon and also concord with the British and French. Among the issues raised by Sihanouk were recognition of the borders, policing of the borders by the ICC, and a neutrality declaration that would imply the withdrawal of the MAAG. They concluded, however, that bilateral steps would prove more effective in giving Sihanouk the security he sought.<sup>212</sup>

By the middle of 1963, Sihanouk, having received no favorable replies to his proposals except from the socialist countries, shelved the whole idea, not without some caustic comments to a national congress of the Sangkum about the hypocrisy of great powers that proclaimed ideals of justice and democracy.<sup>213</sup> He did reveal in this speech, however, that the DRV had offered to guarantee Cambodia's borders, a politically astute but rather empty gesture under the circumstances.<sup>214</sup> Sports delegations were exchanged between the royal government and the DRV in November 1962 and January 1963. In a letter dated April 14, 1963, Ho accepted Sihanouk's invitation to visit Cambodia. The visit was later postponed by the DRV for unexplained reasons.<sup>215</sup> At about this time Sihanouk began talking about neutralizing South Vietnam, which in his mind was a way of keeping Vietnam divided (and therefore less of a threat to Cambodia) and about overthrowing Diem. There was a growing exchange of messages between Sihanouk and Nguyên Huu Tho in 1963 over such trumped-up issues as the "persecution" of Buddhists in South Vietnam. Finally, on August 27, the royal Cambodian government broke "political relations" with the Republic of Vietnam. Sihanouk followed up this move with a new and more openly accusatory press campaign against the United States, resurrecting the CIA's

implication in the Dap Chhuon affair and renewing charges that the CIA was supporting the Khmer Serei. Fulsome praise contained in presidential messages on the occasions of Sihanouk's birthday and Cambodia's national day did little to assuage the prince's suspicions.

## Saigon and Hanoi Test Their Strengths

In Vietnam, events were moving toward war. As the Vietnam Military History Institute wrote after the war, "The 338th Division, which was composed of Southern regroupees, and a number of our infantry regiments, were converted into training groups for cadre and soldiers who would be sent to perform their duties in South Vietnam."<sup>216</sup>

#### DIEM APPEALS TO KENNEDY FOR HELP

The Vietnam problem was coming to the fore in President Kennedy's mind even before his meeting with Chairman Khrushchev crystallized his determination to thwart the Communists' efforts to take over the South by application of the "national liberation war" fraud. A cable to the embassy in Saigon on March 1 advised that the White House "ranks the defense of [South] Vietnam among the highest priorities of U.S. foreign policy," and mandated a search for those military personnel best qualified to give the South Vietnamese counterguerrilla training as an action to be taken immediately, without waiting for the South Vietnamese government's approval. <sup>217</sup> In a visit to Washington, Secretary of State for the Presidency Nguyên Dinh Thuan pointed out that few in the West realized that South Vietnam was at war, with between two and three hundred of its soldiers and many civilians being killed every month by the Viet Cong. The new administration approved the support for an increase of 20,000 men in the Vietnamese armed forces that Durbrow and Parsons had been stalling on various bureaucratic pretexts since 1957. <sup>218</sup>

One of the major obstacles preventing more effective American action in South Vietnam was the unofficial ceiling on the size of the MAAG that the United States had adhered to since 1954. Mainly at the Department of State's insistence, the MAAG had been limited to 685 American military personnel, and Kennedy was warned that diplomacy might be necessary to change this, particularly with India. Now, Kennedy told Lieutenant General Lionel C. McGarr when he visited Washington at the end of April, he was prepared to work outside the Geneva accords, and the MAAG ceiling could be increased "as necessary." The MAAG advisers with South Vietnamese military units were certainly taking part in the war, but they were defending a legally constituted government, be it good, bad, or indifferent. The American advisory role was completely different from that of the advisers (*co van*) the DRV had sent to Laos and Cambodia since 1948, who had a mission of furthering the "revolutions" in those countries, that is to say of bringing one party to power over all others.

On April 29, Kennedy used a meeting of the National Security Council to approve an immediate augmentation of the MAAG by 100 personnel. In addi-

tion, Kennedy approved augmenting the MAAG with two training commands, consisting of about 1,600 instructors each, to establish two divisional field training areas in the Central Highlands to accelerate the training program. <sup>221</sup> McGarr responded by ordering studies of MAAG reorganization, but Kennedy was obviously impatient at what he saw as bureaucratic delays. A State Department cable on May 20 transmitted the NSC decisions to Saigon under the heading, "Presidential Program for Vietnam to be carried out on priority action basis with high sense of urgency and dedication." <sup>222</sup> Included in this all-around program were an increase in the MAAG and support for a 20,000-man increase in the South Vietnamese army, with more to be considered later. On May 26, the Department of State advised the embassy to expect "considerable further increases" in the strength of the MAAG beyond those already discussed. <sup>223</sup>

With the Geneva conference on Laos getting under way, Kennedy had more time to think about Vietnam. On May 2, the country team in Saigon heard General Lyman L. Lemnitzer, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, say that Kennedy was ready to do anything within reason to save Southeast Asia; valuable time had been lost in Laos, but there was still time to act in South Vietnam.<sup>224</sup> In a letter to President Diem on May 8, Kennedy proposed a collaborative effort against Communist aggression.<sup>225</sup> Kennedy authorized Nolting, his new ambassador in Saigon, a career diplomat who had entered the State Department in 1946, "to begin negotiations looking toward a new bilateral arrangement" with Diem. 226 Diem responded quickly and positively to this initiative. There was an exchange of preliminaries during Vice President Lyndon Johnson's visit to Saigon that month, but the details were worked out during Thuan's visit to Washington in June, by which time Diem was asking for support in increasing the army by a further 100,000 men.<sup>227</sup> Kennedy wrote to Diem saying his request was under urgent study and affirmed "in the strongest terms" the American support for his government's "determination to resist Communist aggression and to maintain its independence." Kennedy signed the letter "With warm personal regards."228

Diem's morale had been bolstered by his re-election as president on April 9. He had won 89 percent of the vote running against two other candidates; 6,709,150 out of 7,300,000 eligible voters (93 percent) had gone to the polls.<sup>229</sup> This was indeed a defeat for the Communists. Moreover, Kennedy's appointment of Nolting augured well for close relations with Diem, in sharp contrast to Durbrow, whom Diem considered a nitpicker at best and an interferer in Vietnamese politics at worst. Within a fortnight of his arrival in Saigon, Nolting and his family were invited to spend the weekend with Diem in Dalat.<sup>230</sup>

Nolting cabled a positive initial evaluation of Diem:

I think President Diem's philosophy of government, and his objectives for his country, are sound and good. After many hours of fundamental discussions, I am convinced that he is no dictator, in the sense of relishing power for its own sake. On the contrary, he seems to me to be a man dedicated to high principles by himself and his people; a man who would prefer to be a monk rather than a political leader; a man who does not fundamentally enjoy power or the exercise of it. He is,

nevertheless, an egoist in the sense that he believes (in my judgment, with some justification) that he can govern in South Vietnam, in general and in detail, better than anyone else now available; and that he knows more about the Communist movement in this area and how to combat it than anyone else. His own strong convictions, energy, and his faith in himself are both a strength and a weakness—a strength in providing a counter-dynamic to communism, a weakness in causing overconcentration of governmental power and authority, consequent lack of governmental efficiency, and in offering a vulnerable political target. His philosophy of government, summed up in the term "personalism" (which does not mean personal dictatorship but rather the requirement for individual development much in the Aristotelian sense) is perhaps too lofty for popular understanding, but is certainly in my judgment sound and right, and compatible with US interests. . . . Thus, I think the United States should have no hesitation on moral grounds in backing Diem to the hilt. Where we think he is wrong, we can bring about ameliorations and improvements gradually in proportion to the confidence which he has in us and in his ability to make concessions without slipping.231

Kennedy followed with keen interest the details of the ways in which actions he had authorized were being implemented. He read status reports and individual reports from all agencies in South Vietnam and regularly pressed Nolting with requests for assessments of progress, including answers to such questions as whether Diem's reforms in military command, intelligence, and economic and social programs were taking hold and whether or not there were plans for following up a successful military operation in the Mekong Delta. As Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., the chronicler of the Kennedy brothers, has written, the impetus for counterinsurgency came from the president himself. 233

On August 5, Kennedy wrote again to Diem, assuring him of American support for action in the economic and security fields. Again he signed the letter "With warm personal regards." Diem, however, was beginning to fear that its long exposed flank with Laos and Cambodia would open South Vietnam to large-scale infiltration under the solution of a neutralized Laos, and consequently was beginning to have serious doubts about the policy the United States was pursuing with respect to Laos. Diem had fresh examples of the results of such infiltration in the form of Viet Cong attacks at scattered and isolated points along the border he could point to during September, the most serious of which was the capture of the provincial capital of Phuoc Thanh and its holding for several hours, during which the attackers held a "people's trial" and executed the province chief and his principal assistant.

As the summer wore on, Kennedy was finding that the problem of South Vietnam could not easily be isolated from other problems in the area. The most urgent of these was, of course, Laos; evidence kept coming in of Communist use of Laos for infiltration into South Vietnam. Kennedy asked the Saigon embassy to provide a rapid assessment of whether Diem would be willing "to join in a cooperative action with Laos and Thailand to clean up the panhandle of

Laos" and of what Diem's troop requirements would be. <sup>235</sup> The Pentagon was working on a contingency plan to occupy southern Laos with a combined force of Laotian, Thai, South Vietnamese, and American troops. Just when Kennedy was working out a strategy of deterrence inside South Vietnam, his military planners were talking about widening the war beyond South Vietnam's borders. In previous planning, it had been supposed that any DRV response to a move into Laos could be met on the ground in Laos; now there was discussion of the possibility of meeting any such substantial DRV intervention with direct air and naval operations against Haiphong or even Hanoi. The picture looked so gloomy that there was a suggestion (in late July) that two high-level advisers, Rostow and General Maxwell D. Taylor, Kennedy's military representative, go and have a first-hand look at the situation. <sup>236</sup> Rostow and Taylor put together a list of questions to be asked but held that such a mission was still premature. <sup>237</sup>

Diem was able to convey his concerns about Laos directly to Harriman during the latter's stopover in Saigon on September 20. The military situation in South Vietnam had deteriorated sharply in the five months since Harriman's last visit. At a press conference before departure, Harriman gave assurances that the interests of the Vietnamese people were being borne very much in mind by the United States during the negotiations on Laos and that no decisions would be taken which would hurt those interests. Once again, as had happened in 1954, the Vietnamese were having to pick up their information about what was happening in the corridors at Geneva in bits and pieces and at second hand.

On September 30, 1961, virtually in a state of panic over the Viet Cong moves on the border, Diem asked the United States for a bilateral defense treaty. <sup>239</sup> It was a reversal in his long-time position that was both unexpected and dramatic. During his visit to India in November 1957 Diem had foresworn military alliances. As recently as May, he had told Young that any proposal to introduce American troops in South Vietnam required careful examination. <sup>240</sup> Now he thought a formal commitment would have a desirable psychological impact. <sup>241</sup> Nolting saw Diem's change of mind as the adoption of an expedient that ran against his own convictions, one where he was "willing to accept the attendant diminution of his own stature as an independent and self-reliant national leader." <sup>242</sup> The State Department told Nolting that Diem could be informed that his request would be studied "promptly and sympathetically" but that Article 19 of the armistice agreement was certainly one of the problems to be considered. <sup>243</sup>

The Viet Cong had ambushed and killed two Montagnard members of the National Assembly while they were returning from a visit to a resettlement center near Ban Me Thuot that summer. Also killed were the district chief of Ban Me Thuot, an elementary school teacher, and two guards. <sup>244</sup> The attacks in the border area which followed in September 1961 produced a far greater psychological shock to the South Vietnamese than had the attacks north of Kontum in October the previous year. For one thing, they were more daring, and for another Phuoc Thanh was closer to Saigon and the heavily populated delta than was Kontum. Adding to this psychological shock was the news of the kidnapping and murder of the chief of the Republic of Vietnam's liaison mission to the

ICC, Colonel Hoang Thuy Nam. Colonel Nam was kidnapped from his farm on October 1 and subsequently tortured and killed. His mutilated body was found in the Saigon River near a bridge on the northern outskirts of Saigon on October 17.<sup>245</sup> Captured documents proved that the perpetrators were agents of the party center.<sup>246</sup> The noticeable decline in public morale due to the heightened feeling of insecurity in this period translated into a general desire for the introduction of American forces.<sup>247</sup>

On another track, Taylor was arguing the need for dispatch of an American ground force to either the Central Highlands or southern Laos. On October 11, the day the Taylor-Rostow mission was announced, Kennedy approved the dispatch of the Air Force's 4400th Combat Crew Training Squadron with B-26s, T-28s, and C-47s to the Bien Hoa air base to serve under the MAAG as a training mission and not for combat "at the present time." Kennedy met with Taylor and Rostow before they departed on their mission and told them of the conclusions he had drawn from his October 1951 visit to Saigon. It was a cautionary note about the impotence of military might applied in the wrong political circumstances. The most fundamental question on Kennedy's mind, Rostow wrote later, was this: Did the people of South Vietnam want an independent non-Communist future or would they, in fact, prefer to go with Ho Chi Minh and Hanoi?<sup>249</sup>

The Taylor-Rostow mission resulted in a plethora of recommendations, discussion of which occupied Kennedy's advisers for the next several weeks. The prevailing tendency was to view Vietnam as primarily a military matter; people such as Lansdale who saw it otherwise were in a distinct minority. Kennedy kept his own counsel. In the end, he did not authorize the sending of ground troops. A handwritten note by Lemnitzer on the discussion at a crucial meeting of White House advisers on November 11 reads: "P: Troops are a last resort." The French were so alarmed, however, that they sent their ambassador to see Rusk to find out Kennedy's intentions. Rusk reviewed the problem facing the Americans, emphasizing the lack of Soviet cooperation and the "soft" image projected by American policy in Laos. "Laos is a bad precedent," he said. 251

On December 5, Nolting gave Diem a memorandum of understanding stating that while the "fundamental responsibility" for the conduct of the war would remain with Diem's government, "a closer and more effective relationship will be established" between his government and the United States. In its key paragraph, the memorandum stated:

With the above objectives in mind, the U.S. has indicated its readiness to participate in a sharply increased joint effort with the GVN [Government of Vietnam]. This will involve increases in forms of aid previously furnished and, in addition, fundamentally new steps in GVN-U.S. collaboration, namely, (a) the participation of U.S. uniformed personnel in operational missions with GVN forces, and (b) closer consultation with U.S. advisers, as agreed, in planning the conduct of the security effort. <sup>252</sup>

In this connection, Kennedy indicated to Nolting that he appreciated Diem's cooperation as being important to "both of us," and was counting on

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the efforts of Diem and all his people.<sup>253</sup> The wording accurately reflected Kennedy's philosophy of the proper relationship of the United States to the Southeast Asian governments, as recalled by Michael V. Forrestal, who joined the administration team in January 1962 and was immediately put to work on the Laos problem. "We would like to see them independent,' Forrestal recalled Kennedy as saying. 'We would like to see them be themselves—and not be Chinese or be French or be British or be U.S. How can we get that thought across?' In that area of the world his main theme was: the more they are themselves, the better for the United States. Let's not try to tell them what to do, and how to behave in each case. Let's stimulate them to be more themselves."

# THE GROWING AMERICAN PRESENCE POSES A DILEMMA FOR DIEM AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR HANOI

Decisions in Washington were being made so fast that they were not being communicated to the field in a timely manner, causing problems at the embassy, not to mention at the Independence Palace. Thus, for example, Nolting complained of learning from a conversation with its commanding general that an Air Force unit by the name of 2nd ADVON had set up operations at the Tan Son Nhut air base.<sup>255</sup> This unit was to have operational control over the 4400th and aircraft to be used in aerial spraying of defoliants. McGarr complained to Lemnitzer of being excluded from discussion of staff changes in Saigon and pointed out that his supercession by a more senior commander would greatly reduce his standing and influence in the eyes of the Vietnamese. "We are doing the job of a small theater headquarters with the staff and authority for a MAAG mission alone," he noted.<sup>256</sup> But the Pentagon was now geared up to take over the whole show. Lemnitzer broke the news to McGarr bluntly: the new command, he said, "will insure that the senior U.S. military representative in Vietnam has the controlling voice, both on the U.S. side and with Vietnam officials, on military matters."<sup>257</sup> Expansion of the command to encompass Laos, Thailand, and Cambodia as well was being considered.

By early December, the authorized MAAG strength had reached 1,905. In addition, authorized strength of American military units to be stationed in South Vietnam was 1,774.<sup>258</sup> In that same month, two U.S. Army helicopter companies with 44 helicopters were unloaded at Saigon to provide greater mobility to the South Vietnamese army. On December 22, with Kennedy's tacit approval, American pilots of the 4400th began flying combat missions in South Vietnam; their planes had South Vietnamese markings and carried South Vietnamese trainees. The same day, four U.S. Navy minesweepers took up station five miles south of the 17th parallel to try to cut down infiltration by sea in what was the first step by the American military directed specifically against North Vietnam.<sup>259</sup>

In the space of seven months in 1961, Kennedy had nearly tripled the size of the MAAG and had introduced other American military personnel in unit formations in support roles for the South Vietnamese forces. The decision had been taken to establish a new command structure that would cover American combat personnel as well as advisers. These actions fundamentally changed the

American role in Vietnam. Even if there were no combat battalions yet, the command structure that would be used by the military to fight a big-unit war was already virtually in place; the Military Assistance Command Vietnam (MACV) would be established in February 1962. With these measures, the party center knew it was facing a dangerous adversary, one that did not appear to consider American assistance to South Vietnam to be limited by the terms of the 1954 Geneva armistice agreement, as his predecessor had; a Radio Pathet Lao broadcast called Kennedy a "supergangster." In fact, Kennedy was searching for ways to turn the armistice limitations against North Vietnam by calling a meeting of the conference to consider the guerrilla war in the South as a breach of the Geneva Agreement. <sup>261</sup>

There was by now ample evidence to support such an initiative. Toward the end of the year, Kennedy wrote a long letter to Khrushchev in response to two the chairman had sent him on the German problem and on Laos and Vietnam. Khrushchev had dwelt at length on the situation in South Vietnam, echoing Hanoi's propaganda that the Saigon government was fascist, warlike, and without basis in popular support, and he had dismissed "in a phrase," as Kennedy wrote, the evidence of external interference that governed the American response. Kennedy quoted from Le Duan's statement in September 1960, published in the official newspaper of the Vietnam Workers' Party, amounting to a rejection of the core political provision of the 1954 armistice: acceptance of the partition of Vietnam until the Vietnamese people could be consulted on reunification. Kennedy sought to put the focus where he saw it belonged.

It is hardly necessary for me to draw your attention to the Geneva Accords of July 20–21, 1954. The issue, therefore, is not that of some opinion or other in regard to the government of President Ngô Dinh Diem, but rather that of a nation whose integrity and security is threatened by military actions, completely at variance with the obligations of the Geneva Accords.<sup>263</sup>

The Saigon government's complaints about the external support being provided to the guerrilla forces on the territory under its administration could no longer be pigeonholed by the ICC. The ICC's 11th interim report, which covered the period February 1, 1960, to February 28, 1961, noted that in spite of certain difficulties and the lurking dangers in Vietnam, the active presence of the ICC and its work had helped in preserving peace. Since then, however, the situation in Vietnam had shown signs of rapid deterioration. The ICC decided to file a special report to the co-chairmen with regard to the allegations of violations of the agreement being made by one side and the other.

The ICC's Legal Committee made a careful examination of the allegations and, in a special report published on June 2, 1962, reached the conclusion that "in specific instances there is evidence to show that armed and unarmed personnel, arms, munitions and other supplies have been sent from the Zone in the North to the Zone in the South with the object of supporting, organising and carrying out hostile activities, including armed attacks, directed against the

Armed Forces and Administration of the Zone in the South. These acts are in violation of Articles 10, 19, 24 and 27 of the Agreement on Cessation of Hostilities in Viet-Nam." It further concluded that "there is evidence to show that the PAVN [the DRV army] has allowed the Zone in the North to be used for inciting, encouraging and supporting hostile activities in the Zone in the South, aimed at the overthrow of the Administration in the South. The use of the Zone in the North for such activities is in violation of Articles 19, 24 and 27 of the Agreement on the Cessation of Hostilities in Viet-Nam." The ICC accepted its Legal Committee's conclusions, with the Polish delegation dissenting.

The ICC further concluded that the Republic of Vietnam had violated Articles 16 and 17 of the agreement in receiving increased American military aid and Article 19 in allowing the establishment of MACV and in allowing the introduction into the South of large numbers of military personnel beyond the stated strength of the MAAG, which actions, although there might not be any formal military alliance, "amount to a factual military alliance." <sup>265</sup>

The Polish delegation, in dissenting from the special report, drew attention to the DRV's complaints of the American introduction into the South of a great number of military personnel, weapons and war material, the direct participation of these personnel in hostile actions against the population of South Vietnam, and the establishment of a special operational military command in Saigon. It further charged that the persecution of former resistance members violated Article 14(c) and that the refusal of the government of the Republic of Vietnam to act toward the reunification of Vietnam as foreseen in the Geneva Agreement was a cause of opposition to the government.<sup>266</sup>

As can easily be seen, there was here much grist for the mills of those who had an interest in charging that one side or the other had violated the 1954 armistice agreement. The Saigon side had succeeded in having the ICC place on the record the violation of the agreement consisting of the use of the Northern zone to support the overthrow of its government by clandestine methods. The Hanoi side, for its part, had succeeded in having the ICC place on the record the violation by the South of articles dealing with introduction of personnel and weapons and, more questionably, with military alliances.

The Saigon government welcomed the findings of the ICC. A letter on June 28, 1962, from Lieutenant Colonel Nguyên Van An, the head of the liaison mission to the ICC, to the ICC's secretariat general expressed satisfaction that the ICC's special report highlighted the DRV's violations of the Geneva Agreement and its responsibility for the present trouble in South Vietnam, that the Saigon government had been forced to take appropriate measures of self-defense, that there was a clear cause-and-effect relationship between DRV subversion and these defensive measures, and that the measures would be terminated as soon as the DRV ceased its acts of aggression and started to respect the Geneva Agreement.

The letter pointed out that the DRV had *never* notified the ICC of *any* importation of arms and equipment in spite of the obvious military buildup that had been going on in the North since 1954. This situation contrasted with the Saigon government's notification of such imports to the ICC up to the previous

December (when the Americans had advised the Saigon government to cease reporting in detail in order to avoid adding grist to the Polish ICC commissioner's mill for propaganda.) The letter also paid tribute to the perseverance the ICC had shown in examining the different aspects of DRV subversion in spite of the obstructive maneuvers of the latter to camouflage its hand. It attacked the Polish delegation for its position that the evidence on which the ICC's conclusion with regard to DRV subversion was "false and unsubstantiated." It noted that the Polish member of the Legal Committee had refused even to examine the material evidence supporting the complaint. In point of fact, in the early stages of the investigation the Polish member could not attend meetings because of illness, and the Poles did not see fit to send a substitute. In the later stages, the Indian and Canadian members included the Pole in "pro forma" Committee discussions (some at the latter's bedside), but even when he was physically able to attend he refused to go to look at the evidence. All this because the DRV was insisting that the Polish delegation not take part in any investigation of such complaints.<sup>267</sup>

The letter denied the existence of an alliance with the United States and pointed out that China's secret military aid agreements with the DRV more closely resembled an alliance. Finally, the letter addressed the conclusion that the Saigon government had violated Article 14(c) of the agreement. The DRV gave "an abusive interpretation" to this article, the letter said, in an effort to camouflage the activities of its agents in the South, "who should not be confused with real nationalists." <sup>268</sup>

The DRV, as was to be expected, sought to disparage findings in the ICC's special report about violations by the DRV even before the report was formally issued. It called it "invalid" because it had not been adopted under the unanimity rule of Article 42, disregarding the fact that Article 43 allowed the submission of a majority report when unanimity was not possible. The DRV was careful, however, not to contest the continued operation of the ICC. Radio Hanoi broadcast on June 19 a message from the NLF to the co-chairmen protesting the conclusions of the special report about subversion as "contrary to the truth, invalid, and extremely dangerous." It stated that the "people's struggle" was "fully legal and just." It requested "on behalf of the 14 million people of South Vietnam" that the co-chairmen reject the report's conclusion. <sup>269</sup>

The party center realized there was only so much to be gained by scoring points in a contest with the Saigon government over which side was more to blame for violating the armistice agreement. Neither the ICC nor the co-chairmen had executive power to punish either side. In point of fact, the principal value to the party center in making complaints of violation to the ICC was to give credence to its propaganda that the Saigon regime was a dictatorial, fascist (and of course from the party's point of view, illegal) regime against which the Southern people were struggling with the aim of overthrowing it. For this purpose, the complaints of persecution and other dastardly acts committed against members of the Southern population (for the party's cadres left in the South after 1954 could not be described otherwise) largely sufficed. It can now safely

be said that the propaganda was intended to convince the people of the South first and foremost, Hanoi's allies secondarily as the need for their support grew, and last, and increasingly important as time went on, American public opinion.

The Hanoi side, however, had hard evidence in its hands by this time of another serious violation by the South of the agreement which it did not choose to lodge a complaint about, for reasons of its own. Since early 1961 the Saigon government, with the support of the CIA, had been secretly air-dropping and landing from boats commando teams in the North. Diem approved these limited actions aimed at building an intelligence base and providing a foundation for restricted harassment and sabotage. Thinking as always of the effect on the people, Diem saw the actions as keeping alive the hope of liberation in the North and inspiring passive resistance.<sup>270</sup> A number of these teams had been captured or killed by agents of the counterespionage directorate of the ministry of public security, which would have provided the Hanoi side with evidence that the South was violating the agreement that was more convincing and damaging than the evidence that the South had persecuted former resistance members or entered into a military alliance, which the South denied, and in any case was predicated on the conduct of the United States, which had not been a signatory of the armistice agreement. The reason the Hanoi side did not use the evidence in its hands to make a complaint on this score was purely one of military tactics—it gained more advantage from using these teams to mislead the Saigon government in a number of ways, not the least of which was to induce Saigon to continue to believe in the security of these operations after the North had succeeded in infiltrating its agents into their command center.

The party center had embarked on a strategy based on the NLF. In January 1962, in a move that recalled the splitting up of the ICP and its reappearance under a new name in 1951, it revealed the existence of a separate Communist party in the South, called the People's Revolutionary Party of South Vietnam. This move was obviously intended to distance the DRV government and the VWP further from the National Liberation Front, while maintaining strict control over the National Liberation Front through covert party agents within; none of these would act independently of the party center. It was they who monopolized the NLF's publications and radio station and carried out diplomatic missions abroad; not once did the non-Communist nationalists in the NLF have the opportunity to make public policy pronouncements, and this rather heavy-handed subterfuge was the NLF's main weakness vis-à-vis the non-Communist nationalists.<sup>271</sup> In actual fact, the NLF opposed the expression of pacifist sentiments by the South Vietnamese population and enforced this policy with the usual application of terror.

Following the NLF's First Congress in February 1962, the veteran party member Nguyên Van Hieu<sup>272</sup> embarked on a tour of Communist-bloc capitals designed to propagate the NLF's program. A major theme was the NLF's espousal of "neutralism," a vague concept in keeping with the ostensibly non-Communist nature of the NLF and embracing the peaceful resolution of Cold War conflicts. "Neutralism" as espoused by the party center overlapped with

the principles of the non-aligned movement led by Nehru, Nasser, and Tito. When applied to South Vietnam, "neutralism" connoted negotiations between the NLF and the Saigon government and the formation of a coalition government. Hieu touted it loudly everywhere on his tour, except, significantly, in Hanoi, where the party mobilized a huge crowd at the railway station to greet the NLF delegation like foreign dignitaries, <sup>273</sup> one of those mises en scène at which the Vietnamese excel.

The DRV's NLF-based strategy meant that the Geneva conference on Laos could not serve as a forum for big power negotiations on Vietnam, despite Harriman's interest in involving the Soviets in the search for a solution to the Americans' Vietnam problem. The idea that the neutralization of Laos could serve as an example for a similar treatment of South Vietnam appeared as early as June 1961 in Soviet diplomacy, when the CIA reported a Soviet suggestion of neutralization for South Vietnam.<sup>274</sup> In September, Pushkin suggested to Harriman that a Soviet commitment enforce compliance by other signatories to the Laos agreement using the authority of the co-chairmen. The question arises: Was this offer of a commitment contingent on American action toward the Republic of Vietnam, one of the signatories? In his highly summarized report of their private conversation, Harriman states that Pushkin mentioned South Vietnam specifically, repeating the well-worn Communist line about the unpopular character of the Diem regime. When Harriman observed that the Soviets would have greater difficulty policing North Vietnam, which wanted to use Laos as a corridor to South Vietnam, he reported that Pushkin replied "North Viet-Nam ready to live up to agreement with us if reached. Soviets could guarantee that." When he suggested to Pushkin in the same conversation a settlement of the hostilities between the two Vietnams on the basis of an acceptance of the division and peaceful relations between them, Pushkin agreed that such a solution might be desirable but was beyond his competence to discuss.<sup>275</sup> From Hanoi's point of view, such ideas were useful, but the Americans had to be brought around to accepting the NLF as an interlocutor.

Harriman and Pushkin continued their dialogue on the character of the Diem regime when Harriman returned to Geneva from his Southeast Asian trip in the course of which he had stopped in Saigon. On September 27, Harriman had a discussion with Pushkin at the Soviet villa in which he mentioned the Communists' use of the Ho Chi Minh Trail through Laos and Pushkin defended the DRV.<sup>276</sup> On October 14, just before Pushkin's planned departure for Moscow to attend the CPSU's 22nd Congress, he and Harriman had a further exchange on the subject and Harriman again said that regardless of the Soviet assessment of the Diem regime the Communists were using Laos to attack South Vietnam.<sup>277</sup> On the same day the DRV delegation issued a letter to the co-chairmen accusing the United States of intervening in South Vietnam, to which the American delegation replied saying it was an attempt to distract attention from what the DRV was doing.<sup>278</sup> The Soviet Congress was attended by Ho, Le Duan, and Xuan Thuy. Harriman and Pushkin had another discussion of Vietnam over lunch on November 20, at which they agreed that the question of Vietnam should be kept separate from the Laos negotiations.<sup>279</sup>

A meeting at Geneva between Harriman and Sullivan, on the one hand, and the signatory for the DRV of the Geneva Agreement, Foreign Minister Ung Van Khiem, a Southerner, and his aide Colonel Ha Van Lau produced nothing new, even allowing for the fact that Vietnamese had to be translated into French, then into English and back again. The meeting was held in a small hotel room near the railway station, and Harriman and Sullivan used a back staircase so as to keep the meeting a secret from the South Vietnamese. Harriman's idea of neutralizing South Vietnam by big-power agreement did not have any immediate sequel.

The State Department failed to follow up on Kennedy's suggestion of November that the participants in the 1954 Geneva conference be convened in order to consider the guerrilla war in the South as a breach of the armistice agreement. Rusk was spending a large part of his time attending meetings of NATO, CENTO, SEATO and other alliances in various parts of the world and does not seem to have focused very clearly on the challenge being posed to the United States by the DRV. The focus on Vietnam was further diffused by the creation of several task forces involving several different agencies in Washington. As the principal patron of the Saigon government, the United States would logically have been justified in pursuing the ICC findings of violations against the North on grounds that they brought into play the American policy enunciated at Geneva by Bedell Smith of "viewing any renewal of the aggression in violation of them [the Geneva agreements] with grave concern and as seriously threatening international peace and security."281 Even when the ICC went on record in June 1962 with the violation by the DRV of specific articles of the agreement, the State Department did not even call for a meeting of conference participants to review the threat to international peace and security. As the situation moved in the direction of all-out war between Saigon and Hanoi, such advocates in public of the primacy of diplomacy over armed intervention as Ambassador to India John Kenneth Galbraith remained strangely silent. Nolting's embassy suggested that "the offensive against the DRV in the political arena and within the ICC framework" be continued,282 but there was no follow-up from Foggy Bottom.

Privately, Harriman suspected Nolting of trying to undermine his influence with Kennedy by questioning the value of Pushkin's offer of a commitment to enforce a Laos agreement, and by implication Harriman's negotiating strategy, in his telegram of September 18, which Nolting had sent while Harriman was out of touch. Nolting was also getting under Harriman's skin in other ways. Ever the conscientious diplomat, Nolting had responded to Brown's report on planning for regroupment, demobilization, and integration of the armed forces in Laos by requesting authority to solicit Diem's views on the matter "at an early stage and before [a] firm decision [is] taken by [the] Western powers on [a] matter vital to this country's security." This would avoid presenting Diem's government with a fait accompli and would ensure the latter's cooperation. <sup>283</sup>

Harriman sent off a sharply worded cable from Geneva on October 13. He had heard many expressions of concern in his travels over the past six months about "Diem's dictatorial regime, Palace Guard, family and corruption," he

wrote, without mentioning that he was hearing the same from Pushkin. These expressions spoke of a lack of confidence among the military, provincial officials, intellectuals, and others. "There is general prophecy that another coup is apt to happen, in which case insurgents will not be as considerate of Diem as last year."<sup>284</sup> Harriman's remarks about the head of state of another friendly participant in the conference were, to say the least, impolitic for a diplomat and marked a milestone in the downward trend of thinking in Washington about American relations with Diem. The comments were the more shocking for the double standard they revealed: if a president chose to rely on his family that was his affair, and a president to whom one owed one's position did not bear criticism on this score.

Harriman's attitude toward American allies in Indochina was formed in these private meetings with Soviet negotiators and are revealed in his cabled reports. Basically, Harriman felt that the United States had a right to expect that these allies would cooperate in finding a solution to the problems and conflicts in which they had become involved, much as the Soviet Union demanded cooperation from its East European satellites. It was an attitude that sloughed off any American responsibility for creating the problems in the first place, or else, in a partisan way, simply blamed the non-cooperation on the previous administration. His comment about Phoumi is typical: "It is fantastic that General Phoumi, who is [an] entirely US creation, should be permitted to continue to dictate American policy." Again about Phoumi: "He is an inheritance of the mistakes of the previous Administration, partially due to their permitting him to force their hand. He should not be permitted now to stand in the way of achieving the President's objectives. We cannot depend on Phoumi to negotiate for these objectives as we know that he wants to force us into military intervention." 286

This attitude remained consistent in Harriman's dealings. It may have been reinforced, perversely, by Diem's pleas to the Americans to support General Phoumi, the leader of the anti-Communists in Laos. Having virtually washed his hands of General Phoumi and lined up behind Prince Souvanna Phouma, Harriman may have come to feel that he could treat Diem as he had treated General Phoumi. Yet Diem and Phoumi were completely different, and in many ways were exact opposites in spite of their common stand against the Communists. Diem was the elected president of a constitutional government and incorruptible, whereas General Phoumi had never been elected and was rapidly becoming one of the most corrupt individuals in Southeast Asia. Moreover, Phoumi wanted the involvement of American troops, while Diem was trying his best to keep them out.

Harriman's belief that the Soviet Union could be enlisted in a joint effort to restore peace between Saigon and Hanoi is perhaps best illustrated by a handwritten memo he sent President Kennedy on November 12, 1961. In it, he suggested he be authorized to approach Pushkin and tell him the progress made toward the settlement of the Laos question was meaningless if hostilities continued in Vietnam. Accordingly, the Geneva co-chairmen should bring together a small group of the powers directly concerned to review the accords and see

how compliance could be strengthened. Harriman devoted a paragraph of his memorandum to the internal situation in South Vietnam. Again, as he had done in October, he characterized the Saigon regime as "repressive, dictatorial and unpopular." He said it had to be made clear to Diem the United States was serious about reform. Two questions are raised by this memorandum. First, since Pushkin had told him he was not authorized to discuss Vietnam, why was Harriman seeking authority to do so? Second, what explains the asymmetry of views of the Saigon and Hanoi regimes? Why involve the United States in a potentially dangerous exercise to pressure the Saigon regime when there was no countervailing pressure on the Hanoi regime for acceptable international behavior, not to mention respect for the human rights of its citizens? This is the closest, in my view, that one can come to answering the question of whether there was an understanding between Harriman and Pushkin involving future American actions in South Vietnam.

The publication of the ICC's special report on Vietnam coincided with the windup of the Geneva conference on Laos. Harriman and Forrestal lunched once more with Pushkin, who did not mention his previous commitment on Laos but talked about South Vietnam and the NLF and made complimentary remarks about Nguyên Van Hieu, who had recently visited Moscow.<sup>287</sup> Harriman's apparent search for a solution to the Vietnam problem led him, on one of his trips to Paris in connection with the Laos negotiations in early 1962, to make a request to see Bao Dai, <sup>288</sup> but nothing came of this; there was to be no "Bao Dai solution" for the Americans.

#### SHOWDOWN ON THE PLAIN OF JARS

With Marek Thee obstructing everything in Vientiane that did not suit the party center in Hanoi and doing nothing that favored the reconciliation of the three Lao factions, the partisan warfare between the Meo and the Pathet Lao, bolstered by their Vietnamese allies, who had not yet withdrawn from Laos, resumed in complete disregard of the new cease-fire of June 24. The Pathet Lao appeared intent on "tidying up" the Meo outposts so that a cease-fire map showing areas of control, if one were ever produced, would show a nice block of solid color instead of a patchwork quilt. The pressure on the Meo was accurately reflected in the rate at which they lost airstrips; the small press corps in Vientiane had contacts among the Air America pilots who flew in and out of them in all kinds of weather, and reported this, much to the discomfiture of Prince Souvanna Phouma and Ambassador Unger.

Issues that had loomed large in Geneva shrank to being insignificant in Laos. The masquerade of verification of the departure of the 12,500 DRV troops estimated to have been in Laos at the time of the signing of the Geneva Agreement has been mentioned.<sup>289</sup> Considering the clandestine manner in which these "volunteers" had arrived in Laos beginning in the early days of January 1961, it was not altogether surprising that their withdrawal should have been undertaken in a similarly clandestine manner, as Avtar Singh argued.<sup>290</sup> Singh's position was that if the object was to get the DRV troops out of Laos, then the

issue of verification became secondary. Intelligence reports were in this instance more trustworthy than the pronouncements of Lao factional spokesmen and likeminded foreign diplomats. As the withdrawal deadline of October 7 neared, an unflappable Pushkin was reported to remark that the North Vietnamese would simply "fade away" into the jungles of Laos.<sup>291</sup> This was an easy out for Pushkin from his commitment, as the United States would not be able to accuse the Soviet Union of failing in its responsibility to ensure withdrawal by the DRV, if in fact it took place (verification of which had been made impossible), and at the same time it had the advantage for the Soviet Union of avoiding an embarrassing confrontation with Hanoi. One may ask why diplomats of 14 nations had been put to the trouble of 14 months of hard work at Geneva negotiating the precise wording of an agreement and safeguards; a simple declaration by governments that they favored the neutrality of Laos would have achieved the same result.

Nevertheless, the presence in Laos of DRV troops after the withdrawal deadline had passed continued to be the subject of alternating denials, limited admissions (they were not really troops but "construction personnel"), and finally, when the evidence in the hands of the royal government could no longer be passed off as so many ill-intentioned fabrications, overt hailing by Hanoi of its "fraternal aid" to the Laotian revolutionaries. Souvanna Phouma (whose birthday on October 7 happily allowed him to combine a celebration with a duty)<sup>292</sup> continued to repeat the assurances he had been given in high places, and later on he began talking about getting "the stragglers" to withdraw; he did not press the issue. Today there is no longer any secret about it, and remains of Vietnamese killed in action in Laos have been transferred back to Vietnam. The ICC managed to conduct only two investigations into complaints of DRV troops in Laos, and in each of these instances the restrictions on movement, time, and contacts with the local population imposed by the Pathet Lao made the investigation worthless.<sup>293</sup>

The MAAG withdrew across the river into Thailand, where the American military aid mission in Bangkok took over its headquarters functions. However, the Pathet Lao faction, supported by the DRV and China, and by the Soviet Union when pressed, charged that American, Thai, South Vietnamese, and Chinese Nationalist troops remained in Laos after the October 7 deadline for withdrawal. The Pathet Lao submitted evidence to support these charges at a meeting on October 8 of the Supreme Military Council of the Forces of the Laotian Kingdom, an organization of which Kong Le was president and Phoune Sipraseuth of the Pathet Lao was vice president but which had no tripartite juridical status and served mainly the purpose of producing propaganda to be broadcast over Radio Khang Khay, which was under Pathet Lao control. Prince Souvanna Phouma said he had not given any authorization for such broadcasts and reprimanded Kong Le for allowing his name to be used for lending credence to such "evidence." The same evidence was later submitted, more pertinently, to the relevant tripartite commission overseeing implementation of the Geneva Agreement, without, however, any request for an ICC investigation of the evidence. 295

The Americans cited may well have been working for the large American aid mission or for the CIA; in neither case would these personnel have qualified as troops. There had always been remnants of Kuomintang troops on the Laos-Burma border, but they were involved in the opium trade and played no role in the war in Laos except on the occasions when their mule caravans were intercepted by the Lao. More credible were the charges of Thai and South Vietnamese soldiers in Laos. The Thai had been in Laos since January 1961 in the form of the PARU and were on the front lines advising the Meo, where they certainly qualified as soldiers. Marshal Sarit was planning to build up the PARU in June 1962.<sup>296</sup> They did not evacuate, and continued to report to their headquarters across the river at Udorn. Since the PARU were described by the CIA as "an Agency developed and controlled and funded asset,"297 this particular violation of the Geneva Agreement was especially grave for the understanding between the United States and the Soviet Union. How did this bode for Soviet enforcement of compliance by the DRV and Pathet Lao? The South Vietnamese were in small numbers in the south, doing what they could to interfere with DRV infiltration across their border.

The effective neutralization of Laos depended as much on the control of military supplies to the armed forces of the three factions before their integration as it did on the withdrawal of foreign military personnel, however. The question of military supplies allowed under Article 6 of the Geneva Protocol as "necessary for the national defense of Laos" and the manner of their delivery was discussed in a cabinet meeting on September 1 that was later the subject of a dispute between the prime minister and Souphanouvong; it was discussed between the prime minister and Unger in September and October. Fortunately, these are matters that are covered by the available documentation. A letter to Unger of September 10, 1962, from the prime minister requesting a continuation of aid under the Military Assistance Program (MAP) to the rightist faction in the transition period pending integration of the three armed forces and in amounts consistent with peacetime conditions<sup>298</sup> led to the establishment of an office in the American aid mission, which the prime minister approved orally.<sup>299</sup> With respect to military aid to the Neutralist army, Souvanna Phouma requested such aid in a letter on November 20, 1962, in response to Unger's letter of November 8.300

The establishment of the Requirements Office (RO), as it was known, was a compromise made necessary by the pressing problems threatening the stability of the PGNU, particularly the continuing violations of the June 24 ceasefire, the latest, by the Pathet Lao. Even so, the existence after October 7 of the RO was subject to be construed as violating Article 4 of the protocol, since the term "foreign military personnel" in that article was defined in Article 1 to include "foreign civilians connected with the supply, maintenance, storing and utilization of war materials." The possibility that the United States might be cited for a "technical violation" of Article 4 in case of an ICC investigation of the American aid mission was one the embassy had to live with. There did not seem to be any way in which the PGNU could request war matériel for its national defense without the existence of a recipient of the request who, by

definition, would be connected with the supply of those materials. Unger, a stickler for details and anxious to avoid new problems in Vientiane, protested Washington messages that described the Requirements Office as a "new organization replacing [the] MAAG."<sup>302</sup> The delicacy of the matter was reflected in the discussion between the two men.

I asked him whether, if I were questioned again or felt the need, I could let it be known that I was in receipt of an official request from the Prime Minister on this matter. While Souvanna [Phouma] did not answer my question directly, he replied in such a way as to indicate he was not at all concerned about this matter and stated that the request for continuation of supplies had been discussed in the Cabinet. Nobody could question, he said, the need for continuing to supply the Army those materials and supplies that were essential to its operation. He envisaged, of course, that amounts would be reduced as the size of the forces were [sic] reduced.<sup>303</sup>

The embassy's contract with Air America was a particularly sensitive matter that required Unger to get cleared with the prime minister. Phoumi Vongvichit had already hinted in interviews with Tony Yared of the Associated Press on August 28 and September 25 that the Front would try to force a shutdown of Air America operations after October 7.304 When Unger mentioned to Souvanna Phouma that the aid mission would be in a position after the MAAG's departure to carry on with the delivery of food and medicine to refugees and other groups in remote areas the prime minister replied that this program should be carried out under the royal government's administration and the Americans should make sure the Meo and other groups understand that their loyalty was to the royal government. Unger agreed and said he would wish as soon as feasible to make this matter the subject of a bilateral aid project agreement with the government. He asked the prime minister to name the officials with whom the aid mission, now under the capable direction of Charles Mann, could start to work out such an agreement, and received the reply Keo Viphakone, secretary of state for social welfare, who had been at the Ban Namone talks, and also the ministry of defense, possibly General Phoumi. 305 Keo Viphakone's wife, from a Luang Prabang family, was the younger sister of Phoumi Vongvichit's wife.

Souvanna Phouma sent identical letters on October 1 to the American and Soviet embassies requesting aid for air transport for provisioning troops in outlying areas during the period preceding the integration of the three armed forces. Unger responded immediately and positively.<sup>306</sup> So did the Soviets, who placed several of the planes they had used in the airlift and their crews at the disposal of Vientiane.<sup>307</sup>

Souvanna Phouma, by another letter of October 1, requested Unger to continue aid to the Meo, arguing that if this were not done the Meo would conclude that the central government was ineffective, and there was a risk they would turn against it. Unger saw this request as "more ambiguous" than the

first, giving the Americans permission to proceed with supply operations to the Meo and at the same time emphasizing again the absolute necessity of carrying this out through government channels. Unger intended to work out some limited interim arrangement with the relevant ministry allowing Air America to continue transporting goods to the Meo and once this was done to reply to Souvanna Phouma's letter mentioning the action already undertaken, that wider negotiations were getting under way, and that Unger was taking careful note of the points raised in the prime minister's letter. Aid to the Meo was particularly sensitive to the PGNU because of the resistance to the Pathet Lao and DRV troops being waged by Vang Pao's guerrillas, who fought with their families alongside and who required rice and other essentially civilian goods, but of course also weapons and ammunition. Unger replied on October 4.

The contract for Air America was shifted from the MAAG to the aid mission effective October 7.310 In view of the restrictions on foreign civilians connected with the supply of war matériel, Unger favored a policy of not allowing Air America to transport personnel or war matériel of the royal army and planned to tell General Phoumi he would have to undertake such resupply operations himself. He did not reveal his intentions with respect to flying supplies, with the exception of aviation fuel, to the Meo outposts, which the royal army lacked the capability to keep supplied. Unger warned the Department of State against portraying the flights to the Meo outposts as flights to aid refugees, since General Phoumi had identified Meo units totaling about 4,500 to 5,000 over a year previously to the ICC as constituting part of the royal army, and Souvanna Phouma had recently referred to Meo in military or paramilitary formations. In order to establish grounds for protests against the Pathet Lao attacks on the Meo as violations of the cease-fire, the armed Meo guerrillas, even intermingled with civilians, often refugees, had to be considered part of the royal army, Unger pointed out. 311 In view of the lack of any agreed map of positions held by the factions, the royal army's provision of supplies to Meo outposts anywhere in the country was completely legal; Pathet Lao attempts to portray these defenders as "bandits," as had happened after 1954, were mere propaganda.

The day after his birthday, Souvanna Phouma attended the end of a debate in the National Assembly, which had met again in defiance of the refusal of the Pathet Lao and some Neutralists to recognize it as the only popularly elected body in the kingdom. The Assembly voted to approve once again the installation of the PGNU, support the policy of restoring peace by compromise among the Lao and by elimination of foreign interference, express faith in the future course of actions by the PGNU, and unanimously confer plenary powers for one year on the government to solve all problems in accordance with the policy the prime minister had enunciated to the king on June 23. Following the vote, Souvanna Phouma thanked the deputies for entrusting powers to the government and briefly summarized the PGNU's policy of peace, neutrality, unity, and independence within the framework of the Geneva Agreement. The Assembly's public backing for the prime minister for policy goals, over the meaning of which there was no ambiguity in anyone's mind who was present in the

Assembly chamber, unquestionably strengthened Souvanna Phouma in his dealings with a faction for which the stated policy goals held very different meanings and which preferred secrecy to openness, violence to non-violence, and about which none of the non-Communist Lao had any illusion.

Indeed, the meetings of the cabinet during this period were marked by tense bickering over the issues of supplies to the Meo units and integration of the armed forces and accusations that one faction or the other was not respecting the Geneva Agreement.<sup>313</sup> Even in the king's presence, the cabinet erupted in tense exchanges over Souvanna Phouma's attendance at the Assembly and his having taken decisions without consulting his colleagues; the only statement on which the cabinet was agreed was that it was necessary for all foreign forces to leave Laos and for the factions to work for the unification of the country. Relations between Souvanna Phouma and Phoumi Vongvichit grew very bitter now, and the former counted on his half-brother to restore a working relationship between the two factions, including respect for the cease-fire. Souvanna Phouma offered his resignation to the king, but was dissuaded.<sup>314</sup> He repeated his threat on several occasions in the coming days. He was expecting more trouble, particularly on the Plain of Jars. He was bolstered by a visit from Mike Mansfield, and he made sure the senator and his delegation met and talked with the members of the various factions so that no doubt would be left in their minds about the complexity of the situation.

On November 27, the cabinet agreed in principle on forming an integrated armed force of 10,000 men from each faction and demobilizing the remainder. But this step forward was largely theoretical in view of the failure of the tripartite Cease-fire Committee to resolve many of the pressing differences among the factions. This committee had agreed on the date of the cease-fire, on the prohibition on all three factions against launching any attack, and on the prohibition on all three factions against provocative acts, including aiming propaganda against the other factions. The disagreements were more numerous. The Neutralists and Phoumists favored some regroupment, while the Pathet Lao favored none. The Pathet Lao proposed that no faction take any new territory or establish any new posts. On supplying the forces pending integration, the Neutralists and Pathet Lao proposed allowing all supply operations, but with advance agreement of the three factions and under the control of the cease-fire committee. The Phoumists proposed that all factions have full freedom to supply their units, including by air flights throughout the territory of Laos. The Neutralist members of the committee defended the principle that Laos should be considered a single country and not be divided into separate zones.<sup>315</sup> Similarly, agreement in principle was reached in the cabinet on forming an integrated police force of 6,000 men. Vientiane and Luang Prabang were to be demilitarized and policed by an integrated force.316

Prince Souphanouvong's prolonged absence from Vientiane coincided with meetings in Hanoi, to be followed by meetings in Sam Neua and Khang Khay. The party center had taken stock of the situation and, amid what must have been great uncertainty about Kennedy's next moves in Indochina, now

decided on its strategy and instructed its agents to take the necessary dispositions for carrying them out. Again, definitive word must await the opening of the party archives in Hanoi, but from what is known of the sequence of actions it seems fairly clear that the party center viewed neutralization of Laos as merely a tactical step on its way to achievement of its real goal, elimination of the nationalists and uncontested Communist control of Laos and Vietnam. In this strategy, the Pathet Lao were apprentice revolutionaries; they had not yet engineered a wholesale liquidation of their opponents as the Viet Minh had done in 1945 and 1946. At the opposite end of the socialist camp's long frontier, in Cuba, Khrushchev had just suffered a humiliating defeat at the hands of the U.S. imperialists; did this encourage the party leaders in Hanoi to redouble their efforts on behalf of the world revolution? Maintaining exclusive Pathet Lao control over eastern Laos had become essential. Phoumi Vongvichit was effectively stalling moves in the Central Commission to have the ICC investigate intelligence reports of the presence of DRV soldiers at Tchepone and elsewhere.<sup>317</sup>

On the Plain of Jars, the party's agents were orchestrating events to fall into a scenario of their choosing. Pressure on Kong Le's Neutralist troops was growing. The Pathet Lao had been surreptitiously pinching off Kong Le's supplies from Hanoi for several months, forcing him to approach the American aid mission to supply such things as blankets, rice, and salt, which could only be done by air. At the same time, following a request from Foreign Minister Quinim Pholsena, the ICC withdrew its small representation from Xieng Khouang. With the party center's affairs in Laos in good hands, Marek Thee took the opportunity to absent himself from Laos for a month. While Pathet Lao radio continued to broadcast propaganda intended to fill listeners with hatred for the U.S. imperialists, the radio station Voice of the Lao Kingdom at Khang Khay, which was nominally Neutralist but actually in the hands of the agents of the Lao Patriotic Front, broadcast propaganda aimed at sowing dissension among Kong Le's troops in violation of the agreement within the Cease-fire Committee.

The propaganda was a part of the Front's practice of its well-known united front strategy to win non-Communist nationalists over to its side. What was at first viewed as isolated dissidence in Kong Le's ranks soon emerged as a fullscale effort to split the Neutralists and create a "Patriotic Neutralist" faction under officers amenable to the Front's control and allied with, but ostensibly independent of, the Front. This pseudo-Neutralist faction was set up under the leadership of a turncoat, Lieutenant Deuane Sunnalath. There had already been a few shooting incidents between Neutralists and Pathet Lao soldiers. When "Patriotic Neutralist" soldiers shot down an Air America C-123 flying rice to the Plain of Jars airfield for the Neutralists at Souvanna Phouma's request on November 27, killing the two American pilots, the action was in complete conformity with the party center's strategy. A French intelligence report of a meeting of the Front's Central Committee about November 20 identified three objectives: first, hostility to Americans; second, cutting of further supplies to the Neutralists; and third, dividing the Neutralists. The report also laid down some implementing action, including action against Air America.<sup>318</sup> The downing of the plane at the Plain of Jars fulfilled all three objectives.

Kong Le had been called away unexpectedly to Hanoi some days previously to undergo a nose operation, but his second in command rapidly organized the roundup of about 100 men who manned the anti-aircraft guns at the Plain of Jars airfield and who styled themselves as the "Phetsarath Battalion," but Deuane himself escaped and holed up at the Pathet Lao camp at Khang Khay. Pathet Lao radio issued statements in Deuane's name as leader of the "Patriotic Neutralists," attacked "U.S. imperialism" for plotting assassinations, and attacked Vientiane newspapers such as *Xieng Mahason* and *Pasaniyom* for being American lackeys spreading lies on dissension between Neutralists and the Pathet Lao. The Front did not yet dare attack Prince Souvanna Phouma directly, however, and broadcast the line that the Neutralist dissidents supported Souvanna Phouma's policy of peace and neutrality against the reactionaries and Americans.

After a few days in which he satisfied himself as to the cause of the Air America shootdown and broadcast an appeal for calm, Souvanna Phouma took off in the company of Souphanouvong for the Plain, where he hoped to resolve the growing differences among the Neutralist troops and end the hostile intervention of the Pathet Lao. The prime minister disregarded the receipt shortly before takeoff of a message from the Plain warning that the security of his Soviet gift aircraft, piloted by a Lao crew, could not be assured.<sup>319</sup> He had invited Quinim to join him, but Quinim had refused, not out of cowardice but because he was more deeply involved in the dissension in the Neutralist ranks than anyone realized at the time. Souvanna Phouma did not press for ICC involvement in the issue, preferring to settle the dispute personally with his halfbrother and the men who he knew controlled the Front, just as he had preferred to rely on the assurances he had received from President Kennedy and Pham Van Dong (to whom he paid another visit at the end of October) when the issue of the withdrawal of DRV troops came up instead of relying on the ICC to police their withdrawal. This was just as well, for the diplomats in Vientiane had found a new subject for debate: whether the action of mutinous soldiers at the Plain constituted a violation of the cease-fire. As a result of a second visit a few days later by the prime minister, the Supreme Military Council of the Forces of the Laotian Kingdom was broken up and Kong Le's troops and those of Deuane and the Pathet Lao were physically separated.

In spite of the publication on February 11, 1963, of a communiqué in which the three factions announced agreement to accelerate discussions on force demobilization and establishment of a mixed police force in Vientiane, to proceed with an exchange of banknotes between Vientiane and Xieng Khouang, to cease radio and press attacks on members of the PGNU, and to reaffirm the principle of unanimity of decisions on important questions, tensions started to rise again as the king, accompanied by the prime minister and an important part of the cabinet, departed for a royal tour of the Geneva signatories. Lieutenant Ketsana Vongsouvan, who had been Kong Le's right-hand man, was assassinated on February 12, allegedly by a dissident Neutralist. There were further defections from Kong Le, officers who were lured away by various promises from the Pathet Lao; but the men under these defectors almost invariably re-

turned to Kong Le's fold, it was noticed. Neither Deuane nor any of his fellow mutineers was ever brought to justice, and later, under the people's republic, Deuane was rewarded for his service to the revolution with a sinecure. There were no mutinies on the Pathet Lao side; any Pathet Lao soldier who had dared defect to the Neutralists, much less make public statements condemning the Pathet Lao's dependence on foreigners, would have faced immediate execution at the hands of the Pathet Lao.

Souvanna Phouma and General Phoumi were in full and frank consultation on the situation on the Plain. Kong Le said in March that he did not need reinforcements from Phoumi's forces now, although he planned to maintain discreet contact with them and particularly with Vang Pao's self-defense units which held the high ground surrounding the Plain. Kong Le asked Phoumi for help with armaments and other supplies, however, and this was being urgently studied by the royal army, with participation by the Requirements Office. Souvanna Phouma discussed this need with Unger. 320 For the moment, Phoumi was quite happy to leave the Neutralist forces separate from his own men, with their own identity.

By now, it was evident that the ICC was fulfilling neither its role of reporting violations or threats of violations of the protocol under Article 8 nor that of supervising and controlling the cease-fire under Article 9. Thus, in deference to Prince Souvanna Phouma's reluctance to place his half-brother in an untenable situation with the party decision makers by insisting on an ICC presence in the zone of obvious danger, two more articles of the protocol had been emptied of all meaning within four months of the signing. In Washington, President Kennedy could not understand the inactivity of the ICC and put Harriman on the spot about it. Harriman sent a cable to the field saying that Washington had concluded that unless the Canadian and Indian members of the ICC assumed the responsibilities which they had assumed at Geneva they would be responsible for the dismal failure of the Geneva Agreement. He wanted the governments in Ottawa and New Delhi approached in this vein.<sup>321</sup> The very situation that Kennedy had feared in November 1961 with respect to the ICC had come about. In March 1967, the ICC was still debating whether to approve forwarding to the co-chairmen its first periodic report of activities covering the period May 1963 through December 1964.<sup>322</sup>

King Savang's three-day state visit to Cambodia, part of the royal tour, which ended with a final communiqué in which he expressed appreciation for Prince Sihanouk's help in bringing about the Geneva conference, in effect made amends for the spat between the two sovereigns the previous year. The Lao side expressed support for Sihanouk's proposal for guarantees of Cambodia's neutrality, a formulation that avoided the Lao having to take a stand on the border claims to Stung Treng.<sup>323</sup> The tour also included the United States, which allowed Phoumi Vongvichit, who seems to have been excluded from high-level policy discussions, to satisfy his curiosity about the American Constitution.

There were growing doubts in the prime minister's entourage about the loyalty of Foreign Minister Quinim Pholsena. As president of the Santiphab

Party, Quinim had supported Prince Souvanna Phouma's neutralist policy since the very beginning. He had believed, like Souvanna Phouma, that the nationalists would defeat the Lao Patriotic Front in a fair election. But the humiliating defeat he had suffered in the April 1960 election due to General Phoumi's rigging, his replacement as interior minister by Phoumi in Souvanna Phouma's second cabinet of August 1960, and all the events that followed had induced in him a violent hatred for the general.<sup>324</sup> Not a Communist himself, starting with his hasty trip to Hanoi in December 1960 to secure the aid from the DRV that maintained Kong Le's force in being, Quinim had been forced into ever-closer accommodation with the Communists. As leader of the PGNU's delegation to Geneva, he had dissuaded Souvanna Phouma from making regroupment, integration, and demobilization of the armed forces of the three factions a matter of conference record and he had substituted for Souvanna Phouma's draft neutrality declaration one that he brought with him from Khang Khay, via Hanoi, and that bore all the signs of Communist draftsmanship. Acceptance by the conference of this substitute document was now recognized to have been an error on the prime minister's part. Later, it was Quinim who requested the withdrawal of the ICC team from the Plain of Jars just prior to the plane shootdown, which in retrospect seemed suspicious, as did Quinim's record of siding with Phoumi Vongvichit in the latter's stalling in the Central Commission of requests for investigations by the ICC. Quinim was also thought to have influenced Deuane to defect from Kong Le, and relations between Quinim and Kong Le had grown particularly bad. If reports from Neutralist sources at the Plain are to believed, Quinim had in recent weeks been intriguing with the Pathet Lao and urging them to seize power from the Neutralists by February 15.325

Quinim may have been discontent doing the bidding of others and have seen himself as the real leader of the Neutralist faction and Souvanna Phouma's legitimate successor. He may have been waiting for Souvanna Phouma to give way to discouragement as a result of the adverse events of the winter of 1962–1963 and hand the king his letter of resignation, which the prime minister had reportedly drafted since November.<sup>326</sup> Souvanna Phouma was giving serious consideration to dropping Quinim from the cabinet but hesitated to do so lest this upset the carefully balanced coalition cabinet.<sup>327</sup>

On April 1, Quinim was gunned down by a member of his guard as he and his wife returned to his house in Vientiane from attending a reception for the king on the latter's return from his tour abroad, another of those acts of violence such as the assassination of Defense Minister Kou Voravong in 1954. The reception was not interrupted, and instead of shock there was no immediate reaction in the town, as if people had been expecting something like this to happen. In a written confession, the corporal triggerman stated he had acted from nationalist motives. Hanoi, predictably, blamed the Americans, an accusation Unger took seriously enough to lodge a protest with the PGNU. Quinim's wife became another figure to be accorded honorary status at the advent of the people's republic.

In the first days of April, as intelligence agents reported the replacement of Pathet Lao garrisons near Nong Het by DRV troops and the movement of the former westward toward the Plain of Jars, a series of clashes took place that resulted in the Neutralists' having to withdraw from positions they had occupied since the June 24 cease-fire. The positions were immediately occupied by the pseudo-Neutralists. The Front was thus able to claim that the incidents involved only the "Patriotic Neutralists" and Kong Le, who, in spite of his continued friendly relations with Singkapo, the Pathet Lao commander on the spot, was portrayed more and more in the Front's propaganda as being subject to the pernicious influence of the "U.S. imperialists." The Front thus also avoided the charge that it was occupying new territory and setting up new posts.

Prince Souvanna Phouma was not deceived by the shadow play going on at the Plain, and if he sometimes appeared to Unger to waver uncertainly instead of taking decisive action against the dissidents in the armed forces of his own faction, he publicly expanded on the danger these developments held for the future of the Geneva Agreement and the neutrality of Laos. In a statement on April 18, he refrained from mentioning the DRV by name, and spoke of the existence of a concerted plan,<sup>329</sup> which, in the light of the connections among the parties on the opposite side (which were only publicly proclaimed on anniversaries, it is true), clearly implicated Hanoi. The prime minister was receiving strong backing from the Indian chairman of the ICC, Avtar Singh, who was acting on his requests immediately and riding roughshod over Thee's attempts at obstruction. Unger also was urging on him the danger of allowing Deuane to go on subverting the Neutralist forces and was promising the prime minister that the United States wished to do everything possible to ensure that the Neutralist forces on the Plain were maintained and not weakened in any way and that this included the provision of arms and ammunition to replace their Soviet supplies. 330

In mid-April, Kong Le was driven out of Xieng Khouang and finally faced an all-out assault. Kong Le's men fought back bravely against the combined forces of the Pathet Lao, the DRV, and several hundred "Patriotic Neutralists" and withdrew to a new position at Muong Phanh. The chief of the French Military Mission at Phong Savan, Captain Janeau, recognized the Viet Minh tactics in the attacks on the Neutralists. 331 Although the party center was chalking up short-term gains in territory and political gains in that some of the best nationalist leaders were busily plotting each other's assassination, it was by no means certain that escalation would prove to be to the party's advantage. The Neutralists were being forced to rely on the Americans for supplies. The re-commitment of DRV troops in Laos might push the Americans into some form of counterescalation. In Washington, President Kennedy wanted to know what action could be taken in retaliation against Hanoi, and his military advisers suggested bombing North Vietnam. 332 But in the party's view things were not going well in South Vietnam, and the control of eastern Laos thus assumed great importance in the party's strategy, worth a certain amount of risk-taking.

Prince Souvanna Phouma spoke with heat of the Front's perfidy when he met the representatives of the co-chairmen. It was by no means a question only of dissident Neutralists but a clear Pathet Lao action, with DRV cadres with the Pathet Lao forces. He no longer talked about the assurances he said he had

received from Pham Van Dong concerning the withdrawal of DRV troops from Laos, but was instead requesting the co-chairmen to intervene with the DRV to stop the fighting.<sup>333</sup> Souvanna Phouma also called in the DRV ambassador, Le Van Hien, and repeated his charge of DRV involvement.<sup>334</sup> When Canadian Commissioner Paul Bridle drafted a plan to send an ICC team anew to the Plain, Souvanna Phouma appeared pleased and told Unger he would insist that Souphanouvong agree to make the necessary arrangements. Moreover, the Americans and the French were back on the same wavelength, in Laos at least; Unger requested that the French review a request for arms from Kong Le against their inventory at the Séno base. Unger also raised the question of pay for the Neutralist army with General Phoumi, who gave assurances he had authorized payments for this purpose.<sup>335</sup>

Souphanouvong and Phoumi Vongvichit withdrew from Vientiane during April, using the assassinations of Quinim and of a high-ranking Neutralist police officer to claim that their personal security could not be ensured. The spread of the war had hardened feelings, and there was no guarantee that if they were arrested again as they had been in 1959 they would not be subjected to summary justice and executed. The two secretaries of state the Front left in Vientiane had no decision-making power whatsoever. Two ministers of Souvanna Phouma's own Neutralist Party, Khamsouk Keola and General Heuane Mongkongvilay, also took fright and left Vientiane for safer places; General Heuane had been a member of General Sounthone's short-lived Supreme Committee of the National Army in December 1960 and was the PGNU official responsible for demobilization. Souphanouvong refused Souvanna Phouma's offer to hold cabinet meetings in Luang Prabang but continued nevertheless to maintain the position that any actions taken by the cabinet without tripartite agreement were illegal, although his departure from Vientiane considerably weakened the force of this argument. Phoumi Vongvichit's departure from his post at the information ministry brought the advantage that the national radio was at last free to broadcast news about the fighting on the Plain and the texts of the prime minister's communiqués, which Vongvichit had assiduously censored for the previous three weeks.<sup>336</sup> To confer with his ministers, Souvanna Phouma was compelled to shuttle to Khang Khay, as he had shuttled to Savannakhet in the autumn of 1960.

The prime minister was accompanied on many of these trips by the British and Soviet ambassadors and by the ICC commissioners. The principals on the Plain—Souphanouvong, Singkapo, Kong Le, and Deuane (who made a specialty of laying down conditions for the restoration of peace)—usually appeared, and there were lengthy discussions among the Lao. However, as everyone knew, these were front men and any proposal of substance to the Pathet Lao had to be referred back for consideration to the Front's Central Committee in Sam Neua, whither Phoumi Vongvichit had retired, then to the People's Party of Laos Central Committee in nearby Na Kay, then to the commission for Laos of the Vietnamese Communist Party Central Committee in Hanoi, and the appropriate instructions had to take the same circuit back again to Khang Khay or Vientiane.

The appearance of Nouhak at these meetings in Khang Khay in late April and early May, however, showed that they were of more than routine interest to

the party center. Nouhak had led the Front's delegation to the Ban Namone negotiations, and he usually remained out of sight in Na Kay, Sam Neua Province, the base area of the Lao revolution. The Agence France-Presse correspondent Joel Henri, who hitched a ride on a plane from Khang Khay to Pathet Lao–controlled Sam Neua with a touring Soviet variety troupe in January, described with awe the "regime of iron" under which the people there lived. The shops had empty shelves and the town looked deserted.<sup>337</sup> Three years previously the shops had been well stocked and there was new construction activity.<sup>338</sup> Henri's unqualified admiration for the disciplined and regimented lives of the people who were in the vanguard of the revolution was an attitude fairly common among Western intellectuals, especially Europeans, and reappeared later in Cambodia in connection with the Khmer Rouge.

From the relative safety of Khang Khay, a mostly acrimonious correspondence with the prime minister over Souphanouvong's signature tried to lay the blame for violations of the Geneva Agreement on the latter at the behest of the "U.S. imperialists." Many of these charges were disingenuous, if not cynical, considering the circumstances, and they showed there was little hope of narrowing the enormous gap between the nationalist and Communist interpretations of a Laos enjoying "peace, independence, and neutrality." The fact that Souphanouvong allowed his name to be affixed to countless letters of protest to the ICC and co-chairmen couched in the stilted phrases of party propaganda alien to a man of his intelligence could only be explained by his need to maintain credibility with the party center, which monopolized his life. All these men were hostages to the system in which they were trapped. They had sons and daughters studying in Hanoi, Peking, and Moscow, where they were at the beck and call of the party should the party decide to subject their parents to discipline for deviation from the party line. They needed protection, as Quinim had intimated to friends at Geneva. Souphanouvong was no exception, as he had a Vietnamese Communist wife and the fate of his children was in the party's hands.

Souvanna Phouma continued to believe that his half-brother was not a Communist. Although he was publicly the leader of the Front, Souphanouvong's leadership role in the still-secret Lao People's Revolutionary Party which controlled the Front was revealed only in 1975, and as a disciplined party member it is likely that he did not reveal his party membership until then. Souvanna Phouma, while informed by his intelligence services of the existence of the Lao party and its links with Hanoi, and remembering Souphanouvong's opposition of 1955 (which the latter certainly related to Souvanna), continued to believe his brother was more a nationalist than a Communist. Souvanna Phouma also was aware that some of the statements broadcast by Pathet Lao Radio in his half-brother's name were not drafted by Souphanouvong.<sup>339</sup> Also, some messages Souphanouvong wrote to his half-brother were never delivered, indicating censorship by the party.<sup>340</sup>

In private, Souphanouvong could be charming, not to say disarming. He had apologized to Unger, with apparent sincerity, about the loss of life in the Air America shootdown. With his brother also, of course, there was frank talk. When Souvanna Phouma proposed that the ICC send a team to the Plain of

Jars, Souphanouvong at first, with complete reasonableness, encouraged a brief visit by the ICC, 341 but after he arrived at Khang Khay he changed his line to conform with the party center's decision that no ICC presence could be tolerated on the Plain. The enforcement of this decision was Nouhak's responsibility. In one discussion at Khang Khay on April 21, Souphanouvong played the part of host for a large group that, alarmed by Kong Le's latest reports of the fighting, had flown up from Vientiane. The visitors included the prime minister, British Ambassador Donald Hopson, Soviet Ambassador Sergei A. Afanassiev, ICC Chairman Avtar Singh, Canadian Commissioner Bridle, and Polish Commissioner Thee. After a discussion in which the two princes gave their separate versions of the fighting, the talk turned to the ICC. Avtar Singh said he hoped the ICC could play a helpful role. Hopson then spoke at some length about his responsibilities to the Geneva signatories and why world opinion would not accept that in this dangerous situation maximum use was not being made of the ICC. Souvanna Phouma joined in full support of Hopson's argument and said he needed to have the ICC at Khang Khay as well as with Kong Le. Thee intervened with his usual arguments about the futility of fielding ICC teams unless an agreed-upon map showing the cease-fire line had been produced, without mentioning which side had opposed producing such a map. Souvanna Phouma, ignoring this, then asked Souphanouvong directly to accept an ICC team at Khang Khay. Souphanouvong did not answer, but after a short consultation with Nouhak it was Nouhak who said "No!" A further discussion ensued with Hopson and Bridle strongly supporting the essentiality of the ICC's role and Thee vigorously arguing against it. Finally, Souphanouvong took the position that since the Front was not responsible for the situation, the others who started it all would have to accept an ICC team. Avtar Singh, who had not been sleeping, picked this up immediately and pinned Souvanna Phouma down to an agreement that a team should be stationed "with Kong Le." Nouhak had by this time left the group. When Souphanouvong confirmed this and Souvanna Phouma gave his agreement, Thee was left without an argument. The discussion ended on this note, and the visitors boarded their helicopter for the two-hour flight back to Vientiane. 342 Such was the diplomacy of implementing the 1962 Geneva Agreement on Laos.

Souvanna Phouma put his request formally in writing.<sup>343</sup> This was what Avtar Singh had been waiting for, and he found a convenient formula for overcoming Polish objections by deploying a temporary team on a continuous basis to Kong Le's headquarters at Muong Phanh. He received enthusiastic backing for this initiative from a civil servant in the ministry of external affairs, C. B. Muthamma, who sent him instructions with some bite in them; he was to get an ICC team onto the Plain at all costs and was to report to the co-chairmen its finding on where responsibility for the fighting lay (and since the Neutralists allowed the ICC into their zone of control and the Pathet Lao did not, where the responsibility for continued fighting lay would soon become obvious).<sup>344</sup>

## NEUTRALIZATION IN LAOS FALLS APART

The crisis on the Plain of Jars in April 1963 showed the worthlessness, within less than a year of the signing of the Geneva Agreement on Laos, of the ambi-

tious undertaking Pushkin had given Harriman. After Khrushchev gave his assurances to the king and the prime minister during their visit to Moscow in March that the Soviet Union would work for peace in Laos and received two separate appeals from Souvanna Phouma for action in the April crisis on the Plain (Ambassador Afanassiev having proved himself totally ineffectual, not to say uninterested), the premier received Harriman in Moscow on April 26 and told him bluntly that the Soviet Union could do nothing to influence, much less enforce any sort of behavior on, the Communist signatories. "No socialist state interferes in the internal affairs of any other. Each state makes and keeps its own agreements," he said with reference to the DRV. Harriman reminded Khrushchev of his understanding of the meaning of the reference in Article 8 to the role of the co-chairmen, without apparently mentioning Pushkin's name, perhaps because Pushkin had recently died, which had made British dealings with the Soviets "difficult." The earthy Khrushchev observed that Harriman, the very model of the patrician, was very clever in trying to put such a responsibility on him.346 Khrushchev sent back a message to President Kennedy in response to a letter Harriman had conveyed from Kennedy recalling their "mutual commitment in Vienna":347 "Tell the President that we are still true to our word given in Vienna; but the situation is very delicate. We have given our word in regard to a third party and this makes for real problems."348

This amazing conversation, with its portentous implications for American allies in Indochina, reflected Khrushchev's evolving relations with the Chinese.<sup>349</sup> It was mainly out of consideration of the Soviet rivalry with the Chinese that the Soviets were supplying the DRV with earth-moving equipment and trucks in 1962–1963 to improve transportation on the Ho Chi Minh Trail<sup>350</sup> at the same time that a Russian was allegedly acting for peace in Laos as Geneva co-chairman. Le Duan made an important speech on March 13 in which he stressed, once more, "revolutionary violence."351

In short, this meant that three months of negotiating over wording of this particular provision involving six successive drafts by Pushkin and three by the Western participants, all of which were trying to nail down the responsibility in such a way as to avoid offending any of the conference participants, had come to naught.352 From April 26, 1963, on the co-chairmen ceased to play any effective role in deciding the outcome of the war in Laos. They were the source and destination of a voluminous correspondence, between themselves and among the various parties. Their representatives in Vientiane played an active part in a sort of shuttle diplomacy between Vientiane and the Front headquarters at Khang Khay. But the outcome was decided by the Laotians themselves and their foreign allies. Statements from Moscow on the situation in Laos became little more than repackaged propaganda from Radio Pathet Lao and Radio Hanoi; American, British, French, and Canadian diplomats in Vientiane, doing their best to keep the PGNU afloat, wasted little time over them. Moderate Lao nationalists such as Tiao Sisoumang Sisaleumsak, Souvanna Phouma's nephew, held the Soviets to blame for the failure of neutralization. Souvanna Phouma was also disappointed by the Soviet failure, but he had been realistic enough all

along not to count on the Soviets where Hanoi was concerned.<sup>353</sup> Between July 1962 and March/April 1963, the tripartite Cease-fire Committee held 58 official meetings and 14 informal meetings.

The cabinet agreement of November 27 to form a mixed police force for Vientiane remained a dead letter. The Direction Nationale de la Coordination (DNC) under Colonel Siho Lamphouthacoul, which had been brought to Vientiane in Phoumi's baggage in December 1960, acted as a law unto itself in Vientiane, arresting and humiliating its enemies, and it was uncertain how much control Phoumi exercised over Siho. This while the Neutralist minister of interior was supposedly in charge but unable to give the simplest order to anyone. When Major Leuang Kongvongsa, the Neutralists' intelligence chief, showed up at Wattay airport on November 5 in the entourage of Kong Le, who was making his first visit to Vientiane since 1960, the DNC arrested him. He spent the next 48 hours in captivity, blindfolded and gagged, with his hands bound by wire and with virtually no food. Some of this time he was held in a sack. It was found to be significant that throughout his detention Leuang was never queried about his possession of counterfeit kip, the ostensible reason for his arrest. Instead, he was closely queried about Kong Le's activities in Vientiane. When Leuang was released it was at General Phoumi's house, after he had been given an opportunity to wash up and have something to eat and drink, personally provided by Mrs. Phoumi.<sup>354</sup> Just how sensitive a matter the formation of a mixed police force in Vientiane was was illustrated on the evening of April 12, 1963, by the assassination by the DNC of Khanti Siphanthong, the police colonel who represented the Neutralists on the committee to discuss unifying the police forces.<sup>355</sup> General Phoumi was reported to be blocking any discussion of integrating the police forces. 356 Thus the factions were killing their opponents in their own zone, a consequence of Harriman's willingness to accept Pushkin's thesis that integration and demobilization of the faction armies was an internal Lao matter.

The Pathet Lao had treated the ICC insultingly during the Ban Namone talks and now continued in the same vein. In a particularly revealing display of contempt, the Pathet Lao on May 3 attacked a party who landed in two ICC helicopters at the Plain of Jars in an effort to recover the body of a member of the French military mission who had been killed the previous day when his vehicle had hit a land mine. One helicopter was destroyed by mortar fire, and several members of the party were wounded by small arms fire before they were evacuated by road some four hours later. Tiao Sisoumang Sisaleumsak, a medical doctor, tended to a wounded Indian officer. A group including the ICC commissioners; British, French, and Soviet diplomats; and Neutralist and Pathet Lao officers returned to the scene of the attack the following day to investigate the incident, recover the body, and retrieve the second helicopter. Avtar Singh's decisive manner forced the Pathet Lao to admit that the hill from which the gunfire had been directed was held by Pathet Lao troops at the time, something that was already known to the party because the Pathet Lao liaison officer accompanying them had left them on the day of the incident saying he was going to stop the firing.<sup>357</sup> Nevertheless, for public consumption, Phoumi

Vongvichit gave the official Pathet Lao version the next day, blaming the Neutralists for the firing and adding that a mixed "investigative commission" composed of Pathet Lao and "Patriotic Neutralist" members had absolved the Pathet Lao of blame.358

Whether the Pathet Lao attack on the ICC helicopters resulted from blind application of the party center's decision to exclude the ICC from the Plain or was an isolated incident provoked by undisciplined soldiers, it threw a pall over the talks at Khang Khay, which continued sporadically through the day of the attack, May 3, and on the following day after Souvanna Phouma and the two ministers accompanying him had spent the night at Khang Khay. Nouhak and Phoumi Vongvichit spoke for the Pathet Lao; Prince Souphanouvong was present but hardly said a word. According to Secretary of State for Rural Affairs Khampheng Boupha, the first dispute occurred over the Front's demand that Deuane be present at the talks; this Souvanna Phouma categorically refused. Nouhak and Phoumi then attacked Souvanna Phouma personally for having been a party to the murder of Quinim. They then outlined their party's position: withdrawal of the Phoumist forces from the Plain; reintegration of Kong Le and Deuane forces, on unspecified terms; negotiations between the reintegrated Neutralists and the Front; and finally, tripartite discussion of a range of "national" problems which were left unspecified but apparently included: a meeting of the cabinet elsewhere than at Vientiane; formation of a mixed commission in Vientiane to renew discussion of administrative integration; and suppression of the DNC and formation of a mixed police force in Vientiane to protect the coalition government.<sup>359</sup> The Pathet Lao strategy was to negotiate over and over again agreements on the same issues in dispute, each time leveraging a bit more advantage out of them.

Souvanna Phouma refrained from replying to the Pathet Lao set of demands because he realized there were important issues of principle at stake. For one thing, Kong Le refused to take Deuane and his dissidents, said to number some 400, back into the Neutralist ranks. Prince Souphanouvong rejected the prime minister's call to have the cabinet meet in Luang Prabang on grounds that unless the prime minister accepted the Pathet Lao proposal of May 4 a cabinet meeting would bear no fruit. Souphanouvong called the prime minister's letter to the ICC requesting a team on the Plain a violation of the agreement among the three parties and of the Geneva Agreement and added, threateningly, that if Souvanna Phouma did not withdraw the ICC to Vientiane he would be "the only one responsible for this violation of the Geneva accords."360 Souvanna Phouma was "in a fighting mood," however. 361

In the same vein, statements broadcast in Souphanouvong's name charged that the Phoumist forces were encroaching on the "liberated areas." In the Communist view, the Phoumists and Neutralists were to blame for any fighting that was occurring (even when the Neutralists were not involved and the Pathet Lao responsibility was clear-cut, as in the attack on a royal army battalion headquarters at Ban Nong Boualao in the south). 362 In this propaganda litany, the "Americano-Phoumist brigands" were responsible for fighting and the Neutralists were

being infiltrated by Phoumist agents, the Americans were guilty of "sending an additional 400 spies to Vientiane," and even the French were accused of spreading toxic chemicals in the "liberated areas." It was clear that the Pathet Lao strategy was to have the Pathet Lao forces and "Patriotic Neutralists" take over the territory occupied by the Neutralists in the 1961–1962 fighting, whether it was on the Plain, in Phong Saly, at Vang Vieng, or on the Mahaxay Plateau. Three more cease-fires agreed between Kong Le and Singkapo followed each other in rapid succession in May, each one giving the Pathet Lao a slightly better edge. The Pathet Lao knew the Western ambassadors would push Souvanna Phouma to concede territory as the price of restoring calm. By early June, both Pathet Lao Radio and the Voice of the Lao Kingdom had dropped the "Patriotic" and were referring to Deuane's group as the Neutralists and to Kong Le's troops as "Kong Le's reactionaries." 363 In other words, the negotiations proposed by Nouhak on May 4 between the Neutralists and the Front were the kind the party center liked best, negotiating with its own agents.<sup>364</sup> Furthermore, the change in terminology implied it was only one more step before the Pathet Lao called Kong Le's boss, Prince Souvanna Phouma, a reactionary; but without a credible leader to put in Souvanna Phouma's place as prime minister, the party center's strategy was stillborn.

In early August, however, when a high-ranking Indian official, Gundevia, visited Vientiane, the window of opportunity that had been opened in April for the ICC under Avtar Singh's capable direction to play a peacekeeping role closed abruptly. Gundevia made it clear the ICC was not to be authorized to field teams at various points of tension around the kingdom, as had been the original intention. The Indian pullback was ascribed by diplomats in Vientiane to the Indian government's wish to avoid any trouble with Poles and Soviets which might interfere with Soviet support of India against China, in circumstances where Thee was threatening to pull the Poles out of the ICC. In September the Pathet Lao shot down an Air America C-46 dropping supplies to an isolated royal army outpost in the Tchepone region. As if to reflect the virtual state of war that now existed in the kingdom, the Pathet Lao announced that they would treat the crewmen who had parachuted and been captured, including an American, Eugene DeBruin, as prisoners of war; in fact, they received none of the humane treatment prescribed for POWs under international conventions.

At the end of August, Phoumi Vongvichit arrived unexpectedly in Vientiane, his security assured by the three ICC commissioners and the co-chairmen representatives. Exuding goodwill, he said he had come "to meet the prime minister and present him proposals concerning a settlement of the situation in Laos." There was speculation that his trip had been hurriedly arranged when the Front learned that Souvanna Phouma was planning to depart in early September for the UN General Assembly and an extended round of foreign visits. The formation of a mixed police force in Vientiane and the neutralization of the capital were known to have high priority on the Front's agenda, and Phoumi Vongvichit's visit appeared to be connected with these objectives, which were also affirmed in a letter he brought the prime minister from Souphanouvong. Phoumi Vongvichit's activities were seen more in the way of bilateral contacts

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than an attempt to restore the PGNU to its former self. He set about visiting his ministry and paying calls on a wide range of Lao personalities in the capital, and, with Souvanna Phouma's backing, arranged a meeting of the tripartite national commission, of which he was a member. Phoumi Vongvichit raised the matter of formation of a mixed police force, but this was brushed aside on General Phoumi's orders. General Phoumi maintained the position that his faction would not consent to discuss the neutralization of Vientiane or Luang Prabang unless the Front's members agreed first to restore the PGNU.

In the early hours of September 9, the day the prime minister was due to leave, a brief exchange of gunfire occurred in Vientiane, reportedly triggered by the Pathet Lao guards who lived in the town to guard the Front's representatives. Royal army troops under General Kouprasith Abhay, the regional commander, overreacted by occupying the center of the town, but casualties were light, leading some to believe the incident may have been triggered for political purposes. Phoumi Vongvichit had moved into Prince Souphanouvong's vacant villa on the river bank the previous evening. In any event, the incident reinforced the Front's contention that the city needed to be neutralized before the PGNU could be restored to functioning. The ICC stepped in, although this was clearly outside its mandate, to help work out more secure living arrangements for the Pathet Lao guards. By the time this had been done, Souvanna Phouma had postponed his departure by a day. <sup>370</sup> General Phoumi's statements and actions during the episode were ambiguous in the eyes of many.<sup>371</sup> The September 9 incident was followed immediately by unusual and intensified Chinese press coverage; twice in the space of six days government statements from Peking expressed serious concern and accused the United States of instigating General Phoumi to take advantage of Souvanna Phouma's planned absence from Vientiane to drive the Front's remaining personnel from the capital and undermine the PGNU, which was to put a rather extreme face on it. 372

Before the end of the year, a meeting between Tiao Sisoumang and Phoumi Vongvichit at the Plain of Jars resulted in a communiqué reaffirming the agreed-upon intentions to neutralize and demilitarize Vientiane and Luang Prabang. With respect to the former, the communiqué called for the formation of a mixed police force to ensure security in accordance with the agreement contained in the PGNU cabinet's communiqué of November 27, 1962.<sup>373</sup>

In the face of grave difficulties, the nationalists tried to carry on as best they could. The National Assembly, whose mandate was not recognized by the Front and even by some members of Souvanna's Neutralist party, opened its usual session on May 11, 1963, in Vientiane. Only Tiao Sisoumang Sisaleumsak among the Neutralist members of the PGNU was at Souvanna Phouma's side at the opening, the others pleading illness or having more credible excuses. Fresh life was breathed into the Assembly when Phoui Sananikone, coming out of his largely self-imposed political retirement, was elected speaker by a vote of 41 to 7 for Tiao Somsanith. Phoui, living up to his reputation as the Lao language's greatest orator, scolded the Front for its intransigent attitude toward national reunification and said that he did not intend to allow the Assembly to

lapse back into its state of somnolence of the previous nine months. Newspaper editorials expressed concern at the opening of legalized gambling casinos and were beginning to question the government's economic stabilization program, which was heavily dependent upon foreign aid. As the year ended, Prince Souvanna Phouma let it be known that he intended to make a visit to Sam Neua, at the invitation of the people there.

## DIEM AT WAR ON TWO FRONTS

As the house of cards so laboriously constructed at Geneva was slowly collapsing in Laos, Diem carried on as best he could. His army had recovered from the setbacks suffered at the hands of the NLF in 1961, and the war was going better in 1962 and 1963. A big factor in this improvement was the strategic hamlet program launched at the start of 1962. This was designed to fortify villages and cut off the flows of recruits and food from them to the Viet Cong. The program was based on the theory that the Viet Cong depended on these flows and could not long survive without them. The numbers of strategic hamlets grew steadily, reaching 2,872 by August 30, 1962; 8,600 out of a projected total of 11,864 were reported in Diem's speech to the National Assembly on October 7, 1963. The program was judged such a success that a similar program was initiated in Laos, with American support, during this period. The resurgence of the army, helped by new helicopter tactics, placed the Viet Cong on the defensive. There were more Viet Cong attacks on villages to obtain food, and captured documents and letters in late 1962 described severe lack of food, medicine, and recruits; generally low morale; desertions; and fear of attack, especially in the Central Highlands.

Classes of the Thu Duc officers training school had grown from 700 to 1,500 and the class entering in the autumn of 1962 numbered 2,000 and had seen more qualified applicants, 2,300, than it could accept.<sup>374</sup> The consumer price of No. 1 rice in Saigon on October 18 and 25, 1962, was 7.5 to 8.1 piasters, compared with 9.5 piasters on October 18, 1961, and 11.0 piasters on October 25, 1961, when scare buying had caused the price to spike.<sup>375</sup>

The problem of infiltration through Laos was still there. In spite of Diem's repeated warnings, it would not be until the summer of 1963 that the United States began seriously to consider meeting the problem that had arisen because of the breakdown of neutralization in Laos. The embassy, the CIA, and MACV responded with enthusiasm to the idea of expanding operations in southern Laos and contesting the corridor to impede the infiltration into South Vietnam. Nolting sought approval to inform Diem and seek his concurrence and collaboration; he proposed to encourage the establishment of liaison officers with the royal Lao army. The State Department approved Nolting's working out the details of Diem's efforts in this regard by communicating directly with the Vientiane embassy. Nolting was instructed not to reveal to Diem details of American planning for operations in southern Laos, however, and was told that "as [the] program develops we will review [the] situation with [a] view [toward] passing to [the] GVN [Government of Vietnam] what they must know." 377

As security improved in the countryside, the lives of the peasants became easier. Diem put this to good use by traveling around the country. He spent an

average of two or three days a week outside Saigon. He toured the most remote villages and districts from Camau to the 17th parallel, visiting several villages on the edge of the DMZ in Trung Luong District, Quang Tri Province, in February 1961, for example. He also visited army posts and training camps and spent Christmas with the troops at a remote outpost. From his days as a province chief he had retained an intense interest in local rural problems—health conditions, water supply, roads and canals, schools, housing, land rents and ownership, crop diversification, seeds and fertilizers, and relations of the Vietnamese with minorities. He was full of ideas and on-the-spot suggestions for improvements. He was especially interested in, and proud of, the agricultural improvement stations his government had established, which taught many things, from growing fruit and nut trees to fish ponds, manioc grinding, and mushroom-growing in rice-straw stacks.

On his trips into the countryside, Diem was more informal than formal; he enjoyed meeting small groups to talk about practical matters and eating simply with a few village elders. His informality was typically Vietnamese, and he bowed instead of shaking hands and slapping backs. He was a fast walker for a short, stout man, and he frequently reached villages by footpaths or by boat.<sup>378</sup> He discouraged press coverage of these tours, and of course there was as yet no television. In the year and a half between July 1, 1958, and September 30, 1959, Diem made 45 trips to the provinces.<sup>379</sup> During the last half of 1960, Diem made 17 trips to 14 provinces, and during the first half of 1961, a time when security was getting worse, he made 16 trips to 15 provinces.<sup>380</sup> In late 1962, Diem was not afraid of plots against him; he was satisfied that the bombing of the Independence Palace on February 27 by two air force officers had been an isolated event.<sup>381</sup> It had forced Diem and Nhu, however, to move temporarily into the Gia Long Palace a block away. The C-47 in which the rebellious Vietnamese officers had escaped to Phnom Penh after their coup of November 1960 had finally been returned by the Cambodians to South Vietnam on October 16, 1962.

Diem viewed his trips into the countryside as a relief from the formality of Saigon, where he had to greet visiting American officials and explain the problems facing his government and seek the Americans' aid in solving them. He was sensitive to the demeaning position this constantly repeated procedure forced on him. At times he wished he could make foreign aid a matter of routine agreements and joint communiqués like the leaders in Hanoi, who were treated in Moscow and Peking like brothers in arms instead of beggars and expected aid as a matter of course. In private, Diem's American visitors to the palace complained about his habit of talking endlessly, not allowing them to get a word in edgewise. As with all things in Vietnam, there were two sides; the problem stemmed as much from the Americans' short attention span as from the length of Diem's monologues.

With the return of greater security in the countryside, it was possible to see the relationship between insecurity and anti-government feelings among the population. When the government was unable to protect the people, it received no cooperation from them in the fight against the Viet Cong, no intelligence, no moral or material support; it was fighting an unseen enemy in a vacuum. Peace and protection were what the ordinary people hungered for, far more than government reform. The scale of violence was directly related to the breakdown of public safety. It was not, as some thought, dissatisfaction with the government (unpopularity of the government, in American political terms) that was the cause of the successes scored by the Viet Cong.

The Viet Cong portrayed themselves as a popular movement. Yet their actions caused suffering among those same people they claimed to be fighting for. Most of the victims of Viet Cong terrorism were completely innocent civilians. They were maimed by mines or caught in ambushes as their buses traveled country roads, had their houses and villages burned down, and were recruited against their will into the Viet Cong. In documented instances, villagers demanded the release of captured rural health workers and well-drilling and pump repair teams. The Viet Cong attacked purely civilian targets such as the railroad, as the Viet Minh had done in the north during the August Revolution, and barges on canals, directly interfering with people's livelihood. The popular uprising against the "fascist government" was a tenet of Marxist-Leninist dogma, and this was the image projected by Communist propaganda.

In Washington, there were as yet few who were willing to credit the Viet Cong with waging a popular resistance war, but the discontent of the urban elite in Saigon could be laid at the regime's door without too much fear of contradiction, especially by the French, who were continuing to maneuver behind the scenes after the failure of the November 1960 coup. In September 1961, Professor Pinto called on Assistant Secretary for Far Eastern Affairs Walter P. McConaughy at Dean Acheson's request to talk about the Diem government. Professor Pinto reported indications of political unrest and dissatisfaction among the intellectuals in Saigon with whom he was in contact. He felt that a possible solution might include a change of government to a new government supported by the United Nations. He suggested that if the new government adopted a neutralist policy similar to that of Cambodia and maintained only sufficient troops to defend itself, Vietnam's prospects would be increased.<sup>383</sup> The following month, McConaughy sent Nolting a memorandum outlining specific courses of action in the event that Diem lost effective control over the government and included a discussion of the choice of suitable individuals to succeed him. Mendenhall, with his usual thoroughness, annotated the embassy's copy of this document; he, also, was thinking about successors, and he rejected several names and added others in his marginal notes. Also during 1961, Lucien E. Conein, the soldier of fortune and former OSS officer who was retired from the army and working for the CIA, moved back to Saigon, where he and his wife, Elyette, acquired a comfortable house and entertained the generals.<sup>384</sup>

John Kenneth Galbraith, the Harvard professor and Kennedy's ambassador to India, was in Washington in November and Kennedy asked for his views on Vietnam. Galbraith produced a memorandum titled "A Plan for South Vietnam." His plan, intended to avoid the high risk and limited promise of armed intervention, was less a plan than a list of initiatives, first, a UN resolution "con-

firming the independence of the Republic of Vietnam and calling for immediate dispatch of United Nations observer groups to Vietnam," as if the United Nations made a practice of confirming the independence or non-independence of governments or movements that were not UN members and dispatching observer groups to them; second, a Harriman approach to the Soviets about a cessation of fighting in South Vietnam, an initiative already undertaken informally by Harriman in his talks with Pushkin in Geneva; and, third, an approach by Nehru to Ho Chi Minh, which probably was the most sensible suggestion of all given India's good relations with both North and South Vietnam. Galbraith's number one recommendation to Kennedy, however, was to get rid of Nolting and replace him with "someone . . . who will insist once and for all on government reform, and who will understand the United States political implications of developments there [in Vietnam]."385

On his way back to New Delhi, Galbraith stopped in Saigon. Nolting, whose houseguest he was, was largely tied up at the moment with time-consuming negotiations with Diem on a joint plan of action stemming from the Taylor mission. 386 After two and a half days of discussions in Saigon, Galbraith sent Kennedy another memorandum containing his impressions. Galbraith had acquired an enviable reputation in the United States as an economist and writer, but the South Vietnamese would have been offended by Galbraith's description of their capital as "a rather shabby version of a French provincial city—say, Toulouse, as I remember it."387 They would have been even more astonished to read his political analysis. "The key and inescapable point, then, is the ineffectuality (abetted debatably by the unpopularity) of the Diem government," Galbraith wrote. Reflecting the trend of opinion in academic circles, obviously, he thought a military government would do better. 388 Probably nowhere in American diplomatic history is there an example of an influential envoy's reaching such a sweeping judgment about the politics of a country in so short a time and with the economy of not even meeting its leader. One of the members of the mission with whom he talked was Mendenhall.

Harriman, appointed assistant secretary of state for Far Eastern affairs in December 1961, was still not willing to argue publicly for Diem's ouster. Asked in February 1962 by Senator J. William Fulbright, chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, "Is there any alternative to Diem that you can think of?" he replied: "He is the head of the government, and I would not have thought that it was a proper function of the United States to attempt to make and break governments."389 On April 6, Harriman told Kennedy he did not think the United States should actively work against Diem because there was nobody to replace him.<sup>390</sup>

Mendenhall, however, after leaving Saigon, reviewed the political and military situation since 1959 and set out his thoughts on what actions would be required should alternative leadership in Saigon be desired by the United States. Mendenhall's memorandum was as decisive and precise as Galbraith's was indecisive and imprecise. Its conclusion was that "we cannot win the war with the Diem-Nhu methods, and we cannot change those methods no matter

how much pressure we put on them." His single recommendation: "Get rid of Diem, Mr. and Mrs. Nhu and the rest of the Ngô family." He then named Vice President Tho and Generals Duong Van Minh and Le Van Kim as likely candidates for leadership, the first two because, while they were not likely to be much more efficient than Diem, "would permit U.S. advisers to operate closely on the civilian as well as the military side," which Diem had refused the Americans. He then reviewed the risks involved. The final section of Mendenhall's memo bore the title "How the Coup Might Be Carried Out" and discussed such practical matters as secrecy, timing, and evacuation of dependents. Its key operative phrase read: "The aim would be immediate seizure of all of the Ngô brothers and Mme. Nhu and their immediate removal from Viet-Nam if they survived the process of seizure." Mendenhall had produced the first blueprint for a coup d'état to overthrow the government of President Diem.

The striking aspects of this document are as follows: (1) the statement that the war in Vietnam is to be won by the United States; (2) the hypothesis that the war cannot be won with the present regime in power; (3) the assumption that it is up to the United States (hiding behind a thin veil of secrecy) to "get rid of" Diem and his entire family; (4) the relegating of constitutionality to a nonfactor in making choices to replace Diem, other than a "preference" for Vice President Tho over the other alternatives cited; (5) the need to keep American involvement secret, in other words not to be seen acting overtly as a colonial power; (6) the willingness to see the Ngô family killed implied by the phrase "if they survived the process of seizure," in other words, the legitimacy of the use of violence against allies to achieve American ends; and (7) the clear implication that an important factor to be considered in choosing a successor government following the carrying out of the coup is the instrumentality of that successor government in carrying out American wishes. Mendenhall's memorandum was addressed to Edward E. Rice, who was Harriman's deputy, and Mendenhall supposes that Rice passed it along to Harriman.<sup>392</sup>

The American press was served by a small number of correspondents stationed in Saigon. Since the late 1950s the Associated Press and United Press International had maintained bureaus in Saigon. The correspondents covered the gathering insurgency, using their ingenuity and making the best of their Vietnamese and American official sources. They were underpaid, and some were not even American citizens but Frenchmen such as François Sully or Vietnamese such as Ha Van Tran who covered the 1960 coup attempt for the Associated Press. Saigon was also on the Southeast Asia beat of correspondents who lived in Hong Kong or elsewhere, some of whom had long experience of reporting in Asia under their belt, such as Tilman Durdin of *The New York Times* who had reported from China in the 1940s and had covered the French Indochina War. Of this generation was Homer Bigart, who had been a reporter since 1933, who had covered World War II and the Korean War, and who first went to Vietnam in 1945; Bigart reported from Saigon in 1962 for *The New York Times*.

The bright new Americans who began arriving in Saigon in 1962 as the war grew were completely different, not only in generation but in outlook. Whether

they had been in the military or not (Malcolm W. Browne of the Associated Press and Neil Sheehan of United Press International had done their army service in Korea; David Halberstam of The New York Times had never done military service), they shared a hawkish attitude with political science professors such as Scigliano that assumed the United States had a mission to defeat the Communists. Whereas Bigart had maintained an observational detachment from the Vietnamese imbroglio and reported it as representing a dilemma for American policymakers, the new correspondents believed fiercely that they had a right to advocate policy. The correspondents found a ready source of news in the American military advisers who were more and more engaging in the fighting in the countryside, a few of whom were outspokenly critical of the Vietnamese military. The advisers were critical of the lack of aggressiveness on the part of the average Vietnamese army unit, which they attributed to paucity of forceful leadership at the company and platoon level. 393 The advisers' solution was for the American military to take over greater command in the war and apply American know-how to the problem, and the young correspondents accepted the logic of this almost unquestioningly.

The new reporters' growing dependence on American rather than Vietnamese sources, however (in this, Browne was a notable exception, although he distrusted French sources), had its down side—they came to be seen by the Vietnamese as American agents. In one instance in November 1962, Halberstam went on a trip with the junk forces and got what he called a first-rate briefing from a U.S. Navy officer, only to be told later by the same officer that the Vietnamese commander had rebuked him for giving the briefing and had asked him to ask Halberstam not to use it. When he got back to Saigon, Halberstam was literally shaking with anger.<sup>394</sup> The simplest way for Halberstam to have avoided such frustration, of course, would have been to get the story from the Vietnamese commander, whose war it was, and who probably felt resentment at being cast in second place to his American adviser. No amount of improvement, under American prodding, in press relations was going to solve the problem for the government of foreign correspondents who paid little or no attention to the Vietnamese. Some of the correspondents ended up taking an active role in the unfolding of the events from August to November 1963, even acting as couriers for various of the freelance coup-makers.<sup>395</sup> It seemed like a harmless enough activity at the time, although the partisanship involved stretched the definition of journalism. But then no one predicted the war would last another 12 years and cost so heavily in American blood and treasure.

The advocacy role of the correspondents was completely in tune with sentiment in some quarters in Washington. The assumption that the extent of the American commitment gave the United States a right to intervene in South Vietnam's internal affairs that had been implicit or explicit in the various memoranda written by McConaughy for the contingency of Diem's loss of control of the government, by Galbraith in his recommendations for avoiding armed intervention, and by Mendenhall as a formula for winning the war underlay the report given Kennedy by Roger Hilsman, the director of the Bureau

of Intelligence and Research in the State Department, and Forrestal, of the National Security Council staff, following their 10-day visit to Saigon in the first days of 1963. "In general, we don't use all the leverage we have to persuade Diem to adopt policies which we espouse," the authors wrote.<sup>396</sup> The assumption was that the American presence and assistance created "leverage." The idea that the Americans should be running the show is implicit in the second paragraph of an annex to their report in which they state that Americans should start thinking about the kind of country that should come out of victory.

Hilsman and Forrestal also criticized what they saw as the embassy's having "virtually no contact with meaningful opposition elements" and recommended expanded contacts and a position more independent of Diem. Nolting pointed out the falseness of the criticism of the embassy, saying that one of the first things he had done when he arrived was to tell Diem personally that he intended to see and talk with members of the opposition, that he wanted him to know this and trusted he would not consider it as plotting or as throwing doubt on American support of South Vietnam through its duly elected government. Diem had accepted this in good spirit and the embassy had been doing it ever since. Nolting was sorry Forrestal had not voiced his thoughts while he was in Saigon; Nolting would have been glad to introduce him to dozens of non-Communist members of the opposition at his home, including a wide assortment of bankers, businessmen, labor leaders, landowners, lawyers, doctors, and university professors. Then, perceiving what might be behind the criticism, Nolting concluded that if the idea was to try to build up an alternative to the present government, the United States would have to find another ambassador.<sup>397</sup>

By the spring of 1963, there had emerged a group of individuals in Washington who bent their energies toward removing Diem and his government from power in Saigon. The names of the coup plotters were made a matter of record by Kennedy in a dictated memoir made two days after the coup: Ball, Harriman, and Hilsman at the State Department, supported by Forrestal of the National Security Council staff. Opposed to a coup were General Taylor, Robert Kennedy, Robert McNamara, John McCone, and General Harkins. Harriman's position allowed him to send cables to Saigon over his own signature on the frequent occasions when Rusk was absent from Washington, and sometimes he sent telegrams without any signature at all. Harriman's age made him "the godfather of the anti-Diem band." Hilsman, who had seen action against the Japanese in Burma with the OSS and who was the same age as Conein, although he had been in the State Department barely two years, was promoted to take Harriman's old job as assistant secretary for Far Eastern affairs on April 25; he took office on May 9. Forrestal had been adopted by Harriman at the age of 17.

Among the American correspondents, also, the feeling was growing that the war could not be won by the Diem government. The battle of Ap Bac in January had reinforced their impression that the Diem government was incompetent, and their dispatches reflected this judgment. The ditty Bigart had invented to point up the American dilemma, "Sink or swim with Ngô Dinh Diem," now became a slogan for dumping Diem. David Halberstam of *The* 

New York Times quoted unnamed American "observers" as saying that the military philosophy of Diem and Nhu conflicted with the one espoused by American officials. 400 What Diem and Nhu called the Buddhist affair and the Americans called the Buddhist crisis that broke out in early May brought plotters and press together as actors in a major political drama that posed the question of the regime's survivability as it had not been posed before.

Since its founding in 1950, the General Buddhist Association of Vietnam had acted as a kind of superstructure for the many local Buddhist groups in the country. It had succeeded in circumventing control over its affairs by Diem's government as it had succeeded in circumventing control by the French. The escalating war against the Viet Cong had not altered in any fundamental way the association's refusal to engage in politics on the grounds that religion should remain above the political struggle. It was acceptable for individual members of the Buddhist faith to participate in demonstrations, but not as representatives of Buddhism. It was obvious to an individual Buddhist that communism and Buddhism were incompatible, but any resistance to communism by Buddhist faithful would have to be phrased in passive terms because the tenets of Buddhism did not permit militant political action in the name of religion.<sup>401</sup> In a survey of the potentialities of various groups in South Vietnam for political activities such as demonstrations and mounting of coups that he had sent the Department in September 1960, Ambassador Durbrow had mentioned the Catholic refugees and the sects, but not the Buddhists. 402

The following is based, aside from Vietnamese reports, on what Marguerite Higgins, an American correspondent who visited Hue a few weeks after the events described in her account, 403 which is based on the accounts of eyewitnesses and participants as told to her; testimony taken that autumn by the UN team investigating the alleged religious persecution in Vietnam;<sup>404</sup> the allegations and testimony of witnesses as contained in the indictment of Major Dang Sy, the Catholic assistant province chief of Thua Thien, who was accused of responsibility and put on trial in the spring of 1964; and on the careful reconstruction of events by Ellen J. Hammer. 405

Hue was bedecked with flags for the celebration of Buddha's birthday, which fell on May 8. This became the focus of a major incident on that day. A law limiting the use of religious flags was established by Decree 189/BNV/NA/P5, which became effective on May 12, 1958. According to the law, religious sect flags could be flown only on religious holidays at places of worship or private homes with the permission of the local authorities. The text of this decree was included in a communiqué issued by the mayor of Danang on April 8, 1963, in connection with a Catholic observance in that city honoring a new bishop. Archbishop Ngô Dinh Thuc of Hue, President Diem's brother, attended the observance and was heard to ask "Why are there Vatican flags?" 406 On May 6, a circular recalling the restrictions on display of flags was dispatched from Saigon.

The arrival of the circular in Hue on May 7 caused considerable consternation among the Buddhist hierarchy at the Tu Dam pagoda, the city's most important, a beautiful old temple set in a grove of ancient fig trees in the city's French quarter. When he had seen the display of flags on entering the city from visiting the Catholic shrine at La Vang near Quang Tri, Ngô Dinh Thuc had immediately summoned Ho Dac Khuong, the government delegate who represented the Saigon government in the central provinces, and ordered him to have the flags removed. Khuong protested that it was too late and that removal of the flags now risked deeply offending the Buddhist community. Khuong appealed to Saigon for instructions. The reply was immediate. The flags had to come down. (Another source disputes this version, saying that there was no order banning the display of flags, and a telegram from the directorate of information to its provincial offices on May 7 stipulated only that the national flag should be hung in the middle and above all flags of religions or organizations. <sup>407</sup>)

The Buddhist dignitaries at Tu Dam were also visited on May 7 by Interior Minister Bui Van Luong, who had jurisdiction over the administration nation-wide. He informed them that under the circumstances the regulations would not be enforced. He had told the administrative authorities provisionally not to apply the circular. Thich Tri Quang was present at the meeting at Tu Dam and expressed satisfaction with the assurances given by the minister. The Hue police did take down some flags before the province chief, Colonel Nguyên Van Dang, got word to them that the orders had been changed. As soon as the minister left, Thich Tri Quang sent a few monks around the city to tell people to take down the flags and to tell the people that Diem's orders were to "ban the Buddhist flag."

The following day, when the city and province officials arrived at Tu Dam for the ceremony commemorating the birth of Buddha, they found banners bearing strident slogans against the government. The program of the ceremony was to be re-broadcast that evening by radio. Thus, the surprise was all the greater when Thich Tri Quang seized the microphone in the middle of the ceremony and began clearly and slowly to read anti-Diem slogans into it. He followed this with a vitriolic anti-government speech on the subject of the ban on flying Buddhist flags.

In the early evening Thich Tri Quang and some disciples told the crowds thronging the pagoda to go to the radio station. "Something very interesting will happen there," they said. At about 8 P.M., when the crowd had gathered at the station, all Hue knew what had happened earlier that day. Thich Tri Quang arrived carrying the tape recording and demanded that the station director play it. When the director, Ngô Ganh, refused, Thich Tri Quang turned to the crowd pressing into the grassy courtyard and encouraged them to shout abuse at the director.

When some of the crowd started to press forward onto the cement veranda of the radio station, according to Minister Luong, the director became frightened and locked himself inside. He telephoned to Colonel Dang and the military authorities. Colonel Dang was a practicing Buddhist and a recognized spiritual son of Thich Tinh Kiet. Soon he arrived on the scene and saw what was happening. He tried without success to appease Thich Tri Quang. Colonel Dang sent for armored cars, hoping that their presence would dissuade the

crowd from breaking into the station. Thich Tri Quang was inciting his followers to break the windows and force the doors and enter the station.

The requested armored cars arrived under the command of Major Dang Sy, the assistant province chief. His orders were simply to disperse the crowd, but they did not say how this was to be done. He found a scene of shambles. Motorbikes, bicycles, and closely packed people were blocking the attempt of the armored cars to get close. Thich Tri Quang's followers on the veranda started throwing stones at policemen and firemen, who were aiming water hoses into the crowd. Colonel Dang entered the station, taking Thich Tri Quang with him. From inside, he began broadcasting appeals to the firemen to shut off the water. While he was inside (he later told at the trial of Major Dang Sy), he heard two loud explosions on the veranda, followed by the sounds of broken glass, gunshots, and exploding hand grenades.

The two explosions were also heard by Major Dang Sy just as his armored car was entering the gate in the low wall surrounding the station's courtyard. In the darkness and confusion, he was unable to see what was going on and he feared the worst, a Viet Cong attack. Therefore he pulled out his gun and fired three shots in the air. This was a prearranged signal authorizing his men to use grenades if necessary to disperse the crowd. The grenades in question were American-supplied MK III concussion grenades. At least 15 of these were thrown. As a result of all this, the crowd fled.

When Colonel Dang and station officials burst out onto the veranda, they saw pools of blood, seven dead, and one dying. The victims were identified as Nguyên Thi Ngoc Lan, 12, female; Huyen Ton Nu Tuyet Hoa, 12, female; Duong Van Dat, 13, male; Dang Van Cong, 13, male; Nguyên Thi Phuc, 15, female; Le Thi Kim Anh, 17, female; Tran Thi Phuoc Tri, 17, female; and Nguyên Thi Yen, 20, female. 408 All the dead were lying on the concrete veranda. By the account of Minister Luong, most of the dead had the tops of their heads blown off, but there were no wounds below the chest. There were no metal splinters in the bodies, only holes. No metal was found on the veranda. In his initial report of the incident, however, American Consul John J. Helble attributed the deaths to a grenade explosion on the radio station porch. 409 In a cable sent four hours later, the Saigon embassy stated that while troops may have fired into the crowd, most of the casualties resulted from a bomb, a concussion grenade, or "from general mélée." 410 Luong asked the legal doctor to make a post-mortem and send him the results. The post-mortem showed that the victims were killed by an explosion and a violent blast. Weapons experts consulted in Hue and Saigon were of the opinion that the explosions were caused by plastic bombs, as indeed was subsequently the verdict of a three-man technical commission headed by General Tran Van Don appointed by President Diem immediately after the incident.

At the trial of Major Dang Sy in 1964, the prosecutor insisted that the deaths had been caused by MK III grenades, in spite of the fact that the maximum capabilities of MK III grenades are concussion, burst eardrums, and shock. Weapons experts testified that grenades of that type do not have the suf-

ficient capability to decapitate eight persons, let alone bring down doors, windows, and ceilings that were adjacent to the veranda. The explosive seems in retrospect to have had the characteristics of Semtex, a plastic substance manufactured in Czechoslovakia that would become a favorite weapon of terrorists in the 1970s. <sup>411</sup> Dang Sy was convicted and sentenced to life imprisonment at hard labor. <sup>412</sup> He was a Catholic and was therefore easily identified with the regime; the fact that at least one of the dead was also Catholic was glossed over. He told at his trial of efforts made by police to force him to blame the Ngôs. "They kept me for months in a darkened underground cell. They promised me I could go free if I would put the blame on the Ngô family. I refused."<sup>413</sup>

That the demonstration in front of the radio station was instigated by Thich Tri Quang does not seem to be in doubt. His subsequent role as the mastermind of a plan to bring down Diem's government by a series of such provocations clearly confirms his motives and his means. He may well have been waiting in the shadows for his opportunity to act, and there he had it. There had been a meeting at Tu Dam on the night of April 15–16 attended by Tri Quang and Thich Thien Minh, among others, at which the subject of self-immolation by fire as a political tactic had been discussed and the first volunteer decided upon.

"Who are these people?" President Kennedy asked Forrestal when he learned of the incident in Hue. "Why didn't we know about them before?" 414 Richard Critchfield of the Washington Evening Star, a newspaper correspondent knowledgeable about Vietnamese politics in the 1960s, found biographical information about Tri Quang in the American Embassy files in 1965. His name, like that of Ho Chi Minh, Truong Chinh, Kaysone Phomvihan, and others in this book, was a pseudonym, and means "brilliant mind." He was born Pham Van Bong on December 31, 1923, in Diem Dien village in Ha Tinh Province. He was encouraged to enter the monkhood from an early age and went to the Bao Quoc pagoda in Hue to start training at age13. He was picked, possibly by Le Duan who was in Hue at the time, along with Thich Thien Minh to come under the personal tutelage of Thich Tri Do, who would later become the head of the Buddhist church of the DRV. His mother died in 1945, and shortly afterward an aunt protested Communist confiscation of the family property by setting fire to the ancestral home and throwing herself into the flames. Tri Quang studied Marxism in Hanoi and then went into the Viet Minh zone with the guerrillas. He appears to have been in Hue in 1954 and gone north with the Communists at the armistice, and then moved back and forth several times between Hanoi and Hue until his return to the South for good in 1961; if true, this is highly significant. He is said to have had a brother who was involved in internal security in the DRV and was undoubtedly a party member and another brother who was a monk. In Hue, where he rose to be the dominant monk at Tu Dam and the chairman of the General Buddhist Association in Central Vietnam, Tri Quang seems to have been befriended by Ngô Dinh Can, one of whose advisers, Hoang Trong Ba, was another friend of Tri Quang's from his days with the Viet Minh, as was province chief Dang. 415 During the nine weeks he later spent as a refugee in the American Embassy, Tri Quang had several

conversations with embassy officers. During these conversations, he said his cooperation with the Viet Minh had been "purely passive, and a matter of necessity, and that the Communists subsequently made numerous efforts to assassinate him."416

While there seems little doubt about who incited the crowd at the radio station to violence, the identity of the person or persons who set off the two powerful explosions that made eight victims and turned a peaceful demonstration into a martyrs' cause is still somewhat of a mystery. Diem's government officially blamed the Viet Cong, although there was no evidence of a Viet Cong presence there. This version may have been adopted less out of any conviction of its truthfulness than out of Diem's perfectly natural refusal to blame his soldiers when there was no proof they were guilty of any crime. It was not believed by the people of Hue, as is evident from the failure of a public meeting organized by the NRM to denounce the Viet Cong to draw any crowd whatever the following day. Reason called for limiting the damage from the incident, and Heavner, who had been Helble's predecessor, reacted immediately to Helble's initial report by cabling that the embassy should urge the government to take no repressive measures against the Buddhists, to offer sympathy and funeral expenses to the families of the victims, and to make any other appropriate gestures toward restoration of order and amity between religious groups. 417 Actually, Diem did not need to be told what was appropriate; he had already indemnified the families of the victims. He held steadfast, however, to his refusal in the face of great pressure from the American Embassy to assume responsibility in order to placate the Buddhist leaders. As seen above, Diem's successors were less reluctant to blame the actions of one of their officers, and took the "popular" step of convicting a Catholic to boot.

It was tempting to place the blame for the Hue incident on the Viet Cong, as the official version did. Thich Tri Quang had his murky history of Communist connections, and one witness even reports having seen a letter from Thich Tri Do to Tri Quang telling him to organize a Buddhist movement to overthrow the Diem regime. 418 One piece of evidence that weighs against the government's version is the fact that Nguyên Huu Tho, chairman of the National Liberation Front, sent a telegram to the United Nations immediately after the incident protesting religious discrimination; a few months later, Hanoi took a stand opposing the dispatch of a UN fact-finding team to South Vietnam.

With the Viet Cong virtually ruled out and the government officials on the scene lacking any credible motive for ordering repressive action against a crowd of Buddhist followers, there remains only one other major actor in Vietnam with both motive and means to have exploited the incident for political purposes. When Ngô Dinh Can was roused from his bed on the night of May 8 to be told of the bloodshed by his aide, Captain Minh, who had seen the carnage, he immediately summoned local officials to a meeting, according to a subsequent Vietnamese newspaper article. Those attending the meeting did not hold Major Dang Sy responsible for what had happened and did not think the Viet Cong had anything to do with it. They decided that the real culprit was not Vietnamese at all, but American. 419

An American, Captain James Scott, had arrived in Hue from Danang on May 7. In 1965, Scott was a military adviser to Battalion 1/3, First Infantry Division, one of whose officers was a Captain Buu. As happened so often in Vietnam, where everyone seemed to be related to everyone else, Captain Buu was a cousin of Dang Sy's wife, and he suspected Scott knew something about the events in Hue on May 8, 1963. During a military operation in Nam Dong, Scott revealed to Captain Buu that he set the explosive device, which was the size of a match box, with a time detonator that was still secret and known only to certain people in the CIA. "Dang Sy is totally innocent and has no reason to be in jail right now," Scott told Captain Buu. "Major Sy is only a victim. I can't see how people could think it was Viet Cong plastic or a Viet Cong grenade." Scott said a friend, a lieutenant colonel working for the CIA, had asked Scott "to carry out the mission."

Tran Khoi, an inspector in the ministry of interior, recalled the peculiar coincidence of meeting Lieutenant Colonel Conein in Saigon some time before the May 8 incident, and hearing him talk about the need to enlist the support of the Buddhists in the war against the Viet Cong, and later meeting an American adviser to the Civil Guard in Hue, a man named Johnson, and listening to him talking the same line. The Buddhists were a large group in South Vietnam, and you couldn't win the war without them, the line went. <sup>421</sup> Conein was at the time serving as an adviser to the ministry of interior and accompanied Minister Luong on his visit to Hue on May 7. <sup>422</sup>

In an interview with an American newspaper correspondent a few days after the Hue incident, Nhu referred his interviewer to the involvement of CIA agent Carver in the November 1960 coup attempt. "Personally I have had nothing but very good relations with the CIA," Nhu said. "But maybe the American public opinion ignores the fact that you have many CIA's in the American system. The White House, the Army, the Navy, the Air Force—every American organization or agency has its own intelligence and all those agencies spread out on a limited place are of course ever conflicting within themselves and they give the impression of a lack of discipline, or disorder." Then Nhu added: "Now also there are a certain amount of Americans who are plotting here." Conein, although retired from the army, wore his lieutenant colonel's uniform because the military commanders who knew him assumed he was still an army officer; special arrangements were made for him, with the permission of General Harkins, to carry an identification card as being an active duty military officer.

Plastic explosives "one of which could knock down a whole house" impressed Diem sufficiently so that he mentioned it to Ambassador Henry Cabot Lodge on the day the latter presented his credentials at the Gia Long Palace. At the end of their private talk, Diem said he hoped there would be discipline, particularly with regard to the activities of the United States in Saigon and that there would be an end to reports of diverse activities interfering in Vietnamese affairs by various United States agencies. Lodge replied that he would look into the matter. <sup>425</sup> In October, Foreign Minister Truong Cong Cuu told Lodge that the government was in possession of proof of official American collusion with

the Buddhist leaders "and even instigation of Buddhist activities against [the] GVN [Government of Vietnam]." He stated that this evidence showed that the United States had been instrumental in organizing the original Buddhist incident at Hue on May 8. "Mr. Helble is not without blame in this," Cuu said. 426

The reporting of the Hue incident through State Department channels was confused and tardy. The picture received in Washington was one of a peaceful Buddhist crowd demonstrating in favor of freedom of religion who had been subjected to an unprovoked attack by government troops. The embassy was silent on the matter of responsibility for the deaths, other than reporting the official version. Aside from the cable Heavner sent immediately after receiving the report of the incident, no effort was made in Washington to limit the damage. Instead, the Americans shunned the man who would have been best positioned to bring calm and reason to bear in the wake of the Hue incident, delegate Ho Dac Khuong, who had had continuous friendly contacts with the Buddhists. Khuong was an unassuming man, the son and grandson of ministers at the imperial court. His aunts were dedicated Buddhist nuns. 427 Above all, the manner in which the plotters in the State Department kept the issue of religious discrimination alive, focusing especially on the government's refusal to accept public responsibility for the deaths, 428 seems suspicious. Ambassador Nolting had been scheduled to leave Vietnam on vacation on May 9, and this of course was known in the Department; he postponed his departure by a fortnight. 429 These facts suggest that the intimate relationship between the Buddhist activists and the plotters of Diem's overthrow, which became so visible during the later unfolding of the "Buddhist crisis," dated from at least early May.

Diem deplored the loss of life in the Hue incident. "All religions are good," he told his brother Can. "There are only bad and good elements in every religion. We are now Catholic, but our ancestors are Buddhist. When the monks in the pagodas Tu Dam, Tu Hieu, Dieu De are in need, you must help them." On May 15, the first meeting between a delegation of Buddhist leaders and the government to discuss the Buddhists' "five demands" was held. In a six-hour meeting on June 7 the Buddhist leaders agreed that there would be no new demonstrations or hunger strikes if the government relaxed security measures around the pagodas. The Buddhist leaders and their lists of demands posed a unique problem for Diem in that they were not susceptible to being co-opted by according them membership in the Can Lao, like the army generals. If on the surface everything was calm while the Buddhist leaders were preparing for negotiations, they were also secretly planning widespread campaigns of processions of mourning for the dead at Hue and mass fasting at Xa Loi and An Quang pagodas in Saigon.

On May 17, Diem and Nolting reached agreement, after a long fight over the government's right to control its share, no matter how small, of the funds spent for this purpose on the funding of counterinsurgency and economic development projects supporting the strategic hamlet program. Diem's stubbornness on this issue, which involved for him the principle of sovereignty, had been triggered by an unfavorable report submitted by his old friend Senator Mansfield, which wounded him deeply. Mansfield had visited Vietnam in November, and he, too, had talked to Halberstam. <sup>431</sup> Diem's decision to make an issue of the counterinsurgency funding only served to anger his critics in Washington further. Significantly, the communiqué announcing the agreement stated that as the security situation improved the foreign assistance both in terms of matériel and personnel would be reduced. <sup>432</sup>

The day before Nolting left Saigon for his delayed vacation, he sent the State Department for its approval a revised contingency plan for appropriate American actions in the event of a change of government in Saigon. Nolting had followed a policy of encouraging his officers to maintain contacts with Vietnamese both inside and outside the government on grounds of keeping the embassy informed and American policy up to date; this was just good diplomatic procedure. In the revised document it was stated as follows: "As a minimum the Embassy Political Section should overtly maintain enough contacts so that it will be known that we exercise the right to see persons outside the circle of the GVN [Government of Vietnam] anointed." This instruction was coupled with a significant qualification: "While Diem is in effective control, official U.S. personnel should under no circumstances discuss with any Vietnamese the position which the U.S. might take in the event of a government crisis." Kennedy approved it on June 6. He presumably saw nothing in the contingency plan that went counter to the policy he had in his own mind, and we may suppose that he particularly liked the introductory statement: "To recognize, in the basic American tradition of supporting free governments, that the Vietnamese should, if possible, exercise their own choice without U.S. or any other outside intervention; that any U.S. interference runs a serious risk of branding a successor government as U.S. dominated."

Nolting did not consider the contingency plan important enough to mention in his memoir. The plan pre-assigned a large measure of authority to the ambassador. It authorized the ambassador "to act for the United States on his sole responsibility if in his judgment the situation requires him to do so." It emphasized that in a situation that was likely to be chaotic and dangerous the ambassador should not be inhibited by the need to consult Washington before taking decisions and actions. He was merely expected to seek instructions *if, in his judgment,* time permitted. His responsibilities for deciding and acting took priority over that for reporting. This broad grant of authority would not have appeared unusual to either Ambassador Nolting or President Kennedy in the circumstances where Diem's government exercised full control, as it did in May 1963.

With the benefit of hindsight, historians have noted that Nolting's departure on May 24 was ill-timed. Diem thereby lost the only contact with Kennedy that he trusted. Moreover, Ball, Harriman, Hilsman, and Forrestal gave every indication from this point on that it was their intent to see that Nolting did not return to his post and that the authority placed in the ambassador in a succession crisis be exercised by someone of like mind. Nolting left the embassy in the hands of a chargé d'affaires, William C. Trueheart, a man whom Forrestal had persuaded Harriman to offer a high position in the State Department.<sup>434</sup>

Trueheart made very little effort to keep Nolting informed of possibly significant events, as is evident from his closing in a letter to Hilsman about intelligence of Communist moves: "Perhaps you would also show it to Fritz [Nolting]." He proceeded to disregard Nolting's instructions to alert him to any drastic change in relations between the United States and South Vietnam during his absence. Nolting did not receive any messages about Vietnam between May 24 and July 1, when he arrived in New York to find a brief letter from Trueheart and a message saying Diem had been seeking his return to Saigon "as soon as possible."

In Washington, dissemination of the contingency plan was made the sole responsibility of Hilsman, to whom Nolting had addressed it. In line with the plotters' intention to isolate Diem from his American friends, Hilsman had requested Heavner, the deputy director of the Vietnam Working Group in the Far East Bureau, to draw up a list of actions that the United States might take to hurt Diem but not the war effort. Heavner weighed a list of such punitive actions and their likely effects, but concluded that they would produce not more but less cooperation from the Vietnamese government, certainly less trust, and quite possibly more outrageous statements from the Ngôs. He saw quite clearly that Diem might refuse to yield and might even turn the American action against the United States by making it public, an action that would put the Americans in the position of lending credence to the Communist line that Diem was an American puppet.<sup>437</sup>

At 9 A.M. on Tuesday, June 11, in Saigon a procession of monks and nuns proceeded from a small pagoda on Phan Dinh Phung Street to the intersection of Le Van Duyet Street. On one corner was the Cambodian Embassy, on the others apartment buildings and an Esso service station. A green Austin appeared to stall at the corner. An old monk calmly stepped from the car and took up the lotus meditation position in the middle of the intersection. Another monk produced a container of gasoline and poured this over the monk. The monk, Thich Quang Duc, 73, set fire to his robes and burned for 10 minutes before his body fell backward. Attendant monks and nuns unfurled banners, in Vietnamese and English, reading "A Buddhist Priest Burns for Buddhist Demands," and afterward carried away the body, wrapped in yellow robes which were later cut up and distributed to the faithful. Browne had been summoned to the pagoda and joined the march of the monks and recorded with his camera the self-immolation, or sacrifice (hy sinh), as the monks preferred to call it. 438 At the time, Diem, with his staff, the president of the National Assembly, and most of the diplomatic corps, was attending a requiem mass at the Saigon cathedral for Pope John XXIII.

## AN AMERICAN ULTIMATUM

Reaction to publication of Browne's photos and news accounts was electric, and in Washington those in a position to exploit the opportunity did not delay. A cable drafted by Wood and Hilsman and cleared by Harriman authorized Trueheart to tell Diem that in the American view his government "must fully and unequivo-

cally meet [the] Buddhist demands." This was to be done "in a public and dramatic fashion." Echoing the by-then established line of Harriman and Hilsman, the cable said the international repercussions of the Buddhist troubles in South Vietnam "cannot help but affect U.S. world-wide responsibilities" and that continued American support of Diem's government was predicated on satisfaction of "our attitude towards and our involvement in [the] Buddhist problem." The cable ended by threatening a re-examination of the American relationship with Diem and his regime. "It was, in short, an ultimatum to be served on Diem, and with Nolting absent from his post Hilsman and Harriman could be sure there would be no protest from the embassy. In effect, the June 11 cable was an arrogation of the right to intervene in an internal affair of Diem's government.

Trueheart met with Diem the following day and handed him an unsigned paper headed "Memorandum" containing the substance of the Wood-Hilsman-Harriman cable. Diem read the paper carefully and conferred with Thuan. He wanted to know how to translate the word "reluctantly"; he must have been reminded of Durbrow's list of demands almost three years before. He observed that any public statement by the United States would be disastrous for the negotiations with the Buddhist leaders, which he expected would begin shortly. Trueheart reassured him on this point, quoting from a State Department news briefing to the effect that the United States did not want to comment with negotiations in the offing. After some further discussion, Diem said he would have to reflect and would not, in any case, take a decision until he had seen the Buddhist leaders.

The plotters in the State Department, however, had assured themselves of maximum publicity by leaking the substance of the June 11 cable to Max Frankel, a compliant reporter for The New York Times who on two previous occasions had written their version of South Vietnam's failings. 440 A front-page story on June 14 revealed that Diem's government had been warned that continuing Buddhist dissatisfaction could become politically disastrous. 441 As usual, the Vietnamese side of the story made no news in a newspaper that had published only three dispatches dealing primarily with South Vietnamese politics out of 33 dispatches with Vietnam datelines in the four months preceding the Buddhist "crisis." 442 The frequency of coverage would now change, as the Buddhist activist monks in Saigon came to see the American correspondents as valuable allies in their fight against the regime. "Meestair Hammolsan," the English-speaking monk Thich Duc Nghiep, who acted as spokesman for the activists, said to Halberstam the first time he came to the Xa Loi pagoda in Saigon, "we know you are a special agent for Meestair Averell Harriman and you have a very important mission here." Halberstam was unable to convince the monks that he did not represent his government.443

President Kennedy did not learn of the ultimatum to Diem until June 14. According to a memorandum for the record prepared in the White House on that day, "The President noticed that Diem has been threatened with a formal statement of disassociation. He wants to be absolutely sure that no further threats are made and no formal statement is made without his own personal approval."

Kennedy understood matters such as face. At the same time, the first reports appeared in American newspapers that Nolting was to be replaced. 445

Thich Tinh Khiet, the aged (born in Thua Thien in 1885) president of the General Buddhist Association, arrived in Saigon by plane; after he had rested, negotiations between the government and the Buddhist leaders started on June 14. As the plotters in Washington no doubt intended, the story in *The New York* Times reached Saigon, where it caused Thuan to express his deep distress and anger to Trueheart, something he very rarely did. 446 Vice President Tho, however, managed by sheer willpower to keep the Buddhist leaders from taking an intransigent stand, and in 17 hours of negotiations on June 14 and 15 an agreement was hammered out and made public in the form of a joint communiqué on June 16. The agreement covered the five demands advanced by the Buddhist leaders. Regulations concerning when, how, in what sizes, and in what relation to the national flag the Buddhist flag could be flown were set out in detail. Decree Law 10 governing the nature of associations would be reviewed by the National Assembly by the end of 1964, but in the meantime it would not be strictly enforced against existing Buddhist associations. The government would set up a committee to investigate Buddhist complaints, and those Buddhists in detention would benefit from presidential clemency. But the agreement provided for punishment for those found to be responsible for fomenting civil unrest. 447 The June 16 communiqué was signed by Vice President Tho, Thuan, and Minister Luong on behalf of the government, and by Thich Thien Minh, Thich Tam Chau, and Thich Thien Hoa on behalf of the Buddhist delegation, with the notation "Seen by" over Thich Tinh Khiet's signature and Diem's signature at the bottom preceded by the words "The points put down in this joint communiqué were approved in principle by me from the very beginning." Afterward, Thich Tinh Khiet called upon all monks to resume their normal lives, respect the national law, and obey the directives of the General Buddhist Association; he also declared an end to the struggle.

On June 14, Prince Sihanouk sent a cable to President Kennedy in which he placed the entire blame for "the suffering of the Buddhists of South Vietnam" on the Saigon government and implored Kennedy "to intercede with the full force of your moral prestige and that of your country to the end that the Catholic South Vietnamese Government may accord Buddhists the right to practice freely their religion of peace and brotherhood."448 Sihanouk was wrong: in actual fact, while Diem was a Catholic, of his cabinet ministers in 1963 eight were Buddhists, including Vice President Tho and Foreign Minister Mau; five were Confucians; and five were Catholics. The religious affiliation of the province chiefs was equally diverse: 12 were Catholics and 26 were either Buddhist or Confucian. Similarly, in the military command, the three Catholics were outnumbered by 16 Confucians or Buddhists. 449 Halberstam shared Sihanouk's error: in front-page dispatches on June 17, July 17 and July 20 he wrote "The president and most government officials are Roman Catholic." Kennedy, however, made a brief and courteous reply to Sihanouk stressing his belief in freedom of religious practice and joining him in "hope for a settlement of the recent misunderstandings." 450 The message showed Kennedy at his noncommittal best.

In his telegram to Kennedy, Sihanouk had also alleged that the Cambodian Buddhist community in South Vietnam had been the victim of "exceedingly cruel religious persecution." But, as an embassy report survey showed, while historic ethnic antagonism between the Khmer minority and the Vietnamese persisted to that time, the official policy was one of tolerance, and the discrimination that occurred resulted from private attitudes and had nothing to do with religion. 451 In the two provinces with the largest (more than 300,000 persons) Cambodian ethnic minorities, Ba Xuyen (25 percent Cambodian) and Vinh Binh (40 percent Cambodian), the Cambodians, who were mostly small-plot rice farmers, and the government lived in harmony. With their deep attachment to their Theravada Buddhist religion, the Cambodians enjoyed government support for their religious schools where Pali and Khmer were the languages of instruction and the government paid the salaries of many of the teachers. Pagodas were also permitted to provide religious instruction to lay Buddhists. Important Buddhist religious figures were not only included in all important government ceremonies but were also were consulted regularly on matters religious and secular affecting the Cambodian community. Local government officials participated in Buddhist festivities and contributed money and other resources to pagoda activities. 452 Sihanouk had not mentioned in his telegram to Kennedy, of course, Cambodia's large Vietnamese minority, of which he had written it was not feasible to put them in concentration camps to guard against their subversive activities. There was plenty of hypocrisy to go around.

President Kennedy's message also showed, as his reaction to the June 11 Wood-Hilsman-Harriman cable had shown, the divergence between the conciliation he favored and the confrontation sought by the plotters in the State Department. On June 19, the latter returned to the attack, instructing Trueheart to convey to Diem, as if he were some delinquent juvenile, a list of quid pro quos and resurrecting such old-time demands as permitting opposition candidates to run in the forthcoming elections without harassment and broadening his cabinet. They were now looking for forms of American aid that Diem particularly needed for the war effort, such as the crop defoliation program, as likely targets to be cut off in order to force him to kowtow. The arguments they used to justify these irrational demands were the usual half-baked ones, concocted in Foggy Bottom, such as the hypothetical danger of a leak (and this from the leakers!) connecting the good name of the United States with such joint war efforts. 453 Once their plot had succeeded and the Americans took over the war effort, they would be less chary of recommending the use of the most inhumane weapons, not only defoliants but also napalm and cluster bombs, on the Vietnamese combatants.

Meanwhile, Diem continued his normal presidential activities in spite of the demands on him of the Buddhist affair. He traveled tirelessly through the countryside, in mid-May visiting areas in seven provinces recently brought under government control through military operations, road and canal building, establishment of strategic hamlets, and other measures. American and other foreign diplomats were struck by the evident progress being made in breaking

the Viet Cong hold of terror and subversion. The Viet Cong, also, had recently laid off attacking the government forces in strength. 454 Peasants asked the president to liberate families they knew were still living in areas of Viet Cong control. Diem spent two long hot dusty days talking with and seeking the reactions of farmers and their families and elders to the measures the government was taking. The rapport between him and the people was evident and the exchange of questions and answers remarkably free, including with groups of bonzes. There was evident goodwill and cooperation between American civil and military advisers and their Vietnamese counterparts; the prevailing mood was one of encouragement at progress made and confidence in the future. 455 In the new provincial capital of Quang Tin in August, Diem's popularity was evident from the spontaneous enthusiasm of a crowd of between ten and fifteen thousand. 456

## ENTER LODGE

In the summer of 1963, the plotters in Washington, who had been casting about for ways to jettison Nolting, received a gift from heaven. Henry Cabot Lodge had spent a three-week tour of duty at the Pentagon as a general in the Reserves in January. He was briefed on Vietnam. Lodge then began to float his name as a possible nominee for ambassador to Vietnam. His name was mentioned to Kennedy for the post by Secretary Rusk, to whom Lodge had personally proposed the assignment. 457 Rusk supported the nomination on grounds of American politics (Lodge was a Republican). 458 Kennedy offered the job to Lodge on June 12, the day after Thich Quang Duc's self-immolation. Trueheart was instructed to seek agrément for the appointment on June 20, and he replied two days later that Diem had agreed.

Nolting, in Washington at the end of his vacation, thought that the more Lodge was built up as a strongman who was going to tell Diem where to get off, the harder it would be for Lodge to do his job in Vietnam. 459 What Nolting did not know was that Lodge saw his job not as the traditional job of an ambassador to get along with the head of state of a sovereign nation, but rather as solving Kennedy's problem with South Vietnam by removing Diem and his family. No other conclusion is possible, else why weaken your loyal ally from the moment you set foot on his country's soil?

With Lodge nominated for Saigon, Harriman and Hilsman notched up their coup plotting by sending Trueheart a telegram suggesting that he consider, in the contingency of Diem's incapacitation outlined in the plan previously approved by Kennedy, ways of informing Tho that the United States would want to back him as the constitutional successor to Diem and would assume in that event that "he would need military support." Showing great deviousness, they said that the United States would play no part in the unspecified internal political circumstances preventing Diem from acting as president, but they urged Trueheart to "consider steps [to] gradually increase covert and overt contacts with non-supporters of [the] GVN [Government of Vietnam]."460 It was, in short, their first hint of stimulating a military mutiny.

On July 2, the plotters in Washington sent another telegram to Trueheart over Ball's signature giving him precise instructions about what he should convey to Diem within 24 hours. This time the threat was that the United States would "make its own position perfectly clear" unless Diem issued a public statement "very soon, before there is another Buddhist incident." As on the preceding occasion, Trueheart was to leave a written text giving the substance of the ultimatum. He Again, Trueheart lost no time in conveying the threat to Diem, who listened with what Trueheart described as "rather excessive politeness." It was a sure sign he would do nothing. Diem showed Trueheart's letter to Thuan, who called Truheart in and asked him to transmit his personal recommendation that Nolting should return to Saigon as soon as possible; he felt Nolting, because of his good personal relations with Diem, might be able to move the president to act. He Again and He Again and He Again and He Again are soon as possible; he felt Nolting, because of his good personal relations with Diem, might be able to move the

On July 4, Conein met an old friend, Major General Tran Van Don, acting commander of the armed forces in the absence of General Le Van Ty (who was undergoing medical treatment in Washington), at the Hotel Caravelle. Conein reported that Don told him that if the Buddhist situation did not get settled the military were planning to move. <sup>463</sup> In Washington on July 4, the plotters (Ball, Harriman, Hilsman) informed President Kennedy that in their estimate no matter what Diem did there would be coup attempts over the next four months. Whether any of these attempts would be successful, it was impossible to say.

At this same meeting, Kennedy delegated to Hilsman the authority to decide on the timing of Nolting's return. The plotters knew that Diem had been asking for Nolting to return to Saigon after his lengthy vacation. They feared Nolting more than any other American because he had shown up their arguments for a coup to be a patchwork of lies that wouldn't hold water. Kennedy, ever gracious, volunteered that Nolting had done an outstanding job over the past two years, that it was almost miraculous the way he had succeeded in turning the war around from the disastrously low point in relations with Diem that existed when he had taken over. He hoped a way could be found to commend Nolting publicly. Hold But on the memorandum recording this conversation, Paul M. Kattenburg has handwritten a note saying the suggestion of a commendation was not acted upon in part due to Hilsman's wish that it be held in abeyance. Holding had a brief meeting with Kennedy on July 8 in which Kennedy instructed him to try to restore confidence until Lodge arrived.

Trueheart realized that his own ability to carry out private diplomacy had been gravely undermined by *The New York Times.* <sup>467</sup> By now the reporters in Saigon were making no pretense at objectivity. At the July 4 party Trueheart gave at Nolting's residence, Halberstam, who was given to profanity, stood in the middle of the room as the traditional toast was proffered to Diem as head of state and announced in a loud voice "I'd never drink to that son of a bitch." <sup>468</sup> Nhu realized that two could play at the game and began inserting stories without attribution to named sources in *The Times of Viet Nam*, an English-language Saigon newspaper, containing insider information on Americans' various misdeeds. Hilsman self-righteously complained that such stories constituted "a veiled attack on the U.S." <sup>469</sup> But Nhu had allowed himself to be provoked into confronting his enemies, which was not in the Vietnamese tradition and was a mistake.

In reaction to the receipt of the second ultimatum from Trueheart, the government placed on trial 19 military personnel and 34 civilians it accused of participating in the 1960 coup attempt. The trial, with its hints of foreign involvement, was undoubtedly meant as a warning to present plotters. In rebuttal of the challenges of defense lawyers to the constitutionality of the special military tribunal, prosecutors revealed in closed session evidence to that effect, naming the CIA's Carver in particular and citing an intelligence report from the French Embassy implicating the Americans in the coup. Aside from the coup leaders who had fled the country and who were tried in absentia and received death sentences, including Hoang Co Thuy, the defendants received surprisingly light sentences. Six of the military defendants were acquitted, and the others received sentences ranging from five to eighteen years in prison. Fourteen of the civilians were acquitted, and the others received sentences ranging from five to seven years in the case of Dr. Phan Quang Dan and eight years in the case of former National Assembly deputy Phan Khac Suu. However, one of the accused civilians died a nationalist martyr. Nguyên Tuong Tam of the VNQDD had not been arrested and was at home when he learned of the impending trial. Tam has been described as the "architect" of the 1960 coup attempt. 470 He may simply have been caught up in Hoang Co Thuy's ill-fated efforts to rally the VNQDD to the cause of the coup. Whatever the truth, this honorable man, who had been Ho's foreign minister at the Dalat conference in 1946 and had won a reputation as a gifted writer under the pen name Nhat Linh, took cyanide and died in hospital, leaving a note protesting the trial. The court declared him innocent.<sup>471</sup>

Nolting reached Saigon on July 11. On July 17 he was able to report that some results were beginning to show from the embassy's "almost continuous discussions, probings and negotiations with Diem, Nhu and Thuan." He continued to feel there was a reasonably good prospect of the government's "surmounting the present two-headed crisis (Buddhist agitation and coup plotting)."472 The following day, Diem broadcast a message in which he said he had issued instructions to the government delegation to closely cooperate with the Buddhist delegation in examining all complaints related to the implementation of the joint communiqué, including investigations on the spot, and to all cadres to actively contribute by word and deed to such implementation. Diem concluded by expressing his "hope that all of you, my compatriots, will take note of the utmost desire of conciliation of the government in settling the Buddhist problem."<sup>473</sup> Thuan had been correct about how Diem could be moved to act. Diem had also requested Lansdale to return to Saigon. Kattenburg supported the idea and recommended to Hilsman he approve. A meeting between Lodge and Lansdale was scheduled for July 25. No record of such a meeting has been found.<sup>474</sup> Nolting conveyed to Diem the news that his request had been turned down; Diem regretted the decision and said he hoped Lansdale would come out later. 475 In an interview with United Press International on July 28, Nolting replied to a question about religious persecution and the Buddhist crisis as follows: "I myself, I say this very frankly, after almost two and one half years here, have never seen any evidence of religious persecution, in fact I have the feeling that there is a great deal

of religious toleration among Vietnamese people at all levels."<sup>476</sup> It was an expression of common sense in the midst of hysteria; Buddhist monks were not being drawn and quartered in the streets of South Vietnamese cities as Catholic priests had been in the nineteenth century. Nolting left Saigon on August 15. He had carried out Kennedy's instructions to the letter.

In Washington, however, in accordance with their previous discussions, the plotters continued to insert themselves into the South Vietnamese political scene on the grounds that the American commitment automatically gave the United States the right to do so. Their target was Madame Nhu, whose verbal attacks on the Buddhist agitators had infuriated even Nolting. Madame Nhu had a disconcerting habit of telling people exactly what she saw, like the proverbial bystander who reported that the emperor had no clothes. Thus, in the summer of 1963 she said the bonzes used imported gasoline to make barbecues, a word her daughter had picked up from some American military.<sup>477</sup> She enjoyed a privileged status among the Ngôs because she had produced two daughters and two sons, the only children in the family. She denounced the foreign reporters and the embassy for falling for a "campaign of intoxication." Campaign of intoxication is the term applied by many French writers when looking back at 1894, when French newspapers echoed official accusations of treason, based on the flimsiest of evidence, against the artillery officer Captain Alfred Dreyfus. The campaign whipped up French public opinion in an affair that had anti-Semitic overtones. The Nhus, who had lived through the Decoux years, were well aware of the virulence of anti-Semitism in the French psyche; now they found themselves the objects of a similar campaign.

The plotters rated Diem's chances of surviving this turmoil poorly, and positioned themselves to take advantage of a coup d'état which they expected to materialize in the coming months. A memorandum from Hilsman to Ball stated that until Ambassador Lodge had arrived in Saigon, the policy should be neither to encourage nor to discourage coup attempts. Hilsman said the June 6 contingency plan was being continuously reviewed and perfected, but he viewed a military junta, with or without Vice President Tho as a figurehead, the most likely alternative leadership to Diem, <sup>478</sup> in itself a significant modification of the contingency plan away from the observance of constitutionality in a succession. Thus, as early as the beginning of August the plotters had fixed their sights on the military to carry out the desired coup. The plotters also kept up the pressure for overthrowing Diem with another leaked story to *The New York Times*, this one on August 8 to the effect that there was growing concern in the Kennedy administration that the Diem government would not survive unless it became more willing to compromise on Buddhist demands.

Elections for the Third Legislature of the National Assembly had been scheduled for August 31. At midnight on August 20, however, just four days after the official opening of the election campaign, Diem, on the recommendation of his generals who were alarmed by the rising vehemence of the agitation at Xa Loi and other pagodas, proclaimed martial law throughout the country. He then ordered the security forces to evict the Buddhist agitators from the

pagodas. From his point of view, it was 1954 and 1955 all over again: and once again he decided in favor of decisive action, as he had against the Binh Xuyen. This time, it was the Americans who were backing the forces of lawlessness, instead of the French.

Although in the initial phases of the Buddhist affair the military tended to sympathize with the Buddhists and to be resentful of the government's inept handling of the situation, more recently the embassy had received indications that the military were beginning to tire of the issue, becoming concerned over the impact of the prolonged impasse on the morale of the troops, and beginning to fear that the Buddhist leaders had escalated the dispute to the point where it posed a possibly grave threat to the security of the country and to the struggle against the Viet Cong. Thich Tri Quang had become more outspoken during July in stating his intention not to cease agitation until the Diem government fell and had indicated his intention, if necessary, to call for suicide volunteers;<sup>479</sup> there were four more self-immolations during August. The June 16 accord had completely broken down. On Sunday, August 18, some fifteen to twenty thousand people gathered at Xa Loi, triple the number of the previous Sunday. Orators attacked Madame Nhu, and in banners prominently displayed and in harangues to the crowd they called for the overthrow of the government. These events, plus student unrest in Hue and an attack by Buddhist supporters on an army captain in Da Nang finally impelled the military into action.<sup>480</sup>

There was little disagreement among observers, both Vietnamese and foreigners, that Xa Loi had become more a political command post than a holy place. One recalled the vivid memory of the persistent humming day and night of mimeograph machines that made the entire building reverberate and the hubbub and bustle of telephones ringing, orders being barked, messengers scurrying to and fro, manifestoes being issued, and press conferences being held. On August 20, all the key generals met at the palace with Nhu, as was their custom before seeking Diem's approval for any action, to discuss the situation caused by the demonstrations in the cities. According to one of them, General Tran Thien Khiem, chief of staff of the army, Nhu put the question of what to do up for discussion. General Don said that continued disorders could not be tolerated. The disorders deeply undermined the people's faith in the power of the government to keep the situation under control. The ringleaders of the disorders had to be rounded up; Don felt that Thich Duc Nghiep was particularly dangerous. The pagodas could not be privileged sanctuaries for subversion. It was impossible to give one group the privilege of breaking the law. Soldiers in battle had the right to expect a certain discipline on the home front. There followed a long discussion among the generals of how the Buddhist militants were to be taken into custody and the pagodas changed back to religious rather than political centers. When the discussion ended, the generals decided unanimously to send a written petition to Diem that was signed by all asking for action. Nhu took the petition to Diem, who approved it.481

Don gave an account to Conein immediately after the event that was similar to Khiem's, except for saying that Nhu told the generals to present their

plans to the president and was not present when they did so. Don also said the generals feared that if the Buddhist agitators assembled a large enough crowd they could order a march toward the Gia Long Palace and that the army would not stop them. He said Diem made the decision to establish martial law after the generals had recommended it. Diem made the decision to bring troops into the city to occupy key points and approved the recommendation to move bonzes visiting Saigon back to their provinces and pagodas. Diem insisted, however, that none of the bonzes be hurt. 482

Shortly after the proclamation of martial law at midnight, the army and the police retook control of Xa Loi and a dozen other pagodas (out of a total of 4,766 in the country), breaking down doors barricaded against them and seizing bonzes who resisted on the orders of their superiors. At one pagoda in Hue, monks and nuns held out for eight hours before being rounded up and taken away, and crowds of sympathizers rioted in the city. At Xa Loi, some 400 persons were arrested. It was a miracle no one was killed in the sudden action (as was later verified by the UN investigating team). Two of the monks at Xa Loi eluded arrest by jumping over the wall into the compound of the American aid mission. Although General Don had been made responsible for enforcing martial law, the army units used in the crackdown on the pagodas belonged to the Special Forces under the command of Colonel Le Quang Tung, who followed orders directly from the presidency, which normally were involved in covert operations against North Vietnam; Don found out about the raids by a call on his radio. He went immediately to Xa Loi, where he found a police officer in charge, backed up by Special Forces in the periphery of the area. 483 Diem and Nhu had not given the generals advance warning of the action because they feared they would alert the American Embassy and that this would provide the occasion for another demand from Washington for a public kowtow by Diem; the distrust between the allies had reached this stage.

Canadian ICC Commissioner Gordon Cox felt that Diem and Nhu had the situation well in hand and had actually gained in prestige through recent events because they had demonstrated that they could in no sense be regarded as puppets of the United States. This had in turn weakened the force of DRV propaganda in the South. Cox thought the action against the pagodas was justified in light of the warlike preparations there and the clear intent of the Buddhist leaders to go on with political agitation until the government was overthrown. He Thien Hoa said he agreed with the arrests of monks engaged in politics and called them a "necessary measure to protect the country." Diem's emissary to the United Nations, Buu Hoi, who had many contacts among the Buddhist monks, said that most of those with whom he had talked regretted they had been duped and used as political pawns. Sisouk na Champassak and Ngon Sananikone, also at the United Nations, expressed strong sympathy with Diem's government in taking action to control a subversive movement in a time of war.

Don told Conein he had heard personally that the military were being blamed by the Vietnamese public for the attack on the pagodas. There was nothing surprising about this, as the Voice of the Armed Forces radio station in

Saigon had reported the crackdown and explained that it had been necessary because "Viet Cong dressed in monks' robes" had penetrated the sanctuaries. 487 The embassy had correctly reported that the impetus for the crackdown came from the senior military leadership. 488 Don, however, told Conein that the American government was at fault for this "misconception" because the Voice of America (VOA) had broadcast that the military took action against the pagodas. He asked why the VOA did not "admit" that Colonel Tung's Special Forces and the police carried out the action. Don believed this would help the military at this point. 489 Hilsman in Washington saw to the broadcast of a "correction" by the VOA; Hilsman's view of Vietnam did not include the army's taking orders from the presidential palace. 490

Tri Quang had planned a much bigger demonstration for August 25 to coincide with Lodge's arrival, which had been forestalled by the government's actions to clean up the pagodas. As he told American Embassy officers later, the plan involved giving information to the press and the government at least 48 hours in advance. The aim would have been to publicize the fact that the Buddhists believed that the Ngô family must relinquish its powers. Lists of names of suicide volunteers would have been released, and had the government surrounded Xa Loi or otherwise attempted to prevent the demonstration from taking place, there would have been mass suicides, perhaps 1,000 of them. Tri Quang's followers had already begun compiling lists of volunteers in which high school and college students figured more prominently than anyone else. Tri Quang claimed sole authorship of this plan. 491 The government's preemptive action against the pagodas steeled him in his determination to overthrow Diem himself, not simply to rid the government of other members of the Ngô family.<sup>492</sup>

In the wake of the pagoda action, things in South Vietnam quickly returned to normal. Lodge, who had been making the journey from his home in Massachusetts in slow stages, was informed of the pagoda action while in Tokyo; he was provided with a special plane to fly nonstop from Tachikawa Air Force Base to Saigon, arriving at 9:30 on the evening of August 22. In a matter of days the pagodas occupied by the security forces were turned back to the Buddhist clergy. Once again, Thich Tinh Khiet appealed to the monks to stay out of politics and return to their religious duties.

The events in Saigon on the morning of August 21, like those of June 11, spurred the coup plotters to action. This time the plotters did not simply issue another futile demand for a kowtow, as they had on June 11, but decided to send a signal to Saigon authorizing Lodge to overthrow Diem. Once again, the usual leaked story appeared in The New York Times stating that some officials in Washington believed that the only solution for the Vietnam crisis was to remove Nhu, or Nhu and Diem if the two brothers were inseparable, by a military coup. 493 Most of the leaking was done by Harriman. 494

The plotters chose a time to draft and send their cable when the highest officials of the government were unavailable. Kennedy was spending the weekend at the family house at Hyannisport. Secretary Rusk was away, once again, attending a baseball game at Yankee Stadium. Ball, who was acting, was playing golf that Saturday, August 24, with U. Alexis Johnson, who was not in the small circle of plotters despite his senior position (deputy under secretary for political affairs). Harriman and Hilsman had done the drafting and they found Ball and obtained his approval, being careful not to show the cable to Johnson. The cable was dispatched to Saigon over Ball's signature that evening as Deptel 243.<sup>495</sup>

The plotters' first object was to make it look like the entire government had agreed to Diem's overthrow. This was, of course, false. President Kennedy later recorded his disapproval of Deptel 243. Topies of Deptel 243, along with all other similar cables in the period August 24 to 29 were recalled and destroyed on instructions from the White House. The plotters' second object was to reverse the standing instructions of the contingency plan approved by Kennedy on June 6 that the American position in the event of a change of government was not to be discussed with the Vietnamese prior to such a change. This was important, because before the generals would move they wanted to know what they could expect from the United States. Deptel 243 therefore marked a *breach* of the prohibition against informing any Vietnamese in advance of what the position of the United States would be in the event of a government crisis.

The calm following the pagoda action was only momentary. Generals Don, Khiem, and Ton That Dinh had seen Nhu again at midnight on August 22 because they had information that on August 23, 24, and 25 there would be student demonstrations in Saigon. They recommended that schools in Saigon be closed under martial law. Nhu concurred with the generals' recommendation and told them he had to check with the president. When they saw Diem, however, the president said no, the young people must have a means of expressing themselves.<sup>499</sup>

On Sunday, August 25, groups of youths violated martial law and a number of them were arrested and handed over to the military; some of them were found to be draft-dodgers. It seems significant that the only memorial erected by the Saigonese to the martyrs of this turbulent period was to a girl student, Quach Thi Trang, who was fatally injured in the head by the security forces in the mêlée at the Ben Thanh market on that day; none was put up in the aftermath to the self-immolated Buddhists. Foreign Minister Mau, however, offered his resignation to Diem, who declined it, and then departed to India for what he called a "religious vacation"; he used his pilgrimage to Buddhist holy places to "pray for Vietnam's national unity." On September 1, Tri Quang and two other monks sought political asylum in the American Embassy.

There was no martial law proclamation in IV Corps, where the Buddhist agitation did not extend. Imposing a nighttime curfew in the Delta would have cut off the supply of fish to Saigon. Khmer and Lao Buddhists condemned the burnings. Although the Theravadists in the main Cambodian-inhabited areas of South Vietnam did not approve of the government's raiding pagodas anywhere, they claimed to disapprove strongly the political coloring of the Buddhist leaders' protest movement and the self-immolations, which went against their beliefs. <sup>501</sup> In Laos, newspapers condemned the monk burnings as not being in keeping with Lao tradition. <sup>502</sup> Diem, through his ambassador, Buu Hoi,

requested the United Nations to send a mission to investigate charges by the Buddhist activists of religious persecution; the mission was announced by the president of the General Assembly on October 12.<sup>503</sup>

In view of events, it became necessary to postpone the planned elections. The new date was September 27. With the lifting of martial law on September 16, the election campaign resumed from September 17 to 26. The voting, once again, was marked by a lack of violence throughout South Vietnam. According to the ministry of interior, 84.1 percent of eligible voters voted in Saigon and 92 to 93 percent voted outside Saigon. 504 As in past elections, officials worked hard to ensure a large turnout on election day. An embassy political officer who made unannounced visits to four villages along the main Saigon-My Tho highway found voters who had been persuaded rather than forced to vote, who were unable to state what penalties would be applied for not complying, and who were not particularly unhappy about voting.<sup>505</sup> In Phan Thiet, another embassy officer saw the government-backed NRM candidate, who was cordially disliked by the population, swamped by a margin of three to one, coming in last in a field of three candidates. (Nationally, the NRM was reduced from 76 to 55 seats, while the number of independents rose to 66.) In the adjoining district, the main opposition candidate, a local businessman with an apparent history of dissatisfaction and troublemaking, spent the last days of the campaign in jail for Buddhist-political activities, but still managed to come within 2,000 votes of winning. The officer found a widespread feeling among the voters that the election was much more democratic than the 1959 election had been. A third officer who visited Tay Ninh on election day also observed that the election procedures were followed in an orderly manner, and in a close race the officially favored candidate lost.<sup>506</sup> (Nationally, 15 favored candidates were defeated.)507 Both Ngô Dinh Nhu and his wife were re-elected. In conclusion, it may be said that these elections were the freest held in South Vietnam. The embassy understood that strong cases existed for contesting only two of the results but that Diem was reluctant to allow any of the elections to be overturned.<sup>508</sup>

When the Assembly met, Truong Vinh Le was re-elected its president. In his speech opening the Assembly on October 7, Diem alluded to enemies that had been defeated but had not laid down their arms, described a situation of national danger (the state of emergency decreed in 1961 remained in effect), and asked for the deputies' trust and collaboration. The Communists had lost the support of the people, he said, and had sought an alternative strategy and had succeeded to some extent, "owing to the demagogic and criminal complicity of a certain number of traitors and foreign adventurers, and also thanks to certain elements of the Western big press which gratuitously gave them a sounding board to poison no small part of the national and international opinion with the help of the so-called Buddhist affair." He saw no end in sight. "They will ceaselessly try to exploit the least incident. They will seek to instill fanaticism even into our children, taking advantage of our smallest differences to attempt to destroy our independence and our sovereignty, and wreck our efforts to emerge from the politico-religious confusion to become a modern

state." But he was optimistic about the military picture. The strategic hamlets had cut the guerrillas off from the people and forced them to fight a conventional war in a hostile environment. He paid tribute to the army, which was progressively being freed from static defense tasks and was able to act as a mobile strike force and to take the offensive. Internationally, the Republic of Vietnam had established official relations with 80 non-Communist nations and now had legations or consulates in some 30 states and some form of representation in 45 others.<sup>509</sup>

He was still contending with feudalists (he had finally dismissed Tran Van Chuong, Madame Nhu's father, who had been complaining bitterly since 1960 about Diem's land reform program as it affected him, a rich absentee landowner in Cochinchina<sup>510</sup>), colonialists (in this instance, Americans), and Communists (who were still the same old enemies, though powerfully bolstered by their allies). Diem told Major Pham Ngoc Thiep, province chief of Quang Nam, one month before he was killed that there were three things that he would not allow: (1) the national army being placed under American command; (2) Cam Ranh Bay being given to the Americans; and (3) the Buddhists flying their swastika flag on an equal footing with the national flag.<sup>511</sup>

Asked in an interview published on October 17 how he felt about President Kennedy's statement that the United States would continue supporting his government although it disapproved of some of his policies and what he would do if the Congress began cutting aid, Diem answered: "In a subversive war, one should expect all sort[s] of unpleasant surprises from one's enemies, and sometimes also from one's friends. It is with this kind of war, and not another, that we have to cope.... Now, with or without American aid, I will keep up the fight, and will always fully maintain my friendship towards the American people." In a moment of despair, however, Diem turned to Thuan and asked "Is there no other country than the United States that can help us?" Thuan replied: "There is none, Mr. President." Thuan had, at Diem's request, had elaborate studies made about what steps South Vietnam could take without American aid, and all had concluded that without American aid they could not go on. 514

The government's effort against the Viet Cong was going well, in spite of the uncertainties of American support. The progress was attested to in the increase in volume of spontaneous intelligence being provided by the population, first noted by the Australian counterinsurgency specialist Colonel Ted Serong in May.<sup>515</sup> Despite the political turmoil, Forrestal reported to President Kennedy on July 3, the war against the Viet Cong seemed to be progressing surprisingly well. The activity of the army against the guerrillas had increased in the past two weeks.<sup>516</sup> Rice was moving into Saigon normally. Rice exports continued at their previous levels. General Paul D. Harkins, the MACV commander, characterized the state of the Vietnamese military and its American allies by saying "We're stronger physically, mentally, and morally than the enemy."<sup>517</sup> Diem spent the weekend of October 18–19 visiting the province of Tuyen Duc.<sup>518</sup>

Politically, with Tri Quang ensconced in the embassy, the Buddhist issue was slipping away from the plotters and their accomplices. In September and

October the agitation died down. On October 31, Buu Hoi went to the Gia Long Palace with two Buddhist monks to see Nhu. They asked him to intervene with Diem to free "all Buddhist dignitaries, laymen and students still under detention," and Nhu "promised to obtain from the president a favorable answer to this request." The news was announced in an official press release, and merited a banner headline on the front page of the *Times of Vietnam* the next day. Diem told Lodge on the morning of November 1 that the Buddhist agitators had told the UN fact-finding commission that they had been misled by American agents and offered to give the commission names; Nhu had urged Diem against giving the names because their two countries were, after all, allies, but they would be given to the embassy. Diem against giving the names because their two countries were, after all, allies,

## ATTEMPTS AT NEGOTIATION

The founding of the South Vietnam National Liberation Front in December 1960 had, curiously, put the question of reunification of Vietnam, which had disappeared from view after 1956, back on the agenda of public discourse in Saigon. The NLF's program called for formation of a government that would negotiate seriously with Hanoi to move toward reunification. It was a piece of Communist propaganda, of course, but it caught the attention of a number of Asian and European diplomats in Saigon who saw a real possibility of such a negotiation. The American Embassy, however, did not see Diem's stand on either reunification or possible negotiations as a subject for discussion with him. <sup>521</sup>

From the very beginning of his presidency, Diem had been reluctant to have foreign advisers too closely associated with military operations. After the departure of the French, he had continued his prohibition against American advisers participating in operational planning or accompanying Vietnamese troops on operations. With the influx of American advisers in 1961 and 1962, however, Diem had had to accept them participating in combat against the Viet Cong. He was also worried about the growing numbers of Americans in the provinces responsible for the aid program; he suspected them of beginning to do what the French had done, namely to take over the direct administration of the country. 523

Diem was acutely aware that this state of affairs was grist for the Communist propaganda mill. In July 1962, Pham Van Dong, a skilled reader of tea leaves, had described to Bernard B. Fall the "descending spiral" in which Diem was caught. "Monsieur Diem's position is quite difficult. He is unpopular, and the more unpopular he is the more American aid he will require to stay in power. And the more American aid he receives, the more he will look like a puppet of the Americans and the less likely he is to win popular support for his side." In spite of this brave talk, the DRV was not lessening its own dependence on foreigners. The food supply was meager, and the split between the Soviet Union and China was growing. Moreover, the tea leaves showed another dilemma, which Pham Van Dong did not mention: a prolongation of the armed struggle in the South risked bringing the Americans in ever more deeply, and this inevitably would increase the DRV's dependence on China. This was, of course, the stock argument of French diplomacy. But among others who

were sensitive to this dependence factor was the Indian chairman of the ICC in Vietnam, G. Parthasarathi. <sup>525</sup> Before he left Saigon, Mendenhall had written a memorandum, likewise not discussed with Diem, suggesting the retaliatory bombing of North Vietnam, and this had been forwarded to Washington. <sup>526</sup>

The first real break in solving this riddle came in September 1962 with a visit to Hanoi of the new Indian ICC Chairman, Ramchundur Goburdhan. During his four-day visit, Goburdhan had talks with Giap and Dong, and during the latter talk Ho came in and participated in the conversation for two hours. According to the account received by the embassy, Ho described Diem as a "patriot" and said he was prepared to extend the hand of friendship to him. Ho also said he was willing to explore the exchange of families between the two zones of Vietnam, that is to say the possibility of allowing divided families remaining in the North to rejoin family members in the South and vice versa. Ho also spoke about the war, expressing the wish that Diem's government would cease bombing and air attacks on resistance elements in the South.<sup>527</sup>

The following month (October 1962), a joint statement of the National Liberation Front and the Vietnam Fatherland Front placed strong emphasis on the future reunification of Vietnam as the goal of both fronts. This coincided with a French view that the military situation was moving in Saigon's favor. French Ambassador Lalouette told Nolting on October 17, 1962, that for the first time in four years he had filed an optimistic report on the situation in South Vietnam covering both the military and political aspects and based on a careful review by himself and his advisers. Favorable trends cited by Lalouette included the progress of the strategic hamlet program, the continued enlightened approach by the government to the Montagnard population which aimed at their incorporation as a real and vital part of the body politic, and the improved military outlook. British diplomats and military experts were in agreement about the general trend. 528 Lalouette had dropped hints to the Vietnamese about the French government's view that some sort of parley between North and South Vietnam "in a year" was inevitable. Nolting told the Vietnamese (and it is hard to believe he did not accept Lalouette's assurance on this score as being true) that the French realized that a Laos-type settlement was not applicable to the Vietnam problem.<sup>529</sup> But the two things were not, after all, entirely incompatible. France had its delegate general in Hanoi, and among Western countries it was well informed about Northern affairs.

At Tet on January 25, 1963, Diem received a gift of a flowering cherry branch from Ho, which he displayed in the hall where the traditional reception for the diplomatic corps was held. On April 12, in the midst of the confrontation with Nolting over control of the counterinsurgency fund, Nhu discussed with CIA station chief John H. Richardson, in one of their periodic private meetings, the question of relations between the Vietnamese and the Americans. He said it would be useful to reduce the numbers of Americans by anywhere from 500 to 3,000 or 4,000. He said that when the Americans first arrived, the Vietnamese had a particular respect for them because the Americans were very hard-working, disciplined, and without "rancor" among themselves or toward

others. He said the influx of Americans and their stationing in the provinces had been welcomed with the thought that Americans located in the provinces would come to understand the difficulties confronted by the Vietnamese and would interpret Vietnamese problems sympathetically and with more knowledge of the situation. This had not proved sufficiently to be the case. Nhu cited complaints by Vietnamese officials that they felt inferior because their American counterparts controlled the funds and materials, but the issue lying at the heart of Nhu's observations, Richardson understood, was infringement of national sovereignty.<sup>531</sup>

Nhu needed a public forum in which to express these views so that Hanoi would receive the desired signal. The occasion presented itself with the visit to Saigon of Warren Unna of *The Washington Post.* Unna, a respected diplomatic correspondent, was not held in high regard by Nhu, who characterized him as incurably prejudiced against Diem's government,<sup>532</sup> but the interview was printed on the newspaper's front page and led with Nhu's statement that South Vietnam would like to see half of the 12,000 to 13,000 American military personnel stationed in Vietnam leave the country.<sup>533</sup> The joint communiqué on May 17 was also a signal to Hanoi that Diem was trying to keep his independence from the Americans.

Also in May, Polish ICC Commissioner Mieczyslaw Maneli, who was on friendly terms with Nhu, informed the DRV leaders on a slightly more official level of Diem's desire to reduce the American presence in South Vietnam. Maneli traveled frequently between Saigon and Hanoi on ICC business. As a representative of the socialist camp, although he was not a career diplomat but a member of the liberal Polish intelligentsia, he was trusted by the DRV leaders. On July 10, he reported that he had asked Pham Van Dong, in Ho's presence, whether the DRV government foresaw some kind of federation or coalition with the South. Dong replied: "Everything is negotiable on the basis of the independence and sovereignty of Vietnam. The Geneva Accords supply the legal and political basis for this: no foreign bases or troops on our territory. We can come to an agreement with any Vietnamese."534 This visit occurred at a time when Chinese influence in Hanoi, following Khrushchev's washing of his hands of responsibility for the neutralization of Laos, was at an all-time high; yet the DRV leaders were at pains to emphasize to their interlocutors that the militant communiqué issued after the visit to Hanoi by Liu Shao-chi altered nothing in their desire for negotiations with the South.<sup>535</sup> The DRV leaders were aware of Maneli's friendly relations with Nhu. For their part, the Chinese either remained ignorant of contacts, direct or indirect, between the DRV and Diem's government, or disapproved of them.<sup>536</sup>

Nhu's unusual initiative of calling in Trueheart, Harkins, Major General Richard G. Weede (Harkins's chief of staff), and Richardson on May 24 to discuss an intelligence report of a meeting held the previous week at the Mimot rubber plantation in Cambodia suggests several possible motivations.<sup>537</sup> On one level, by discussing with the Americans raw intelligence that had not yet been analyzed and asking them to contribute to a recommendation to be made to the

president, in itself an unprecedented procedure, Nhu was showing his willingness to confide in them. On another, the intelligence reported by Nhu's informant to the effect that the principal Viet Cong political and military leaders in attendance had been informed by the representatives of the party center who were present that top military priority for the moment was being accorded to Laos, and that a directive had been issued at the meeting, effective May 20, that about six battalions of Viet Cong special forces were to be withdrawn from South Vietnam into southern Laos, may have been Nhu's way of demonstrating to the Americans the hollowness of Article 2(i) of the Declaration on the Neutrality of Laos that Harriman had signed with the DRV foreign minister. On yet another level, Nhu's purpose may have been simply to exhibit the degree of his information about Communist moves and intentions, and thereby to hint, at least, at his ability to contact negotiating agents if his brother so ordered. Nhu's insistence that no special publicity be given to a new campaign against the Viet Cong, as favored by his American interlocutors, if it should take place, suggests that his purpose was something other than to initiate a more aggressive policy against Hanoi; there was no declared state of war against Hanoi in any case, so his soundings for negotiations could hardly be construed as treason.

In any event, all available evidence suggests that battlefield offensive activity fell off during the summer and autumn of 1963; whether this was connected with negotiating attempts under way is unknown. The decrease in Viet Cong actions was not accompanied by a noticeable increase in defections from Viet Cong, which indicates a planned step-down and not a shift in the military balance. A continued decline in the level and scale of Viet Cong-initiated activity was noted in the second week of October. Total Viet Cong killed in the month of September were 1,982, against only 83 government soldiers killed.<sup>538</sup>

On June 29, a fortnight after the American ultimatum demanding a public kowtow, the Ngô family met in a planning conclave in Hue and apparently decided for a new strategy for reunification and the dismissal of the Americans.<sup>539</sup> The Communists also adjusted their strategy to take advantage of the situation. They had inexplicably not exploited the Buddhist affair, and now there settled on the battlefield as well a lull in offensive activity. In a statement broadcast on July 12, the NLF warned that the Americans were pursuing a vain hope if they thought that by ridding the country of Diem and his family they could destroy the revolution; any replacement government set up by the imperialists would only be a puppet government and hence an enemy of the people.<sup>540</sup> As long as the Americans remained, the war would not go away. The statement was the signal for a major effort to dismantle the strategic hamlets. While avoiding major engagements, Communist main force units were dispersed around the countryside to confront the village militias defending the strategic hamlets. The American-inspired rumors of coup plotting had made Diem and Nhu nervous about troop movements. Nowhere was this development more evident than in Long An Province on Saigon's doorstep. The American provincial representative, Earl Young, reported that the regular army, in the form of the 7th Division based at My Tho, had been confined to barracks and

was no longer responding to calls for assistance from village militias under attack, as had been standard operating procedure. The party center was kept informed of the situation through an agitprop agent called Albert Pham Ngoc Thao. Thao had emerged from the Vanguard Youth in 1945 to rise to the position of political commissar of the 410th Viet Minh Battalion in Ca Mau. After the French war, Thao, a Catholic from a family in Vinh Long, had ingratiated himself with Ngô Dinh Thuc and won promotion by Diem, under whose protection he had complete freedom to go anywhere, passing himself off as an inspector of strategic hamlets, and cultivating Americans as well. Thao was reportedly particularly close to General Tran Thien Khiem. Thao quietly fanned the rumors in high places of coup plotting. In Long An, the Communists moved in with overwhelming force and dismantled 50 strategic hamlets, forcing the defenseless villagers to cut up barbed wire fences and even remove the corrugated metal roofs from their houses.<sup>541</sup>

The French were having their own thoughts and expectations about the two Vietnams. Although still maintaining a public posture of disinterest in what was happening in Indochina, de Gaulle and his Asian specialist at the Quai d'Orsay, Manac'h, were reliably reported in November 1962 to have taken the decision to work for a neutral South Vietnam. Such a "neutral" South Vietnam could only, obviously, lead to the reunification of Vietnam on the same terms as Mendès-France had envisaged in 1954, that is to say on Hanoi's terms. This de Gaulle made clear in his much-publicized statement of August 29, 1963, which he issued without consulting the United States. The statement, showing Manac'h's clever drafting, focused on the struggle for independence of the Vietnamese people without distinction between North and South, and thereby it appeared to condemn foreign intervention in South Vietnam without condemning massive Soviet and Chinese military aid to North Vietnam. The statement was reportedly influenced by the DRV agent in Paris, Nguyên Van Chi. States.

In Saigon, as August gave way to September, Ambassador Lalouette's position changed: where once he had opposed Diem and favored his replacement, he was now beginning to see Diem as the last obstacle to complete Americanization of South Vietnam and to conclude that Diem had to be saved. There is little evidence that Diem and Nhu placed any confidence in the French scheme, and Lalouette left Saigon before the coup, a defeated man who felt the regime was lost.

Diem and Nhu carried on with their attempts to open a dialogue directly with Hanoi, and it is probably because of the importance of the hoped-for negotiations, which Diem would not have entrusted to anyone else, that Nhu reversed his decision at the beginning of September, reportedly at the insistence of Archbishop Ngô Dinh Thuc, to leave the country. They had no way left to discuss with Lodge their attempts to negotiate a modus vivendi with Hanoi even had they wanted to, because he had effectively cut them off. Nhu saw that Lodge, with his demonized view, took his hints about negotiations to be attempts to blackmail the United States. Any serious attempt to broach the subject, he could see, was useless, but the numerous reasons favoring it led other

foreign diplomats in Saigon that September to conclude that a deal could emerge before the end of the year.<sup>546</sup>

When Maneli reported that Nhu had requested him to call on him on September 2, Colonel Ha Van Lau, the chief of the DRV liaison mission with the ICC, advised Maneli to see Nhu whenever he wished it and as often as he wished. "The comrades from the leadership advise that you listen carefully and do not promise anything beyond your willingness to be helpful in any action designed to carry out the Geneva Accords. We ask you to give us a detailed account of your conversations as soon as possible." The meeting with Nhu produced no dramatic breakthrough. Nhu formally denied there were any secret negotiations going on. At the same time, he explained that ideologically and politically such negotiations were possible. Maneli had the impression that Diem and Nhu viewed anti-communism not only as an exportable commodity but also as a medium of exchange. Nhu in his talk with Maneli was at the same time and with the same words confirming and denying. 548

The timing of the opening of this channel of communication to Hanoi was propitious for Diem. The successful conclusion of the popular election of the National Assembly on September 27 put him and his government in a stronger position, for if he was not ruling out the possibility of a negotiated settlement of the insurgency, he at least did not want to have one imposed upon him. He seemed to believe that the convergence of interests between Hanoi and Saigon would suffice without necessarily opening negotiations. Fearing to derail the process, Diem did not say much in his address to the Assembly on October 7 about the Americans and the help they were giving his government. He wished to send a signal to Hanoi that he was not dependent on the Americans, who were trying to make him behave like a puppet.

Immediately following the coup, of course, the DRV denied it had ever encouraged any negotiations with Diem. The Polish Embassy in Washington, obviously acting under instructions, took pains to make it clear that Hanoi had not initiated any contacts with Diem and had not reacted to them positively. The liberal Maneli's attempts to be helpful in solving the Vietnam problem thus were consigned to oblivion by the Stalinists in Warsaw and Hanoi. In Washington, Harriman's "experts" did their best to question the credibility of a professor's book in which the author had written that Ho had approached Diem requesting that he demand the departure of the Americans. <sup>550</sup> Viet Cong actions increased dramatically in the week following the coup, including at least six company-sized attacks; South Vietnamese military losses went up to 116 killed; 265 Viet Cong were killed. <sup>551</sup>

## THE OVERTHROW OF CONSTITUTIONALITY—II

Neil Sheehan's good sources at the embassy told him that within a few days of his arrival in Saigon, Lodge had determined the Ngôs would have to go.<sup>552</sup> The evidence is that the plotters had reached such a conclusion considerably earlier, but once on the spot Lodge showed a single-minded determination to run the show himself. He had had two months in which to prepare himself. At about

the time Trueheart had sought Diem's agrément for Lodge's appointment in June, the director of the Bureau of Intelligence and Research had prepared and sent to Rusk a research memorandum titled "Implications of the Buddhist Crisis in Vietnam." The memorandum had predicted that a resurgence of Buddhist agitation would almost certainly give rise to coup efforts. Such efforts would require considerable prior planning, but a coup could be carried out in Saigon without excessive armed conflict and bloodshed and without weakening the military front against the Viet Cong. One proviso was that the coup makers not succumb to protracted negotiations with Diem, as had happened in 1960. The memorandum had dismissed the possibility that Diem could be convinced to separate himself from the Nhus, and had predicted that the family would not be prepared to capitulate without a fight, "but we see it as equally unlikely that they would be permitted any alternative other than to resign or face death." Much depended on the public attitude of the United States during the coup attempt. If Diem did not receive the immediate and strong American support that he expected and succeeded in defeating the rebels, he would be even more difficult to deal with and would be confirmed in the view that he was indispensable, knew best what the situation required, and could not trust anyone outside his immediate family. The rebels, for their part, would take silence on the part of the United States as a sign of support, which would inspire broader participation in their efforts and would enable the United States to influence the formation and policies of the successor government. Obvious support for Diem, on the other hand, would cause hostility toward the United States on the part of the successor government.<sup>553</sup>

Trueheart had addressed a long telegram telling Lodge what to expect on his arrival in Saigon. In a paragraph that made eminent sense, Trueheart had attempted to size up the war, on which Lodge would certainly get questions from newsmen. He suggested Lodge say that the government had a sound program and had made notable progress in the past 18 months, but he advised a qualification to the effect that the war was "frustrating, ugly, and probably long drawn-out." Harriman objected to this, saying that it conveyed the impression "that we are somehow ashamed of it." The only reason for Lodge's interest in the army was how it could be used to overthrow Diem. He, like the other plotters, focused on the generals as the instruments most easily controlled due to the fact they were totally dependent on American support; the plotters showed no interest in other coup plotters. 556

At Tan Son Nhut the only Vietnamese official to greet Lodge was an army colonel. The newsmen were there in force, however. Halberstam had served notice to Trueheart that "everyone here, Americans and Vietnamese alike, expects much too much from him [Lodge], more than any man could ever produce," but had offered to go easy and not harass him with difficult questions at the outset. 557 Lodge ignored Trueheart's advice to restate "that U.S. policy remains one of full support for the constitutional government of President Diem" and talked instead about the role of the press in American democracy, which gained him favor with the assembled American correspondents. On his first

day in Saigon he visited the two monks who had taken refuge at the American aid mission on the night of the crackdown.

Diem received Lodge at the palace graciously, betraying no suspicion. Lodge was carrying a letter to Diem that Kennedy had given him at their August 15 meeting. After noting that Lodge was a distinguished native of his own state and had served it in the Senate, Kennedy wrote: "I think it important that Ambassador Lodge establish with you as quickly as possible a close working relationship based upon mutual confidence," and signed the letter "With cordial good wishes for your personal welfare."558 Lodge was the most dangerous American Diem had ever met, more dangerous than Collins, more dangerous than Durbrow, far more dangerous than Diem's American academic friends Fishel and Buttinger, whose blind antagonism to him was grounded, if it was grounded at all, more in emotion than in reason. Within a month of his arrival, Lodge had wrecked the relationship of mutual trust Nolting had built up over the preceding two years. Lodge attached no particular importance to this. He had found a way of getting rid of Diem without threatening him: by isolating him, a course he could justify to Kennedy on grounds of pressing American demands for reforms; in fact, this meant that there was no negotiating on any of these demands.

Anxious to get on with the business at hand, in one of his first telegrams from Saigon Lodge gave an analysis of the power structure in the army and of what could be expected if the army tried to depose Diem. 559 Taking advantage of the broadened authority the plotters had given him in Deptel 243, at a meeting on the morning of August 26 Lodge ordered Conein to meet immediately with General Khiem and tell him the United States was in agreement that the Nhus had to go and convey a promise of American direct support during any interim period of breakdown of central government mechanism.<sup>560</sup> Khiem expressed his pleasure at knowing the American position.<sup>561</sup> Another CIA agent who talked with General Nguyên Khanh at Pleiku on August 26 gave him the same message. Khanh wanted to know whether the Americans would grant safe haven and support to their families in case the generals' coup failed, and the CIA station reported that this question, as well as the question of money to be set aside for this purpose, would be discussed with Lodge. 562 Word of these discussions reached the palace, for President Diem broached the subject with Ambassador Lalouette, who had just returned from Paris, during a three-hour meeting on September 2. "There are rumors of plans for a coup de force. I am told that my life might be in danger. It is inconceivable that one would have recourse to such activities against the government of a friendly country."563

What the generals had been told or not told thus became an important topic at meetings in the White House. On August 29, Hilsman observed, in response to a remark by Nolting, that it was not clear whether the generals wanted to get rid of both Nhu and Diem, that they had been told they could keep Diem in their new government if they wished. Nolting must have realized that the contingency plan had been thrown out, thereby giving Lodge a free hand in plotting with the generals. Rusk showed little concern for the scrapping of the presidential policy on coup planning, assuming he had even seen it; he was gung-ho for getting the generals ready to carry off a coup. <sup>564</sup>

Who were these generals? Anne Blair, who has examined Lodge's papers, observes that in his notes for speeches Lodge habitually began with the entry "Confucian, tropical rice-growing society." Yet nowhere in his writings did he reveal any appreciation that professional soldiers had always commanded little esteem in Confucian society. <sup>565</sup> In Truong Vinh Le's opinion, Duong Van Minh was naive, shallow, lazy, and empty-headed. He was principally interested in tennis, his orchid garden, and his aquarium. <sup>566</sup> General Harkins's evaluation of Minh was that Minh had contributed nothing to the war effort either as commander of the field command or as adviser to the president; in a year and a half he had done little but complain about the government and the way it was run. <sup>567</sup>

The fact that they could speak French counted in their favor with the American plotters, none of whom could speak Vietnamese. Tran Van Don had lived in France until the age of 34, when he had returned to Indochina at the end of 1940 and joined Decoux's campaign against the Thai in Cambodia, which earned him the rank of reserve second lieutenant. Don and Conein were old friends. But their French past was not an unmixed blessing. Tran Trung Dung, the former assistant defense minister, considered the majority of the generals (though not Minh) "French-trained sergeants in generals' uniforms." Le Van Kim was married to Don's sister, so the generals, like Diem, also had their family. And they soon fell to squabbling among themselves, calling into question their patriotism. They had all owed their promotion to Diem, and once he was gone it was a free-for-all.

Staging a coup in Saigon did not demand genius. The attempt in 1960 had shown how ridiculously easy it was: all the generals had to do was to encircle the presidential palace with troops, who might or might not have been told by their commander what the real purpose was, and negotiate the president's surrender. The Americans were there to provide them with maps of army camps and inventories of munitions stocks.<sup>569</sup> With assurances from the protecting power of continued recognition and aid in the event of success, there was no need to worry about such niceties as constitutionality and elections. The generals confessed their puzzlement at the fact that the Americans, who for years had been preaching the need for the military to stay out of politics, were now urging them to overthrow the civilian government and replace it with one of their own. But the generals had very little understanding of American politics, very little understanding of anything except who paid them their salaries and granted them their privileges. And it was the prospect of losing these salaries and privileges that finally induced them to screw up their courage and act on November 1, for Lodge, fed up with their dithering, had conveyed to Don on October 28 the message that the Kennedy administration was toying with the idea of pulling out of Vietnam by 1965. 570 The reaction was near panic. General Khiem later told Higgins "We took it as a sign that unless we got rid of Diem, the United States would wash its hands of the war no later than 1965."571

The coup of 1963 had nothing to do with democratizing the regime, any more than the coup attempt of 1960 had. Generals Minh, Kim, and Don did not share the noble sentiments of freedom of religious expression espoused by

Harriman and Lodge and in fact viewed the Buddhist leaders' agitation as a serious threat to the country. Minh and Kim resented having been shunted off to meaningless paper jobs. Dinh, who all accounts describe as volatile and emotional, had had his pride wounded when Diem refused to make him interior minister after the pagoda crackdown. Perhaps General Khiem summed up the mercenaries' motivation the best when he told Higgins, with alarming frankness: "The revolt was staged to please the United States. We thought that was what the Kennedy administration wanted. We thought it was the only way to save the war effort." The generals essentially hired themselves out to the plotters.

Lodge knew that the most difficult part of the task he had assigned himself would be to secure the acquiescence, if not the approval, of the president of whom he was the personal representative. Kennedy was reading a steady stream of Halberstam's anti-regime dispatches in *The New York Times* and did not approve of Halberstam's "political campaign." Hilsman assured Kennedy that Halberstam was not unduly influencing the administration's policy.<sup>573</sup> Kennedy, as was his habit, was following the action closely, as he had done during Harriman's negotiations on Laos, and periodically sent messages to Lodge with advice and hard questions. He questioned Lodge's tactic of isolating Diem instead of engaging in a dialogue with him; Lodge finally explained that his strategy was to wait for Diem to ask to see him about some part of the aid program the Americans were deliberately holding up.<sup>574</sup> This scrutiny restricted Lodge's room to maneuver with respect to the mercenaries upon whom he counted to carry out the plotters' plan.

In the week following the dispatch of Deptel 243, once he had had a chance to reflect, Kennedy felt, not unreasonably, that if only Lodge had a cards-down (as Nolting put it) talk with Diem all would be well.<sup>575</sup> Kennedy was not even certain at this point, as he later became, that Lodge supported a coup.<sup>576</sup> But the plotters endlessly muddied the waters, ensuring that White House meetings produced fruitless discussions of whether Lodge should meet Diem, and if so, what he should tell him, while in Saigon Lodge continued to isolate Diem on one pretext or another. Forrestal suggested in a memorandum on August 27 that Kennedy state his policy to his advisers as one of leaving to the generals the decision of whether Diem could be preserved, in other words taking no policy lead at all.<sup>577</sup> One of the ways the plotters kept American sponsorship of the coming coup secret was to keep Washington guessing about the likelihood and timing of the Vietnamese generals' move into action and whether some other group suspected of coup-making might preempt the generals. The crucial turning point at which Kennedy seems to have acquiesced in a coup against Diem's government by the generals came in two White House meetings on August 28, the first at noon, the second at 6 P.M. Fortunately, several of those present kept records of the proceedings, the thrust of which was that the plotters, Ball, Harriman, and Hilsman, with their concocted emotional arguments, overpowered Nolting's warnings.<sup>578</sup>

Another ploy by Lodge to keep the Washington pot bubbling was to raise the fear that the United States would be thrown out of Vietnam. Kattenburg,

who had replaced Wood as head of the Vietnam Working Group, was asked by Lodge to make that point if he got the chance, <sup>579</sup> which he did at a State Department meeting on August 31 attended by Vice President Johnson. He said that if the United States acquiesced in what had happened in Saigon it would be butted out of the country within six months to a year. Kattenburg said he felt it would be "better to withdraw in a dignified way." 580 In the follow-up discussion, no one proposed a unilateral American withdrawal; the debate inexorably came back to the question of what to do about Diem.

In this manner, the corruption spread, seeping like a poison into the meetings at the White House where the president found himself immersed in the operational details of balance of forces and other matters connected with the carrying out of a coup, rather than asking whether the coup was in the best interest of the United States. And enmeshing the Congress where Hilsman was encouraging the drafting of a Senate resolution condemning the Diem regime's "repression" of its people and threatening an aid cutoff unless this changed.<sup>581</sup>

Thereafter, the plotters had the upper hand. When Secretary McNamara and General Taylor insisted on sending instructions to Lodge to open a dialogue with Diem, Hilsman drafted the appropriate cable and got it cleared by Rusk, McNamara, and Taylor.<sup>582</sup> But he immediately drafted a second cable instructing Lodge that he should assure the mercenaries that his approach to Diem, which was still hypothetical at that point, did not imply any change in American intentions and had it cleared only by Rusk and Forrestal.<sup>583</sup>

A new list of demands on Diem was prepared on September 17 for Lodge's attention, reflecting the plotters' influence.<sup>584</sup> It resurrected many of the same old demands that had been made over the years: cabinet changes, elections, meeting of the National Assembly, disbanding of the Can Lao. Its relevance to the situation on the ground was debatable. Diem had already taken actions that met many of those demanded, such as releasing many monks and students, rehabilitating pagodas, and welcoming a mission of inquiry into the charges of religious persecution. The planned elections were just 10 days away, and the National Assembly would meet routinely shortly thereafter. Also, Madame Nhu departed on a foreign mission at the beginning of September. The embassy had reported that the Can Lao was already losing momentum in 1962 and was no longer the feared machinery for intrigue and inquisition that it used to be;<sup>585</sup> even Nhu had ceased running in the Assembly elections under the Can Lao party label. Nhu compared himself now to Sherman Adams, perhaps not an altogether happy choice. 586 The Ngôs understood perfectly that implementing these measures would not contribute to the stability of the government. However, compliance with these demands or not posed the problem of avoiding loss of face for Kennedy, in whose name they had been made. But Lodge did not allow himself to be bothered with questions of face.<sup>587</sup>

As the embassy's public affairs officer put it: "Lodge insisted that the Mission become a one-man operation, conducted in total secrecy and insulated from the staff he had inherited from Nolting by a pair of special assistants he had brought from Washington." These were John Michael Dunn and Frederick

W. Flott. He did not rely on the country team for advice, but turned to outsiders when he needed it. Lodge also claimed for himself a monopoly on direct contact with top officials of the government, to the point where he ordered several senior Americans to cease working with Vietnamese whom they had known for years. 588 Unlike Nolting, who had spent much time traveling around the country, Lodge stuck close to Saigon.

Lodge reduced the number of country team meetings; no meeting, for example, was held on Deptel 243.589 Circulation of cable traffic to and from Washington was cut drastically. Dissemination of incoming cables was tightly held; even the chief of the political section was often not being cut in.<sup>590</sup> Lodge sent his most important cables, including those he sent for Kennedy's eyes only, without consulting the other members of the country team; the effect of this was that no one in the embassy except his aides knew what he was reporting to Washington. On occasion he typed his own messages. Censoring all political reporting, Lodge passed to the highest levels in Washington unevaluated, unqualified opinions he and Conein received from their contacts, giving weight, for example, to the mercenaries' criticisms of the government they were being paid to overthrow.<sup>591</sup> McCone complained that Lodge's policies had "foreclosed intelligence sources" and consequently were undermining American efforts in Vietnam.<sup>592</sup> In the same vein Lodge did his best to play down judgments that went contrary to his plan; he used his long connection with the military to suggest that officers questioned by visiting General Victor Krulak expressed optimism about the direction of the war because young officers are always intimidated by superior officers.<sup>593</sup> Lodge's efforts to shape the embassy's reporting led him into serious error on occasion. He was wrong in his reporting on the trend of the war, as we have seen, in predicting "widespread apathy among voters" in the September 27 elections<sup>594</sup> and in predicting that the government would not permit free inquiry by the UN mission.<sup>595</sup>

Lodge's treatment of his subordinates depended more on whether they fit into his plan to get rid of Diem than on the professionalism with which they carried out their duties. (Here again was another of many ironies: one of the charges against Diem was that he granted army promotions on the basis of loyalty to him rather than on professional grounds.)

Harkins was the principal of these subordinates. By virtue of his position as commanding general of MACV, he had his own independent channel of communication with Washington. President Kennedy on more than one occasion expressed his confidence in Harkins. <sup>596</sup> Lodge acted immediately after his arrival in a meeting with Harkins, Trueheart, Mecklin, and Richardson to cut Harkins out of Conein's contacts with the mercenaries. <sup>597</sup> Nor did he share his outgoing reports with Harkins, leading Harkins to complain to Taylor. <sup>598</sup> Eventually, the split between Lodge and Harkins grew to the extent that Lodge merely added a sentence—"Harkins has read this and does not concur"—to his cables.

There was one member of the country team who continued to inconvenience the carrying out of Lodge's plan. CIA station chief Richardson enjoyed relations of confidence with Nhu as part of his duties, per directive of CIA head-

quarters.<sup>599</sup> It was unseemly to have one of Richardson's subordinates, Conein, plotting the regime's overthrow while at the same time Richardson shared Nhu's confidence. More practically speaking, as long as Richardson was on the scene, Lodge could not get access to the unvouchered funds of the CIA station that he needed to pay the mercenaries. Lodge, in one of the messages he typed himself, wrote to Rusk requesting that Richardson be relieved and that Lansdale to be sent out as a replacement. 600 When informed of Lodge's request, CIA Director John A. McCone turned it down, 601 as Lodge must have known he would; the last thing he wanted was someone on his staff such as Lansdale who enjoyed Diem's trust. McCone saw that Lansdale as head of the CIA station would pose insurmountable problems, and in any case he thought Richardson was doing a good job of keeping CIA headquarters informed, as indeed all senior officers, including Hilsman, agreed.602

Lodge, accordingly, had to resort to a stratagem. He used the press, one of several such instances. 603 Lodge regarded the newsmen as a resource that was in the same category with cable traffic: as his private domain. 604 He invited them individually to meet with him and gave the appearance of listening to their views. He lobbied for them when they needed visa extensions. 605 He soon had the American correspondents feeding out of the palm of his hand.

On October 2, a story attributed to "a high United States source here" accused the CIA station in Saigon of flatly refusing to carry out Lodge's instructions and identified Richardson by name as "chief of the huge CIA apparatus here."606 Two days later, Lodge arranged to have Halberstam given a story that he would be happier with a new station chief. In the dispatch that appeared on the front page of The New York Times on October 4, the second paragraph contained a sentence in brackets, "The present C.I.A. chief in Saigon is believed to be John Richardson." The use of brackets in the body of a story is a newspaper practice allowing the insertion of relevant information not provided by the correspondent whose byline appears on the story. In this instance, it avoided blame being attached to either Lodge or Halberstam as the source of the identification of the station chief, an official secret. Despite the fact that Richardson had befriended Halberstam from his earliest days in Saigon, 607 the strategy worked, and Richardson, with his name on the front page of The New York Times, was recalled immediately, as Richardson related much later. 608 Halberstam reported that "it is believed" Lodge felt Richardson's responsibility for operations conflicted with the objectivity and disinterest of his responsibility for intelligence. Halberstam's was, in the lingo of the profession, a bullshit story. CIA station chiefs had had dual functions in the countries of Indochina for years and Richardson conformed to the norm. Lodge gave Washington a cock-and-bull story about the efforts he was making to prevent leaks in response to a personal message of concern from Kennedy.609

After Richardson's departure, the CIA station was headed by an acting station chief, David Smith. Conein, covered by Lodge, seems to have enjoyed a free hand without interference from Smith or CIA headquarters in Washington as the time for the coup approached, although in the final White House meetings questions were beginning to be raised about his freewheeling. The CIA station began immediately on Richardson's departure to report assassination threats against Lodge, reportedly originated by Nhu.<sup>610</sup> No such threats ever materialized, but the reports helped Lodge to further blacken Nhu's reputation in Washington, as did his report of the arrest by police of young women.<sup>611</sup>

The demonization of Nhu was a central part of the plotters' scheme. The premise that Nhu had taken power into his hands with the action against the pagodas had been the justification the plotters had cited in Deptel 243 for creating a situation that the United States could not tolerate. This was, of course, a fabrication like many others; Nhu's service to his brother was to act as an adviser. Lodge invented, on the basis of nothing more than "persistent rumors" of the Radio Catinat variety, a fictitious Nhu candidacy for the presidency of the National Assembly so that he would allegedly be in a position to succeed his brother as president. 612 In order for Nhu as putative president of the Assembly to succeed under the constitution, he would first be obliged to persuade both the vice president and the sitting president of the National Assembly to resign, and then contrive his own election by the Assembly as successor. He would then have a further two months during which to arrange and win a general election, which would legally install him in the office of president. 613 The president of the National Assembly, Truong Vinh Le, a prominent Southern Catholic politician and wealthy businessman, scion of a family of distinguished journalists and publishers, and greatgrandson of the Vietnamese-French scholar Petrus Ky, was far too deeply committed to the constitutional process, as his later career proved, to have taken part in such a cabal. What particularly annoyed Nhu, more than the unfounded rumors about him the Americans gave credence to, was the sneaky way Lodge had tried to have Nhu removed from his position; if Lodge had talked to him directly about leaving, he would have left, but instead he tried to talk Diem and others into making Nhu leave, and that made his departure impossible. 614

As Lodge focused on the planned coup, his outlook became narrower. Like a man whose imagination has run wild, Lodge said of Nhu that "the Furies are after him." <sup>615</sup> But this was only in keeping with Lodge's general contempt for the Vietnamese and their medieval country, which, he wrote on the eve of the coup, the United States was trying to bring into the twentieth century politically. <sup>616</sup> Diem stuck by his brother to the end, telling Lodge on October 27 that Nhu was "good, quiet, conciliatory, and compromising." <sup>617</sup> Higgins reports talking to dozens of persons who saw Nhu in the last days of his life, "and his sanity was never doubted by any of them." <sup>618</sup> Nhu had the orderly thinking that is the hallmark of the trained archivist. Lodge, however, pursued his obsession with blackening the reputations of the Ngô family even after the deaths of Diem and Nhu. <sup>619</sup>

In the aftermath of the coup, Lodge made a number of self-congratulatory remarks about the lack of a paper trail. On November 5, he wrote to his sons "The Generals conducting the coup did a masterful job. . . . There had been absolutely no leaks. I understand that there was no paperwork at all, everything having been committed to memory. Perhaps in other places, some lessons might be learned about not having leaks and not drowning in paper." 620 He reported

that the mercenaries burned all papers, memorizing everything.<sup>621</sup> The way in which secrecy was preserved and no papers of any kind were used during and preceding operations might profitably be studied.<sup>622</sup>

Lodge's advocacy for the absence of a paper trail in the planning and execution of the coup was advice he followed himself, and he went even farther, embellishing his role. For example, he publicized the fact that "a prominent Vietnamese" had told him that unless Diem and Nhu changed their ways they were bound to be assassinated. It made a good story, and above all it served Lodge's aim of making the murders seem inevitable, preordained. He told it to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in 1964, 623 and years later he repeated it to his biographer. 624 In fact, the story came from Tran Van Chuong, who in the days before the coup went around Washington telling it to anyone who would listen. 625

No record has been found of Lodge's meetings with President Kennedy on June 12 and August 15, or of his instructions from Kennedy, other than the versions presented in his papers and in his oral history. The only source for the frequently cited quote Lodge attributes to Kennedy at their June 12 meeting that "the Diem government seems to be in a terminal phase" is Lodge, and it may not accurately reflect the president's viewpoint at the time. Lodge gave his papers to the Massachusetts Historical Society during his lifetime, and he personally went through them and removed some secret materials. Anne Blair has studied these papers and his oral history at the Kennedy Library, and as she has found accounts in these two sources of other events to contain inaccuracies and omissions, they may be judged unreliable. It is significant, in my view, that the compilers of the volume on the 1963 coup in the State Department's published historical series omitted Lodge's papers from their list of documentary sources.

Among Lodge's papers is a memoir claiming that Kennedy had instructed him to maintain close contact with the apostolic delegate and other representatives of the Vatican in Vietnam with the intention of making sure that "every action that Kennedy took in relation to the Diem regime had the approval of Asta, and therefore of the Vatican." Monsignor Salvatore Asta, the papal delegate, was an old friend of Lodge, and Lodge contacted Asta soon after arriving in Saigon with a view toward having Asta prepare the ground for his first meeting with Diem. Asta lost no time in promoting a meeting between Lodge and Nhu. Lodge reported that the Italians were "afraid of a U.S. coup." Hilsman's reply approving Lodge's tactics makes no allusion to any other purpose than advancing Lodge's diplomacy with Diem, and it seems likely that, here again, Lodge was deliberately setting a paper trail. Lodge's confidential relations with Asta were susceptible to being used, without fear of contradiction, to implicate Kennedy in a scheme to obtain the Vatican's blessing for Diem's overthrow.

On Sunday, October 27, in Dalat, Diem told Lodge, his dinner guest, that the CIA was intriguing against his government. "Give me proof of improper action by any employee of the U.S. Government and I will see that he leaves Vietnam," Lodge answered with disarming mendacity. Three days earlier, Conein had withdrawn 5 million piasters (about \$70,000) from the CIA station's finance of-

fice and taken it home in a brown courier bag and placed it in a safe. <sup>632</sup> Conein understood the purpose of this money from Lodge, who, in one of his telegrams in which Harkins did not concur, explained it was to be used if needed to "buy off potential opposition." <sup>633</sup> Under questioning later, Conein said this was not the purpose told to him by General Don. <sup>634</sup> Like General Ely, Lodge saw nothing wrong with sharing Diem's dinner table while hatching plots against him.

Conein had actually offered the money on the night of October 28, but, according to Don, his offer was declined. 635 It was not until the morning of November 1 that an aide to Don told Conein to bring all available money to the Joint General Staff headquarters. 636 Conein stuffed as much of the money as he could in his briefcase before leaving his house. It was now the United States, not France, that was paying Vietnamese officers to disobey their commander in chief. This time, the Vietnamese accepted it, and the money was subsequently divided among a number of officers. In 1971, Don ordered Major Dang Van Hoa to conduct a search for receipts. Major Hoa's report, dated August 14, 1971, detailed the following payments: General Ton That Dinh, 600,000 piasters; General Tran Thien Khiem, 500,000 piasters; Lieutenant Colonel Le Nguyên Khang, 100,000 piasters; Tran Ngoc Huyen, 100,000 piasters; Phan Hoa Hiep, 100,000 piasters; Dao Ngoc Diep, 100,000 piasters; Colonel Nguyên Van Thieu, 50,000 piasters. Another 1,450,000 piasters were delivered to Generals Duong Van Minh, Le Van Kim, Ton That Dinh, Nguyên Huu Co, Tran Ngoc Tam, Nguyên Khanh, and Do Cao Tri. In addition, General Minh received another \$6,000 found in a suitcase belonging to Diem. 637

The fact that the top generals of the army had been promised money by the American coup plotters obviously affected their own loyalties and those of their subordinates. A fortnight after the raid on the pagodas and before the promise of money, MACV had made a survey of the attitudes of the South Vietnamese officer corps. The survey was conducted by American advisers throughout the country and at all command levels, and the results were reported through Harkins's channel to Washington, thereby escaping Lodge's censorship. The officer corps was still loyal to its commander in chief, the survey found. Among the top level of officers, there was discontent but not disaffection; they continued to prosecute the war against the Viet Cong, although their morale had suffered and they were more tired and apprehensive than usual. Among junior officers, a high state of discipline prevailed, and even though some had private qualms about the situation they had had no marked impact on efficiency or morale. As for their view of the generals, the junior officers felt that they were too weak to act on their own initiative or were playing a waiting game to see what would develop; in III Corps, however, the officers of the 5th Division expressed their irritation that the corps commander, General Ton That Dinh, had referred to Nhu in a press conference as "our leader." <sup>638</sup> By the end of October, the loyalties of the top officers had changed drastically, and those of their subordinates were torn by unfolding events over which they had no control.

Although Lodge's self-serving exchanges of telegrams with the plotters in Washington in the last days before the coup make it difficult to sort out fact

from the charade he was conducting with the mercenaries through Conein, it seems that the generals did not entirely trust their American sponsors, even though their request for safe haven in the event of failure had been granted by the Americans. <sup>639</sup> Four days before the coup, Don asked Lodge for assurances of Conein's trustworthiness. <sup>640</sup> The mercenaries took the precaution of moving four companies of Colonel Tung's special forces out of Saigon before the coup; in spite of the fact that American aid to these troops had been cut off after the pagoda crackdown, <sup>641</sup> the mercenaries apparently still regarded them as a threat to their coup.

In Washington, the information President Kennedy was receiving from Saigon was now being filtered through the plotters—Ball, Harriman, Hilsman, and Forrestal. He told Walter Cronkite on September 2 that "in the final analysis it is their [the South Vietnamese] war."642 This was in line with his belief, based on his years of reflecting on the Indochina experience of the French, that taking over the war was a sure recipe for failure; it was not merely a question, as for the plotters, of wanting not to have the Americans being blamed for the coup or any of its consequences, but reflected his inner core conviction about the likely success or failure of the American enterprise in Vietnam. Lodge was reporting that the mercenaries insisted that the coup be a Vietnamese affair, that the Americans not get involved, which did not ring any alarm bells in Kennedy's mind. Lodge did not report, however, the true extent of American involvement with the mercenaries. Over Lodge's objections, McNamara and Taylor made another trip to Vietnam to gather information to report to Kennedy. On October 14, Kennedy formally requested from Lodge reports from him at least weekly on the progress of the war. 643

The last few meetings in the Oval Office prior to the coup, however, had fallen back into the pattern of going round and round the mulberry bush. Fortunately recorded on tape, these meetings show the participants talking at cross purposes. There is uncertainty about what instructions had been sent to Lodge over the at least five channels of communication between Washington and Saigon (the intelligence agencies of the Saigon government seemed like a paragon of order by comparison). Doubts about the country team dominate much of the talk. They were belatedly discovering that Lodge, who had been on the job only 60 days, knew next to nothing about the people he was dealing with. There were arguments about whether the promised coup would take place and how to stop it if it looked like failing. The background chatter fell silent while Secretary Rusk puzzled over constitutional process and historical relations between governments and their people, observing that Stalin ran a civilian government and President Eisenhower was a general. Obviously placing little or no credence in the views brought back by the American ambassador in Saigon for the past two years, Rusk thought that the Saigon government was a tight, small military dictatorship run by Nhu and Colonel Tung and that the generals offered a better chance of restoring normal civil liberties and moving toward more civilian control. His somewhat hallucinogenic discourses on these subjects gave the impression of someone who has been tippling from the whiskey bottle he was

known to keep in his desk drawer; Rusk, it is true, had been particularly traumatized by the photos of monk burnings.<sup>644</sup> Kennedy, not surprisingly, gave the impression of being bewildered both by the situation in Saigon and by the staffing arrangements of the American mission.<sup>645</sup> In a desperate, last-minute effort to regain control over a process run amok, his national security adviser, McGeorge Bundy, suggested to him that one copy of all important separate instructions and reports made on any channel be sent to him for his personal information.<sup>646</sup> The voice of Robert Kennedy, the president's younger brother, was often the lone voice of reason in all this confusion.

In Saigon, Lodge knew exactly what he was doing. On November 1, he accompanied Admiral Harry D. Felt, the American commander in the Pacific, to Gia Long Palace for a meeting with Diem. According to Sheehan's good embassy sources, Lodge knew the coup would occur that same day.<sup>647</sup> After the meeting with Felt, Diem asked Lodge to stay for a private conversation, which lasted 20 minutes. Diem observed that the American action in cutting off support to the Special Forces was a very serious thing because it cut them off from friendly agents in North Vietnam who depended on them for support. He said he was thinking about possible changes in his government, as the Americans wished. He again defended his brother Nhu. He said he took all President Kennedy's suggestions very seriously and wished to carry them out, and he asked Lodge to convey to Kennedy the message that he was a good and frank ally, that he "would rather be frank and settle questions now than talk about them after we have lost everything."648 This telegram is another example of Lodge's artful reporting, since Lodge had never made it possible for Diem and Kennedy to carry on a dialogue (as had been advocated by Nolting), and all the "suggestions" mentioned by Diem had come from the plotters in Washington, not from Kennedy. Diem and Nhu, who was particularly interested in the inner workings of the American government, were aware of this important distinction. In September it was Hilsman who had drafted a letter to Diem over Kennedy's signature that Kennedy judged to be so harsh it was never sent.<sup>649</sup> As Lodge knew when he sent the telegram reporting his meeting with Diem that the coup was planned for later that day, it seems likely he drafted his report, like many others, purely for "paper trail" purposes. Still, he was unable to conceal the fact that Diem, in extremity, had appealed directly to Kennedy for some measure of understanding between the two presidents.

## THE MURDER OF DIEM

The plotters timed the start of the coup for the early morning hours in Washington in order to minimize the likelihood that Lodge would have to consult anyone there; instead he would have a plausible excuse for reserving all the decisions for himself. On the morning of November 1, Saigon time, the first blood was spilled hours before the official start of the coup at 1:30 p.m. The commander of the navy, Captain Ho Tan Quyen, who suspected nothing, was lured into a car by a naval officer in league with the mercenaries on the pretext of going to a surprise party, it being his birthday, and was driven to an isolated spot and murdered. 650

At navy headquarters on the Quai Bach Dang, senior naval officers were summoned to a meeting in the conference room. There they learned for the first time who the conspirators were: Captain Chung Tan Cang, commander of the River force; Lieutenant Commander Nguyên Van Luc, his deputy; and Hoang Co Minh. It had been Luc who had murdered Quyen; he was a killer well known to navy men, someone who had been seen to shoot down in cold blood a small child on a river bank during a training exercise. Now these three men sat at the head of the table drinking beer. One of those present recorded the strong impression that the Americans must have planned the coup, the generals being too cowardly and disorganized to have done it; this impression was reinforced by the unusual absence of their American advisers that morning. 651 These were the sort of people Hilsman and Conein believed would defeat the Communists. Kennedy had no idea of the nature of the leadership to which his cause had suddenly been entrusted in Vietnam. All he had were the glowing reports Lodge sent him of decisive generals. If de Lattre had not been able to defeat the Communists without popular support, there was little prospect these men could, since they had neither popular backing nor the stature of de Lattre as a commander tried in war.

Lieutenant Colonel Nguyên Ngoc Khoi and the 2,500 men of the presidential guard, faithful to the oath of loyalty to their president they had taken, put up a valiant fight to defend the Gia Long Palace against the superior forces of the coup leaders. Around midafternoon, Colonel Lam Son brought officer cadets to help protect the palace. Other troops from Camp Le Van Duyet arrived and encircled the Joint General Staff headquarters. They requested permission to attack, but Diem, fearing bloodshed, refused.<sup>652</sup>

Another murder victim in the coup was Colonel Le Quang Tung, who commanded the Special Forces. He was a man of slight build, bespectacled and mild-mannered. A devout Catholic, he was dedicated to his president, who had selected him for the post and, with Nhu, supervised his work with the Americans on the various projects conducted with the CIA station. The mercenaries took him prisoner at the start of the coup. They made him telephone Diem and tell him of his capture. He was then taken outside the Joint General Staff head-quarters and shot.

At 4:30 p.m. Diem telephoned Lodge. The conversation, preserved for history, was notable for Lodge's coldness; in his own mind, he was already distancing himself from the terrible events the plotters in Washington had set in motion. In response to Diem's question about the American attitude toward the coup under way, Lodge answered disingenuously that he did not feel well enough informed to be able to tell him. He pointed to the time difference in Washington. He had heard the shooting, he said, in a remark indicating disembodiment from the unfolding events. But then, as reality sharpened suddenly, he said that he had a report "that those in charge of the current activity offer you and your brother safe conduct out of the country if you resign." Diem ended the pointless conversation by stressing what was important to him—reestablishing order. 653

Sixteen hours later, Diem and Nhu were dead. Mendenhall's blueprint had been carried out to the letter. The fact that they had not "survived the process of seizure" seemed to be a minor detail against the backdrop of the end of the regime. The expressions of general satisfaction with the outcome by all the principals are matters of record. The mercenaries' first action, after assuring themselves of the continuation of American aid,<sup>654</sup> was to give themselves promotions. Of course, they did nothing to give any credit to their American sponsors. Even in their books they take all the credit for themselves, except they do give credit to Conein, whose praises they cannot sing loudly enough.<sup>655</sup>

A visitor who saw Lodge in his office shortly after the coup remarked that he looked like a "riverboat gambler who has just raked in the pot." The American flag was run up in front of the Gia Long Palace, like in conquered territory. Lodge's injured amour-propre had been assuaged. "We were being totally taken for granted by the GVN [Government of Vietnam]; we were never asked to do even the smallest favor," he reported to Kennedy. He was generous in his praise: "The president, the State Department, the military, the AID, the USIS, and the CIA deserve credit for this result. Without united action by the U.S. Government, it would not have been possible." Lodge overlooked the part played by the mercenaries, naturally.

Hilsman, roused out of a sound sleep in Washington by Higgins, who had just confirmed on the telephone to Madame Nhu that her husband and brother-in-law were dead and promised to ask the State Department about the safety of her three children remaining in Vietnam and her brother-in-law Can, volunteered "Oh, come on now, Maggie. Revolutions are rough. People get hurt." He offered to have General Harkins send his personal plane to get the children, and said Can could have asylum if he wanted it. 659

Hilsman's reaction was typical of the man. In Burma he had once had a Shan who was compromised as a spy for the Kempeitai tried, convicted, and executed on his own authority, whereas such authority was vested in the senior Allied commander of flag or general rank. Hilsman felt uncomfortable about his decision, he later wrote, but justified it on the grounds that he could not in good conscience have put the 300 men under his command at risk. Prisoners were a nuisance in the jungle; they had to be fed and guarded and represented a constant threat of discovery in the event they escaped. 660 In a rather similar situation of justice in the field some time later, which Hilsman wrote that he found distasteful, a Karen collaborator of the Japanese was tortured while in custody of Hilsman's guerrillas prior to being executed. 661 These episodes took place in wartime in situations where the lives of the guerrilla force were in constant danger from the Japanese. Overthrowing the government of an ally and murdering its head of state, on the other hand, was engaging in a criminal act, even if in Hilsman's judgment its objective was to protect the policy interest of the United States. Hilsman of all people, with a Ph.D. from Yale, should have understood the difference. The hypocrisy of Hilsman's subsequent comment can be judged in the spotlight of hindsight:

In a very real sense, the ultimate responsibility for the coup lay with President Ngô Dinh Diem, because he did things that we told him over and over and over again that if he did them we would have to publicly disapprove of them, and that this would encourage a coup. And he said "I know." Now he went ahead and did them, and we *had* to publicly disapprove of them. There was *no* choice. <sup>662</sup>

Galbraith had been unable to take part in the plotting because he had returned to academia, but he sent Harriman a congratulatory letter written on Harvard stationery saying "The South Viet Nam coup is another great feather in your cap. Do get me a list of all the people who told us there was no alternative to Diem." He at last had his military government, which would be more effectual. Professor Galbraith's sarcasm notwithstanding, the list of those who had said there was no alternative leadership to Diem available included some of the most thoughtful Americans in government, as well as the man who succeeded Diem as "head of state," General Duong Van Minh, who had blurted out to General Taylor in October that he saw no opposition to the government which might rally domestic and foreign support. 664

In the hundreds of hours William Prochnau spent interviewing the Saigon correspondents of 1963, not once did any of them express any remorse. Ges Joseph W. Alsop, who was of a different generation and had been in China, however, expressed in his autobiography his feeling of guilt for having told Kennedy at the end of September that Diem had lost his ability to govern. Ges The 1963 coup was one of the worst examples of reporting in the history of American journalism, both at the time and afterward. The American correspondents filled columns with the doings of the mercenaries, whose egos were only slightly larger than their own and sometimes clashed, with unpredictable results. Few asked the mercenaries about the American role, the question that intrigued Higgins, who came from the outside and did not wear the blinkers of the resident correspondents.

Reaction to the coup in the Congress was similarly untroubled by moral considerations. Senator Bourke B. Hickenlooper noted Diem's courage in establishing law and order in South Vietnam, but such tribute was rare. Senator Frank Church said he had hoped for the coup and felt it meant that the successor regime "can establish some rapport with the people and sufficient popular support to summon the will and resolution to win the war." The press campaign had induced people in Washington to believe the worst of the South Vietnamese leaders. Senator Hubert Humphrey remarked "From what I read in the paper, we sure are mixed up with a bunch of bandits." <sup>667</sup>

The plotters' cover story about the lack of American involvement had been so effective that at a hearing before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee dealing with Vietnam on November 5, 1963, there was not a single question about American involvement in the coup. The information volunteered by Rusk about the events in Saigon was replete with factual errors. No one thought to ask Hilsman anything. 668 So, for the second time in three years, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee was led to believe that the United States had done nothing dishon-

orable in connection with the overthrow by violent means of a constitutional government in Indochina.

Clement J. Zablocki, chairman of the Subcommittee on Far East and the Pacific of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs, asked embarrassing questions on the House floor about American complicity in the coup, to no avail. Madame Nhu's plea, addressed on January 3, 1964, to heads of state and government of UN member countries for the creation of a commission to investigate the circumstances of the deaths of her husband and brother-in-law<sup>669</sup> was similarly brushed aside. "We [are] not responding to [the] letter since it makes generalized political charges against [the State] Department and [the American] Embassy [in] Saigon which [it] appears wisest [to] leave unanswered, rather than engage in endless polemic," the Department observed when the New Zealand government raised the matter. <sup>670</sup> When Madame Nhu applied for a visa to the United States at the embassy in Paris in June, she was informed that she was ineligible under the Immigration and Nationality Act, which prohibits issuance of visas to persons who, after entry, might engage in activities prejudicial to the public interest or endanger the welfare, safety, or security of the United States.<sup>671</sup> Had the same standard applied in South Vietnam, Lodge would never have been granted entry, much less graciously received at the palace. Lodge, in Saigon, expressed an active interest prior to the decision in Madame Nhu's case. <sup>672</sup> In a similar vein, Lodge quietly quashed a scheduled debate in the General Assembly of the United Nations on the report of the fact-finding mission to investigate Buddhist charges of human rights abuses. The arrival of the UN mission in Saigon in October had posed a problem for Lodge; he had scruples about briefing members of the mission, as this might compromise his stance of making no public statements about the government's behavior. 673 American officials at the UN rapidly fell into line, advising the State Department that an airing of the mission's findings would reflect badly on members of the new regime in Saigon who had served under Diem; moreover, a public debate might show the new regime to be not much different from the old. 674

Reaction to the coup among the South Vietnamese was more problematic. The fact that Lodge reported he had been cheered while driving through Saigon was noted in the Oval Office with considerable satisfaction. <sup>675</sup> Harkins reported on November 2 that the popular mood was jubilant and people were offering food to the coup troops. <sup>676</sup> Two days later, however, he was already tempering this by noting that information on the extent to which the wholehearted support and participation of influential civilian leaders had been gained was scanty. <sup>677</sup> Observers with longer experience of the Vietnamese, however, such as the French photographer-writer Suzanne Labin, who spent much time wandering through the streets of Saigon taking photographs, reported that the "explosion of joy" described by the press consisted in reality of a few thousand spontaneous demonstrators and that photographs revealed very shallow crowds. More disturbingly, she reported that 15 minutes after the last shot, at 7 a.m., she observed disciplined groups marching in order and attacking buildings that had no connection with the Diem regime. Then, an hour later, some of

these same bands started shouting Communist slogans such as had never been heard before in Saigon: "Down with the strategic hamlets!" "Stop the war!" for the seven provinces surrounding Saigon in the days immediately following the coup, embassy officers found that most provincial officials and members of the educated elite in the provincial towns were cautiously approving; the attitudes of the peasant population were, as always, an unknown factor. 679

There remains the question of responsibility for the murder of Diem. Even today, the documentary record is spotty. This is due to three main reasons. First, the selectivity of reporting by Lodge and Conein and the probability that some events were never reported in the first place made it possible for those involved to embroider and mislead. One example of this is Lodge's statement to Higgins a fortnight after the fact that his November 1 telephone conversation with Diem was his last. 680 Another is Conein's speculation in his after-action report that an informant must have called the Joint General Staff headquarters with the information about the whereabouts of Diem and Nhu on the morning of November 2.681 To Conein, who knew of the top priority the White House had assigned to locating Diem and Nhu that morning, the identity of the informant would have been of more than casual interest. The Church Committee in 1975 relied heavily on Conein's testimony, and hired Trueheart, hardly a disinterested party, indebted as he was to Harriman, to be its consultant, so its failure to get at the truth was hardly surprising. Nevertheless, after publication of the Church Committee's report, it became law that the United States not assassinate foreign heads of state.

Second, original documents disappeared for one reason or another and have simply not resurfaced. For example, Lodge was reported to have ordered all copies of some cables to Washington burned in the coup's aftermath.<sup>682</sup> One document which the State Department historians reported missing was the reference telegram from CIA headquarters cited in the report of Lodge's meeting on August 26 with Harkins, Trueheart, Mecklin, and Richardson in which he defined the channel of communication with the generals. According to a note on the source text, this telegram contained guidance "regarding future course of action in directing the leadership in the days ahead."683 Lodge and his aides had the opportunity in the aftermath of the coup to collect and impound any documents in the Gia Long Palace that might have implicated the United States in the Buddhist affair, such as the evidence claimed by Cuu, which was never made public. Lodge would no doubt also have wanted to get his hands on the white paper Diem told the papal delegate, Monsignor Asta, he was preparing on "American coup plotting." Flott, who spoke Vietnamese, told a Vietnamese friend whose house he visited on November 2 that he had just come from the Gia Long Palace, where he was looking for some documents; that explained the soiled condition of his suit. 685 The mercenaries were not about to stop the foreigners from removing or destroying damning evidence of collusion. Third, other official documents exist but have still not been declassified by archivists. Examples are Hilsman's reading file in the State Department archives and many CIA documents.

With the above caveat, it can be stated that there is, to my knowledge, no contemporary documentary evidence that President Kennedy was informed at any point before the event that the mercenaries planned to assassinate Diem. There are, on the other hand, accounts based on memory years later at second or third hand of what Kennedy is alleged to have told people around him. Such accounts, which have acquired authenticity with 20-20 hindsight, need to be treated with skepticism.

During one of his visits to Saigon from Pleiku, about one month before the coup, General Khanh was told by Minh of the possible need to kill Diem.<sup>687</sup> General Khanh may have told this to Forrestal, who visited Vietnam from September 23. Forrestal apparently did not convey this information to President Kennedy.

In one of their meetings to which special secrecy seems to have been attached, given its location and pre-arrangement, Conein met with General Don for an hour on the night of October 2 at Nha Trang. Don told Conein that General Minh wished to see him for a private conversation, and a meeting was fixed for 8 A.M. on October 5 at Minh's office at Joint General Staff Headquarters on Le Van Duyet Street in Saigon, where Conein was to present himself in uniform under a cover story of discussing the possible relocation of U.S. Special Forces headquarters. 688 At their 70-minute meeting on October 5, which Lodge had cleared in advance, Minh stated that he had to know the American government's position with respect to a change of government in South Vietnam within the very near future. Minh then discussed with Conein a possible plan for assassinating Nhu and Can while keeping Diem in office; he considered Nhu and Can the most dangerous men in South Vietnam and he dismissed Conein's remark, adding the name of Colonel Tung. He asked to meet again with Conein in the near future in order to discuss the specific plan of operations.<sup>689</sup>

Lodge sent a cable to Washington recommending that Conein be authorized to assure Minh that the United States would not attempt to thwart his plans and to offer to view his plans (other than assassination plans). The CIA station cabled on the same day that it had recommended to Lodge that we do not set ourselves irrevocably against the assassination plot. In Washington, however, CIA Director John A. McCone sent back a cable saying "[W]e certainly cannot be in the position of stimulating, approving, or supporting assassination, but on the other hand, we are in no way responsible for stopping every such threat of which we might receive even partial knowledge. We certainly would not favor assassination of Diem."

McCone stated 12 years later that he met privately with President Kennedy and his brother Robert, the attorney general, taking the position that the United States should maintain a "hands-off attitude." McCone felt the president agreed with his position; he stated that he did not discuss assassination with the president.<sup>693</sup>

McCone sent a cable to the Saigon station on October 6 directing that it withdraw the recommendation to Lodge concerning the assassination plan "as

we cannot be in [the] position [of] actively condoning such [a] course of action and thereby engaging our responsibility therefore."<sup>694</sup> The CIA station replied that "Action taken as directed. . . . Ambassador Lodge commented that he shares McCone's opinion."<sup>695</sup> Conein omitted mention of McCone's telegram from the after-action report he wrote immediately following the coup. He stated 12 years later that he was first told of McCone's response around October 20 in the form of instructions from Lodge preparatory to his next meeting with Don. He also stated that he then told General Don that the United States opposed assassination, to which Don replied "Alright, you don't like it, we won't talk about it anymore." Under questioning, Conein stated that his after-action report did not mention his exchange with Don.<sup>696</sup> Whether President Kennedy saw a copy of McCone's telegram of October 6 remains unknown; as we have seen, an attempt to bring order to the chaos of outgoing instructions dated only from October 29.

Thus, the facts that emerge from a (no doubt incomplete) reconstruction of this complicated series of exchanges is that the generals informed the Americans on October 5 that their operational plans included the option of assassinating Nhu and Can; that the CIA, the main American agency dealing with the generals, adopted a policy of neither supporting in advance nor acting to stop assassination and applied a flat prohibition to American complicity only in the case of Diem; that McCone did not discuss the generals' assassination plot with President Kennedy but left him under the impression, because of McCone's general opposition to the coup, that the CIA had not sanctioned assassination of Diem; that Conein was informed tardily of McCone's views and conveyed these views to the generals in a less than forceful manner, assuming he conveyed them at all (taking into consideration that he omitted mention of McCone's telegram and of conveying its contents from his report compiled on the spot immediately afterward); that General Don made a remark to Conein that was sufficiently ambiguous to leave open the possibility that the generals planned to assassinate Nhu, Can, and very possibly Diem; and that Lodge, not wishing to leave a paper trail between the plotters and the mercenaries, put nothing in writing about assassination.

The upshot is that there exists no record of a flat order from President Kennedy to Lodge forbidding assassination of Diem, even after assassination was being considered in Saigon. Why did McCone not discuss assassination with Kennedy at the beginning of October when the issue was raised by the country team? Was it because of the shared assumption that assassination had been ruled out? In the normal conduct of everyday business, McCone could direct the CIA station to recommend or not to recommend whatever he wanted to Lodge, and the CIA station would be bound to follow such direction; but the only direction that would have been binding on Lodge, as Kennedy's personal representative, was a direct order from Kennedy. Lodge's reported comment to CIA headquarters (not to Kennedy) about "sharing McCone's opinion" on the undesirability of assassination would not have prevented him from carrying through his plan of arranging things in Saigon so that the members of the Ngô family remaining in Vietnam would not "survive the process of seizure." Although Conein was technically an

employee of the CIA and as such his direct superior was CIA station chief David Smith, he was working, as he later testified, for Lodge; he reported to the ambassador and received his instructions from the ambassador.<sup>697</sup> It therefore can be said with some justification that the CIA as an organization was not responsible for the deaths of Diem and Nhu, although the latter probably believed to the end, on the basis of their experience in 1960 and their knowledge of Conein's contacts with the generals, that it was what Nhu called "ces grenouillards" of the CIA who were plotting against the regime.<sup>698</sup>

At 8 P.M. on Friday, November 1, Diem and Nhu left the Gia Long Palace in disguise, walked to Le Thanh Ton Street, and were driven in a small Citroën by Cao Xuan Vy of the Republican Youth to the home of Ma Tuyen, a Chineseborn trader, in Cholon. Nhu wanted to split up, with Diem going to the Mekong Delta and Nhu to the Central Highlands to seek protection from General Nguyên Khanh, who had saved them in 1960. Diem disagreed, telling his brother it was better to stick together.<sup>699</sup> After a night spent in fruitless appeals for help, Diem ordered the palace guard to cease fire and also placed a number of calls to the generals over a telephone line that had previously been installed to allow the brothers to send and receive calls through the palace switchboard, thereby preserving the secrecy of their location. The troops who entered the palace at about 8 A.M. on November 2 discovered that Diem and Nhu were not there. Diem was now reconciled to giving up power in a manner consistent with his honor. It was his last wish. He told his aide Do Tho "I don't know whether or not I will die and I don't care. Please tell Nguyên Khanh that I love him very much and request him to avenge me."700

At about 7 A.M. Diem telephoned Lodge once more. Diem asked if there was something the embassy could do, according to Dunn, who was present when Lodge took the call. Lodge put the phone down and absented himself while Dunn held the line open, he said. When he returned, Lodge told Diem he would offer him and his brother asylum and do what he could for them. From the very start of the coup, the generals had refused to deal directly with Diem and Nhu and in effect asked the embassy to relay messages at the embassy's option. Dunn asked Lodge whether he could go to their location and take them away "because they [the generals] are going to kill them." Lodge replied: "We can't. We just can't get that involved." Diem had revealed the brothers' whereabouts to Lodge, and Lodge had had time to make a call to the mercenaries. Lodge had finally succeeded in forcing Diem to come to him, and he had betrayed him; he kept this second telephone conversation with Diem a secret during his lifetime, realizing it would implicate him in the murders.

On the crucial point of how the generals learned the whereabouts of Diem and Nhu, Conein wrote in his after-action report that an informant must have identified them and called the Joint General Staff headquarters. This is extremely improbable because, even supposing the alleged informant had known the correct telephone number, he would not have been able to act on this because the generals had cut all the telephone lines in Saigon except those between the JGS headquarters and the palace, the American Embassy, Conein's

house, and selected command posts around the city. In an interview in 1986, Conein was asked about the identity of the informant and replied: "It was simple. Somebody spotted them." This is too simple. Lodge's account of the seizure presented in the 1983 PBS television series is similarly incomplete; he claimed that when Diem and Nhu came out of the church they found armed men and the armored personnel carrier outside (deus ex machina). Even allowing for the unrepresentativity of material made necessary by the medium and an obviously sympathetic interviewer, whose questions are not shown, this is a bit much. The series in the control of the church they found armed men and the armored personnel carrier outside (deus ex machina).

General Minh ordered General Mai Huu Xuan, Colonel Nguyên Van Quan, Colonel Duong Ngoc Lam, Lieutenant Colonel Duong Hieu Nghia, and Captain Nguyên Van Nhung to organize a convoy to pick up the brothers at a church near Ma Tuyen's house. All Vietnamese sources agree that Diem, in his last telephone conversation with Lodge, when he had revealed his whereabouts, had been promised safe conduct out of the country by Lodge. This is supported by the evidence concerning the manner of the brothers' arrest. Upon arrival at the church, Colonel Lam went in alone and talked with them. They, trusting Lam, agreed to leave with him. Diem asked General Xuan to drop by the palace to pick up some personal effects; Xuan and Colonel Lam answered that it was impossible, that the orders were to bring them to the Joint General Staff headquarters. The brothers were surprised that an armored personnel carrier had been sent for them; Nhu protested that this was no conveyance for a president. It was a deliberate insult on Minh's part. The soldiers accompanying the convoy tied the brothers' hands behind their backs, again an insult. Diem or his aide was reported to be carrying a briefcase containing the 6,000 dollars mentioned above, although in a version given by General Khanh and reported by Lodge afterwards the sum was said to be 1 million dollars in American currency.<sup>706</sup> Would he have been doing this if he were expecting to meet the generals, whose greed for money he well knew? Would it not have been more likely he planned to use the money to defray his expenses in exile?

Diem and Nhu were alone in the armored personnel carrier with the driver. General Xuan and Colonel Lam rode at the tail end of the convoy in a car that was four vehicles behind the armored personnel carrier. When the convoy was temporarily halted at the level crossing on Hong Thap Tu Street, the assassin, Captain Nhung, entered the vehicle and gunned them down, gangland style. When the convoy returned to the Joint General Staff headquarters, General Xuan saluted and told General Minh "Mission accomplished." The photograph of the blood-splattered, bullet-ridden bodies of Diem and Nhu lying on the floor of the armored car had the distinct touch of a later period in American life when violence became endemic. Diem had been shot in the back of the head; Nhu had been stabbed in the chest and shot numerous times in the back of the head and in the back.

The mercenaries went to great pains to prove to Lodge that Diem and Nhu had not escaped and fled the country. On Sunday night, General Kim sent an officer to the house of David P. Sheppard, the mission's deputy public affairs officer, who asked him to come to JGS headquarters early the following morn-

ing and to bring a camera. Sheppard was met by General Kim, who showed him the bodies of Diem and Nhu laid out on the grass, and photographed them. Kim then gave Sheppard a short roll in a can of 16-mm film which Kim had taken showing Diem and Nhu dead on the floor of the APC. Kim said the generals hoped the embassy would use the pictures to scotch rumors that Diem and Nhu were still alive. Sheppard reported to Lodge and assured him he would have the negative film developed in a few hours. Lodge then told him to hand over the notes he had scribbled while sitting in his staff car and to say nothing to anyone about the meeting. 708 The bodies were turned over to Tran Trung Dung, Diem's former deputy minister of defense, and his wife, who were a nephew and niece of the slain brothers. They assumed the family obligations incumbent upon them and, together with a priest, were the only ones present when the bodies were buried in unmarked graves in a corner of the large park surrounding the Joint General Staff headquarters. They were disinterred in 1965 and reburied in the Mac Dinh Chi Cemetery, but in 1983 the Communist administration, which wanted to use the land for building, forced their removal once more to permanent tombs at Lai Thieu north of Saigon, where they were reunited with the tombs of their mother and that of Can.

A message was received at the embassy during the coup asking the whereabouts of Diem and it was of sufficient importance to result in Conein's being brought to the embassy from his house, whither he had gone from the Joint General Staff headquarters on November 2. By then it was too late. For President Kennedy to have blamed Lodge for the deaths would have meant disowning him and everything he had done. But in reflections he dictated two days after the coup, Kennedy recorded his shock at the murders and reminisced about his meeting with Diem at Justice Douglas's luncheon in May 1953. "The way he was killed made it particularly abhorrent." De Gaulle is reported to have told his cabinet, at their first meeting following the coup, "Messieurs, we at least did not have blood on our hands!"

The mercenaries, of course, had no plans to publicize their offer to Diem of safe passage out of the country, which in any case had been made in the context of an ultimatum to resign during the siege of Gia Long Palace, and they had only acted when prodded by Lodge; shedding crocodile tears was not their forte, although they were quick to lie when necessary, as is evident from their initial story that Diem and Nhu had committed suicide. Lodge passed off the assassinations as "the kind of thing which will happen in a coup d'état when order cannot be guaranteed everywhere."711 But Mendenhall drafted a telegram urging Lodge to approach the mercenaries for a complete clarifying statement "with [a] full account of arrangements for safe passage and safe removal [of] Diem and Nhu from [the] palace. We do not think there should be any suggestion [that] this is just the sort of thing you have to expect in a coup. On the contrary, [the] Generals should emphasize [the] extensive efforts we understand they made to prevent this result."712 Lodge's total disregard for the safety of Diem, the man of non-violence, contrasts most markedly with his solicitude for the safety of Thich Tri Quang, a man whose attitude toward the political

uses of violence, in the opinion of embassy officers who talked with him at length during his sojourn, was at least ambivalent.<sup>713</sup>

After Mendenhall's cable to Lodge, a fairy tale was spun about Lodge's supposed concern about the safety of Diem and how Diem had refused an offer of safe conduct (which itself raises further unanswered questions about Lodge's telephone conversations with Diem during the coup, be it noted). It was based on Lodge's own papers, and on the oral histories recorded by his two principal aides, which reveal how relatively easy it would have been to offer safe conduct with the means at Lodge's disposal.<sup>714</sup> A presidential C-135 was standing by at Tan Son Nhut to fly Lodge to Washington on his consultation mission. 715 General Harkins's personal C-54 was also at Tan Son Nhut. Ironically, in the aftermath of the coup this plane was used to fly the Nhu children, who had been in Dalat, to Bangkok, where they caught a commercial flight to Rome to be reunited with their uncle and mother; the embassy had learned at 5:00 P.M. that the children were in Saigon, and by 8:20 P.M. they were airborne, "with all the necessary arrangements having been made."716 Even this action had a political motive: to lure their mother to leave the United States, where she had been on a speaking tour when the coup occurred.<sup>717</sup> This does not even consider the two helicopters that were standing by on the Saigon golf course to carry the mercenaries to safety in case their coup failed.<sup>718</sup>

Lodge displayed the same cold-bloodedness toward the last brother remaining in Vietnam and the one who had held the Americans at arms' length, refused to wear Western suits, and talked to them in Vietnamese, Ngô Dinh Can. On the afternoon of November 2, two separate emissaries of Can contacted American officials at the consulate in Hue to ask for assistance if Can's life were endangered. American officials replied that Can could only be helped if he was in "imminent danger from mob violence" and pointed out that the consulate's premises were not inviolable. If asked by government authorities to turn him over, the consul would have to comply.<sup>719</sup> Fearing mob violence, Can left his aged mother, Mrs. Ngô Dinh Kha, at the family house and sought refuge initially at the Redemptorist Seminary.

On the morning of November 5, Can arrived alone at the consulate, where his presence presented a problem for Consul Helble, who felt he should be removed from the Hue area as soon as possible. General Do Cao Tri, the I Corps commander, told Helble he had orders to move Can to Saigon by plane. Ignoring instructions from the Department that Can should not be harmed and that "we should make every effort to get him and his mother, if necessary, *out of country* soonest, using our own facilities if this would expedite their departure, 1721 Lodge instructed Helble to release Can to General Tri for a flight to Saigon aboard an American plane, first asking for Tri's guarantees in writing for Can's physical safety and observance of due legal process, and when this was refused by Tri (who had a good knowledge of the Saigon generals' standards in this regard), asking for unconditional guarantees. Can left Hue at 2:40 P.M. accompanied by a vice consul, a MAAG lieutenant colonel, and two MAAG military policemen. He expressed the wish to Helble to go to asylum in

Japan accompanied by former defense minister Tran Trung Dung.<sup>722</sup> Lodge, on the basis of personal assurances from General Don that Can would be dealt with "legally and juridically," instructed that Can be turned over to the Vietnamese military on arrival at Tan Son Nhut. Lodge commented "Can is undoubtedly a reprehensible figure who deserves all the loathing which he now receives."<sup>723</sup> Mrs. Kha arrived in Saigon from Hue aboard an Air Vietnam flight on the same day.<sup>724</sup> She did not have long to live, however, and died on January 2, 1964, without having received the benefit of any assistance whatever from any official of the new junta.

## FATE STRIKES THRICE: KENNEDY ASSASSINATED

Now fate struck for a third time for the Indochinese, as it had when Emperor Tu Duc died childless in 1883 and the Japanese swept away the French in 1945. The news of the assassination of President Kennedy in faraway Dallas on November 22, 1963, reached them with the shock of the loss of a true friend. In Saigon, high school and university students marched in Kennedy's memory, and memorial services were held in churches and pagodas. For many South Vietnamese, always superstitious, the hand of fate was only too obvious so soon after the murder of their own president. Buddhist memorial services were held in Luang Prabang and Vientiane. The Cambodia, the shock was the same, but the reaction was different.

Sihanouk was already toying with the idea of cutting off American aid, and on November 5 he made his threat public in a speech in which he said he would do so if Khmer Serei broadcasts from Thailand and South Vietnam did not cease before the end of the year. 728 In this volatile mood of mixed deception and belligerence, his fright at the thought that his own generals might be pressured to assassinate him in the same brutal fashion took on extreme proportions. During the coup, Radio Saigon had broadcast a statement "that the Diem-Nhu regime had deprived the country of U.S. aid without which the Communists would gain and that the army's coup would enable the country to get this eco-

nomic aid and thus survive."<sup>729</sup> Sihanouk's defense minister, General Lon Nol, had assured the chief of the MAAG, General Taber, that Cambodians were nationalists and would never become Communists. If Communist strength increased, Lon Nol went on, Cambodia would take the necessary action, including perhaps "calling on the West for help." Lon Nol also stated that Cambodians were friends of the United States. The embassy considered Lon Nol's professions of friendship as evidence of a reservoir of goodwill in the royal army and reassurance that Sihanouk's policies were beginning to cause potential opposition in the Cambodian armed forces. Sihanouk was almost certainly informed of Lon Nol's remarks. He used the celebration of National Day, November 11, to announce the cutting of American aid and to request the United States in a diplomatic note to terminate all its aid programs immediately with the comment "that the most elementary dignity prevents Cambodia's continuation of any form of American aid no matter how small."<sup>731</sup>

News of President Kennedy's assassination was met in Phnom Penh with "stupor, sadness and profound indignation," in the words of the newspaper *Phnom Penh Presse*. Sihanouk, Prime Minister Norodom Kantol, and Foreign Minister Huot Sambath addressed letters of condolences to their American counterparts. Prince Kantol left to attend the funeral. Three days of mourning were announced, flags flew at half mast, and newspapers ran front-page photographs and articles paying tribute to the late president as a man of peace and goodwill. Outside the ministry of information, the most "pro-Communist" ministry, anti-American displays were temporarily removed and replaced by a black-draped portrait.

Sihanouk was still in his highly nervous state on November 30 when he received Forrestal, whom President Kennedy had sent in an effort to stay the crisis between the United States and Cambodia; there was a feeling in Washington that Ambassador Philip D. Sprouse had not been seeing Sihanouk as good relations demanded. Now Sihanouk was talking to one of the plotters of the Saigon coup. Their talk revolved around the Saigon government's alleged support of the activities of the Khmer Serei, and Forrestal's protestations of American lack of involvement sounded more hollow than ever. It was clear that Sihanouk was determined to make no concessions in favor of better relations with Saigon so long as he felt the Khmer Serei continued to pose a threat to him.<sup>732</sup>

On December 8, news arrived of the death of Marshal Sarit in Bangkok. Sihanouk's mood turned to unrestrained joy. The following day, Radio Phnom Penh broadcast a communiqué in Cambodian, attributed to the Ministry of Information. It said:

Thanks to divine protection for our Kampuchea, all the enemies of Cambodia suffer complete destruction. Ngô Dinh Diem and Ngô Dinh Nhu were killed by bullets. Their friend Sarit Thanarat, who mistreated Cambodia incessantly, has just met with sudden death. Moreover, the great boss of these aggressors shared the same fate. So we have seen that those who want to mistreat Cambodia and who despise our venerated Samdech Aou [Sihanouk] will not be able to live long and will certainly be destroyed. . . .

The people from all walks of society and all circles throughout the country feel elated, not out of enmity but simply at the end of persons who mistreated us. This joy reigns among the Khmers in all corners of the country as they are informed of the country's victory.<sup>733</sup>

That same evening, Sihanouk himself made a broadcast speech saying:

At two-week intervals our enemies have departed one after the other. At first the one in the south, then the great boss and now the one in the west. All three have always sought to violate our neutrality and to make trouble for us, to seek our misfortune. Now they are all going to meet in hell where they will be able to build military bases for SEATO. Our other enemies will join them. Imminent justice strikes them down. The gods punish all the enemies of neutral and peaceful Cambodia. The spirits of our former kings protect us. The death of Sarit Thanarat is a real relief.

On December 11, Agence Khmère de Presse carried the official French version of Sihanouk's speech, which translated the above as follows:

We do not wish evil to anyone and we do not laugh at the misfortunes that afflict others, but for us who are Buddhists and who believe in imminent justice, it is no accident that in the space of one month and a half, at an interval of several weeks, the leaders of the only countries that have caused harm to independent and neutral Cambodia have died.<sup>734</sup>

Although the clear references to President Kennedy's death in both the communiqué and Sihanouk's speech were deplorable, the motive behind them appeared to be more one of indoctrinating the Cambodian people in the belief that Cambodia and Sihanouk were protected by former kings and heavenly spirits than of intentionally denigrating Kennedy's memory. In his speech, Sihanouk was addressing his people, and his attempt to impress them with these divine portents went further than he realized. The United States protested the statements as "barbaric." Sihanouk was so outraged at this epithet that he recalled his ambassador and the embassy staff from Washington.

The solution to the problems of Indochina eluded President Kennedy to the end. His hopes of neutralization in Laos, based on the cooperation of the Soviet Union, evaporated. He had no greater luck in achieving a workable relationship with Sihanouk than his predecessor. In Vietnam, there was an irreconcilable conflict between his policy of "their war" and the pursuit of the "our war" objective of the plotters of the coup. In a press conference eight days before he died, Kennedy again stated that his objective in South Vietnam was "to bring Americans home, permit the Vietnamese to maintain themselves as a free and independent country, and permit democratic forces within the country to operate—which they can, of course, much more freely when the assault from the inside, which is manipulated from the north, is ended."<sup>735</sup>

Kennedy's presidential biographer, Richard Reeves, who has studied the matter exhaustively, has said he was struck by three main characteristics of Ken-

nedy as president. First, he didn't know, and the complaint "Why the hell didn't someone tell me this?" recurred time and time again. Second, he mostly listened and almost never announced decisions at meetings, thereby giving everyone the impression that he agreed with them; this proved to be an especially fatal flaw in dealing with the coup plotters. Third, he kept everything compartmentalized. When he reacted in shock to the deaths of Diem and Nhu, it was because he thought his aides had control over the situation. The Had Kennedy had around him advisers who were competent in the matter and objective, such as Edmund Gullion (whom he was inclined to send as ambassador to replace Nolting but whose nomination was opposed by Rusk), The Particular, had he had a secretary of state who exercised control over the State Department, these faults would not have proved so damaging.

## **Looking Back**

During the fateful years between 1961 and 1963, as the royal governments of Cambodia and Laos maintained the independence of their countries in the face of stiff challenges, Presidents Ho and Diem tried to manage their internal affairs as best they could with a minimum of foreign interference, as the signals they were sending each other indicate. Diem negotiated with the Americans where he thought it essential to do so, as over the issue of his government's share of the counterinsurgency fund. Ho tried to retain the support of China and the Soviet Union without taking sides completely with one or the other.

Foreign dependence was masked in Communist countries by the theory of proletarian internationalism, which historically had been based on the subordination of national interests to those of Moscow, said to be inseparable from those of the world revolutionary movement, and later on the need to defend the socialist camp. Such relations were doctrinally quite different from those prevailing among capitalist nations, which in the Marxist-Leninist lexicon were characterized by relations between master and puppet.

President Diem's struggle to maintain independence from the Americans had been watched in Hanoi with mild bemusement. Again, we must wait until we have access to the party center's archives to have firmer information than veiled public signals upon which to base the record of the attempts at settling the war among the Vietnamese by negotiation in 1963. Was the May 20 directive reported by Nhu real or fictitious? The circumstantial evidence we have indicates that the attempts were serious on the Saigon side and that they coincided with a slackening of Communist armed pressure in the South, certainly ordered by Hanoi. We know that the channels of communication between Saigon and Hanoi were open through the ICC. On the Saigon side, Nhu's efforts to deal on an equal footing with Lodge, using the threat of negotiations as a tool, complicated the story. On the Hanoi side, we do not know whether the party authorized or implemented the sort of exchanges by secret emissaries that were its preferred way of working on important matters such as this.

Pham Van Dong told the French delegate general in Hanoi after the coup that the fact that its authors were so recently faithful executors of Diem's policies and the fact that they carried out American orders did not allow any hope for a rapprochement of North and South. He nevertheless considered the overthrow of Diem to be a positive fact on the long road which would lead one day to negotiations. He was convinced that the problem of Vietnam would not be solved by force whether on one side or the other. This declaration, for all its Marxist-Leninist one-sidedness, already foreshadowed the future course of the party center's policy, which was to be based on negotiations, not between the two Vietnamese governments, but between the DRV and the Americans.

The overthrow of constitutionality in Laos sponsored by the Americans had been serious, but the breach in the nationalist ranks had been mended thanks to Ambassador Brown's energetic diplomacy with the Lao parties. The king remained unharmed, and he presided over the reconciliation, thereby limiting the damage that had been caused. But in South Vietnam, it was the head of state himself who had been overthrown by American plotting, entailing the end of the Republic of Vietnam (the successor to the State of Vietnam), of the Empire of Vietnam, of the Hue court. The damage was thus irreparable.

Kennedy himself abhorred violence, but he drew a distinction between street violence, as we now know it, and the risks of military service in the honorable defense of a free people. "I believe if you can see this as he must have seen it, you will believe as he must have believed, that he did not die in vain," he wrote to the sister of one of the American advisers killed at Ap Bac. 739 That is why Kennedy and his younger brother, Robert, hoped and believed that the problems between the administration and Diem could be solved short of the violent overthrow of Diem.<sup>740</sup> But the ultimate responsibility for the murders was Kennedy's, and it led him to cross the thin line. The shock of Kennedy's own murder was captured by James Reston of The New York Times, who wrote on that day that America wept for itself as well as for Kennedy, "for something in the nation itself, some strain of madness and violence, had destroyed the highest symbol of law and order."741 But there was much more violence to come, both in Indochina and in America. Thus, the tragedy is that Kennedy did not seize the opportunity to extricate the United States from its intervention in Indochina at a time when only 78 American servicemen had died.

Lodge may have seen himself as high commissioner in Saigon, but no French high commissioner or governor general had ever condemned an Indochinese head of state to death and presided over his murder. During their 96 years of colonial rule the French had exiled Vietnamese emperors whose presence proved inconvenient, but they had never killed them. The thought that Lodge, who came from a patrician Boston family, could be implicated in such an affair was at first unbelievable to me. Thus, it came as something of a confirmation to find that the history of American diplomacy 50 years earlier contained a precedent for Lodge's actions in Saigon. It concerned the overthrow and murder on February 23, 1913, of President Francisco Indalécio Madero of Mexico and his vice president, Pino

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Suárez, by a cabal of mutinous generals, an act that received the support of the American ambassador, Henry Lane Wilson.<sup>742</sup>

In 1963, American diplomacy in Indochina went from the phase of ambassadors being obliged to claim ignorance of the CIA's attempts to overthrow heads of state and prime ministers of sovereign states to reach the stage of American officials actively working to undermine one another. This was largely the work of the plotters in Washington and Lodge in Saigon. The campaign to discredit Nolting left one man to nurse his bitterness in private, for Nolting soon left public service. But Lodge's use of the press in Saigon against the CIA and the military created a lasting legacy of hostility at the top levels of these agencies of government.<sup>743</sup>

# 8. Americanization of the War

### Dismantling the Republic of Vietnam

The first action in the field of constitutionality taken by the South Vietnamese generals, who had decided to call themselves the Military Revolutionary Council, was to suspend the constitution. This they did in a decision published in Saigon on November 1, 1963. The document reflected their uncertainty about how to proceed once power was in their hands. While the title referred to the decision to abolish the October 26, 1956, constitution and dissolve the National Assembly, the text was to the effect that the Council decided to "suspend at present temporarily the application of the constitution" and to dissolve the Assembly. The document's preamble added a further twist by stating that the constitution contained "many provisions that need to be revised," and that the National Assembly elections of September 27, 1963, had been "dishonest and fraudulent," a statement for which there existed not the slightest proof.

Two days later, the Council issued Provisional Constitutional Act No. 1 which contained six articles that centralized legislative and executive powers in itself, designated its chairman (General Duong Van Minh) to be chief of state, and delegated certain executive and legislative powers to a prime minister (Nguyên Ngoc Tho) and a provisional government. The Council designated the prime minister. The prime minister, with the Council's approval, designated the members of the provisional government.<sup>2</sup>

As these steps showed, the generals held all important decision-making power in their hands. They created an executive committee of the Military Revolutionary Council, which amounted to a kind of shadow government. Minh was chairman, Don and Dinh first and second vice-chairmen, Kim commissioner for foreign affairs, Pham Xuan Chieu commissioner for security affairs, Khiem commissioner for military affairs, Do Mau commissioner for political affairs, and Mai Huu Xuan, Le Van Nghiem, Nguyên Huu Co, and Nguyên Van Thieu commissioners. The possibilities for confusion were endless. Sensing the need for some civilian institution, the military rulers in January 1964 created a Council of Notables.

The absence of any fundamental or constitutional law was to be the main characteristic of South Vietnam following the coup d'état of November 1–2, 1963. There existed no legal basis for governmental institutions, individual

rights were not guaranteed in any legal form, and there was no legal commitment on the part of the military to permit open political activity in such a forum as a popularly elected assembly.<sup>3</sup> This was the environment in which the political instability triggered by the coup d'état itself, which the Americans complained about, proliferated. The preamble to the Council's decision of November 1 might well speak of a democratic regime requiring that national sovereignty come from the entire people and was the choice of the Vietnamese people of a democratic regime, but the reality was that sovereignty had passed to the American Embassy in Saigon, which alone had the power to decide the fate of the country and its people.

The Provisional Constitutional Act No. 1 stated in its first article that the state remained a republic. Within less than a year, American officials found themselves arguing with the Vietnamese over whether the head of state should be popularly elected, whether the leader of the government should be civilian or military, and how long it would take to elect an assembly, as if the republic had just been invented.<sup>4</sup> In fact, everything had to be reinvented anew, as had happened a decade previously. Now, however, the conditions were even worse than when the French had dabbled in power politics in Saigon, and the threat to the survival of the republic came from men in Hanoi who were bound to stop at nothing to liquidate nationalism in its entirety.

What would prove most difficult was to reinvent legality. The plotters thought they had arranged things so the American hand would not show, so the United States would not be blamed for the consequences of their actions. But Canadian ICC Commissioner Cox immediately perceived the puppet-master's hand behind the coup and did not hesitate to say so, talking about the "American detailed prior knowledge, support, direction, and control of [the] coup."5 Lodge sought to have him silenced by his prime minister; Hilsman sent the Ottawa embassy a long cable intended to refute Cox's allegations about American engineering of the coup and direction of the murders of Diem and Nhu.6 Other diplomats in Saigon also guessed the truth but kept their counsel, seeing the disaster that lay ahead. The illegality would trap the United States. At a time when almost 50,000 Americans had been killed in Vietnam, Halberstam wrote, in what must rank as one of the most hypocritical passages in American letters, "I watched the escalation with mounting disbelief and sadness. It seems the saddest story possible, with one more sad chapter following another. Like almost everyone else I know who has been involved in Vietnam, I am haunted by it, by the fact that somehow I was not better, that somehow it was all able to happen." Halberstam soon left Vietnam and went on to other things; the South Vietnamese, of course, remained.

The impression made on ordinary Vietnamese by these generals from day one was of an incompetent bunch of clowns. The very qualities that endeared them to the American plotters, the facts that they spoke French and thought like Westerners and were womanizers, made them objects of contempt in the eyes of the Vietnamese, for whom they lacked every Confucian virtue—humility, fidelity, filial piety—that was judged important. In the coming days, the generals were to show that they held the fighting qualities of the soldiers under their command in as little esteem as the French had.

The generals gave a cold welcome to the organizers of the 1960 coup attempt who returned to Saigon, except for Colonel Dong who returned from France and was given a cushy job. Major Pham Van Lieu, who had spent his three years of exile in Phnom Penh, had refused Dong's suggestion that they all go to France. "No. We fought against Diem, we didn't fight against our country," Lieu said.<sup>8</sup> Now they received a sharp reprimand from General Le Van Kim: "I told you, no politics!" Kim sent Lieu to Pleiku, disregarding the fact that he had an infant son born in Phnom Penh with leukemia. Colonel Thi on his return was similarly exiled, without any promotion, to I Corps.

A few days after the coup, Tri Quang left his sanctuary at the American Embassy, uttering his usual Delphic pronouncements about the American obligation to bring justice to Vietnam and carefully steering clear of any commitment to the new regime. But even he had been shocked at the violence of the murders of Diem and Nhu. At first, he had indicated his belief that clemency would not be well received; on hearing they had committed suicide, he had approved this solution; but subsequently he became skeptical and stated that if the Ngôs had been murdered clandestinely it was a reprehensible act. In future, he would not hesitate to direct his rabble-rousing talents against those who had befriended him in their hour of need. In the month following the coup, three more monks would immolate themselves.

All kinds of political parties—62 of them—came out of the woodwork in the aftermath of the coup; they were formed from the splintering of old-line parties or were freshly organized by returning exiles. <sup>10</sup> This was a completely spontaneous development that owed nothing to the generals. Frank Gonder reappeared in Saigon as the self-styled agent of a new party headed by Phan Khac Suu and demanded an interview with Lodge. <sup>11</sup>

The generals were very concerned, naturally, about the absence of a formal commitment from their great ally to defend their country in the form of a mutual defense treaty such as had been briefly sought by Diem in 1961. They considered that, in the absence of a formal commitment, the surest way of committing the United States was to involve the United States in the war to the maximum extent possible.

When *The New York Times* published an editorial calling on the United States to consider neutralizing Vietnam, the generals became thoroughly alarmed. They believed, on the basis of their recent experience, that this was the fruit of another of Harriman's leaks. To what extent they were aware of Harriman's part in the overthrow of Diem is unknown, but they certainly remembered his browbeating them at Geneva in July 1962 to cast aside their reservations and sign the agreement neutralizing Laos. Lodge attempted to persuade them that the *Times* editorial did not reflect official thinking.

However, the South Vietnamese envoy to President Kennedy's funeral, Tran Chanh Thanh (none of the generals had dared to leave Saigon, where in an almost continuous series of meetings they were discussing how to share the power they had seized), sought assurances from Hilsman that statements in October about withdrawing American advisers did not signal an intention to abandon South Vietnam. The new president, Lyndon Baines Johnson, not only supported Kennedy's policies toward Vietnam but had participated in making them, Hilsman said. Therefore, he would give full support to the new government in the effective conduct of the war. To Thanh's further query about withdrawing American forces by the end of 1965, Hilsman replied that this referred only to training personnel "and we shall keep in Viet-Nam whatever forces are needed for victory." The chargé d'affaires, who had accompanied Thanh, observed that in South Vietnam the withdrawal announcement was interpreted as intended to exert pressure on the Diem government and urged that the United States remove this implication vis-à-vis the new government; Hilsman agreed. 12 Thus, at one stroke one of the principal plotters of Diem's overthrow had committed President Johnson in his first week in office to the pursuit of victory and had left the Vietnamese allies wondering whether the withdrawal pressure might not be reapplied one day in the future. Lodge no longer mentioned withdrawal of American advisers in his meetings with the generals, but they distrusted him sufficiently to put out feelers to the French. Rusk's position on the issues posed at this juncture was, as ever, undecipherable. But a memorandum over his signature to President Johnson that was drafted for him on December 26 by Mendenhall urged the sending of a presidential message to General Minh "reaffirming the United States policy of complete support for the Vietnamese Government."13 Thus, Lodge was enabled to say something that he had deliberately not said, and no one in Washington had insisted he say, during his first four months as ambassador in Saigon.

It was judged expedient to have Secretary McNamara make another flying visit to Saigon in December, during which he granted the South Vietnamese two meetings totaling three hours and fifteen minutes. The meetings were not very satisfactory. The generals told McNamara frankly how bad the situation really was in the critical areas and blamed the Diem government. They offered little in the way of suggestions about how they could improve the situation. McNamara offered the advice that Minh, as chief of state, should go out on the stump and make speeches. Another visitor to South Vietnam in December was McCone. He concluded that "there is no organized government in South Vietnam at this time. The Military Revolutionary Committee (MRC) is in control, but strong leadership and administrative procedures are lacking." 15

The generals now turned all their attention to Lodge, who had been coaching them on the rudiments of public relations, to see what rabbit he would pull out of the hat to implement various American pledges of "complete support." It was clear to Lodge that the generals would need quite a bit more than public relations coaching to win the war. They had quickly thwarted him on two of the promises he had made to Kennedy in the final days before the coup: that there be no wholesale purges of personnel in the government and that there be a cabinet covering a very broad range. <sup>16</sup> After taking power into their hands, the generals rapidly proceeded to change most of the province chiefs and many of

the district chiefs. There were qualified people available for these posts. More serious was the disruption of intelligence-gathering; as anyone associated with the Diem government was judged to be suspect, the new regime did away with most of Diem's intelligence agents, with consequent effect on the war effort.

How much stock Lodge personally placed in the promises made to him by the generals before the coup is uncertain; they may simply have been part of his window-dressing for Kennedy's benefit. He believed that in Vietnam the technique of changing governments by violent means was not yet ready to be displaced in favor of changing governments by election, and after the coup his recommendation was that the United States go easy on the generals, not pressing them too hard on political reforms and early elections.<sup>17</sup> In view of this tendency toward violence on the part of the Vietnamese, Lodge urged that plans for a new embassy building take security into consideration and include a helicopter landing pad.<sup>18</sup>

Moreover, Lodge was hearing some surprising things from these Frenchtrained generals whom he had up to then treated as obedient servants. They did not, apparently, buy the John Paul Vann school of thought that because of their superior know-how the Americans should take over the running of the war in the field from the Vietnamese. At a one-hour meeting on January 10, Generals Kim and Minh, with the evident approval of everyone present, stressed "the extreme undesirability of Americans going into districts and villages" because they would "appear more imperialistic than the French" (who had never had district advisers) and their presence would substantiate Viet Cong charges that the government was a lackey of the Americans. Minh thought that visits to districts and villages by Everet Bumgardner of the U.S. Information Service, when not done "hand in hand" with the province chief, could have a bad effect. When Lodge commented that most of Bumgardner's teams were Vietnamese, Minh replied "Yes, but they are considered to be the same as the Vietnamese who worked for the Japanese during the war. They act as though they thought they were God, just as the Vietnamese in Saigon who drive for the Americans break so many traffic laws." Minh complained of special American support for the Cao Dai and Hoa Hao, who they believed were trying to play off the Americans against themselves. Finally, they asked Lodge to stop providing financial support to a "goodwill" student organization in Saigon which had done good work at the time of the Buddhist crisis, but which, they were certain, had been impelled by Americans to demonstrate recently in front of the French Embassy and the Alliance Française. They had enough trouble without having Americans stirring up trouble between them and the French.<sup>19</sup>

But Lodge was now focusing on North Vietnam as the battlefield where the "shorter war" he had also promised Kennedy would most likely be won.<sup>20</sup> Lodge had seen intelligence reports indicating that the North Vietnamese might be considering a way out of the war in South Vietnam. He was convinced that they wanted more than anything else to have the American presence removed and felt that the United States should exact some quid pro quo for withdrawing American forces rather than handing the withdrawal to them on a silver platter,

as existing plans would do.<sup>21</sup> His idea was that when South Vietnam had made sufficient progress and clearly had the upper hand, the United States should first get word to North Vietnam, in the form of a plant, that it planned an air strike if the North Vietnamese did not stop their support of the Viet Cong and then develop some method by which, after they were in a fearful mood, direct contact would be made which would get them to stop in return for American agreement to abandon plans for an air strike.<sup>22</sup>

But at another two-hour meeting on the evening of January 20, Generals Minh and Kim and their counterparts Prime Minister Tho and Foreign Minister Pham Dang Lam picked Lodge's presentation of a plan for attacks against North Vietnam to pieces. The plan had been drafted by the Americans, and Lodge wanted the generals' agreement that the South Vietnamese would carry it out under the direction of MACV. President Johnson had already approved a first phase lasting four months to begin on February 1. The plan involved sabotage raids on the port of Haiphong and destruction of petroleum reserves and naval installations. The goal was to compel the North Vietnamese leaders to order a cease-fire.

To the generals, Lodge's proposal was astounding in the extreme. The reaction was "thoughtful and constructive," Lodge reported hopefully. But the Vietnamese pointed out problems and asked a series of questions that were much to the point. The past experience with South Vietnamese clandestine operations in North Vietnam had been largely a failure. Did this plan offer anything new which promised a greater chance of success? The cease-fire sought in the plan might turn out to be only a cover for a conference on neutralizing South Vietnam. What was the real motive? The planned actions carried the danger that South Vietnamese and American involvement would become known. What would be the reaction at the United Nations and in the world? How would the North Vietnamese and their allies, the Chinese, react? The war in the South required men and matériel that would have to be diverted to action against the North. Would it not make more sense to concentrate their use in the South or, alternatively, against enemy bases in Cambodia? Any actions against the North would prove useless unless they were paralleled by an intensified effort against the Viet Cong. In sum, the plan deserved further study, they thought, and they proposed to resume discussion on January 23.23

When the Vietnamese asked Lodge what would happen if North Vietnam reacted by stepping up the sabotage of installations in South Vietnam, he said the actions against North Vietnam could also be stepped up. When they asked what would happen if North Vietnam reacted by launching air attacks on South Vietnam, using Chinese pilots, Lodge had no answer. When they asked what would happen in the event Hanoi ordered a unilateral cease-fire as a result of the actions against it, Lodge answered that once the fighting stopped they would decide what to do next. The thing that particularly disturbed Lam about Lodge's plan was that it would almost certainly mean the end, once and for all, of the Saigon government's adherence to the Geneva armistice agreement. The DRV

had violated with impunity the provisions of the agreement dealing with administration in the two zones ever since the party had decided on launching armed action against the Southern government in 1959. But the latter had adhered to these provisions, with the exception of the secret commando raids into North Vietnam. Lodge's plan would result in both Saigon and Hanoi being on the same footing, legally speaking, with respect to violations of the 1954 armistice agreement. Moreover, a campaign of sabotage against the port of Haiphong and its oil storage and naval installations, while possibly spectacular, risked arousing world opinion in favor of an international conference in which the Saigon government and the United States would find themselves on the defensive.

The generals, also, were reluctant to display their dependence on American aid and advice. As South Vietnamese, they were, after all, subject to the same calculation as Diem had been. Even if General Minh were to go on the stump with a thousand speeches, he would not be able to overcome the perception of the generals as puppets, whatever Lodge thought. The way for the generals to gain even a minimum of respect from their countrymen was not to embark on large-scale military action against the North, but to provide their compatriots security from the depredations of the Viet Cong in the countryside. It was not the United States that would win the minds of the Southern people. And the generals did not have the intelligence of a Nhu to use anti-communism as a medium of exchange. They were stuck with the war, but they could try to avoid expanding it.

Hilsman and Bundy urged the generals to publicize reports "that Nhu was dickering with [the] Communists to betray [the] anti-Communist cause." <sup>24</sup> The generals had enough sense to ignore this advice, knowing how the Vietnamese public would have received this news, and estimated what chance there was now of a peaceful settlement of the war. The generals quickly shut down a Saigon newspaper, *Tan Van*, that had carried material alleging that the people wanted nothing more than peace and an end to the armed struggle. <sup>25</sup>

Minh said artillery and air attacks against populated areas did little but alienate the population from the government. He talked of ridding the villages of the internal Viet Cong organization. Once the Viet Cong lost the guides who prepared their entry into the villages, they would be afraid to enter. He said maybe Americans could not understand how the Viet Cong could be driven out of the villages, but the Vietnamese understood how it could be done. Once the Viet Cong were separated from the villages, they could be isolated and destroyed. Such talk from Minh was not surprising, as it had been Diem's and Nhu's strategy and the foundation of the strategic hamlet program.

Before the coup, the generals had been annoyed by Sihanouk's meddling in South Vietnam's affairs by repeating charges that the Buddhists were being persecuted, which gave unwanted (in their view) weight to the demands of the Buddhist activists. In a November 2 broadcast, Sihanouk had laid down the conditions by which Cambodia was willing to re-establish relations with the new government in Saigon. These were: (1) stop aiding the Khmer Serei, close

down their radio, and end the Khmer Serei movement; (2) recognize the territorial integrity of Cambodia, withdraw the historic South Vietnamese claim to the coastal islands, and end territorial violations; (3) respect and recognize Cambodia's neutrality and not ask Cambodia to participate in the anti–Viet Cong efforts; (4) grant the Khmer Krom the same rights they enjoyed under the French colonial administration; and (5) agree to settle existing financial issues between the two countries.<sup>27</sup> This was a tall order by any measure, and it shocked the generals. They nevertheless refrained from making any public rejoinder and privately decided to postpone for the time being any effort to seek a rapprochement with Sihanouk.<sup>28</sup> Within a month, however, Generals Minh and Kim were sounding out Lodge about the possibility the United States would try to remove Sihanouk and put in a "nationalist" chief of state; Sihanouk rubbed them the wrong way, too, just as he had Diem.<sup>29</sup>

After a brief interruption, the Khmer Serei radio resumed regular broadcasts from Saigon thrice daily on November 16.<sup>30</sup> Indeed, during November the Saigon press published reports of coup rumors in Phnom Penh. It is difficult to explain the continuation of these activities, which aggravated problems with Cambodia, by the regime in Saigon, and it is not certain that they can be chalked up to the CIA. Given the freelancing activities at this time of a Communist agit-prop agent such as Colonel Pham Ngoc Thao at the highest levels of the Saigon ruling elite, it is not impossible that the Communists were behind them. Son Ngoc Thanh and Sam Sary had few, if any, followers left in Cambodia and so their broadcast incitements to revolt would have posed very little danger to the Communists, whose agents in Cambodia would have been quick to denounce any incipient plots to Sihanouk's ever-vigilant police in any case. Sihanouk showed he was as sensitive as ever to the Khmer Serei by dealing harshly with two of their agents his security police captured, ordering one executed in public and making a film of the execution to be shown in Cambodian cinemas.

### THE PARTY CENTER RE-EVALUATES THE SITUATION

The overthrow of President Ngô Dinh Diem was the greatest Communist victory since Dien Bien Phu. At one fell swoop, it destroyed the nine-year-old claim of the Southern regime, which had resisted the attempts of Mendès-France to undermine it at Geneva, to be the constitutional and popularly elected rival to the illegal, illegitimate regime of the party in Hanoi that had allies in Peking, Moscow, and Paris. The fact that the Americans had put people in power in Saigon who represented no one but themselves was a political factor of tremendous importance for the party, since the future of its instrument in the South, the National Liberation Front, which was an armed minority espousing violence and claiming universal representativity, depended on negotiating with a pliable government in Saigon to form a coalition to open talks for reunification with the North. And the less encumbered that government was with constituents to whom it was responsible, the better, from the party center's point of view. "It was a gift from heaven for us," said Nguyên Huu Tho of the coup.

As the DRV representative in Paris, Mai Van Bo, told Louis Schneider, the associate executive secretary for programs of the American Friends Service Committee, on November 16, 1965, the DRV would have negotiated with the Diem government, but its successors were not representative and the DRV would not negotiate with them.<sup>31</sup> The changed situation was reflected in Communist terminology. Before the coup, Hanoi had referred to chinh quyen My-Diem, meaning the American-Diem authorities or government, a term that conferred a modicum of recognition of two more or less equal allies—the American imperialists and the stubborn Diem fascists. Henceforth, Hanoi would refer to *nguy quyen*, meaning puppet or illegitimate authorities or government. Furthermore, the party center's negotiating strategy, in good Marxist-Leninist fashion, would henceforth be based on this perception. From now on, the NLF would be entitled to a seat at the negotiating table on an equal footing with the Saigon government, while the DRV and the United States would bargain in secret over the fate of the South Vietnamese people, for the fate of the North Vietnamese people was never placed on the negotiating table. In all the negotiations to follow, the status of the DRV was never questioned, while the status of the Saigon government was put forth as a principal issue for negotiation. In a very real sense, the Southerners never succeeded in restoring what they had lost on November 1, 1963, that is to say legitimacy. Despite the successes of military campaigns paid for on the battlefield in blood, they never were able to negotiate in the international arena from a position of strength as the aggrieved party.

Moreover, the victory was all the sweeter in Hanoi because it had been achieved without the Communists lifting a finger. This singular feat in an essentially political war recalled Sun Tzu. The famous Chinese sage had written about offensive strategy:

- 1. Generally, in war the best policy is to take a state intact; to ruin it is inferior to this.
- To capture the enemy's army is better than to destroy it; to take intact a battalion, a company or a five-man squad is better than to destroy them.
- 3. For to win one hundred victories in one hundred battles is not the acme of skill. To subdue the enemy without fighting is the acme of
- 4. Thus, what is of supreme importance in war is to attack the enemy's strategy.
- 5. Next best is to disrupt his alliances.
- 6. The next best is to attack his army.<sup>32</sup>

The party leaders could waste little time in congratulating themselves. With the Vietnamese nationalists in disarray, they met to take stock of the new situation created by the overthrow of Diem. The ninth plenum of the Vietnam Workers' Party Central Committee convened in Hanoi in December 1963. By all indications, it was a stormy rather than a smooth meeting. According to Le Duan, it

took several days of debates before the plenum approved the resolution drafted earlier by the politburo:

Now [that] we are stronger than the enemy politically, we must continue to strengthen our political forces. However, we are still weaker than the enemy militarily. Therefore the key point at the present time is to make outstanding efforts to rapidly strengthen our military forces in order to create a basic change in the balance of forces between the enemy and us in South Vietnam.

If we do not defeat the enemy's military forces, we cannot overthrow his domination and bring the revolution to victory. To destroy the enemy's military forces, we should use armed struggle. For this reason, armed struggle plays a direct and decisive role.<sup>33</sup>

The plenum approved a proposal to increase the level of military assistance to be provided by the North, but not to dispatch combat units to the South to take part in the fighting. The immediate task was to strengthen the military capabilities of the Viet Cong.<sup>34</sup> The plenum's decision to step up the pace of military action in South Vietnam, the most important since the decision of January 1959, made the use of the trails through Laos vital.<sup>35</sup> In accordance with customary procedure, the plenum was followed by a high-level meeting from January 23 to 26, to which "observers" from the Lao Patriotic Front (LPF) were invited. At the January meeting, undoubtedly, the Lao party members received their directives for action in the coming period.

The party center had, however, to consider what moves the United States was likely to make now that it had complete control of the decision-making apparatus in Saigon. The plan for stepped-up action against the North that Lodge had submitted to the generals had already reached Hanoi in all probability. The three days the generals kept the document for further study no doubt allowed it to be copied, by hand in those days before photocopy machines, and then sent on its way to Hanoi either by the trusted Polish ICC courier or by commercial airliner from Phnom Penh's Pochentong airport. The party center would have accorded such a document top priority. This would have allowed the party leaders to see what the intentions of the Americans were with respect to North Vietnam. It is significant that in February *Nhan Dan* and Radio Hanoi carried a statement that if the United States (and here the party leaders no longer made any distinction between South Vietnamese and American boats or planes) attacked North Vietnam, it would have to fight "not only with North Vietnam but also with China, or eventually with the socialist camp as a whole." In April, Ho himself gave an interview in which he said that his government had "powerful friends ready to help."36

The DRV was checking up on these allies. Le Duan and Le Duc Tho made one of their periodic visits to Moscow between January 31 and February 10 to inform Khrushchev and the Soviet leadership of the decisions reached at the ninth plenum and to gauge the Soviet reaction. It apparently was not one of pleasure; the Russians, as ever, were suspicious of the Vietnamese, afraid they might involve them in a war with the United States at a time when tensions with the Chinese were reaching a new high.

# The Escalation of the War in Laos and Cambodia

### SOUVANNA PHOUMA'S DIPLOMACY

Phoui Sananikone addressed the closing session of the National Assembly on January 11, 1964. In the audience was the cabinet, except for the Lao Patriotic Front's representatives, and the diplomatic corps, including the Soviet and Czech envoys and the three ICC commissioners, but not the Chinese or DRV envoys, who, however, attended the closing session of the King's Council which followed that of the Assembly.

Phoui began by praising the Assembly's role in supporting the PGNU and Prime Minister Souvanna Phouma, as evidenced by a vote of full powers earlier in the session. At the start, with the backing of the Assembly and the Geneva signatories and the presence of the Front's ministers in the PGNU, the government had every opportunity to carry out a policy of national reconciliation. Nevertheless, almost two years after the Geneva signing, fighting continued in Laos with foreign troops still intervening to help the Pathet Lao to fight the royal army despite the fact that the army's foreign advisers had been certified to have departed. The cabinet had split up; three ministers (Souphanouvong, Phoumi Vongvichit, and Khamsouk Keola) had fled to the Plain of Jars or abroad. Phoui concluded that neither the Geneva accords nor government efforts nor the long series of negotiations had produced any results, though the fault lay not with the Lao but with foreign intervention. He appealed to the Geneva signatories to halt intervention. The prime minister's impending meetings with the Front's leaders would, he said, probably be the last chance for national reconciliation.<sup>37</sup>

Indeed, the reality was that the agreement for the neutralization of Laos over which the diplomats of 14 nations had labored for 14 months in Geneva had completely collapsed 14 months after its signature. Laos lacked a working unified government, a unified administration, a unified army or police force, an elected assembly respected by all factions, a program for or international verification of demilitarization, and observance by foreign powers of the prohibition against introducing into it foreign military personnel. Its only unifying factor was the king, to whom the three factions paid homage. The threat of escalation of fighting among the three factions and outside intervention hung over the kingdom like a dagger.

The agreement itself, oddly perhaps, was never formally renounced by any of the signatories; like gravity, it seemed to exert an all-pervasive force. Even after the Soviet Union abdicated its Article 8 responsibility as co-chairman for supervising implementation, the agreement continued to have a breath of life. The Lao argument that foreign countries must bear a major share of the blame for the continued fighting was not far wrong, since these foreign countries had assumed responsibility for negotiating the peace agreement at Geneva. Now these countries insisted on interpreting the Geneva Agreement each in its own way. It would be hard to find a more vivid example of irresponsibility in the history of diplomacy.

Ambassador Unger had told Kennedy that the Soviets enjoyed very little influence in Laos, <sup>38</sup> which must have come as a surprise to the president, who had listened for years to Harriman's assurances that the Soviets could be counted on to defuse the crisis in Laos. Unger was succeeded by one of Harriman's protégés, and the existence of a supposed United States–Soviet "understanding" on Laos, solemnly referred to before congressional committees and elsewhere, assumed the proportions of high truth in the face of all the contrary empirical evidence. This accounted for the fact that there was concern after Khrushchev fell from power in October 1964 about whether the Soviet Union would continue to honor its responsibilities as co-chairman.<sup>39</sup> In later years, as the war in Laos escalated, considerable time was devoted in the American Embassy in Vientiane to reading the tea leaves to determine what the Soviets would and would not accept. In the end, it was found that they would accept virtually anything, provided it was not officially acknowledged.<sup>40</sup>

The immediate problem in Vientiane, however, was the growing tension between the Neutralists and rightists, so called because other figures had arisen to challenge General Phoumi's exclusive control over the Phoumist faction. Early on the morning of December 5, 1963, Colonel Leuang Kongvongsa was trapped by two jeeps belonging to General Kouprasith Abhay in a well-staged ambush while driving to his home on the outskirts of Vientiane and was gunned by some 15 rounds from a Thompson submachine gun. 41 Leuang had done his apprenticeship in guerrilla warfare as a 14-year-old against the Japanese, had been active in the Service Interministériel d'Action Social et Politique (SIDASP) in psychological warfare against the Front, and had been a member of Kong Le's group in staging the 1960 coup d'état. Since the formation of the PGNU, as Neutralist intelligence chief, he had organized small units to penetrate both the Front and the rightist zones to spread pro-Neutralist propaganda. General Amkha Soukavong gave the funeral oration. Apparently in retaliation, although the circumstances had reverted to their usual murkiness, Major Praseuth, the rightist intelligence chief of Military Region V, was assassinated on March 17. These two deaths were a victory in absentia for the Front.

General Minh had invited General Phoumi, Harriman's old nemesis, to pay an incognito and discreet visit to Saigon at the end of November to discuss cooperation. Later, General Don had thought better of having Phoumi seen in Saigon and suggested instead he himself make a quiet visit to Pakse and perhaps Savannakhet. Now, however, it was the Americans who started pushing for South Vietnamese intervention in Laos. The month following the Saigon coup, Washington was already suggesting measures in southern Laos to stop infiltration into South Vietnam of the kind that had been discussed with Diem before Lodge made a pariah of him; such measures were justified on the grounds of "present intensive efforts of VC [Viet Cong]."

Unger replied with characteristic vigor. He believed that chances were remote that Prince Souvanna Phouma, if consulted in advance, could be brought to approve any of the proposed operations at a time when, despite considerable pessimism, his effort continued to be concentrated on keeping the DRV quiet

and seeking some means by which the leaders of the Front could be brought into renewed conversation about restoring the PGNU. Although the prime minister had become openly critical of the DRV's behavior in Laos, Unger was persuaded that he privately questioned the wisdom of American policy in Vietnam; while refraining from adding to the American difficulties diplomatically, he would continue to resist the spillover into Laos of actions in pursuit of the Vietnam war.

Specifically, Unger continued, if he were to consult the prime minister and after learning of his disapproval proceed with the proposed measures, his relations with the PGNU and with Souvanna Phouma personally would be deeply compromised. There was probably some limited range of actions that Souvanna Phouma would tolerate if not consulted, even though he would disapprove if asked. Unger believed that air reconnaissance was one such action. With respect to proposed ground probes into Laos from South Vietnam, an American decision to proceed without consultation would provide only temporary protection. Once such actions attracted the attention of the DRV and were denounced by the Lao Patriotic Front as an expansion of hostilities into the "liberated area" (in violation of the Zurich agreement on temporary separate administrations of the zones controlled by the three factions) Souvanna Phouma's position would be exposed. He inevitably would associate the United States as well as General Phoumi with this escalatory move and would probably feel impelled to join in criticizing it. At a minimum, Unger concluded, he could expect to find new and larger obstacles to his effective relations with Souvanna Phouma and to Souvanna Phouma's relations with General Phoumi. Souvanna Phouma's position of leadership would be weakened and he might quit.<sup>45</sup>

The first place that the decision taken at the party's ninth plenum in December to step up military pressure on the South Vietnam battlefront showed up, not surprisingly, was in Laos. A tentative push by Neutralist and rightist forces on Lak Sao on the way to the Mu Gia Pass, after meeting with success, was vigorously rebuffed in mid-December. In the early days of 1964, DRV "volunteers," reportedly in battalion strength, began a vast month-long clearing operation jointly with the Pathet Lao south along Route 8 in Khammouane Province designed to free it for movement of men and supplies to South Vietnam. He prime minister attempted to stir the ICC to action to investigate this new breach of the cease-fire and the involvement of foreign troops. But the new chairman, Ashoke Bhadkamkar, argued, as had Khosla in 1955, that the ICC should take no initiative so long as talks were going on between the factions, thereby penalizing the Neutralists and rightists relative to the Front. The ICC dithered for weeks before finally sending out a team in late March, by which time Communist control over the area had been secured.

A hastily arranged meeting on December 20 on the Plain of Jars between Neutralist representative Tiao Sisoumang Sisaleumsak and Phoumi Vongvichit, in the absence of Souphanouvong (who was in Hanoi), resulted in a communiqué in Lao containing a set of general principles concerning agreed-upon intentions for the neutralization and demilitarization of Vientiane and Luang Prabang.

The communiqué said Vientiane should be returned to the status quo ante September 9, 1963, neutralized, demilitarized, and equipped with a mixed police force to ensure security in accordance with the communiqué of November 27, 1962. 48 General Phoumi, however, reacted with skepticism and advised the prime minister to obtain a commitment from the Front to restore the PGNU and honor the cease-fire before undertaking any serious discussion of other steps. 49 On December 24, the Australian, French, British, and American ambassadors in Vientiane exchanged with the prime minister confidential letters with a minute attached constituting agreement on a financial stabilization program including accession to a royal government request to establish a Foreign Exchange Operations Fund. The royal government agreed to devalue the kip from 80 to 240 to the U.S. dollar, limit the budget deficit, increase taxes, create a budget office, and establish a legal open market for the kip that was expected to be near the black market rate of 450 to the dollar. 50

Prince Souvanna Phouma, dressed in his civil service uniform, visited Sam Neua in January 1964. A crowd of about 5,000 people, many of whom had walked for a day or more from their villages, greeted him at the provincial capital as he disembarked from an ICC helicopter with the British and Soviet ambassadors and the three ICC commissioners. Another helicopter had picked up Phoumi Vongvichit in Khang Khay. Prince Souphanouvong greeted his half-brother on arrival; the two had not met since their failed negotiations on the day of the helicopter incident on the Plain of Jars eight months previously. There was the usual salute to the flag, military honors, and prayers by bonzes.

It was the first time Souvanna Phouma had set foot in the province since 1960, and the little town of Sam Neua showed evidence of three years of Communist rule. The main street was decked with flags and banners bearing militant slogans. There were practically no shops left open and few goods for sale. Most emphasis was on agricultural production and cattle raising, and people told Lucien Coudoux, a cameraman accompanying the visitors, that they had recently killed 80,000 rats in 35 villages using bamboo traps.

At a reception in his honor at Souphanouvong's house, Souvanna Phouma said he brought best wishes to the people from the king and asked them to support the PGNU in order to bring about real neutrality. He planned visits to Cambodia and to Hanoi and Peking, he told them. In the Plain of Jars area, a cease-fire was holding except for isolated incidents around Xieng Khouang town. He pledged to concentrate his efforts to transfer the government temporarily to Luang Prabang; a tripartite police force assured security. With security, all three factions had promised him they would participate in the government. Phoumi Nosavan, he said, had pledged to work for unification of the armed forces and administration on the condition that the Lao Patriotic Front allow free circulation of the civilian population throughout the country.

Souvanna Phouma visited a primary school and told the students how happy he was to see all the people out to greet him. He told the students that the policies of the Front and its leaders were successful only with those people who were not well acquainted with them. He referred to the refugees arriving every day at Muong Phanh, Kong Le's headquarters on the Plain where he had stop-

ped over, and said he was going to see that they were resettled. That evening he watched a performance by a Pathet Lao dancing troupe who sang anti-American and anti-rightist songs. The following day, a delegation of Kha and Meo came to see him and presented him with a gift of chickens, followed by a delegation of local inhabitants bringing cabbages, coconuts, and sugar cane. He thanked them and offered them money to buy candy and gifts for their children, but there was nothing in the shops. The Pathet Lao soldiers received no salary. However, it was opium-selling season, and a Chinese man was buying unrefined opium at a price of 25,000 kip per kilo.<sup>51</sup> The visit ended with separate statements by the two princes.<sup>52</sup>

Prince Souvanna Phouma returned to Vientiane highly satisfied with his trip. He emphasized to Unger the need for progress in order to be able to penetrate the Front's zone, whose population would rally to him and to the PGNU as soon as they had an opportunity to do so. A real effort had to be made to achieve national reconciliation. He recognized General Phoumi's problems with his supporters and pledged to do everything he could to explain the situation and persuade the latter. Unger felt that Souvanna Phouma was hoping for his support in the coming negotiations, particularly to put pressure on the rightists.<sup>53</sup>

Thus, in the early spring of 1964, there appeared harbingers of unity of action among the non-Communists in Indochina. First, General Nguyên Khanh in Saigon, actively encouraged by Ambassador Lodge, initiated a rapprochement with General Phoumi Nosavan, who was himself disillusioned with the way the PGNU was working to the Communists' advantage. The two generals, accompanied by their aides, met at Dalat on March 14. Since 1959, South Vietnam had had a secret treaty with the royal government permitting South Vietnamese forces to operate within 10 kilometers inside the border of Laos to protect South Vietnam from infiltration. This restriction was now done away with. It was also decided that the South Vietnamese Embassy in Vientiane would be reopened, which was done on March 17. Joint operations by the royal army and South Vietnamese forces would be undertaken in southern Laos, with American support for aerial reconnaissance.

These initiatives of General Phoumi presented Souvanna Phouma with a dilemma. He was trying against great odds to restore the PGNU to functioning status, and his deputy prime minister was agreeing to foreign intervention in complete violation of the Geneva Agreement. Nor were these developments to the liking of the French, who soon got wind of the Khanh-Phoumi talks from the French ambassador in Vientiane, Pierre Millet. The Quai d'Orsay found sanction in de Gaulle, but in actual fact the policy originated with the followers of Mendès-France who were still ensconced there and who continued to believe that the DRV enjoyed exclusive legality and legitimacy in Vietnam and therefore was entitled to act as it wished. French policy was based on the assumption that the problem of South Vietnam would be settled by the summer, probably as a result of the collapse of the Saigon military regime and the opening of negotiations with Hanoi for a "neutralist" coalition and the final expulsion of the Americans (this last being a constant theme of French diplomacy), which would open the way for a government headed by Souphanouvong in Laos. The Poundary of the summer in the problem of South Vietnam and the final expulsion of the Americans (this last being a constant theme of French diplomacy), which would open the way for a government headed by Souphanouvong in Laos.

The French, in fact, had done precious little to bolster Souvanna Phouma in his desperate gamble to make his policy of neutrality work in Laos. Not only had the French said not a word of condemnation for the DRV "volunteers" in Laos, they had also ignored a request from the prime minister for French military instructors for the rightists,<sup>57</sup> and had furnished no war matériel to them in 1963.<sup>58</sup> It had taken American and British pressure to persuade them to maintain their military mission with the Neutralists on the Plain of Jars, which at one point in 1963 had been briefly pulled back. The party center was making attempts to enlist the French in the effort to undercut Souvanna Phouma; in February 1964, during his consultations in Paris, Ambassador Millet had received a message from the Front saying they wished to see him immediately upon his return to Vientiane. <sup>59</sup> Souvanna Phouma's wife told the Americans in Paris that the French seemed to be moving in the direction of supporting a revamped PGNU under Souphanouvong. 60 These visible deficiencies severely diminished whatever credibility the French might have enjoyed in Laos, where they still enjoyed a considerable, but eroding, reservoir of goodwill among the nationalists. It was left to the Americans, the British, the Canadians, and, to a lesser degree, the Australians to uphold the neutrality of Laos. As evidence of the more active role in Indochina sought by the French during the years 1964– 1968, Phnom Penh became the center of French intelligence operations, much as Bangkok had been the center of American intelligence operations in the 1950s; many of these operations were directed against the Americans.

The Front continued to exploit the capture of crew members of the Air America C-46 that had been shot down the previous September 5. Ignoring calls for their release on humanitarian grounds, Phoumi Vongvichit continued to call them "war prisoners." After a Vientiane newspaper published an interview with an escapee from a Pathet Lao prison camp who described the conditions in which the foreigners were held, Souvanna Phouma wrote to Souphanouvong requesting that the prisoners be treated in accordance with international law with regular visits by representatives of the International Red Cross and prompt delivery of mail. Souphanouvong replied that the release of the prisoners depended on a general settlement in Laos and not just on the withdrawal of Air America from Laos, as Phoumi Vongvichit had earlier intimated. This effectively put all airmen in the country on notice that they could expect a prolonged captivity if they were captured by the Pathet Lao or by DRV "volunteers."

With the Soviets now largely out of the picture, Souvanna Phouma had to try to convince the DRV and China to rein in the Pathet Lao. Souvanna Phouma's trip to Hanoi and Peking in April 1964 was in fulfillment of his long-standing pledge to visit the capital of each of the signatories of the 1962 Geneva Agreement, but it had a more than formal purpose. Conditions at home favored the trip. Most of the Neutralists arrested by Siho's DNC had been released, easing tensions in the capital. Ahead of him, Souvanna Phouma had a three-faction summit meeting, at which he could use any diplomatic achievements he brought back to good advantage.

Souvanna Phouma's visit to Hanoi passed off uneventfully. He talked with Pham Van Dong and Vo Nguyên Giap for two and a half hours, then with Dong

alone for four hours. He warned them that unless his government was made to work, they faced the prospect of war. Although the relevant archives in Hanoi have not become accessible yet, it seems safe to say that the Hanoi leaders stressed the increased American intervention in South Vietnam and the need for Hanoi to support the Southern revolutionaries. This implied the use by Hanoi of the trails through Laos, and Dong and Giap may have pointed out to Souvanna that under the 1962 Geneva Agreement as it had been signed they were not prohibited from this, in spite of what the Americans were claiming. As for DRV support for the Front to further its cause within the PGNU, Souvanna Phouma was on stronger ground in arguing for the DRV to desist. They made the usual empty protestations of peace and reportedly gave him conditional assurances that they would use their influence with the Front.

In Peking, Souvanna Phouma was reunited with Chou En-lai, the statesman of 1954, who advised him to dissociate the Laos problem from the Vietnam problem. Chou must have been alarmed by the press reports that had appeared about plans for cooperation between the royal army and the South Vietnamese and felt that the policy pursued by the party center in Hanoi was pushing Souvanna Phouma into the arms of the Americans. In a noticeable difference of language, the joint communiqué issued in Peking spoke of "thoroughly carry[ing] out the political program of the Laotian Government of National Union," whereas the statement issued in Hanoi spoke of "restor[ing] the normal activities of the Laotian National Union Government."

### THE REACTION AGAINST THE GENEVA AGREEMENT

At the long-planned summit meeting at Muong Phanh, which finally took place the week following Souvanna Phouma's return, Souphanouvong and Phoumi Vongvichit with unaccustomed urgency demanded that General Phoumi agree on the spot to a joint communiqué they had drafted calling for "rapid implementation" of the neutralization of Luang Prabang as had been agreed to in the December 20, 1963, communiqué of the meeting of the two parties, which had not included General Phoumi's party.<sup>64</sup> General Phoumi told a press conference on April 18 on his return to Vientiane that he had agreed in principle to demilitarize and neutralize Luang Prabang, but he could not agree to all the Front's demands and suggested that a mixed committee be set up to discuss the details. General Phoumi answered that he had gone too far already in agreeing in principle, and he asked that the three leaders sign a joint agreement which would leave the details regarding Luang Prabang unstated. In a fit of anger at the rejection of General Phoumi's suggestion, first by Phoumi Vongvichit and then by Souphanouvong, Souvanna Phouma broke up the meeting, refusing to give his brother the usual embrace, and told the press at the Plain of Jars airfield he would submit his resignation to the king. Phoumi Vongvichit, as always disarmingly charming, suggested to reporters that Souvanna Phouma might change his mind in the morning and the talks might be resumed later. General Phoumi had been following instructions of the king not to agree to neutralization of Luang Prabang.65

Souvanna Phouma was in despair on his return to Vientiane that afternoon. He told a visitor, Philip Chadbourne of the American Embassy (Unger was in Saigon attending a meeting with Rusk) that the situation was much the same as it had been in 1960, when the Lao apparently had been determined to fight each other. Phoumi had behaved reasonably, Souvanna Phouma told the UK chargé d'affaires, John Denson, whereas the Front's tactics could not be considered negotiating. Indeed, for Phoumi to have accepted Souphanouvong's demand would have meant accepting an ultimatum from the Front, something far different from agreeing to make a concession to Souvanna Phouma. General Phoumi himself refused to dramatize the situation, telling Chadbourne at his house that evening there was no need to worry, that Souvanna Phouma was in one of his mercurial moods and he would never actually submit his resignation. When Chadbourne observed he had never seen Souvanna Phouma in such a depressed state of mind, Phoumi said again there was nothing to fear whatsoever, that Souvanna Phouma's threats were meaningless, and as it was Saturday night they should all have another whiskey.66

That night, the madcaps of the DNC moved troops into Vientiane, and a self-constituted military revolutionary committee the next morning declared the PGNU at an end. They arrested Souvanna Phouma and other Neutralists in town; Pheng Phongsavan found safety in the Soviet Embassy. Fortunately, their action was unopposed and there was no fighting or civilian casualties.

Once again we are faced, in the absence of documents of the party center, with a series of events that seem more than coincidental and that require some circumstantial explanation. It seems likely that the nature of Chou's intervention with Souvanna Phouma was such as to alarm the party center. If acted upon, this intervention might have forced the restoration of the PGNU, to which end the prince had been tirelessly working, and faced the party center with the prospect of losing control over the "revolution" in Laos. A Chinesesponsored reinforcement of Souvanna Phouma's authority in Laos would compel the Front to play the part of a political party and result in extension of Souvanna's control over the entire territory of the country of which he was, nominally at least, the head of government, a major threat from the party center's point of view. There was also another threat to the party center in the offing. The Indian-Canadian ICC team (the Poles having refused to participate) that had been sent after long delay to investigate the prime minister's charges of DRV intervention in the January offensive in Khammouane Province had turned up for the first time material evidence, not just verbal testimony, of DRV involvement and planned to put this evidence, which was brought forward by Neutralist and rightist soldiers who had taken part in the fighting, in its report to the co-chairmen when the team returned to Vientiane on April 16. The ICC chairman, Bhadkamkar, had stalled action on the prime minister's request as long as he could, and now, faced with the most unwelcome prospect of dealing with Polish objections to presentation of the evidence, he retired to his bed, where he received official visitors, for the next four or five months with a case of water on the knee, as pitiable a figure as any among the

many foreigners the Lao had to deal with.<sup>67</sup> Accordingly, there are good circumstantial grounds for hypothesizing that the party center decided that the time had come to destroy the Neutralist center once and for all. It had failed to accomplish this by military force the year before, but now the opportunity presented itself in the form of the prime minister's withdrawal in frustration.

The idea of dissociating the Laos question from the Vietnam question was something that went against Indochinese Communist strategy, which since 1954 had always been to intermingle the two, diplomatically as well as on the battle-field. Chou, like Khrushchev before him, was threatening to let the Indochinese Communists down; they were already suspicious of Chinese intentions. At the same time, they could not afford to publicly protest Chou's initiative without jeopardizing their Chinese support, notably the Chinese supply of arms to the Viet Cong through Cambodia which Sihanouk had agreed to that year.

Hanoi was well informed of Chou's diplomacy. Souvanna Phouma may have intimated the expectations he held from his visit to Peking in the course of his conversations in Hanoi. In any case, the Hanoi leaders would have subsequently received accurate reports of Chou's remarks from the Front members of Souvanna Phouma's delegation. Souvanna Phouma himself saw no reason to make a secret of Chou's statement. In a farewell speech at the Peking airport on April 7 reported by New China News Agency, Souvanna Phouma expressed his strong approval of the "candid and wise" position of the Chinese government, his hope that the position of dissociating the Laos problem from the Vietnam problem would "ultimately prevail" among all the signatories to the Geneva Agreement, and his endorsement of China's "recommendations concerning Laotian affairs," which, together with China's "logical view of things," would help in settling internal differences, particularly at the forthcoming Lao summit conference.

As if this were not enough, Souvanna Phouma told an Agence France-Presse correspondent aboard the aircraft taking him from Peking to Canton that the separation of the Laos question from the general problem of Southeast Asia had great political significance because it was "of a nature to calm possible American apprehensions regarding South Vietnam." He also said that the two rightist members of his delegation, Leuam Insisiengmay and Bounthong Voravong, now knew the Peking viewpoint and had as their duty to gain Phoumi Nosavan's acceptance of his (Souvanna Phouma's) neutrality policies. At Don Muang airport on his way back to Vientiane, Souvanna Phouma told a press conference that the problems of the former states of Indochina should be handled separately.

Edward E. Rice, the American consul general in Hong Kong, was an old China hand and immediately recognized the unusual tenor of the reported Chinese statements and drew the Department's attention to their potential significance. They might presage, he commented, a slowing down of the pace of Pathet Lao activity, a restraint on the militancy of the Pathet Lao and of the DRV troops and cadres, and a need for explaining these steps within these movements. 68 Rice was received by Souvanna Phouma during the latter's stopover in Hong Kong. The prince explained that Peking's position meant that it recog-

nized that his government's authority extended to all of Laos. When Rice asked how the Pathet Lao could be expected to react, Souvanna Phouma replied that they would have to agree to free circulation throughout Laos.<sup>69</sup> On his return to Vientiane, Souvanna Phouma pressed on Unger the consideration that it would be particularly helpful in the new context if the United States would publicly take note of Chou's suggestion of dissociating Laos from Vietnam and indicate that this also accorded with American policy. Unger agreed to propose this, which he did.<sup>70</sup>

American policymakers, however, completely misread Chou's intent. Part of the problem was that Unger, in reporting Souvanna Phouma's remarks to him upon his return to Vientiane, failed to point out that it was Chou who had taken the initiative on the question of dissociation, merely referring to "Communist agreement." Secretary Rusk, who was attending a SEATO Council meeting in Manila, interpreted the statement to mean that Peking and Hanoi had offered to voluntarily desist from using the trails through Laos. Even less able to distinguish between China and the DRV, those in Washington demanded an opportunity to test the new agreement by an observed immediate reduction in DRV infiltration through Laos. This obviously amounted to a very biased test.

Instead of demanding a test on such a grand and public scale, it would have made more sense diplomatically to acknowledge Chou's initiative by a small signal. If Rusk had caught a cold and canceled his trip to Taipei after the Manila meeting, it would most likely have done the trick in view of the acute Chinese sensitivity to the meaning of such gestures. The statement that was read by a State Department spokesman in Washington on April 16, following Unger's recommendation, was ambiguous, focusing on the problem of the use of the trails, over which Peking had minimal influence, instead of on the authority of Souvanna Phouma's government, over which Peking exerted much greater influence than the Soviet Union. It also repeated the American contention that the United States had respected the 1962 agreement. Thus, instead of sending a clear signal of interest, American policymakers sent what amounted to further demands. Instead of enlisting Chinese help in confronting the DRV on the question of war or peace in Laos, the United States itself, in the absence of any provocation, adopted a confrontational attitude toward both the DRV and China.

Unger received the State Department's statement in time to show it to Souvanna Phouma before the latter's departure for the Plain of Jars summit meeting. Souvanna Phouma was so pleased with it that he handed it around to diplomats who had come to the airport to see him off. He may also have mentioned it when he received the DRV ambassador, Le Van Hien, who came to see him on April 13 to lodge a protest against an alleged commando raid into DRV territory a few days previously. Two days later, he told Unger the first test of "dissociation" would come at the summit meeting on April 17, giving Unger to understand that his plan was to press for the right of free circulation for government officials in return for a major concession by the rightists such as creation of a mixed police force in Vientiane or the neutralization of Luang Prabang. He knew that the Front would never agree to free circulation in an area unless the DRV presence had been withdrawn from that area.<sup>71</sup>

Ordering Souphanouvong to deliberately sabotage the summit thus fell into the party center's scheme of things. The Front would be in a position, in the event Souvanna Phouma went through with his threat, to argue that its ministers and the "patriotic neutralists" constituted the core of a still-legal successor government. Alternatively, in the event that Souvanna Phouma's announced intention to resign triggered a violent reaction on the right to overthrow the coalition, as seemed likely, and Souvanna Phouma stayed, the Front could argue that he had been taken over by the rightists and no longer represented the Neutralist faction. Either way, Souvanna Phouma would no longer stand in the Front's way.

The DRV's diplomats in Vientiane had been taking discreet soundings since February with the French and British about how much Pathet Lao aggressiveness would be tolerated without bringing a reaction. Paparently laying further groundwork, Tiao Souk in Vientiane spread reports that General Phoumi was refusing to consider the neutralization of Luang Prabang, and Radio Pathet Lao made similar charges during March. The matter was brought up on the first day of the summit meeting, April 17, when Souphanouvong asked for a "reaffirmation and implementation" of the principles of the December 20, 1963 communiqué, while maintaining the Front's position that each faction was entitled to administer its own zone under the terms of the 1962 Plain of Jars agreement. On the second day, Souphanouvong, backed by Phoumi Vongvichit, insisted on immediate acceptance in communiqué form of a package proposal for neutralization of Luang Prabang. All observers agreed that it was this ultimatum and Phoumi Vongvichit's intervention that caused the breakdown of the summit and led to Souvanna's resignation announcement.

The tensions that had prevailed in Vientiane since February, when rumors of demonstrations in front of the DRV Embassy had circulated, reached a critical point at which any incident would set them off. The tensions had risen markedly on March 17, when Major Praseuth, the intelligence officer of the Fifth Military Region, was assassinated. Revenge for the assassination of Colonel Leuang the previous December was suspected. General Kouprasith, the regional commander, placed 23 Neutralist officers under arrest. As a precaution against further violence, Souvanna Phouma asked teams from the ICC to act as guards at the residences of Neutralists at night.<sup>73</sup> There was plenty of scope for mischief by the Communists in the weeks before the coup, with leading figures such as General Amkha receiving anonymous death threats through the mail. Things had reached such a stage that Souvanna Phouma was threatening to pull out of Vientiane and set up his headquarters with Kong Le at Muong Phanh. He told Unger on at least two occasions that Colonel Thonglith, Kouprasith's chief of staff, was in regular touch with the Front.<sup>74</sup> General Amkha told Unger that two dissident Neutralist colonels, Thanh and Kong Sy, who had been arrested by Kong Le in the spring of 1963, were reported to be back in Khang Khay, and complicity by the rightists was suspected. 75 A member of Amkha's special military cabinet, Colonel Hongkeo Sadittan, told an embassy officer that the Neutralists suspected Thonglith of being responsible for releasing the two but were not sure whether he was taking orders from the Communists or was merely an

unwitting agent. According to Thonglith years later, however, it was Siho who had been in contact with agents of the Front. At 8:12 P.M. on April 18, Thonglith was convoked to Siho's headquarters at Ban Dongpan and shown a letter from Souphanouvong saying that the three princes had failed to solve Laos's problems. Whatever the truth (and it was possible both men had been in touch with the Front), it would seem that the Front would have found willing accomplices in Vientiane for the overthrow of Souvanna Phouma, who was the biggest obstacle to the success of its strategic plans.

It may be significant that during the coup attempt all Neutralists in Vientiane were disarmed, but the members of the Pathet Lao guard detachment in the city were not. William Bundy, who had visited Vientiane in the aftermath of the coup attempt and who had access to all the intelligence, reported to the National Security Council:

We must always remember that it was the Pathet Lao who were responsible for breaking up the conference at the Plain of Jars [on April 17 and 18] and preventing the coalition from working. The Pathet Lao created the situation which led to the right-wing revolt.<sup>78</sup>

Although troops of both the Fifth Region and Siho's DNC took part in the action, Siho and Kouprasith maintained separate headquarters, and the Army attaché, Colonel William Law, found Kouprasith distraught and somewhat unsure of himself, giving the impression he had been pushed into leadership of the coup rather than directing it. Ye Kouprasith's father, Kou Abhay, had died only 13 days before. As the revolutionary committee had listed virtually all senior officers of the armed forces as members, even making a crude attempt to suggest support from Kong Le, it was difficult to sort out who was in the know and who was not. Thonglith, however, was regarded as one of the principal coup plotters. It was not surprising to find Oun Sananikone, one of the most extreme nationalists in his readiness to denounce the interference of foreigners, on hand in Kouprasith's office at Camp Chinaimo on the day of the coup, giving every indication of enjoying himself.

Kouprasith and Siho did not even mention the Pathet Lao, and in a letter they gave the king explaining the reasons for their action, they merely blamed the PGNU for having created a situation in which party interests rose above national interests. <sup>80</sup> The Lao, after all, had felt the frustration for almost two years of seeing the complete ineffectiveness of foreigners in overseeing the cease-fire, as exemplified by the fact that it was not until March 26 that the ICC got around to dispatching a team to investigate a blatant violation of the cease-fire at Na Kay; the prime minister had requested in writing that it do so on January 16.<sup>81</sup> Unger made a point of emphasizing the Lao frustration with the continued failure of the ICC by visiting Chairman Bhadkamkar in his hotel room, where he was confined for several weeks by water on the knee.<sup>82</sup>

When Unger disabused Kouprasith and Siho of their belief that their action would receive support from the great powers, they were stunned.<sup>83</sup> Unger admittedly had little to offer in response to their criticism of the PGNU except

more of the same, namely a continuation of efforts to circumvent Polish obstruction of the functioning of the ICC and an attempt to encourage the Indian chairman to live up to his responsibilities. But it was better than plunging Laos into a full-scale war between Thailand and the DRV that might easily expand to include the Chinese and the Americans. The Chinese received assurances from the British chargé d'affaires, on instruction, that the Western powers continued to support the PGNU, but they were clearly disturbed by the coup attempt and brushed aside protests against the Pathet Lao–DRV attacks on the Plain of Jars; <sup>84</sup> from this point on, Peking ceased to pay its contribution to the upkeep of the ICC in Laos. <sup>85</sup>

When Souvanna Phouma failed to carry through his threat to resign, Souphanouvong quickly hinted at establishing a separate, "legitimate" government. The hints were made verbally to the Soviet ambassador and the Polish ICC commissioner at Khang Khay on April 29.86 Unger heard them from French Ambassador Millet, and the embassy concluded they were connected with the attempt of the Lao Patriotic Front at its Second Congress, held from April 6 to 12, to project itself as a large national party that had a well-formulated program for the nation and that enjoyed domestic and international support.87 Although they were not followed up, reports of the imminent announcement of a rump government by the Front circulated for months.

Prime Minister Nehru, for his part, had sent Souvanna Phouma a letter expressing "deep concern" over the recent events and offering the Lao leader the customary lukewarm support. "We have admired the way you, as prime minister of the Government of National Union, have tried to carry out your difficult task of reconciliation and maintaining the unity of Laos," he wrote. But India's inaction in the crisis was a major disappointment to Souvanna Phouma. \*\*8 This was no longer the Nehru who had led India to independence and had declared, in 1949, "Where freedom is menaced or justice threatened, or where aggression takes place, we cannot be and shall not be neutral."

Souvanna Phouma, who in the past had often used the threat to resign to obtain agreement among the factions, had, in the final analysis, brought the crisis on himself and on his government. Unger summed it up in a cable to Washington detailing his "Romeo-and-Juliet diplomacy" of the previous 48 hours (he had had to convey assurances of continued American support for the PGNU to Souvanna Phouma, who was standing on a second-floor balcony): "Souvanna [Phouma] has through his own actions and also under pressures of others been maneuvered into a position in contradiction to much of what he has stood for and worked for over recent years. Because he had announced his intention to resign last Saturday and then compounded the problem by insisting (stupidly I believe) on taking the position that the Government of National Union had fallen as a result of the coup, he put himself in the hands of those who want to bring down the Government of National Union."90

General Phoumi, whatever his private thoughts and resentment against the Americans may have been, had supported Souvanna Phouma loyally since Geneva, perhaps not so much due to the prodding he was regularly subjected to by

the Americans as out of a sense of the need to protect the prime minister against the day when the Americans would decide to sacrifice him, as Phoumi himself had been sacrificed. As a former defense minister General Phoumi had good sources of information in the army and may not have been quite as innocent as he gave the appearance of being. Nevertheless, his name had been omitted from the list of members of the military committee.

Although the action of the military revolutionary committee had met with favor in certain quarters in Saigon and Bangkok, without Sarit's money at hand Phoumi was more concerned with preserving his lucrative business dealings than with seizing power. Whether Phoumi knew what was afoot, and whatever the encouragement he may have given the plotters, once the coup had occurred he loyally supported Souvanna Phouma. At a crucial cabinet meeting on the morning of the April 21 a unanimous vote was taken in favor of resigning and submitting a new cabinet to the king in Luang Prabang. Phoumi, according to Souvanna Phouma, had taken a strong position that he believed the military revolutionary committee's demand that such a new government should exclude the Front ministers had to be accepted, but the implication, at least, was that in so doing Phoumi was protecting Souvanna Phouma from reprisal on the part of the military and thereby ensuring his continued political viability. Phoumi had been at Souvanna Phouma's side when, ignoring the advice of Nehru and others, the prince returned from Luang Prabang determined to face down the generals even though his life was thereby put at risk. 91 The danger of ending his life like Diem must have been in Souvanna Phouma's mind.

As for Kong Le, he judiciously decided to ignore the blandishments of the military revolutionary committee and remained at his headquarters at Muong Phanh, where he professed his lack of concern with politics and his loyalty to Souvanna Phouma. He sent messages to the ICC, however, that he was not in sympathy with the coup, having received assurances of continued American supplies for his troops. 92 The king, for his part, when confronted with the leaders of the military revolutionary committee, Souvanna Phouma and General Phoumi, and the Western ambassadors in successive audiences in Luang Prabang, and fully aware of what was at stake for his kingdom, played for time and in the end avoided accepting Souvanna's resignation. Thus, it only remained to pick up the broken china.93

### BACK TO NORMAL

After the outburst of tensions in Vientiane on April 19, 1964, Laos seemed to return, in Unger's words, "to its more accustomed range of insoluble problems."94 In an obvious attempt to exploit the confusion in Vientiane, the Pathet Lao attacked Groupe Mobile 17, a Phoumist unit, on the Plain of Jars on April 26. By April 28 they had pushed this unit off its defensive positions and thus expanded their area of control. Just prior to the attack, someone in the military revolutionary committee in Vientiane had ordered Groupe Mobile 17 to withdraw, adding to the confusion.

Pheng Phongsavan emerged from sanctuary at the Soviet Embassy on May 9 and announced he was resuming his duties as minister of interior; fear of reprisals because his guard detachment had killed three members of the arresting party, including a major belonging to the DNC, apparently accounted for his decision to stay in sanctuary. Two ministers of the PGNU, Khamsouk Keola and General Heuane Mongkhonvilay, had fled the country in 1963 and had now taken refuge in Phnom Penh, whence they wrote to Souvanna Phouma that they would return only once Luang Prabang was neutralized. The prime minister expressed his outrage to Unger, saying "They want me to get the house all swept clean and all the work out of the way and then they will come in and sit in the nice furniture." He reaffirmed his right as prime minister to propose cabinet changes and to replace ministers belonging to his faction who had abandoned their posts. 197

In extemporaneous remarks to the opening session of the National Assembly on Constitution Day, May 11, King Savang Vatthana allowed himself to speak some truths he rarely deigned to mention. The king's morale had been bolstered somewhat by a message from President Johnson assuring him that the United States would continue to support his efforts to bring unity, peace, and prosperity to Laos and to preserve its independence and neutrality.<sup>98</sup>

It is a unique fact in the modern world that Laos, by the Geneva Agreement, must obligatorily put up with a government composed of elements of different and even opposed political tendencies. The future of Laos depends on the operation of this government. Success will be attributed to Lao wisdom and patience. Failure, which implies enfeeblement and perhaps the end of the country, will be said to come from the ignorance and stupidity of the people. As we are Buddhists, we must accept with humility the scornful criticisms with which the external world overwhelms us. But as Buddhists we know that our salvation can come only from ourselves. Let us proceed hand in hand even through the most terrible trials towards a peaceful future for an old race and an historic people. <sup>99</sup>

In his speech on the same occasion, Souvanna Phouma expressed the frustrations of many. "On April 19 feelings of an anxious and distressed country were expressed against sterile confrontations, foreign intervention, the hypocrisy of their [i.e. foreigners'] official declarations, irritation at the paralysis of the control organs of the Geneva accords, and so forth." Souvanna Phouma also alluded obliquely to his meetings in Hanoi and Peking, saying: "It was with hope and the feeling that peace at all cost must be saved that I began once again a series of urgent démarches with certain signatories of the accords, démarches which would have been pursued elsewhere if the April 19 explosion had not occurred."

Souvanna Phouma put the best face on his concession to the military revolutionary committee, which was still looking over his shoulder, in eliminating the small Neutralist staff headquarters that had continued to function sepa-

rately until then. "The Savannakhet group, faced by total breakup," he said, with his audience in Khang Khay in mind, "wished to make this attempt at national conciliation by giving the most tangible proof of its good will: putting its troops really back under the ministry of defense." He had assumed the post of minister of defense himself. He concluded: "I have on occasion been called weak. I accept this reproach gladly if tomorrow I could see all Lao reconciled, united and working for the good and prosperity of the country in a true neutrality recognized internationally without reservations." It was spoken from the heart. The Assembly re-elected Phoui Sananikone as president.

Everyone was now expecting the Pathet Lao–DRV to launch an attack on Kong Le's troops on the Plain, again using the pretext that the "patriotic neutralists" were rightfully taking over the positions that had been held by Kong Le in 1962 before he sold himself to the rightists. A large number of Neutralist military men in Vientiane on April 19, together with their weapons, had been moved up to the Plain. Kong Le's forces were in relatively good shape, with supplies moving in satisfactory fashion and two months' supply of ammunition and fuel on hand prior to the onset of the monsoon. Payments to the Neutralists, which were briefly interrupted on April 19, had been resumed. 101

The attack opened with a successful drive on Tha Thom south of the Plain, defended by a rightist garrison, which fell on May 14. Two days later, the main drive began against Kong Le's headquarters at Muong Phanh, where recriminations over the mistreatment of Neutralist officers in Vientiane on April 19 and the merger of Neutralist and rightist forces had not been completely settled. Amid the confusion, which resulted in the defection of one platoon of the Fourth Battalion to the Pathet Lao, 102 Kong Le fell back to the west. His losses of matériel were substantial; between May 14 and June 1, the Neutralists lost 25 Russian PT-76 light tanks. 103 The ICC team at Muong Phanh and seven French military mission personnel were evacuated by helicopter on May 17. 104 By the end of the month, Kong Le had been driven completely off the Plain. In the offensive the DRV "volunteers" played, once again, a decisive part. 105

Colonel Thaoma Mahaanosith and the Royal Lao Air Force (RLAF), however, now entered the balance of forces. Thaoma was one of the most colorful military figures on the nationalist side in Indochina. He was born in 1932 in Saravane, the son of a soldier in the Indochina Army. He attended schools in Saravane and Vientiane and attended the collège in Pakse in 1952, followed by 18 months at the army officers' school at Dong Hene. He fought against the Viet Minh near Luang Prabang and at Dien Bien Phu, where he was ordered to pull back before the final siege, and when the armistice took effect on August 6, 1954, he was fighting at close quarters with the Viet Minh at the Mu Gia Pass. When the firing stopped, he and his men crossed the 50 meters that separated the positions and shook hands with the Vietnamese; he had lost three men and the Viet Minh had lost ten. There followed the only nine months of peace in Thaoma's life. Leaving his wife and children, he volunteered for the newly formed RLAF in October 1957 and was sent by the royal government to the French flying school at Marrakesh, where he learned to fly T-6s. He returned to

Laos with the rank of captain in May 1960. In return for his services flying C-47s for General Phoumi, with whom he kept a close personal relationship to the end of his life, Thaoma was appointed RLAF chief of staff.<sup>106</sup>

Thaoma pleaded with the Americans in July 1963 that T-28 fighter-bombers were needed to save Thakhek, which, while not under imminent threat at the time, was vulnerable to a threat that could develop with very little warning. In this situation, T-28's, which the Thai Royal Air Force had in its inventory, would be a valuable resource, particularly in view of the fact that the ancient T-6 Harvard trainers that had been given to the rightists in January 1961 were rapidly approaching the end of their useful life. Souvanna Phouma had broached the matter with Unger. Accordingly, Unger recommended on July 15 that the T-6s be replaced with T-28s. As a first step in this process, he proposed obtaining Souvanna Phouma's formal request, and as a second step informing the Western allies. Finally, Unger would advise General Phoumi of this decision, making it very clear that T-28s were to be used exclusively for defensive missions. 107 The T-28 was a heavier, faster, and longer-ranged aircraft than the T-6. But the most significant difference between the two was that while the T-6 was armed with machine guns and rockets, the T-28 also carried bombs. In this sense, it represented an escalation of the fighting capability of the royal government.

After arguments back and forth with Washington over the legality of introducing the T-28<sup>108</sup> and the best manner in which it should be done, and consultations by the Department with the dubious British and French, <sup>109</sup> Souvanna Phouma gave Unger a letter formally requesting the aircraft. <sup>110</sup> The first three aircraft arrived in Laos at the end of the month under a complicated three-way deal involving the United States, Thailand, and Laos. <sup>111</sup> Unger told General Phoumi the plan was to pre-position 50 100-pound bombs at Savannakhet; fuses for the bombs would be held in locked storage under American control. <sup>112</sup> The arguments in favor had been strengthened by the unleashing of a new Pathet Lao–DRV offensive on the Plain in mid-July, which highlighted the visible threat faced by the royal government.

Over the next 10 months, the Lao learned to handle the planes, maintain them, and put them to use. In spite of severe handicaps, such as a cumbersome chain of command for requests for air strikes, lack of training by ground commanders in coordinating air strikes, absence of air-ground communications in combat zones, and total lack of any system for after-action reports or other evaluation of air strikes, the RLAF proved the worth of the T-28s in scattered actions such as the defense of the isolated royal army garrison at Attopeu in southern Laos. The major effect of the T-28s, however, was in the boost in morale they provided to the ground troops, who requested missions far in excess of the RLAF capability to deliver.<sup>113</sup>

The Lao pilots of the RLAF, reinforced by four additional T-28s and using bombs for the first time with Souvanna Phouma's concurrence, 114 blew up Kong Le's abandoned ammunition dump at Muong Phanh, destroyed many of the Pathet Lao's artillery pieces which had proved devastating weapons against Kong Le's lightly armed troops, knocked out DRV "volunteer" trucks on Route 7, and, most important, flew ground support for the embattled Neutralist infan-

try. Flying in on their targets as the first monsoon rains swept the Plain, they saved the day for the Neutralists.<sup>115</sup> On May 20, the Department granted Unger authority to call on Air America pilots if necessary to fly additional T-28s with RLAF markings from Udorn, a precaution Unger had sought should the offensive approach the Mekong down the valley from Tha Thom. 116 Souvanna Phouma telephoned Unger on the morning of May 24 regarding the threatening situation around Muong Kheung and Muong Soui and asked for T-28 strikes in the area. To do anything quickly, Unger said, he would have to use his authorization for American pilots. Souvanna Phouma hesitated, but finally agreed. Unger also decided to relax, on a selective basis, the long-standing prohibitions against Air America being permitted to carry military personnel and war matériel in hill areas, the participation of army and air attaché personnel in targeting for T-28 strikes, and more direct Requirements Office participation in supply arrangements. 117 He was on solid ground legally because he was responding to the prime minister's requests in the joint defense of the kingdom against attack supported in men and matériel from outside.

In reply to Souvanna Phouma's telegram requesting the Pathet Lao not to attack the Neutralists, Souphanouvong stated that the Pathet Lao were not involved, that the fighting was provoked by "reactionaries" within the Neutralist ranks who attempted to place the Neutralists under the command of the rightist faction. The version of events broadcast on Radio Pathet Lao was that some of Kong Le's officers at a meeting at Muong Phanh on May 14 had attempted to have the Neutralists adopt a program opposing the coup d'état of April 19, the merger of the Neutralist and rightist armies, the reorganization of the PGNU, and so on. These demands were rejected by the usual "reactionaries." The following day the latter plotted to merge their forces with the rightist army and then began the attack. 118

In a press conference in Vientiane on May 18, the prime minister rejected the Pathet Lao version of events and said "It is a question of deliberate Pathet Lao violations of the cease-fire agreement." He added:

> There is no longer anyone, except the NLHS, to uphold the view that the Pathet Lao is not the aggressor at Muong Phanh, which, as I said, underwent repeated assaults of Pathet Lao and Viet Minh troops. . . . Now, what do these offensives mean? Have they arisen spontaneously because of local incidents as, moreover, the Pathet Lao has said, claiming the revolt of Neutralist soldiers? All this is of whole cloth. It is only a pretext invented by the Pathet Lao, for the troops of Deuane alone could not undertake such actions. But has not the leader of the Front recently threatened to launch a general attack to protest the events of April 19? Well, it is done. The plan is being executed according to the Pathet Lao warning. The extent of the offensives, the points of attack, the means used, which are not modest, prove adequately that all has been thoroughly prepared with agreement and support from abroad. I declare again that the Pathet Lao has violated all internal agreements (and the spirit of the Geneva agreement) concluded in the past two years and that it is aided by foreign nations.

Souvanna Phouma went on to defend the PGNU's authority. He said that he had been compelled to replace the two Neutralist ministers absent in Phnom Penh when they failed to heed his appeal to return to Vientiane. The government had been voted full powers. The replacements were Neutralists. The king had given his approval. Finally, Souvanna Phouma said that he was refusing an invitation from Souphanouvong to visit Khang Khay.<sup>119</sup>

To diplomats in Vientiane, Souvanna Phouma was even more candid in expressing his outrage at Souphanouvong's obvious lies about the events on the Plain. He spoke in stinging terms of the Front's perfidy, of the grievous losses suffered by the Neutralists (here, he was obviously affected by an emotional letter written to him on May 18 by Kong Le), and of the desperate state which the situation had reached. Souvanna Phouma recorded in his diary receipt of a message from Souphanouvong saying the fighting at Muong Phanh had been provoked by the Neutralists and that the Lao Patriotic Front had not taken part in the fighting against Kong Le, punctuating the last claim with three exclamation marks. 121

In view of the ineffectiveness of his repeated appeals to the co-chairmen to bring forth anything other than weak declarations, Souvanna Phouma, abandoning any further hope of Communist cooperation to secure the neutralization of Laos, decided instead to call for consultations among friendly signatories under Article 4 of the Declaration on the Neutrality of Laos, which he did on May 19. Article 4, in fact, contained the only collective obligation of the signatories to the 1962 agreement, which was their undertaking "in the event of a violation or threat of violation of the sovereignty, independence, neutrality, unity or territorial integrity of the Kingdom of Laos" to consult jointly with the royal government and among themselves to consider appropriate measures. The consultations opened in Vientiane on June 2 under the chairmanship of John Denson for the United Kingdom and included diplomats and their military advisers from the United States, Canada, Thailand, South Vietnam, and India (although on an "informal" basis). Aside from producing reports on the military situation that the ICC had not produced and publishing a communiqué, the five signatories achieved little after several weeks. 122 The Soviet cochairman ignored the entire proceeding; its ambassador in Paris told Bohlen point blank the Soviet Union had no more interest in Laos, 123 and the Soviets informed the Poles they planned to abandon the co-chairmanship because Laos was too distant and was causing too much trouble in proportion to the interest it held for them. 124

One signatory that declined to participate was France. De Gaulle himself had recently reaffirmed France's intention "to hold scrupulously to [the] provisions of [the] Geneva accords of 1962." He had written to Prince Sihanouk on May 5 "That is why it [is] necessary, in its view, that [the] tripartite balance be fully respected which up to [the] present has assured more or less well [the] maintenance of Laotian neutrality." Nothing better illustrated the hypocrisy of de Gaulle's position than this letter, which included effusive praise for Sihanouk's call for an international conference to affirm Cambodia's neutrality and

territorial integrity, while France sidestepped the obligation bearing the signature of its foreign minister to consult in light of the evident threat to Laos's neutrality and territorial integrity. De Gaulle enjoyed creating difficulties for the Americans, and he referred in his letter to consultations between the French and Americans on Sihanouk's conference proposal, which was a fiction that embarrassed the embassy in Phnom Penh. 125 This, like others of de Gaulle's sporadic pronouncements on Indochina, appears to have been motivated mainly by personal pique; along with Souvanna Phouma and other prominent Neutralists arrested by the DNC on the morning of April 19 was Major Jean Deuve, the intelligence officer who was Souvanna Phouma's adviser, who had to leave the country. In protest at the arrest, the French Embassy boycotted the funeral of Kou Abhay on April 25, deeply antagonizing the Lao. 126 French Ambassador Millet paid Souphanouvong a visit and reported to the Quai d'Orsay the latter's version of recent events on the Plain and protestations of Pathet Lao innocence (with parenthetical qualifications), his eagerness to participate in a reconvened Geneva conference being proposed by the French, and his profuse expression of thanks to de Gaulle for his policy. 127 When Ambassador Hervé Alphand called on Secretary Rusk, Rusk defended American policy in Laos strongly and berated France for unilaterally proposing a conference and reneging on its obligations to consult under Article 4. 128

There were many repercussions from the Pathet Lao-DRV offensive, not all favorable to the Communists, however. As the fighting flared, refugees streamed out of villages on the Plain by the thousands, afraid of being caught behind Pathet Lao lines. Many were trucked or flown to Sam Thong, a new administrative center set up in haste in the mountains southwest of the Plain, and from there flown to Vientiane. The offensive galvanized the nationalists as nothing had done before. Souvanna Phouma's political position was strengthened. The National Defense Council, made up of the leading generals of the kingdom, issued a statement of support. 129 Even the king muted his customary criticism of the prime minister. 130 The King's Council, in an unusual move, passed a resolution on June 25 expressing total confidence in Souvanna Phouma and his policy.<sup>131</sup> By the beginning of June, the T-28s, their Lao pilots gaining confidence with each mission, were ranging over Route 7 to North Vietnam, hitting bridges. But the principal repercussion of the Pathet Lao-DRV offensive was the direct involvement of American aircraft in combat over Laos for the first time.

In a message to Souphanouvong on May 28, Souvanna Phouma revealed that he had asked the United States "to help carry out reconnaissance flights intended to watch the comings and goings of all forces of invasion and aggression now operating in Laos." As for the Front, he said, "It cooperates with, blindly obeying, those powers which have the avowed and proclaimed political ambition of supporting so-called wars of national liberation by every means," as a result of which there was no peace in Laos. <sup>132</sup> The flights were publicly announced on May 21. The first American jet aircraft making low-level passes

over the Plain were cheered by the Neutralist troops. <sup>133</sup> The photos were turned over to the prime minister's office, with a request he furnish copies to the ICC.

When one of the unarmed American reconnaissance planes was shot down near Ban Ban on June 6, Unger was instructed to explain to Souvanna Phouma that armed escorts would protect the next reconnaissance mission the next day and would respond if the reconnaissance planes were fired upon. This action was needed to offset the psychological effect of the shoot-down and to demonstrate American firmness; Souvanna Phouma need not specifically request the armed reconnaissance, but only acquiesce. 134 The prime minister raised no objection to the plan, but he was adamant that the United States not state publicly that American aircraft were being sent over Laos to make air strikes. By mutual agreement, then, the armed escorts of the reconnaissance flights were unacknowledged, although this compelled Unger to hold out against those in Washington such as William P. Bundy, who had replaced Hilsman as assistant secretary of state for Far Eastern affairs and who wanted to publicly announce the presence of the armed escorts so that the American public would be assured everything was being done to support its air crews over Laos. "I believe [the] views of [the] prime minister of [the] country directly concerned should be given full weight," Unger cabled. 135 Unger urged that all diplomatic posts and military commands be advised of these guidelines. 136

### Unger Resists American Intervention

Unger reported to Washington that Souvanna Phouma ruled out Khang Khay and Xieng Khouang towns as targets and added Ban Ban for good measure, commenting that "I would expand that to say populated places should not be attacked."137 However, after an armed escort was shot down on June 7, he received alarming news from Washington. Reporters informed the embassy that the State Department had announced that "an American rocket-carrying jet fighter [had been] shot down while escorting [a] reconnaissance plane over the Plain of Jars," and according to authorized sources President Johnson had personally approved the use of armed escorts, which had been authorized to return fire against reconnaissance planes or escorts. Unger's agreement with Souvanna Phouma regarding non-acknowledgement of armed escorts had just been blown sky-high, leaving Unger to pick up the pieces; he hastened to inform the State Department that the embassy was holding the line at disclaiming any information and was "unable to confirm or deny the story being thrown in our faces."138 RLAF T-28 pilots gallantly participated in the search-and-rescue missions for the missing American pilots, one of whom was rescued.

But Unger hardly had time to recover from his surprise when a second, far more serious, surprise landed on his desk. Washington was informing him of a planned strike at an anti-aircraft position identified seven-tenths of a mile from Xieng Khouang town in which the strike aircraft would *precede* the reconnaissance aircraft, which was, of course, the usual military way of doing things. Bundy was also suggesting that napalm would be used. <sup>139</sup> Unger cabled back a warning in blunt terms:

[I] have recently expressed in various messages . . . my belief that recce [reconnaissance] flights should be curtailed and fighter escort removed, that in any event quote suppressive unquote takeout of gun positions should be vetoed, and that I see substantial dangers [that] we are backing or sliding into an escalating situation of U.S. involvement in Laos conflict without a conscious decision to do so or any clear understanding of where this road leads. 140

Unger warned that Souvanna Phouma was not likely to back up the Americans in any public acknowledgement they might make of having sent armed escorts, to say nothing of having deliberately bombed positions in Laos. <sup>141</sup> He modified his stance to the extent of pointing out that while he had opposed the planned strike against the Xieng Khouang anti-aircraft battery, in the event of a renewed offensive against Muong Soui or south from Tha Thom he hoped and expected Souvanna Phouma would ask for American air strikes and that he would then strongly recommend the request be approved. <sup>142</sup> Souvanna Phouma was particularly concerned about how the Chinese might react to reports of direct American involvement in Laos.

Souvanna Phouma called Unger to his office on the morning of June 9 and told him, as Unger had expected, that he would have to deny that he had given permission for armed escorts for reconnaissance aircraft. The prime minister considered there had been a major breach of faith in the Department's statement and that the incident was in his view very serious. He found Unger's explanation about American public opinion entirely unsatisfactory. The Department instructed Unger to convey its "deep regret over [the] misunderstanding which arose out of [the] exigencies of [the] situation. The flights will be terminated June 10, and left the matter there before flying off to Luang Prabang. However, he noted in his diary that he had expressed his regret to Unger that Washington felt it necessary to speak out. We have to act and let people say what they will. The Viet Minh do not proclaim that they have sent their troops into Laos. We should imitate them = act in silence and deny the facts. Unger agrees.

On his return to Vientiane on June 12, the prime minister issued a statement to the press in which he once again maintained the legitimacy of the reconnaissance flights to learn the movements of Pathet Lao and DRV troops who were committing acts of aggression against the Neutralist troops in violation of the Geneva Agreement and of the internal agreements. The royal government, lacking the means to carry on these flights, had requested the assistance of the United States. Because recent reports had indicated important troop movements in those zones, he said, the flights would continue as and when needed, and if the Pathet Lao wished them to stop it was up to them to create the necessary conditions. In answer to a question about armed escorts, he said he saw no objection.<sup>147</sup>

The State Department defined American public policy to be one of acknowledging that escorted reconnaissance missions were being conducted on an "as necessary" basis but not announcing or acknowledging that any specific mission had taken place. The policy stated that the missions were being con-

ducted at the request of the prime minister of Laos, that the armed escorts were necessary for the protection of the reconnaissance aircraft, and that the prime minister did not object to the use of armed escorts under those circumstances. All these statements were correct. Internally, the Department viewed the American actions as being legal under Article 4 of the Protocol on grounds that the aircraft crews were not stationed in Laos. 149

Unger discussed the guidelines with Souvanna Phouma on June 16. He confirmed that future reconnaissance flights, escorted or unescorted, would take place at irregular intervals. He was making provisions to assure that he would at all times know whether and what flights had taken place on previous days and what was planned for the day ahead, and that he would be able to provide the prime minister with this information at any time on request. He expected also to be in a position to ask for special flights as requested and also to cancel scheduled flights if necessary. While the programming of flights would proceed fairly automatically, it was understood that if at any time the prime minister wished to request a specific flight or wished to call off flights he would let Unger know and Unger would see that the orders were carried out. Likewise, Unger would consult with Souvanna Phouma if he felt that anything in the program seemed to raise possible political difficulties. Souvanna Phouma assented to all of this and said that it met with his approval. Unger also took the occasion to clarify that the escorts would fire on offending ground fire whenever it was encountered, and this was also acknowledged by the prime minister. Publicly, nothing would be said about firing on ground targets by escort aircraft. 150

The tiny air force of T-28s was being strained to the limit by the Pathet Lao–DRV offensive. On June 28, Souvanna Phouma recorded in his diary a conversation with Unger in which the subject of using Thai artillerymen in the defense of Muong Soui was discussed. "But we have to keep this a total secret," he wrote.<sup>151</sup>

Since the events of April 19, the propaganda of the Lao Patriotic Front had taken the line that Souvanna Phouma was under duress and had acquiesced in an American plot to destroy the PGNU, in which the reshuffling of the cabinet was merely the latest step. Up to May 22, Souphanouvong had called on Souvanna Phouma to exercise his authority internally and with the co-chairmen externally, indicating that he still considered his half-brother capable of acting as head of government. In the immediate aftermath of the T-28 strikes on the Plain and the introduction of American aerial reconnaissance flights, however, the Front's propaganda line hardened further. The two Neutralist ministers left Phnom Penh for Hanoi on May 26, as if in preparation for some move. 152 Khamsouk Keola, as former minister of health representing the Neutralist faction in the PGNU, seemed to be the leading candidate to fill the role of alternative "Neutralist" prime minister should the party center decide on a complete break with Souvanna Phouma. 153 On June 1, the prime minister placed the blame for the lack of unanimity in recent cabinet decisions where it had to be logically, squarely on Souphanouvong and Phoumi Vongvichit, the Front's ministers.<sup>154</sup> On June 3, Souphanouvong wrote to the co-chairmen that he no

longer accepted Souvanna Phouma as prime minister. Souvanna Phouma seemed more upset about the Front's efforts to subvert the Neutralist party and army, however, than about the accusations made against him personally, which he brushed off with the insouciance of the aristocrat, or about his position as prime minister, where he felt himself to be on firm ground.

In any event, Souvanna Phouma had won his gamble. By late August, the Front's propaganda was no longer suggesting that he had forfeited the mantle of leader of the Neutralist party, and in an unusual gesture the Pathet Lao allowed the pilot of one American aircraft downed over the Plain in June to send out letters to his wife through the Polish ICC commissioner (who had resumed his seat in the ICC) and the International Red Cross. The Pathet Lao complained to friendly diplomats in Paris that autumn about the effect the RLAF T-28 air strikes on the Plain of Jars were having on their troops. Colonel Singkapo admitted to the Soviet military attaché that Pathet Lao morale had suffered as a result of the T-28 strikes on the Plain, which had caused much damage. 155 At the end of the year, the royal government published a white book detailing the DRV intervention in Laos.

All the same, even in his strong position Souvanna Phouma did not want to risk a complete break with the Front. This is why he accepted a French invitation for another summit meeting in Paris in the autumn of 1964. Although there was no question of the pseudo-Neutralists being invited, Souvanna Phouma's participation caused misgivings to many in Vientiane. He was ready to stand up to the French, even after Ambassador Millet, on instructions from Manac'h, had told him that the American reconnaissance flights violated the Geneva Agreement and that the Americans would not follow through on their statements of readiness to protect Laos. 156 Even Souvanna Phouma's wife expressed fears that her husband would not be able to retain his independence.

In the absence of Prince Boun Oum and General Phoumi on the right, Ngon Sananikone did a commendable job of leading the negotiations. His messages kept General Phoumi in Vientiane well informed about developments. Moreover, he was loyal to Souvanna Phouma; he did not let himself be led astray by the Quai's maneuvers, which included trying to enlist the Chinese ambassador in Paris to put pressure on the prime minister. The major Front proposal, reportedly drafted with French encouragement, was that about 1,000 deserters from Kong Le's Neutralist army be reabsorbed by Kong Le. The Front refused to consider allowing Kong Le to reoccupy his positions of 1962 or to allow the ICC to carry on inspections. Not surprisingly, Souvanna Phouma summarily rejected this scheme, and the negotiations ended without result. French actions and statements became increasingly disingenuous toward the United States. 157 The Quai sent the French chargé d'affaires in Laos on a sudden unannounced and unauthorized visit to Kong Le's headquarters at Muong Soui to question him on the numbers of Thai artillerymen and American advisers present; Unger refrained from embarrassing his French colleague by raising the matter when they met at the regular weekly meeting of Western envoys. 158

Souvanna Phouma, ever hopeful that something might turn up, demonstrated once again his remarkable capacity for forgiveness when it came to his brothers. He had forgiven Phetsarath over his part in the Kou Voravong affair, and similarly he now forgave Souphanouvong over his scheming to subvert his authority as prime minister. When the Front in a face-saving gesture broadcast a statement by Phoumi Vongvichit that the two deserting Neutralist ministers had urged Souvanna Phouma to return to his position as leader of the Neutralist faction after the latter had refused to take them back, Souvanna Phouma must have gotten a chuckle out of this palpable twisting of the facts. Souphanouvong wrote to the king on the fifth anniversary of King Sisavang Vong's death pledging "that the NLHS and the Laotian people always maintain their full respect and high regard for the Throne and the national constitution."

Unger had been told in April in his meetings in Saigon with William P. Bundy that the Joint Chiefs of Staff felt "direct ground and air action" against targets in Laos should be taken. <sup>160</sup> Road watch teams in central Laos had counted 3,000 DRV troops moving along a new road from the Mu Gia Pass to Tchepone between March 8 and 25. <sup>161</sup> The planning of the Joint Chiefs for cross-border operations from South Vietnam had reached an advanced stage. This planning was strictly military in nature.

The JCS planning, moreover, coincided with a feeling in the administration, as Bundy put it, that the time had come to send a message to Hanoi by some show of firmness. Unger strongly opposed such operations on political grounds. Any public disclosure of cross-border operations by South Vietnamese troops, about which there had already been considerable press speculation as a result of the Khanh-Phoumi meeting, would seriously undercut Souvanna Phouma's position. While Souvanna Phouma no doubt sympathized with the South Vietnamese desire to stop the infiltration, disclosure would provide further grist to Radio Hanoi's mill to charge him with violating the Geneva Agreement and weaken his bargaining position with respect to issues to which he gave a higher priority, such as bringing Souphanouvong back into the PGNU and getting on with demobilization and integration of forces. However, the increasing instability in Saigon resulting from two American-supported coups d'état in rapid succession forced repeated postponements of implementing cross-border operations, letting Unger off the hook.

On June 15, Secretary Rusk again had a detailed exchange in executive session with the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, in the course of which he pinpointed four specific violations of the 1962 Geneva Agreement by the DRV. These were: (1) the presence of DRV soldiers in Laos; (2) use of Laos for infiltration into South Vietnam; (3) Pathet Lao refusal to permit the royal government, and Prime Minister Souvanna Phouma, to exercise authority in the Pathet Lao zone; and (4) Polish stonewalling of the ICC. Rusk referred to sections of the accords, copies of which the members had before them. What the senators undoubtedly did not know was that the DRV had counterarguments to every point except (4). The DRV soldiers were, of course, "volunteers." The agreement had not prohibited the use of Laos for communication between

North and South Vietnam, one country. The Pathet Lao were entitled to maintain their own zone during the "transitional" period under the terms of the Zurich agreement, which had been reaffirmed at Geneva. But the main cause of the failure of the agreement to neutralize Laos was the USSR's abdication of its responsibility as co-chairman of the Geneva conference and its trashing of the Harriman-Pushkin September 1961 understanding about policing "our side, your side." There appears to have been some confusion also at this time in Secretary McNamara's mind about the realities in Laos, as opposed to Pentagon contingency plans; in an exchange with Rusk at an NSC meeting on May 24 he asked "how we would get the Pathet Lao to withdraw from Laos." It was little wonder that President Johnson exclaimed to McGeorge Bundy three days later, in a remark reminiscent of President Roosevelt talking about China, 164 "It's just the biggest damned mess that I ever saw." 165

In response to an inquiry from Washington, Unger replied "I believe we must clear with Souvanna [Phouma] all actions which are likely to come to his attention," and added "I believe this includes virtually everything proposed except perhaps some actions in most remote southeastern areas of country within perhaps twenty-five kilometers of South Vietnamese frontier." <sup>166</sup> In dealing with Souvanna Phouma, Unger followed the rule that as long as the prime minister was not put in a position of requesting actions by the United States that violated the Geneva Agreement, he could accept them, without at the same time accepting responsibility for them, which was the important point. This position of Souvanna Phouma's argued for the minimum of public disclosure. <sup>167</sup>

However, a message to Unger from Washington in late July alerted him to the unpleasant fact that the Department was considering asking Taylor to broach with Khanh air attacks in southern Laos "primarily for reasons of morale in South Vietnam and to divert GVN [the Government of South Vietnam] attention from proposal to strike North Vietnam." 168 Apparently, no one had given thought to the problem of how publicity about actions in Laos for morale-building purposes in South Vietnam would make it impossible to avoid charges by the Communists that the United States was violating the Geneva Agreement on Laos. Unger sent back a long, diplomatically worded negative reply arguing, characteristically, that should Souvanna approve American-initiated actions against the trails in southern Laos, it would lead him to request a stepped-up American commitment to help him in northern Laos, and the United States would hardly be in a position to refuse this request. 169 Sullivan had signed off on telegrams authorizing cross-border operations into Laos from South Vietnam without informing Souvanna Phouma. 170 A message from Washington now asked for Unger's judgment about how many cross-border operations Souvanna Phouma could accept without protesting. 171 Unger replied again with a thoughtful review of all the relevant facts, using the same arguments.<sup>172</sup>

With further prodding from Washington, Unger agreed to have the RLAF T-28s participate with American aircraft in strikes against the trails in southern Laos. On plans for ground operations in southern Laos, he requested that the embassy be informed of each operation in advance and give its individual con-

currence.<sup>173</sup> He continued to play for time on a proposed expansion of air operations in northern Laos by insisting that radar coverage of Vientiane be provided from Udorn and by calling for rules of engagement to be fixed before such operations began.

Unger constantly cautioned against placing expectations that were too high on planned bombings of the trails in southern Laos. A trained geographer with an acute sense of human geography, he had paid unannounced visits to the rugged areas to see for himself what conditions were like, walking all the way to the Vietnam and Cambodia borders. A great deal of the traffic involved mountain tribesmen of diverse and inconstant loyalties. The Lao military on their side of the borders, and the Cambodian military on theirs, were content to let things happen so long as they were not involved, he concluded. If difficulties to crossing directly from Laos into South Vietnam presented themselves, the flow was directed far to the west, and if it cut through a corner of Thailand on its way from Laos to Cambodia and eventually to South Vietnam, that was no problem; the North Vietnamese were past masters at such long-range logistics. Slowing the traffic would be a long, hard job, he concluded, and could probably only be done by dedicated, highly trained scout teams. Eventually, such teams were recruited, trained, and sent into the field. But in 1964, the talk in Saigon, Honolulu, and Washington about cross-border operations was just that—talk. 174

Nevertheless, Unger was informed in a message drafted and approved by Bundy dated September 9 that "early initiation [of] air and limited ground operations in [the] Laos corridor as soon as politically and militarily feasible" had been approved in Washington. 175 Beginning that month Unger was involved in periodic meetings of American heads of mission in an attempt to bring some coordination and oversight to the military's diverse ongoing plans and actions in the Indochina countries. At the first meeting on September 11 in Saigon, an ambitious program for air and ground operations in southern Laos was advanced "to be initiated as rapidly as operationally feasible." The main question then became whether to inform Souvanna Phouma. At this meeting it appeared that Unger's warnings had been brushed aside; although the planned operations involved American and South Vietnamese forces, RLAF T-28s, and an air base at Korat in Thailand, it was decided not to inform Souvanna Phouma of any of the planned operations except those of the RLAF T-28s. In a telegram to Washington on September 21, Unger raised fresh objections to the operations, pointing out that the United States would be cited for violations of several articles of the Geneva protocol and declaration if they came to light.<sup>177</sup> However, Unger expressed his readiness to broach the subject of RLAF T-28 strikes against the trails in southern Laos with Souvanna Phouma. 178 The same day, he had occasion to lodge a vigorous protest against an American air strike near Lak Sao, near one of the passes over the mountains, of which he had not had prior notice.<sup>179</sup>

Unger discussed the matter of RLAF T-28 strikes in central and southern Laos with Souvanna Phouma on September 29. As he had expected, he found the prime minister reluctant to give his approval, but he finally did, on condi-

tion that the civilian population should not be affected. Also, as Unger had foreseen, Souvanna Phouma pressed for concentrating the T-28s instead against Route 7, as he feared a new Communist offensive in the Plain of Jars. 180 The danger in the planned air strikes in central and southern Laos, in Unger's view, lay in the fact that they represented a major infringement by the royal armed forces, with evident foreign support, on an area that had been in undisputed Pathet Lao hands at the time of the 1962 cease-fire, one that could not be explained by any imminent Pathet Lao attacks, as could the air strikes on the Plain of Jars. Unger told Washington that he regarded the planned operations there as a military venture likely to trigger an intensive response from the enemy and consequently to require a larger American commitment. Unger repeated his feeling that the prime minister had acquiesced with serious misgivings and reported that in discussions with the Lao military their initial attitude had been one of willingness to cooperate, at American request, in an exercise which they would not have undertaken on their own but which they knew the Americans desired. 181

In recognition of their enhanced importance in the war, Colonels Vang Pao and Thaoma had figured on the new year's list of promotions to general. Both men had the soldier's instinct for hitting the enemy where it hurt. Once General Thaoma became involved in the planning process for expanded air strikes, he saw in it an opportunity to destroy the tempting targets at the Mu Gia Pass, the main DRV entry point for men and matériel into central and southern Laos. On October 14, a day after the State Department had explained to Unger that the Mu Gia Pass targets were "too close to North Vietnam for this stage of the scenario,"182 Thaoma himself led a flight of six T-28s to strike at targets in the pass. 183 Photo interpretation personnel in Saigon confirmed that about 95 percent of the targets at the Mu Gia Pass had been destroyed. 184 Thus, the RLAF had the honor of flying the first bombing mission, without any American air cover, against the major choke point on the Ho Chi Minh Trail. Between October 1 and December 30, the RLAF flew 724 sorties, which, considering the still relatively small number of T-28s operational, was remarkable.<sup>185</sup> RLAF pilots were paid the equivalent of about \$20 a month; Thaoma himself made \$126 a month. 186 Some pilots flew five sorties a day; one T-28 pilot was shot down four times and survived. 187 General Thaoma was crying for more T-28s.

On December 1, the day he left Laos, Unger could truthfully claim that he had succeeded in avoiding infringement on Lao sovereignty in furtherance of the American war in South Vietnam and that he had kept his word to the prime minister. His efforts on behalf of the independence of Laos were graciously acknowledged by the king. 188 However, this situation was to change abruptly after Unger's departure.

# FIGHTING IN LAOS TO CONTAIN MAO TSE-TUNG

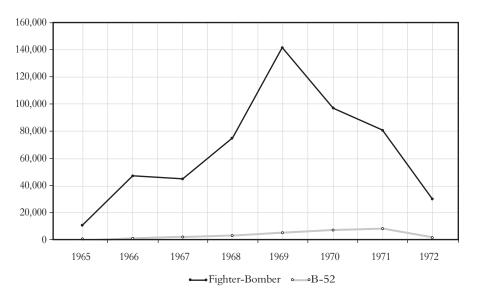
William H. Sullivan was the choice of Dean Rusk, as Lodge had been, for an ambassadorship when Unger's time to return to Washington came. 189 During his long tenure at the embassy from December 1964 to March 1969, Sullivan, rather than leaving the management of the American air war over Laos to his

military attachés, took over this responsibility himself. The air war expanded immediately. The restrictions on bombing in Laos that had prevailed under Unger were dropped. The first American air strike in northern Laos not covered by the armed escorts policy of the previous June occurred on December 14, 1964. The number of sorties and tonnage of ordnance increased accordingly. Thaoma was conscious of the need to avoid civilian casualties in this rain of fire, as when such casualties were reported they invariably led to questions being asked in the National Assembly. Souvanna Phouma asked that particular care be taken to avoid bombing the Chinese engineer troops who were building roads in northern Laos. Like the model major general of Gilbert and Sullivan's *Pirates of Penzance*, Sullivan knew a little about a great many subjects and impressed the generals and admirals whom he regularly met at Udorn and who were really running the war. Treating Laos as virtually his private preserve, he liked to twit them in his messages about the rules of engagement, the relative effectiveness of their hardware, and other matters.

To be fair, Sullivan inherited the fruitless debate over "sending a message to Hanoi" that had been going on in American councils over the previous months. Reflecting this sense of frustration, Sullivan reported on December 10, the day after his arrival in Laos, that he had met with Souvanna Phouma in accordance with his instructions. Souvanna Phouma fully supported the American program of pressures against the DRV, he reported. In discussing the armed reconnaissance proposed by the Americans against infiltration routes, Souvanna Phouma specifically requested that American warplanes be used over Routes 7, 8, and 12, demonstrating full comprehension of the meaning of armed reconnaissance "by stipulating that if we 'see anything moving on the road, either day or night, attack it." Sullivan quoted the prime minister as saying "We are ready today." Again using the analogy of the DRV's across-the-board denials of its intervention in Laos, Souvanna Phouma told Sullivan that he wanted to continue the policy Unger had worked out of acknowledging the fact of reconnaissance missions, but not the fact of armed escorts. 193 In terms of escalation, Souvanna Phouma's granting of permission in one of his first meetings with Sullivan for American armed reconnaissance missions along the trails to the south was more than a mere extension to the center and south of the country of an existing policy from the Plain of Jars; it was an open invitation to the United States to bomb military targets anywhere in Laos that it wished. The king himself told General Ouan that he endorsed American air strikes against Pathet Lao-DRV installations within Laos. 194

On the diplomatic circuit in Vientiane, Sullivan and his deputy, Robert A. Hurwitch, tried against all odds to keep the 1962 accords alive. The Indian chairman of the ICC, Deva, had found new ways of fudging his responsibilities, using phrases such as "sense of the Commission" and "failure to attract a majority" in recording Commission votes rather than evading them altogether as his predecessors had. 195 Sullivan was particularly adept at explaining such nuances to Washington; he had been Harriman's deputy in the last stage of the Geneva negotiations and as such was an architect of the disastrous agreement that resulted. The three-ring circus of the ICC had been going on for 15 years, and

GRAPH 2
Fighter-Bomber and B-52 Sorties over Laos
1965–1972



Source: Congressional Record—Senate, July 18, 1973, pp. S13848-S13849

still the Lao had not succeeded in safeguarding their sovereignty from the ministrations of the ICC chairmen nominated by the Indian government. It was enough to try the patience of even a Scot such as Brigadier Cooper, and the Canadians were threatening to pull out altogether, mincing no words about everyone else in the Vientiane diplomatic community—the Indians first and foremost, followed by the Russians, the Poles, and even the British, who seemed to be more interested in maintaining their relations with the Russians than in making the ICC work.

Sullivan's tenure was to coincide with a number of disasters that befell the Lao nationalists. Any ambassador, it might be argued, would have been powerless to prevent these disasters, but someone with more sensitivity would at least have tried to head them off. His telegrams are easily recognizable for the derogatory judgments they contain about the Lao, the Thai, the South Vietnamese, and sundry other inhabitants of Southeast Asia. For example, perhaps for the entertainment of bureaucrats in Washington, Sullivan presumed to write in one of his cables that "these little Laotian rascals unfortunately have a natural predisposition to such frailties." <sup>196</sup>

General Phoumi Nosavan's loyalty to the prime minister during the crisis of April 1964 had caused a worsening of his relations with his peers. Souvanna

Phouma recognized this, saying confidentially that the general's activities had cost him the friendship and support of his own followers, including a number of Phoumist generals. 197 The reform of Western, particularly American, aid programs as a result of previous scandals placed Phoumi under financial pressure after the disappearance from the scene of his patron and financier, Sarit, and his insatiable appetite for money led him into increasingly dubious commercial ventures which involved him inevitably in conflict with others in the royal army and government. 198 For some months, Souvanna Phouma had had the feeling that the general was using the PGNU and the prime minister personally to front for all kinds of corrupt practices such as opening casinos, holding a pork monopoly and other restrictive commercial combines, illicit banking, and the diversion of German aid through his brother-in-law Ou Voravong. These activities led Souvanna Phouma to conclude that the general was motivated primarily by a single-minded determination to enrich himself at the expense of the Laotian people and his foreign friends, to the neglect of any constructive work for his country, frustrating as the work had been made by the troika government's incoherence.

The ambitions of General Siho of the DNC had grown even larger since the April affair. In December, he ordered the arrest of the editor of the newspaper Xieng Mahason for printing editorials criticizing the corrupt practices of the police. 199 Finally, in February 1965, he made another bid for power. The action of one Bounleuth Saycocie in moving troops into the capital led to an attempt at a coup d'état. Phoumi found himself caught in the quarrel; he appealed to General Khamkong of the Second Military Region to come to his aid and ordered General Thaoma to bomb Kouprasith's headquarters at Chinaimo. These events led to the ignominious flight to Thailand of both Phoumi and Siho. It was not until May in Borikhane Province that the last remnant of the mutiny was put down, with some bloodshed.<sup>200</sup> Although he continued to protest his innocence, a military court in December 1966 sentenced Phoumi in absentia to 20 years in prison for desertion, a decision that was subsequently confirmed by Laos's high court.<sup>201</sup> His requests to the prime minister to be allowed the same consideration as the Front's members of the PGNU in continuing to serve his country by returning, or even by running for election to the National Assembly, were turned down. Siho, imprudently, returned to southern Laos uninvited, and was arrested and taken to his old headquarters at Phou Khao Khouei, where he disappeared, apparently executed.

Kong Le had had his share of discipline and command problems in the Neutralist army, owing mainly to the subversion campaign against him mounted by the Front. In the opinion of the army and air attachés at the American Embassy, however, he acted quickly and forcibly to correct them. <sup>202</sup> Nevertheless, Kong Le was suffering from fatigue after being on the front lines for four years, first on the Plain of Jars and then at Vang Vieng, with scarcely a break. Since 1961, he had been referred to as general, which suited Souvanna Phouma in his efforts to keep a high profile for the Neutralists in their relations with their allies the Pathet Lao. But because of the failure to regularize ranks in

the Neutralist army, another bit of unfinished coalition business that could be chalked up to the prime minister, Kong Le had not received a royal commission, and while a roster of rightist officers received promotions to general regularly each year, Neutralist officers were not so favored.

A bewildering series of conspiratorial moves were mounted against him during 1966 involving a large cast of characters, including some of Kong Le's own subordinates, General Kouprasith Abhay, and the Thai. Kouprasith was by this time politically the most influential general in Laos owing to his rise to deputy commander in chief of the Phoumist forces and the location of his headquarters in Vientiane. His attempt to integrate the Neutralist army, whose commanders he accused of corruption and indiscipline, into the Phoumist forces (where, incidentally, he would exercise control over their supplies and payroll) led to his scheming, reportedly with Thai support, to remove Kong Le. Finally, on October 17, Kong Le was induced to go to Bangkok on some flimsy pretext, the beginning of a long peregrination about Southeast Asia that did not end until he settled in exile in Paris. The moves against him by the co-conspirators were made easier by his habit of corresponding with prominent people (he had once sent a Christmas card to Unger) to express his real feelings rather than hiding them behind polite inanities. Souvanna Phouma was not anxious for another confrontation with the Vientiane generals so soon and let events take their course. Reports circulated in Vientiane, whether inspired by the prime minister or not, about Kong Le's political naiveté, although the general had conducted himself with remarkable sophistication in avoiding a commitment to the revolutionary committee. The French, who by this time had lost all credibility with the Lao nationalists, were not in a position to defend Kong Le, who suspected them of undermining him because of the trust he placed in the Americans. His downfall was less a result of policy differences than of personal conflict.203

The fall of General Thaoma was altogether more spectacular. While Thaoma was on good terms with General Nouphet, the regional army commander, his relations with General Kouprasith in Vientiane grew steadily worse. The latter had the overweening ambition to bring to the General Staff in Vientiane any general who was actually fighting the war. The generals in Vientiane also had the habit of commandeering C-47s to fly opium out of Laos to neighboring countries. Aside from the effect on the planning of military operations, the high payoffs due to these smuggling missions, reported to be as high as thousands of dollars to the pilots, exerted a corrosive effect on the morale of Thaoma's combat pilots. The General Staff, living comfortable lives in Vientiane, had no wish to see an effective RLAF and kept moving T-28 pilots around the country as a precaution. Kouprasith grew to fear Thaoma, who was completely honest, dedicated to fighting the war, and had no political ambition. Relations between the two festered for about a year, during which Sullivan did nothing to alleviate the situation. The attitude of Sullivan's embassy in the face of the corruption of the General Staff was described by one of the mission's military officers as "They knew everything already. Their attitude was 'Don't bother me with the facts."

On October 21, Thaoma decided he had had enough. Sending a message to Ambassador Sullivan condemning the moral cowardice of the generals in Vientiane and claiming to act on behalf of the ordinary soldier to effect a change in the high command "for decency and truth," Thaoma led his pilots aboard their bomb-laden T-28s from Savannakhet to raid Kouprasith's headquarters and his home and the anti-aircraft artillery at Wattay. Kouprasith and the rest of the General Staff miraculously escaped unscratched, but 19 ordinary soldiers were killed and 50 were wounded, and four civilians were killed and 15 were wounded. If Thaoma had hoped for support from the rest of the military, it failed to materialize, and when army troops began moving on Savannakhet the next day he took 11 pilots and aircraft with him to Udorn and asked for political asylum. Nothing in Vientiane changed, neither in the faces of the generals nor in the smuggling of opium.

Thus, three nationalist military figures who had been most closely identified with the Americans fled Laos in the space of less than two years and were doomed to wander like lost souls. It seemed that the more the Americans took over the running of the war, the less control they had over the actions of the Lao military. Phoumi lived in comfortable exile in Thailand until his death in 1985; the unvouchered CIA funds he had received over his years in power and the money he had raked off from his various business enterprises had kept him prosperous. Kong Le lived the rest of his life in exile, first in Paris (where the French, having put an end to his aimless wandering around Southeast Asia that Sullivan tolerated, provided him with a honorable retirement on the pay of a captain or major in the French army, "in recognition of the constructive role he had played in the past," as Manac'h put it nicely) and then in the United States. <sup>205</sup> Abroad he continued, in his own manner, to pursue his dream of a Laos from which Vietnamese "volunteers" had been banished.

Thaoma and his pilots, unlike Phoumi, had no money, aside from the spending money a grateful Vang Pao sent to them in Thailand, remembering the precious air support Thaoma's tiny air force had provided the Meo over the years.<sup>206</sup> Thaoma addressed letters to Sullivan and Ambassador Graham Martin in Bangkok from his cell in Klong Prem prison, but Sullivan, citing his diplomatic immunity, declined a request from Thaoma's defense attorney that he testify at Thaoma's trial to establish the point that his had been a political act, not a criminal one.<sup>207</sup> Nevertheless, the Thai court agreed with this interpretation advanced by Thaoma's able defense attorney, and Thaoma and on June 16, 1967, his pilots were released from custody as political refugees.<sup>208</sup> For the moment, Thaoma was free, although he was constantly on the lookout for assassins. One of the few places he felt safe was in the house of an American friend, Air Force Lieutenant Colonel Billie R. Keeler, There, Thaoma talked for hours on end. He was so poor that he had newspapers stuffed in his shoes, whose soles had worn out. Mrs. Keeler gave Thaoma bags of groceries for his family. Thaoma was just managing to pay his children's school fees. 209 He felt the injustice done to someone who had fought the Americans' war on the Ho Chi Minh Trail as he had fought the French war at Dien Bien Phu, and he feared that Sullivan and the corrupt generals in Vientiane might still get him. After what had happened to President Diem, liquidating an inconvenient general would be nothing at all. He relied on Keeler for protection the same way General Nguyên Khanh had relied on his American adviser Colonel Jasper Wilson when he got into a similarly life-threatening situation. Kouprasith's arrogance finally lost him the support of his fellow generals in Vientiane, and his influence in Laos politics declined. Yang Pao and his Meo represented a force that even Kouprasith hesitated to tangle with in his drive for hegemony.

Ever mindful of the 1962 accords, Sullivan embroidered on Souvanna Phouma's simple request for maintaining silence about the actions that the United States was taking to defend his government against the equally unadmitted actions of the DRV. When an American strike aircraft was lost in Sam Neua in February 1965, Sullivan suggested that Washington not identify the country in which the loss occurred, leaving the impression it was associated with actions in DRV territory. Sullivan urged on Washington that as the air war over Laos, at least so far as the Ho Chi Minh Trail was concerned, was "an open secret" and was known and accepted by responsible journalists and by the members of Congress whom he had occasion to brief during their visits to Vientiane, the policy of no official acknowledgment requested by Souvanna Phouma should be continued. 212

The American air war over Laos, and indeed the vital American support to the royal army, were not intended to drive the DRV troops back across the border into North Vietnam but merely to stabilize the situation on the ground every time the DRV threatened to upset it. "We do not rpt not envisage supporting efforts to drive communists back in PDJ (Plain of Jars) or elsewhere if this would require major action," William Bundy had written in June.<sup>213</sup> Most actions involved small outposts, which were picked off one at a time with the objective, since they were all interdependent, of gradually expanding what was referred to in Communist propaganda as the "liberated zone." When King Savang talked boldly of recovering the provinces of Sam Neua and Phong Saly by military action, Sullivan sought gently to dissuade him.<sup>214</sup> Along the eastern border, air power was being used to stem the traffic along the Ho Chi Minh Trail complex to South Vietnam, insofar as it was possible to do so. It was thus in support of a strange kind of sovereignty, one that conceded part of the territory to occupation by a hostile foreign power, that the Americans were committed in Laos.

The war was nonetheless real. It was the worst sort, one fought on a hundred battlefields in which the Lao, Meo, and other inhabitants were being decimated or forced to become refugees and their villages destroyed, either by ground fighting or by retaliatory bombing, and with no end in sight. In these battles, the Lao often showed extraordinary courage, not hesitating to push deeply into the "liberated zone" to seize isolated positions by feats of daring from which there was little chance to evacuate the wounded or to resupply or reinforce. Groupe Mobile 13 had done this along Route 7 east of Ban Ban in the spring of 1964; an able commander, Colonel Chansom, and close cooperation with Vang Pao's Meo guerrillas and Kong Le's commandos were factors contributing to Groupe Mobile 13's performance. On the other hand, when they

were poorly led, as they often were, a case in point being Groupe Mobile 15 at Kam Keut and Na Kay in December 1963–January 1964, the Lao courted disaster. An ever-present factor noted by their American friends was the Lao belief in the supernatural, which made some days not suitable for action and some areas the abode of unfriendly spirits. A soldier's pay was barely sufficient to cover the cost of food for himself and his family.<sup>215</sup>

The American part in the air and ground wars in Laos (surveillance of the Ho Chi Minh Trail complex by small Special Forces teams operating from South Vietnam had been instituted in May 1961 following the Communist capture of Tchepone) became, in the words of a headline on a seminal 1965 article by the Australian journalist Denis Warner, a "secret war." In late 1967, the United States installed an advanced navigational station atop the mountain fastness of Phou Pha Thi in Sam Neua Province to allow fighter bombers to carry out missions in the Hanoi area in all kinds of weather. The station was to be manned by military personnel, who for purposes of their assignment would be carried on the rolls as civilians, to conform to an agreement reached between Sullivan and Souvanna Phouma. Sullivan ruled that no weapons would be permitted on the site, as security was to be provided by "highly trained and experienced paramilitary resources, for which fire discipline is a primary element of defense." 217

It is clear from the geostrategic "think pieces" that he regularly sent the Department that Sullivan had very little consideration for Laos or its inhabitants. Instead of seeing Laos as a fully sovereign country, he seems to have looked on it as a great-power condominium of the nineteenth-century sort. Its future prospect lay with the 1962 accord, which, he reported in 1966, "remains in our judgment a valid prescription for Laos," in spite of violation of that agreement all around by foreign powers (including one of the co-chairmen of the Geneva conference), in spite of non-compliance with demilitarization and other agreed-upon obligations of the three factions, and in spite of the signal failure of the international community to ease the royal government's burdens of governance, or even to try to strengthen the institutions established at Geneva and subsequently in Vientiane in 1962 and 1963, including the exceedingly rusty "co-chairmen machinery," to neutralize the country.

It is not surprising that Sullivan went out of his way to maintain good relations with the Soviets, whose anti-China views at the time he readily adopted. He spent much of his time in Vientiane going around the mulberry bush with his good friend Boris Kirnassovsky, the Soviet ambassador. Soviet influence was to be enlisted with the object, in his words, "to collaborate in the support of independent, non-Communist states on the southern flank of China as a means to contain the southward thrust of the thoughts of Mao Tse-tung." Whenever the American press, which seemed to have its nose everywhere to the ground, broke a fresh story about American involvement in Laos, Sullivan's first reaction was to worry about what the effect would be on Souvanna Phouma's relations with Moscow. As for the DRV, which maintained an embassy in Vientiane, Sullivan was in the best position of any American ambassador worldwide to cultivate discreet contacts directly with this government, as many foreign journalists

did, but his only sustained exchanges appear to have been occasioned by the search for a suitable place to hold negotiations. His lack of initiative seems inexplicable. King Savang berated Kirnassovsky's successor, Victor Minin, for the Soviet policy of providing arms to the DRV for action which violated agreements they, as co-chairmen, were bound to uphold; Minin's weak response was to say that the arms were being given to the DRV to help it protect itself against American aggression.<sup>221</sup>

Even though half their country was occupied by a foreign power, the Lao still clung with an endearing attachment to their old constitution. Following an extraordinary session of the National Assembly in March 1965, the king convened a National Congress, a joint session of the National Assembly and King's Council, to consider ways of holding elections for the Assembly, whose mandate expired in April. Article 25 of the constitution was amended by an overwhelming majority vote so as to allow the king a number of options to renew the Assembly's mandate in the special circumstances prevailing due to the war.

The action represented a return to constitutional forms, which had been severely bent in the Zurich and Plain of Jars agreements at the urging of the foreign powers to meet the demand of the Front that the Assembly have no standing. The outgoing Assembly had not been called upon to pass on ministerial appointments (until recently) or on legislation; the new amendments met the king's and Souvanna Phouma's oft-cited insistence that nothing should be permitted to take precedence over the constitution by giving back the Assembly its prerogatives of passing on ministerial appointments and legislation.<sup>222</sup> Predictably, Prince Souphanouvong, in his dual role of loyal subject and rebel faction leader, wrote a letter to the king, which was politely ignored, protesting the change as a violation of the cited agreements.

A new National Assembly was elected by indirect suffrage on July 18, 1965. The king, using his new powers, appointed members on the basis of choices made by 20,000 electors, mostly officials and village chiefs, across the country. He was also empowered to appoint a certain number of additional members to the Assembly, a provision aimed at allowing the NLHS to participate if it wished, but this power was not invoked. In the new cabinet announced on September 6, Souvanna Phouma held the portfolios of defense and foreign affairs, while Souphanouvong remained as deputy prime minister, in title if not in physical presence; Sisouk na Champassak assumed Phoumi's old portfolio of finance.

Following a budget crisis in the autumn of 1966, the Assembly was dissolved and fresh elections were held on January 1, 1967. About 80 percent of the registered electorate (i.e., the electorate in the government-held areas), totaling some 800,000, voted at 1,330 polling places, including 16 in Sam Neua Province and 8 in Phong Saly Province. The Front, as expected, boycotted the voting. An Assembly that supported Souvanna Phouma's policies convened, with the majority of the deputies expressing readiness to join a national front of all non-Pathet Lao political tendencies, to be headed by the prime minister. Souvanna Phouma was the indispensable man, and when he absented himself, as happened in July 1969, his government was unable to act effectively and the

best-laid plans "collapsed like a house of cards," in the apt phrase of Sullivan's successor, G. McMurtrie Godley.<sup>223</sup>

# SIHANOUK MORTGAGES THE FUTURE OF CAMBODIA TO THE DRV

In 1964, Sihanouk was, by the accounts of those who are in the best position to judge the matter, nearing the peak of his power as undisputed leader of Cambodia, which he reached the following year. Cambodia enjoyed bumper rice harvests in 1963 and 1964, and the exportable surpluses were sizeable. The ill effects of Sihanouk's decisions to terminate American aid and to nationalize a large segment of the economy had not yet begun to make themselves felt. The economy, if it was not creating jobs at a pace to keep up with the job-seekers leaving school each year, at least generated sufficient spoils to allow Sihanouk to keep the bourgeoisie quiet by giving them cabinet posts where they were in a position to appropriate these spoils. Sihanouk's vindictive measures against all whom he judged to be opponents had not yet created the fertile ground for armed resistance, which was still several years away. Sihanouk was still able to abolish such outlets of grassroots popular sentiment as had survived until then, and he could order the execution with impunity of Khmer Serei agents who fell into the hands of his police. In foreign relations, the stream of statements churned out by his French press advisers crediting him with the defense of Cambodia's independence and neutrality and the preservation of peace threw a smokescreen over the fact that Cambodia had ceased to be neutral and was on the way to losing its independence. Sihanouk's script was being edited to please foreign powers, and he was speaking less and less for the genuine interests of all Cambodians.

Having reduced the Khmer People's Revolutionary Party and the Pracheachon Group to impotence, Sihanouk was not noticeably worried when the former held its Second Congress in September 1960 in a room of the Phnom Penh railway station. The election at that congress of Saloth Sar to the party's number three leadership position and to membership of its politburo did not draw particular attention, nor did the election of several of his Frencheducated colleagues to various positions. The veteran Son Ngoc Minh, absent in his sanctuary in Hanoi, was re-elected to the Central Committee. The party's name was changed to the Workers' Party of Kampuchea (Pak Polakor Kampuchea), on the Vietnamese model. In actual fact, the party was being infiltrated by a new group of educated urbanites who were different from the largely rural cadres of the 1950s. The internal struggle was evidenced by the fact that its veteran secretary, Tou Samouth, disappeared in 1962, the probable victim of an assassination. Saloth Sar became the party's acting secretary.

Sar and those in his immediate entourage were shadowy figures given to extreme secrecy, but other party members such as Khieu Samphan, Hu Nim, and Hou Yuon were well known to Sihanouk, who alternately co-opted them into the government and threatened them with punitive measures as and when he felt challenged from the left. Khieu Samphan briefly served as a cabinet minister and Hu Nim was deputy president of the National Assembly before they finally, in 1967, imitated Sar, who had gone into the bush in May 1963 to escape threatened police action.

Sihanouk in early 1964 was talking obsessively of finding guarantees of Cambodia's borders. At first his project took the form of convening an international conference under British and Soviet co-chairmanship on the model of the Laos conference. Later he envisaged a quadripartite conference among Cambodia and its neighbors to east and west, which Sihanouk accused of plotting to dismember Cambodia, and the United States. The American ambassador in Phnom Penh, Philip D. Sprouse, saw advantages in such an arrangement. Sihanouk considered Sprouse a good friend who showed understanding and sympathy for Cambodia. Unfortunately, Sprouse went on medical leave at this critical juncture. The technical problems of the borders did not seem insurmountable. On the west, Cambodian sovereignty over Battambang and Siem Reap had been recognized in the report of June 27, 1947, of the Franco-Siamese reconciliation commission, and Preah Vihar had been awarded to Cambodia in 1962 by the International Court of Justice. On the east, the problem boiled down to reconciling maps printed at different periods of French rule and now taken over by the successor states, a situation tailor-made for error, and the royal government's claim to certain islands northwest of the Brevié Line, an administrative boundary created by the governor general of French Indochina in January 1939 in an effort to simplify the lives of the islanders. These points would have to be negotiated.

The United States would normally have found little difficulty in meeting Sihanouk's minimum demand for a declaration of respect for the borders, as finally agreed by the parties themselves, or even of Cambodia's neutrality. But Washington and the embassies in Saigon and Bangkok were hesitant, fearing strong reactions from the Vietnamese and Thais. What was abnormal about the situation in early 1964 was that the United States had assumed responsibility for the sovereignty of South Vietnam. Had Sihanouk claimed in one of his public speeches, as he was quite capable of doing, that the American declaration provided moral and legal support for Cambodia's claims against its neighbors, it would have been difficult for the United States to refrain from correcting him. The generals in Saigon had staged "their" coup d'état on November 1 on the premise that they would receive continued American support.

And so the matter was allowed to fester, Washington dissuading the British from making any response. Sihanouk on February 15 threatened to sign defense agreements with China and the DRV. Still nothing was done, in spite of a warning from Souvanna Phouma, who fully shared Sihanouk's distrust of the Thais, that Sihanouk was serious, and on March 11 well-organized street mobs attacked the American and British embassies. Sihanouk, making good his threat, turned to China and the DRV.<sup>224</sup>

As a result of Sihanouk's successful wooing of Peking, military aid from China began to flow through the port of Sihanoukville. Two shipments of 50 trucks each (Type CA-10) were received in February 1964 from China. The trucks were assigned to the royal army's Transportation Group near Phnom Penh. Sufficient arms to equip two to three battalions were offloaded from Chinese ships at Sihanoukville in February 1964.<sup>225</sup> Chinese military aid to

Cambodia was judged by the embassy to be "impressive in terms of quantity." 226 Military aid "for the purpose of the effective defense of the territory" had been explicitly allowed under Article 7 of the armistice agreement signed by Nhiek Tioulong and Ta Quang Buu at Geneva in 1954, which committed the royal government to this limitation during the period between the cease-fire and the final settlement of political problems in Vietnam. In point of fact, the extent of these Chinese deliveries exceeded by far anything the tiny Cambodian army could have used. From about this time, Sihanouk had secretly approved a triangular arrangement under which most of this Chinese military aid was delivered to Vietnamese Communist forces fighting in South Vietnam. The Cambodian army received a cut of 10 percent of matériel handled in this way. Lon Nol visited Peking in March 1964. The documentary record of this triangular arrangement is still sealed in archives, but there can be no doubt about its operation. Aerial photography as early as February 28, 1964, revealed a heavily defended military complex straddling the border in the vicinity of Bathu where there was no royal army installation.<sup>227</sup> Press reports quoted military sources in South Vietnam on the flow of Chinese arms to the Viet Cong, and also on the establishment of Viet Cong fixed installations, such as training camps, just inside Cambodia.<sup>228</sup> Sihanouk, while denying the truthfulness of such reports, contributed to this charade by making a show of visiting the border provinces in July and August 1964 and distributing some of the Chinese arms to Cambodian paramilitary organizations.<sup>229</sup>

Sihanouk was acting out of his long-standing belief in the inevitability of a Communist victory in South Vietnam, sharpened by his poor personal relations with the new regime in Saigon. The unending series of border incidents and Sihanouk's propaganda use of them to create the picture of a Cambodia threatened by invasion from its neighbor, a picture he certainly knew was a false one, allowed him to cover the generous Chinese aid flowing into Cambodia. The NLF leadership, for its part, took the position in its exchange of messages of mutual support with Sihanouk that the Viet Cong were helping him defend Cambodian territory against invasion by the warlike, aggressive regime in Saigon; this may have helped Sihanouk rationalize the arrangement. Sihanouk also knew perfectly well that the Cambodian army's officer corps would profit from the traffic in Chinese arms, another of his payoffs to the Cambodian elite. He was running the risk, however, that the shipments would cause alarm at the extent of the Vietnamese presence, which is exactly what happened in 1970. For Sihanouk, the unspoken quid pro quo for the arms traffic arrangement was that the DRV agreed to refrain from overturning his regime. From this time forward, for all practical purposes, under Sihanouk's leadership Cambodia joined the alliance of the DRV, China, and the USSR and the rest of the socialist camp. The Hague Convention of 1907 on the rights and duties of neutral states had declared that the territory of neutral states was inviolable (Article I), but also that belligerent powers were forbidden to convey across the territory of neutral states troops and convoys of munitions and supplies (Article II). France had signed the convention, making the royal government of Cambodia as successor subject to its terms.<sup>230</sup> By giving official, albeit secret, sanction to the movement of munitions across Cambodia, Sihanouk forfeited the protection accorded a neutral state.

Sihanouk's ideological slant was evident in the turn Cambodia's relations with Laos took in March 1964. A visit by Souvanna Phouma, originally intended to cement relations with the man who three years earlier had first proposed the holding of an international conference on Laos and to whom Souvanna Phouma had paid an emotional tribute in absentia at the final session of the Geneva conference, went off badly. Sihanouk pressed the prime minister to state Laos's recognition of Cambodia's borders in a joint communiqué, something he was not prepared to do because of the historic Lao claim to Stung Treng. Souvanna Phouma, who did not want to make an issue of the border but who was not willing to be Sihanouk's tool, pointed out that the Lao-Cambodian border had never been demarcated, which made recognition a moot point in any case. The issue had been made more sensitive by the publication in Lao newspapers of letters from Lao ethnic residents of Stung Treng to the king complaining of the poor Cambodian administration of the province and asking that it be returned to Laos.<sup>231</sup>

Sihanouk was furious at Souvanna Phouma's polite refusal, and the very afternoon of the departure of the Lao delegation from Phnom Penh he made the prime minister the object of one of his vitriolic attacks over Radio Phnom Penh. Later that evening Sihanouk sought out the Lao ambassador, Chao Sopsaisana, to explain that he had made the attack for political reasons, in other words for an intended audience other than the Lao, and to say he hoped the Lao and Cambodians could continue to be friends. Sopsaisana, who had been a schoolmate of Sihanouk's, thought his old friend had gone crazy and was so shocked by the incident he requested a transfer of posting. It was an ungraceful way for Sihanouk to pay back Souvanna Phouma for his enthusiastic and affectionate support for Sihanouk's idea of holding an international conference on Cambodia. Souvanna Phouma, characteristically, declined to respond to Sihanouk's public attacks; he told Unger that if he were to respond, he would among other things simply read back to Sihanouk all the warm and cordial sentiments expressed by the latter.

The most reprehensible part in this entire affair was played by Souphanouvong. Prior to Souvanna Phouma's visit, Sihanouk's adviser Son Sann had made a visit to Vientiane seeking advance agreement to a joint communiqué. Having failed in his purpose on the border question, he unwisely spoke with Tiao Souk, who helpfully passed along the request to Sam Neua. The party center saw the opportunity and Souphanouvong, using a direct channel to the Cambodian ministry of foreign affairs through Hanoi bypassing the PGNU, affirmed his readiness to recognize Cambodia's borders. Sihanouk informed Souvanna Phouma of this gratuitous offer of Souphanouvong's. But Sihanouk miscalculated; instead of making Souvanna Phouma more flexible, Sihanouk's move stiffened Souvanna Phouma. Sihanouk, for his part, went ahead to initiate a rapprochement with Souphanouvong by issuing him a formal invitation to visit Cambodia. Perhaps recognizing to what extent these back-channel maneuvers undercut the Front's

propaganda about respecting unanimity of decision-making in the PGNU, Souphanouvong pleaded the press of business and put off acceptance.

Word that the Khanh government was toying with the idea of reviving the Khmer Serei, which was almost certainly given Sihanouk by the French, also infuriated Sihanouk. In a speech in Stung Treng on March 26 he accused Son Ngoc Thanh of attending the meeting between Khanh and Phoumi in Dalat (a charge denied by both Khanh and Phoumi), and said Cambodia could go no further with South Vietnam. As he had already broken with Saigon, the speech had little impact.

At the same time as he was moving to the left in his foreign policies, however, Sihanouk, who saw himself destined to play a larger role in Indochinese history, continued to dabble in ethnonationalism. He had long posed as the champion of the people of Kampuchea Krom, whose rights he alleged were trampled upon by successive Saigon governments. Now he saw the opportunity to foil the republican Son Ngoc Thanh by creating rival organizations loyal to himself and to the Khmer monarchy. A Khmer Krom monk named Samouk Sen, a mystic who had spent considerable time among the monks, hermits, healers, and sorcerers in the Seven Mountains area of the Mekong Delta, had created a movement called the Can Sen So (White Scarves) after the scarves inscribed with cabalistic symbols favored by its members. In 1961, the name of this movement expanded and changed its name to the Struggle Front of the Khmer of Kampuchea Krom (KKK).<sup>234</sup>

In November 1964, Sihanouk proposed that he host a so-called Indochina People's Conference that would bring together anti-imperialist organizations of the three countries. A preparatory conference was held in February 1965 at which the names of such participating organizations were announced. Sihanouk, abetted by General Lon Nol, to whose mystical nature the KKK and its emphasis on Khmer identity appealed, invited the delegates of no less than 10 such organizations, including the KKK; the United Front for the Struggle of the Oppressed Races (known by its French acronym FULRO, the organization was not unknown to Sihanouk and his delegate in charge of ethnic minority affairs, Lieutenant Colonel Les Kosem, a Cambodian Cham), which had staged a revolt against the Vietnamese in several Special Forces camps in South Vietnam in September 1964 and various Cham and other "Austrien" (as Lon Nol called them) front groups, as well as the DRV, the NLF, and the LPF. Any moderate nationalists inclined to participate had been dissuaded by the anti-American tone of the invitations. When the conference was held in Phnom Penh in March amid the usual fanfare, it finally comprised no fewer than 38 delegations. Sihanouk's closing speech was so full of references to the rights of the "Austriens" that it raised objections from the DRV and NLF delegations and had to be published separately rather than delivered as planned. He also had to abandon plans to establish the permanent conference secretariat foreseen in the final resolution and to celebrate the "historic" conference each year. <sup>235</sup> The DRV and NLF made full use of the anti-imperialist nature of the conference in their propaganda.

Cambodia's relations with the United States continued their inexorable downward course. In August, Sihanouk humiliated Randolph A. Kidder, the new ambassador, by sending him home without allowing him to present his credentials. The embassy, constantly on the defensive in political, military, and media matters, had been expecting a complete break in relations, and in May 1965, after a further round of anti-American demonstrations in Phnom Penh<sup>236</sup> and provincial centers<sup>237</sup> had made the point, it came. Sihanouk cited as a pretext the publication of an insulting article by Bernard Krisher in Newsweek alleging that Sihanouk had "one to several concubines," and that his mother, Queen Kossamak, was "said to be money mad" and ran a string of bordellos at the edge of the city, a fantastic accusation that may have been misdirected, as Sihanouk's mother-in-law, Madame Pomm, was indeed reputed to be "money mad." The real reasons, of course, had to do with Sihanouk's assessment of the war situation and the instability on the border with South Vietnam that had resulted in large measure from his one-sided actions and which was such that a flare-up could be triggered at any given moment by the forces confronting each other. Queen Kossamak was reported to have opposed the break. The Americans departed more in sadness than in anger, because they knew their presence had been welcomed by most Cambodians.

#### REVOLT AND BORDER BASES IN CAMBODIA

While Sihanouk dallied with Peking, Hanoi, and the NLF, important developments were taking place on the real left of Cambodian politics. In late 1964, Sar and some of his associates started an overland journey up the Ho Chi Minh Trail to Hanoi. They stayed for several months, but this was not unusual given the fact that about 1,000 Khmer Communists, adherents of the KPRP, had been living in Hanoi since 1954. What was unusual were the discussions between Sar and the VWP leaders. The Vietnamese delegation was led by Le Duan and probably greeted the Cambodians warmly as comrades in arms. Le Duan, according to Sar's subsequent account, called on the Khmer party followers in Cambodia to renounce revolutionary struggle and wait for the Vietnamese to win their victory, which would automatically produce victory in Cambodia. The VWP was against the mounting of armed struggle inside Cambodia until the common enemy had been defeated on the primary battlefield, South Vietnam. The Vietnamese, who knew relatively little about the secretive Sar and his followers, may have been surprised to hear the visitors affirm, in all calmness, that the Cambodian party had its own political line. Le Duan was not accustomed to being contradicted by other Indochinese Communists; he presented Sar's delegation with a document in Vietnamese, probably spelling out the VWP's demands. In Sar's discussions with the KPRP adherents in Hanoi, the symbolically loaded question of the party's name figured prominently.

Sar then visited China, where he stayed for four or more months. This was at a time when the secretary-general of the Chinese Communist Party was Deng Xiaoping, who would have been responsible for receiving Sar's delegation. The visit was kept a secret, so that even Sihanouk, who was in Peking on

October 1, did not know about it. Sihanouk's mistaken belief that Hanoi was behind leftist opposition activities in Cambodia played into Chinese hands, although the Chinese leaders then in power were not yet ready to sponsor such activities in Cambodia. This would change with the advent of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, which would draw in the large Chinese communities in Cambodia and other Southeast Asian nations and exalt armed resistance to bourgeois, feudal governments such as Sihanouk's.

For the moment, the Chinese were content to keep Sihanouk and Saloth Sar and his followers strictly separate as far as they were concerned. This was to be their policy until March 1970. It was obviously in their interest to have in their hands the leaders of a Cambodian party independent of, and even opposed to, the Hanoi-sponsored KPRP. Something of this was discerned by the Vietnamese, who were invited to a banquet for the about-to-depart delegation where Mao himself made an effusive speech praising Sar and his followers. Sar arrived back in Cambodia in early 1966. The VWP's efforts to discredit Sar and his group as "ultra-leftists" and "adventurers" led Sar to conclude that the Vietnamese were determined to retain control of the Cambodian revolutionary movement and that there existed a fundamental contradiction between the Vietnamese and Khmer revolutions. In September 1966, his party formally adopted the name Communist Party of Kampuchea (CPK), although Sar (who by then was known by the name Pol Pot) did not reveal this until September 1977. From that time on, the CPK constituted a party center where decisions were taken independently of the party center in Hanoi. In the CPK's official historiography, the 1960 congress was given as the CPK's founding congress.

On April 11, 1966, the royal government and the DRV agreed to elevate the DRV mission in Phnom Penh from a commercial representation to "the rank of Representation of the Government of the DRV."

Also, in August 1966, Sihanouk surprised everyone by announcing that, contrary to his usual practice, he would not nominate the Sangkum candidates in the elections due the following month. Sihanouk's abstention from the electoral process was not total, as he could not resist meddling in the campaign in an effort to discredit conservative candidates such as Douc Rasy, who nevertheless won. Money played an important part in the voting. At the other end of the political spectrum, Khieu Samphan, Hou Yuon, and Hu Nim had to contend with the machinations of Sihanouk's police, but all won seats. Lon Nol, who had acquired unprecedented importance as a result of his role in assuring the flow of Chinese military aid and the trafficking of arms and rice to the Viet Cong, was elected to the prime ministership with Sihanouk's approval. The requisitioning of rice by the government had created discontent among the peasantry, and no one was more aware of this than Lon Nol. In a fact-finding tour of the country, Lon Nol was greeted by large crowds. In the judgment of one astute observer in Phnom Penh at that time, by the beginning of 1967 a probable majority of the elite was ready at least to question the assumption that there could be no alternative to Sihanouk and his policies.<sup>238</sup>

Responding to heavy-handed actions by the military, on Lon Nol's orders, to enforce the collection of rice, angry peasants in Battambang Province attacked the soldiers and killed two of them on April 2. The Samlaut rebellion, as it came to be known, was as much an example of a spontaneous resistance to the government as anything Cambodia had ever known. Sparked by the army's behavior, it fed on a large substratum of grievances at low crop prices and requisitioning, indebtedness, and resentment against the resettlement on good lands of refugees from Kampuchea Krom.

The trumpeting of alleged persecution of the Khmer minority in South Vietnam had been stock speech material for Sihanouk for years. Drawn by promises of fair treatment and a peaceful life, a trickle of Khmer Krom refugees had crossed the border and entered Cambodia. Sihanouk had no wish to see these refugees flood Phnom Penh, and so he made sure they settled on cooperative farms far from the capital. One of these cooperative farms, constructed by the youth organization affiliated with the Sangkum, lay in Battambang Province. The resentment stirred among the local population by the arrival of these refugees, who were more well to do than themselves and were given land to farm, led to the Samlaut rebellion, which continued sporadically for months and drew in Cambodian leftist agitators.

Sihanouk's speeches blamed the events of the Samlaut rebellion on local "reds" acting under the orders of a "great chief" who could be Cambodian or a foreigner. As he had previously believed any leftist agitation was sponsored by the DRV, now he switched the blame to China. He ordered the closing of the Khmer-Chinese Friendship Association, which he saw as a conduit for leftist subversion, and threatened that "Khmer Rouge" like Khieu Samphan, Hou Yuon, and Hu Nim would be treated in the same way as Khmer Serei rebels. The latter soon took to their heels, escaping Sihanouk's police in the nick of time. The discovery of a trunk containing 700,000 riels in large denominations during a police search of the possessions of Hou Yuon's wife reinforced Sihanouk's belief that these "Reds" were being supported from abroad. But the repression led to protests by other, non-leftist members of the National Assembly. Unrest appeared in Cambodia's schools, and student demonstrations demanded an end to the persecution of hapless peasants. Lon Nol resigned and was momentarily eclipsed by the rapid series of events, but he soon reappeared on the political scene, more indispensable than ever, as acting prime minister.

Also in 1968, an uprising broke out among the Brao ethnic minority of Ratanakiri Province, who were antagonized by government attempts to resettle them in collective villages. The coincidence of these events with the windstorm of the Cultural Revolution in China alarmed Sihanouk and the conservative elements in Phnom Penh as nothing else had. The result was brutal repression on a massive scale, which in turn led to further resistance. Villages were put to the torch, and several hundred peasants were killed by the army. Large numbers of Cambodians from Stung Treng Province fled to the relative safety of the Laos border, where the Lao government made some ineffectual efforts to assist them but for the most part left them to fend for themselves. In early June 1969, 50 of

these families returned to Cambodia, attracted by Khmer Rouge promises of sustenance if they joined the movement.

The indiscriminate repression ordered by Sihanouk had the quite unintended effect of allowing the real leftist agitators in the countryside to portray themselves as the defenders of the persecuted peasantry and to garner popular support on an unprecedented scale, constituting for the first time a genuine liberation movement. This was doubly ironic because the leaders of this movement were the same handful of educated returnees from France whose subversion up to that point had been restricted largely to the capital by their being out of touch with conditions in the countryside. Now they judged the situation to be favorable to the accomplishment of their revolutionary aims, and in January 1968 the CPK took the momentous decision to begin armed struggle against Sihanouk's regime. Further acts of violence followed.

Meanwhile, on the Cambodia-Vietnam border, and quite unaffected by the events in Samlaut, the Hanoi party center's bases in Cambodia expanded dramatically in 1966 and 1967 to accommodate much larger numbers of troops and for much longer periods of time as the pressure exerted by the ARVN and the Americans made itself felt on the Communists. The party's Central Office for South Vietnam, as well as the headquarters of the National Liberation Front, remained inside the Cambodia sanctuary also, where they were relatively immune to attack. The presence of Vietnamese troops in Cambodia, unlike the arms traffic across Cambodia, was a violation of the Geneva armistice agreement, which in its Article 4 provided for the withdrawal outside the territory of Cambodia of "the combatant formations of all types which have entered the territory of Cambodia from other countries or regions of the peninsula." Thus, the withdrawal (and continued non-presence, pending a final political settlement in Vietnam) applied to both the DRV and the NLF as combatant formations from other countries. Yet this violation of the armistice was never investigated by the ICC up to its adjournment sine die on December 31, 1969.

Under cover of the secrecy surrounding its troop presence at this point, the DRV approached Sihanouk about the need to expand its base areas, allowing Sihanouk to up the ante. He demanded statements from both the DRV and the NLF recognizing Cambodia's borders at the end of May 1967. After extensive negotiations, in which the Cambodians tried unsuccessfully to get the Vietnamese to agree to a set of principles for demarcation of the border, the Vietnamese made statements simply recognizing Cambodia's existing borders. According to Son Sann, who led the negotiations, the Vietnamese took the position that negotiations on border demarcation should not take place in wartime; they in fact benefited politically from leaving the demarcation ambiguous.

On the domestic scene, Sihanouk had numerous accomplishments to his credit, and it is a puzzle why he was willing to jeopardize them for the sake of punishing his enemies at home, who still did not represent a dire threat to him or the monarchy, the main pillar of Cambodian traditional society. In 1968, for example, Cambodia had 5,857 schools scattered all over the country with more than 1 million pupils. Education in these schools was free. In addition, there

were 180 collèges and lycées with 117,000 students, 99 professional and technical schools with 7,400 students, and 48 faculties and institutions of higher education with 10.800 students. In the field of education, Cambodia had no one to look up to in Indochina.

With no embassy in Phnom Penh to guide it, the American effort to normalize relations with Cambodia was in the hands of three tired bureaucrats. Rusk, Harriman, and Chester Bowles, who had been posted to New Delhi. Ambassador Nong Kimny, who was also now in New Delhi, stressed to Bowles the importance of the declaration on borders. Despite forthcoming conversations in Phnom Penh in January 1968 with Son Sann (Sihanouk was careful to keep his trader in Chinese arms, Lon Nol, out of dealing with the Americans), Bowles achieved little. His sole initiative was to secure a promise from Sihanouk to write to the chairman of the ICC requesting greater vigor on the part of that body in protecting Cambodia's neutrality, an exercise doomed to be as futile as similar efforts had proved in Laos.<sup>239</sup>

# Political Instability and Lurching toward **Escalation in Vietnam**

The cumbersome and lethargic regime of General Minh was overthrown without bloodshed by General Nguyên Khanh in Saigon on January 30, 1964. This time, unlike in 1963, the coup forces struck in the early morning hours and Washington was able to keep up with the action and send a steady stream of information and commentary. Khanh had four leading generals of the Military Revolutionary Council—Generals Don, Kim, Dinh, and Xuan—arrested and sent in custody to Dalat, dissolved the Council's Executive Committee, and appointed himself Council chairman.<sup>240</sup> Three other Council members, Generals Khiem, Thieu, and Do Mau, had been associated with his coup. The rest he reduced to simple Council members.

He confided to his close friend and MAAG adviser, Colonel Jasper Wilson, that he was pre-empting a French-inspired neutralist coup.<sup>241</sup> He suspected that the central figure in the conspiracy had been Lieutenant Colonel Tran Dinh Lan. Lan had been one of several among the Vietnamese exiles living in France who sought to return to Vietnam after the November 1 coup; he had been initially refused a visa by the South Vietnamese Embassy but had benefited from a reversal of this ruling that was made to permit him to attend funeral ceremonies for his father. Lai Van Sang and his brother Lai Huu Tai of Binh Xuyen fame called at the American Embassy to request assistance to return to Vietnam, and General Nguyên Van Vy wished to do likewise, all apparently feeling that their convictions for treason under Diem were now a thing of the past.<sup>242</sup> Khanh had no actual evidence of a French-inspired conspiracy, however.<sup>243</sup> De Gaulle's recognition of Peking in January, however, may have contributed to a hothouse atmosphere in which conspiracy theories were easily hatched.

Khanh had also not forgiven Minh for keeping a large sum of money taken from Diem on his death.<sup>244</sup> One of Khanh's first acts was to order the arrest and execution of Captain Nguyên Van Nhung, Diem's murderer. The story was put about that Nhung had committed suicide in his jail cell. Thus was Diem's last-hour request to Khanh to avenge him at least partly fulfilled.

Khanh recognized his own political inexperience, and immediately promised to "rely heavily for political assistance" on Lodge. <sup>245</sup> Lodge was receptive to Khanh's real or imagined stories about pro-French plotting, but there is no evidence that this time he involved himself or paid for the overthrow of the Minh government. Lodge was gratified to find that Khanh sought him out for consultations. <sup>246</sup> Lodge commented that the traditional way of getting important things done in Vietnam was by "well planned, well thought out use of force," and that from the Vietnamese he saw every day, namely his cook, his numberone boy, and his driver he heard expressions of admiration for the smoothness of the technique. <sup>247</sup>

By modifying Constitutional Act No. 1 of November 4, 1963, Khanh permitted Minh to occupy the position of chief of state. It was a figurehead position that no longer interested even the Americans; by April, Minh was complaining that Lodge no longer bothered to keep in touch.<sup>248</sup> Pham Dang Lam became secretary-general of General Minh's office after the January 30 coup. Khanh was confirmed in his position as Council chairman at a meeting at Joint General Staff headquarters on March 22. In addition, a steering committee was constituted of Khiem, Do Mau, and Pham Xuan Chieu, with Thieu as secretary-general; Minh was named supreme adviser. Khanh instituted a government of the more traditional type. He himself took over the prime ministership after reportedly having offered it to Nguyên Ton Hoan, a leader of the southern Dai Viets, and finding out that Hoan, who had been living in exile since 1954 and had distinguished himself mainly by writing scurrilous letters to Western publications denouncing Diem, was unable to get the support of his own party for his appointment. Khanh appointed Hoan to be one of three vice-prime ministers. The others were Nguyên Xuan Oanh, a technician in economics and finance who himself had lived outside the country for most of the previous 18 years, and General Do Mau.

After initially announcing that he would retain the Council of Notables, which he had also inherited from Minh's regime, Khanh announced on April 4 that he had decided to dissolve it. The Council of Notables had been intended to constitute a kind of pseudo–National Assembly, but its members were not chosen until late December and it held its first meetings only in January; a subcommittee of this body had been reported to be working on a draft constitution. In mid-May, some of the more respected nationalist "out" politicians dispatched a letter to Khanh in which they recommended that the constitutional vacuum be filled by some sort of provisional document. Khanh seemed interested and called in their spokesman, Tran Van Do, to discuss their proposals in detail. Nothing further happened, however, and it was not until mid-August that Khanh again addressed himself to this demand.

To be fair, Khanh had more than constitutional problems to worry about. He had to tread carefully to avoid offending the military or any of the numerous religious groups, students, labor leaders, and a diverse array of intellectuals

and politicians. These cross currents were reflected within the military establishment, particularly among the senior officers. General Do Mau was no threat, in Khanh's view, because he had no following, and he served a useful purpose in surfacing dissatisfied people who might plot against his regime. General Le Van Kim, on the other hand, still represented a threat and would be watched closely. As a result, Khanh groups vied for influence. His was a military regime which, if not respected by the population, was at least feared because it had the army behind it. He had nothing but contempt for the so-called intellectuals and politicians. As for the Buddhists, he felt he had made good progress in cultivating them and could always count on the full support of Thich Tam Chau, chairman of the Institute for the Propagation of the Buddhist Faith, and he had gone a long way toward winning over Thich Tri Quang, secretary-general of the high council of the Buddhist hierarchy.<sup>249</sup>

The Buddhist leaders, however, now claimed to see Can Lao figures under every stone, and pressed their self-arrogated right, backed by the threat of resort to violence, to veto Khanh's cabinet appointments. The Cao Dai and Hoa Hao, for their part, found temporary allies in the Buddhists in opposition to the Catholics. The local people's salvation councils that had been formed under Buddhist auspices throughout Central Vietnam soon entered into conflict with the local and provincial civil authorities. They found a sympathetic ear in Colonel (finally promoted to General) Thi, the corps commander, who nursed his own grievances against the Saigon generals. Province chiefs who ordered the police to curb anti-government demonstrators were relieved of their posts. In this manner, the turnover of government personnel from top to bottom accelerated during 1964, further reducing stability and respect for law and order.

The growth of influence of the Buddhist leaders was manifest in the matter of the treatment of Ngô Dinh Can, another heritage of the Minh regime, who was being held in Chi Hoa prison in Saigon, although he was a severely sick man. As head of state Minh had the power to grant clemency, but he felt that Khanh was putting him in the position of taking the wrath of the Buddhists should he do so. Khanh in turn put the problem in Lodge's lap.<sup>250</sup> Lodge journeved to Hue to see Tri Quang, who made it clear to him that news that the ambassador had come to Hue to plead for Can's life would be very unfavorably received by the Vietnamese, <sup>251</sup> and in the end Can's execution, a sop to the Buddhist leaders, was duly carried out, although it was not made a public spectacle as was the execution of another official of the old regime before a crowd in the stadium at Hue.<sup>252</sup> Nor was Can's cadaver taken to Hue for all to see, as some student leaders demanded during a demonstration at the Hue radio station on May 10.253 On Lodge's departure from Saigon in June, Tri Quang presented him with a framed photograph of a Buddhist monk burning himself to death.<sup>254</sup> It was a fitting farewell gift.

In July, Deputy Prime Minister Hoan formed what he called a United Nationalist Forces Front, a brave attempt at a mass political organization encompassing Buddhist, Catholic, Hoa Hao, Cao Dai, and other elements. 255 Hoan's fledgling organization was neither united, as each of its constituents continued to play the old game of stabbing its opponents in the back, nor worthy of the description forces, as the real political forces in South Vietnam, notably the army, the Buddhists, and the Catholics, showed a growing tendency to fight it out on the streets of Saigon, Hue, Da Nang and other cities instead of within the framework of legal political activity. Thus, Hoan's organization ended up being a front only in the sense the NLF was a front, a high-sounding political organization that represented little beyond the will of those in the shadows who pulled the strings; the difference was that in the case of Hoan's organization those pulling the strings were nationalists, whereas in the case of the NLF they were Communists. Shortly after this, Khanh dropped Hoan from his cabinet altogether; it marked the beginning of Dai Viet opposition to Khanh.

In the wake of the Gulf of Tonkin incidents, Khanh issued an emergency decree on August 7 that gave him a legally freer hand to act. The decree was apparently accepted as necessary by majority public opinion in view of the uncertainties created by the incidents. On August 16, after obtaining the approval of the Military Revolutionary Council, Khanh, who had withdrawn to the seclusion of Vung Tau whither he had summoned legal experts, issued a new charter establishing a strong presidential system and postponing to an indefinite future any return to representative government.

Public opinion interpreted the Vung Tau charter as an effort to consolidate military control of the government and as an indication of more stringent control of the population to come. Relations between Buddhists and Catholics had remained tense since the November 1963 coup, and incidents led to confrontations, such as one at Da Nang in May where serious disturbances were narrowly avoided. The anti-American overtone of these demonstrations was obviously the work of professional propagandists. In August the student agitation spread to Saigon; street demonstrations by students advocating civilian and democratic government (and fearing a more severe conscription policy) grew, but leadership of these demonstrations was quickly asserted by Buddhist leaders who had in fact already launched a campaign of opposition to the government. Tri Quang declared more than half the government ministers, led by Khiem and Thieu, to be inimical to Buddhist interests, although as usual he was unwilling to indicate precisely what he was after other than the destruction of the "cabal" of Can Lao, Catholic, and Dai Viet elements.<sup>256</sup>

Khanh's dithering over what kind of government to form contributed to the disorders. The final sign of his weakness in the face of the Buddhist leaders came on August 25, when a crowd variously estimated at between ten and fifteen thousand gathered in Saigon's Ben Thanh market to commemorate the first anniversary of Quach Thi Trang's death. When the memorial service was concluded, the crowd moved on Khanh's office at 7 Thong Nhut Boulevard. In the street before the prime minister's office, the crowd demanded the revocation of the Vung Tau charter, the dissolution of the Military Revolutionary Council, and the return of control of the government to civilian hands. Khanh went into the street in an attempt to reason with and deflect the crowd. He was unsuccessful and finally was forced to agree tentatively to their demands. From this time on, Khanh was seen to be subject to the will of the Buddhist leaders.

Khanh called a meeting of the full Military Revolutionary Council the next day to endorse the concessions he had made to the crowd. He met with considerable reluctance. Largely out of a desire to preserve the solidarity of the military, however, the Council gave in and declared the Vung Tau charter abrogated. It directed the government to convoke in two months' time a "General Assembly of the People" which would have for its mission the election of a provisional chief of state and the establishment of national organs "conforming to the aspirations of the nation." Thereupon the Council dissolved itself, after creating a Provisional Leadership Committee composed of the triumvirate of Minh, Khanh, and Khiem to serve as executives.

But the street demonstrations continued. Vigilante groups that were forming on the side of attackers attacked. In the last week in August, mobs armed with clubs roamed through Saigon, spreading panic and attacking both opponents and the soldiers ordered into the city to try to restore order. Thirteen died on one day, four more the next. The most gruesome moment came when a Buddhist-controlled mob paraded a captured Catholic boy through the downtown streets and ritually murdered him in the central marketplace as unarmed police and troops stood by watching. Then, one day, as if miraculously, the marauding mobs disappeared from the streets as suddenly as they had appeared.

The embassy expressed alarm at these disorderly developments, and Ambassador Maxwell D. Taylor, who had succeeded Lodge, pressed Khanh hard on whether the new government was going to be a Buddhist government or a national government; Khanh replied that if the Buddhists made good on their word the counterinsurgency program could proceed apace, but if not the war would be lost. The Council's decision marked the withdrawal of the army from politics; any other alternative would have resulted in the use of armed force against fellow citizens, a solution that he, Khanh, found was intolerable.<sup>257</sup> Tri Quang kept promising the Americans he would issue an anti-Communist statement "if and when it became necessary," though he much preferred to work against the Communists behind the scenes to preserve his credibility. There is undoubtedly some truth in his statement, judging by later Communist criticisms of his actions in undermining the NLF. Tri Quang said he was preparing a list of Viet Cong acts of violence against Buddhist followers and pagodas. But Taylor found Tri Quang's position of power without responsibility disquieting.<sup>258</sup> Tri Quang exhibited greater passion when he talked about anti-Buddhist plotting in the government, and at such times his words came rapidly and in a very heavy Central Vietnamese accent.<sup>259</sup>

The Provisional Leadership Committee met with the press on September 9 and published two decrees relevant to a two-month "handover period," the first assigning Minh powers that made him de facto head of state, including the convocation of a High National Council, and the second establishing this Council. The second decree set forth four responsibilities or tasks which it would be expected to perform: (1) convocation of a National Assembly; (2) the drafting and promulgation of a provisional constitution with the cooperation of jurists chosen by the Council; (3) establishment of national institutions provided for in the pro-

visional constitution; (4) counseling by the Provisional Leadership Committee and government during the "handover period." Meanwhile, what was seen to be Khanh's capitulation to the Buddhist leaders had repercussions within the military, where a rather half-hearted coup attempt was mounted on September 13 by General Duong Van Duc, the IV Corps commander, which failed through lack of military support and popular apathy, but which forced the embassy to declare its full support to Khanh. One result of this development was the emergence on the political scene of a younger group of officers, of whom General Nguyên Cao Ky, commander of the air force, was the rising star, just when it looked like the civilians were succeeding in getting the military out of politics.

Following consultations with various figures, Minh presented the High National Council to the public on September 26.260 The Council would hold its meetings in the Gia Long Palace, which up to then had served as Minh's official residence; Minh retained only a small office for himself.261 The Council, although it was appointed rather than elected, could claim to be the most broadly representative body of South Vietnamese people since the last National Assembly of the Diem regime. It was composed of 17 members, chaired by Phan Khac Suu, and contained Buddhist, Catholic, Cao Dai, Hoa Hao, and Northern, Central and Southern representatives, of whom several had been members of the Council of Notables. The embassy judged the Council to be "more impressive, dedicated, and cohesive in their views than we had anticipated."262 With barely a month remaining to complete the monumental task it had been assigned, the High National Council decided to give priority to drafting the provisional constitution. Working rapidly, the Council produced a draft providing three branches of government with separation of powers and several checks and balances to protect against the ascendancy of any one branch. The Council felt that a National Assembly whose members were appointed would not meet the needs of the moment and put off this task; it made the Council itself responsible for legislative functions in the interim. Consistent with this view, the Council contained a strong faction that favored holding some form of election to provide the government with a popular mandate as soon as possible.<sup>263</sup> Some Council members saw Khanh, who remained commander in chief of the armed forces, as maneuvering to be renamed prime minister for reasons of personal ambition and face, and they were determined to prevent this.<sup>264</sup>

### PHAN KHAC SUU AND TRAN VAN HUONG

Four days after the promulgation of the provisional constitution on October 20, the Council, whose members had had lengthy discussions with Minh and Khanh, chose Suu to be head of state. The choice caught the embassy, which favored Minh, by surprise, and Taylor expressed his displeasure. The Provisional Leadership Committee formally relinquished control to Suu on October 26 at a ceremony at the Gia Long Palace. Suu appointed Tran Van Huong, the prefect of Saigon, to be prime minister; he was confirmed by the Council on October 31. Thus, by November 1, South Vietnam's new National Day, civilian control of the government appeared to have been re-established.

Both the aged Suu in his traditional robe and Huong with his crewcut and weather-beaten face were well-respected Southern nationalists. Both had opposed first the French and then Diem and had signed the Caravelle Manifesto. Suu was born in 1905 in Can Tho, the son of wealthy landowners. He was educated in Saigon, Tunis, and France, where he received an agricultural engineering degree. Director of the Economic and Agricultural Research Service and secretary-general of the agricultural chamber of commerce of Cochinchina in 1930–1940, Suu seemed assured of membership in the elite. But in 1941 he was sentenced to eight years' hard labor and deported to Poulo Condore for having founded a movement called the Unified Revolution of Annamese People, making him another example of the Decoux regime's harsh treatment of Vietnamese would-be revolutionaries. He was released in 1945 and resumed his non-violent nationalist activities, founding and directing the newspaper Dan Quy and becoming under secretary of state for agriculture, labor, and social action in Bao Dai's first government. Diem appointed him minister of agriculture in his first government.

Huong was born in 1903 in Long Chau town of Vinh Long Province, the son of a landless day laborer father and a peddler mother. He was to remain poor all his life; at the time he became prime minister he was living on a teacher's pension equivalent to about \$60 per month. Huong received his primary education at the Vinh Long Provincial School, which was free and followed a Franco-Vietnamese syllabus. One story had it that while there he joined a student protest against an overbearing French school official and lost his scholarship and that he then worked his way through the school as a coolie. After this, Huong attended secondary school in My Tho and the Lycée Chasseloup-Laubat in Saigon, where he received a teacher's certificate in 1921. After two years teaching at his old school in Vinh Long, Huong received a scholarship to study at the School of Pedagogy in Hanoi, and for the next 19 years he was a teacher of Vietnamese and French and an inspector of primary schools; many of his pupils remained lifelong friends and some advanced his later career. Among his pupils was Huynh Tan Phat. Sometime in 1936 or 1937, he was bitten by a rabid dog. He claimed he suffered an adverse reaction to the antirabies vaccine he was treated with and sustained cardiac damage. In addition to heart problems, Huong suffered from chronic malaria between 1926 and 1946.

Huong entered politics after March 9, 1945, by joining the Southern Vanguard Youth, and on September 15, 1945, was elected chairman of the Tay Ninh Administrative Committee. When the French reoccupied Tay Ninh in November, Huong fled to join the resistance in the bush. According to one account, he learned from the Viet Minh on December 5, 1945, that he had been elected a deputy to the National Assembly, but he declined to go to Hanoi. Shortly thereafter, he left the Viet Minh. He remained quietly in the South, becoming a member of the Red Cross Society in 1952 and doing a great deal of work to establish the Vietnamese chapter of the Red Cross. Diem chose him to be prefect of Saigon on October 27, 1954, and Huong began what was to be the longest career of public service and elective office of any figure in South Vietnam's

history. Huong resigned on April 7, 1955. In June 1956 he became secretary-general of the Vietnamese Red Cross Society, a position he held until late 1960. Following the coup attempt of November 1960, Huong was arrested and imprisoned until April 7, 1961. He was among the civilians found guilty of charges arising from the coup attempt but was released. Huong was appointed to the Council of Notables by General Minh's regime and served as chairman of the council's political committee. On September 9, 1964, he became prefect of Saigon briefly for the second time.<sup>266</sup>

After being named prime minister by Suu, Huong presented his all-civilian cabinet on November 4. Huong's agenda was only slightly less ambitious than that of Hercules; it included commitments to oppose communism and neutralism, clean up government, separate religion from politics, restore a sense of national discipline among the people, weed out corruption, expand educational facilities, raise living standards, and expand the labor force.<sup>267</sup> His inaugural statement about getting religion and education out of politics was correctly perceived by the Buddhist leadership to be a challenge to their hold on street power. The formation that December of the Vietnam General Buddhist Church, composed mainly of Southern bonzes under Huong's patronage and in the face of threats of retaliation, was a long-overdue antidote to the activist leaders of the Unified Buddhist Association, who since May 1963 had monopolized the voice of Vietnamese Buddhists for their own narrow sectarian ends. The embassy judged the political prospects to be at least faintly encouraging.<sup>268</sup>

Heavy monsoon rains in Central Vietnam caused serious flooding during the second week of November in 10 provinces, killing an estimated 7,000 persons and making as many as 100,000 homeless. Communications were knocked out, the rice crop was destroyed, and the armed junk fleet that patrolled the coast was severely damaged. This natural disaster created an enduring refugee problem for the government, and the NLF exploited alleged failings in the government's relief efforts. Tri Quang told an American that the NLF was allowing Buddhist relief supplies to get through but were not allowing government relief activities in many areas.<sup>269</sup> The party center viewed the Buddhists' efforts as a setback. As recalled by Nguyên Van Linh, the party's secretary-general:

In 1964, there was severe flooding in Central Vietnam. NLF fighters were about to take over the puppet army's outposts, when Thich Tri Quang launched the slogan "Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam Rescue Mission." With the five-colored (Buddhist) flag floating on the dinghies, boats and helicopters, the NLF soldiers could not attack and the soldiers of the puppet army were saved.<sup>270</sup>

Tri Quang remained an enigmatic figure, and Huong found it difficult to deal with him. He was a man who intimidated the American Embassy by declaring that the Buddhists held the embassy responsible for the government's acts of repression against them, then turned around and convinced his followers that he had some special power over the Americans; a man who disappeared from Saigon for days at a time on mysterious missions, who reportedly held

secret meetings with Communist leaders but afterward was able to convince people that he had only been trying to convert them to Buddhism; a man who skillfully intrigued with the more ambitious young generals, setting one against another and inciting them against the government; and a man who stood for non-violence but whose power depended on the implicit threat of violence. He behaved like a party operative, but in spite of Huong's suspicions he apparently was not a Communist, unless the party has played an elaborate charade on us. When Malcolm Browne sought him out in Saigon again in 1994, he was swabbing the latrine floor at the Xa Loi pagoda, reduced, like everyone else outside party circles, to a subsistence standard of living.<sup>271</sup> He had apparently played one too many tricks on the party, as he had on the Americans and on the nationalists.

In late November, following renewed demonstrations in Saigon, Huong declared a state of siege, closing all schools, prohibiting all public meetings, and giving wide powers to the commander of the Capital Military District, Brigadier General Pham Van Dong (a Northerner and no relation to the DRV's prime minister), to search and arrest without warrant. The measures were popular with the Saigonese, who had had enough of the Buddhists' agitation, but who on previous occasions had opposed such draconian steps. Huong was not vulnerable to character assassination, as the Ngô family had been. His opponents adopted the line that he was too old and not very bright, a line that was repeated by some American officials, including Barry Zorthian, the embassy's press spokesman, and some American journalists.

During the night of Saturday, December 19, to Sunday, December 20, the army arrested 22 political figures, including some members of the High National Council, and flew them to Pleiku. The Armed Forces Council, which grouped all the top officers, issued Decree No. 1 dissolving the High National Council. Huong was informed of these actions at 2 A.M. when he received Khanh and 10 other general officers, who asked that he remain as prime minister. Huong's reaction was to tell them he would remain only on condition that the military did not constitute itself "a state within a state." <sup>272</sup>

Taylor and Johnson, who had been informed of events early Sunday morning by a junior officer, met first with Huong at his office and then at the embassy with four representatives of the Armed Forces Council, Generals Ky, Thi, and Thieu, and Rear Admiral Chung Tan Cang, the navy commander. Ky acted as spokesman and justified the action as designed to remove disruptive elements in the High National Council; the military intended to return power to civilians, giving Chief of State Suu the legislative powers formerly held by the Council. In response to Taylor's questions, the Vietnamese said that the Armed Forces Council was an advisory body to Khanh as commander in chief and that the decision had been Khanh's.<sup>273</sup>

Taylor and Johnson took a very serious view of the action because they saw that it amounted to a coup in disguise, one that had destroyed the whole basis for orderly development of government that had gone on since the previous August. If Huong and Suu remained in office under these conditions, it would make a mockery of civilian government. Responsibility for this action was the

military's, and they could not just wash their hands of it. At one point, Taylor asked, "Do all of you understand English?"

The Vietnamese, on the other hand, had a different view, one that placed importance on composing personal relations of individuals and groups to one another rather than on preserving abstract institutions. Their action had been triggered by the High National Council's opposition to a scheme promoted by Thi and Ky for compulsory retirement of all generals after 25 years of service. The proposal seemed aimed at General Dong, a soldier who in his long career had never meddled in politics but who, as military governor of Saigon, stood between Huong and the Buddhist opposition. Thi accused the arrested Council members of having frustrated "conciliation" with the Buddhists by refusing to expand membership of the Council to allow more of Tri Quang's supporters in. The two views now collided head-on in the persons of Taylor and Khanh.

The four general officers went from the embassy to have lunch with Khanh. They carried with them a request for an appointment from Taylor later that afternoon, but Khanh telephoned the embassy and said he was too busy. Taylor did not see Khanh until the following morning. In the meantime, Taylor and Johnson had another meeting with Huong in the course of which they urged the prime minister to refuse to accept the "illegal" action of the Armed Forces Council and told them they could tell Khanh that there was real doubt that the United States could continue to support South Vietnam.<sup>274</sup>

Khanh was thus fully prepared for a showdown with Taylor when Taylor and Johnson showed up at his office at the Joint General Staff headquarters at 10:30 the following morning. Taylor opened the conversation by asking who was responsible for the Armed Forces Council's decree dissolving the High National Council. Khanh replied that it was a decision by all the Armed Forces Council, including himself. The High National Council had been entrusted with two specific missions, and it had exceeded its authority, making its dissolution necessary. Taylor recalled his conversations on the importance of stability in the government and having a loyal ally with whom the United States could work with confidence. The action of December 20 made this difficult if not impossible. Khanh replied that loyalty was a reciprocal matter and that Vietnam was not a vassal of the United States. Taylor said he had to admit that he had lost confidence in Khanh. Khanh replied that the ambassador should keep his place as ambassador, and, as ambassador, it was really not appropriate for him to be dealing in this way with the commander in chief of the armed forces on a political matter, nor was it appropriate for him to have summoned some of his general officers to the embassy the previous day. Khanh also referred to Diem, saying that the United States had not been very loyal to him, to which Taylor replied that some Americans may have perhaps done things that they had no authority to do. <sup>275</sup> In closing the meeting, Khanh told Taylor: "In future, please have the courtesy of consulting my chiefs [Huong and Suu]. I believe I have nothing further to say to you." Taylor rose and said: "I think we are starting to be too nervous."276

The absolute failure of a meeting of minds between Taylor and Khanh grew deeper as word of the conflict spread through Saigon and into the foreign press. Washington backed Taylor completely and began to look for leverage against Khanh and suggest ways to withhold aid and let it be known to the public.<sup>277</sup> Khanh sent to his superiors a report on how Taylor had treated the four general officers and himself. Khanh's standing suddenly rose and it appeared that he enjoyed the support of all 20 members of the Armed Forces Council;<sup>278</sup> indeed, a meeting of the generals decided to propose that Taylor be declared persona non grata.<sup>279</sup> Khanh issued statements saying things such as "We make sacrifices for the country's independence and the Vietnamese people's liberty, but not to carry out the policy of any foreign country," and "Better to live poor but proud as free citizens of an independent country rather than in ease and shame as slaves of the foreigners and Communists."280 He was starting to sound like Diem. But he had learned something Diem had not—the importance of the foreign press. He summoned Beverly Deepe of the New York Herald-Tribune to Dalat and related the whole story of the way Taylor had made the Vietnamese lose face, which she duly published.<sup>281</sup> The embassy noticed that the Buddhists had suddenly become relatively quiet.<sup>282</sup>

This last changed in mid-January, when a delegation of Buddhist leaders consisting of Tri Quang, Quang Lien, and Phap Tri, the leader of the Theravada sect, was received at the embassy by Taylor, Johnson, and Melvin L. Manfull, the head of the political section. Tri Quang, speaking for the delegation, proceeded to advance the argument that since November they had resolved to oppose Huong's government using only legal means, through a vote of no confidence by the High National Council. As this last body had been eliminated on December 20, legal means were no longer available. In his usual wellrehearsed manner, Tri Quang set forth a number of positions of the Buddhists, and at every attempt by Taylor to show the contradictions inherent in these positions without hesitation countered with another argument. For example, when Tri Quang suggested the embassy use its influence to get Huong to resign or have Suu dismiss him and Taylor countered with the suggestion that the National Assembly under preparation would offer a suitable opportunity to change governments legally, Tri Quang countered by observing that "the people" would not trust the Assembly because it would have been convoked by Huong. And so it went. For individuals who officially foreswore politics, these persons were obviously deep into political personalities. Again before they left, Tri Quang renewed his suggestion to Taylor, adding that otherwise the United States might have "no way out" of the current political impasse. Taylor suggested they might meet again soon, preferably less conspicuously at his home. 283

Two days later, under renewed pressure, Huong was forced to reshuffle his cabinet, taking four generals, including Ky, into the cabinet. Street disorders broke out again. Rioters sacked the American library in Hue, burning 8,000 books. In Saigon, small crowds dressed in the robes of monks and nuns stoned the American press center and screamed in front of the embassy, "Taylor is killing Buddhists!" Huong said that of the 103 persons arrested not a single one

turned out to be a bonze; many were well known to police as troublemakers.<sup>284</sup> The self-immolations began again when the Buddhists claimed that a 17-year-old schoolgirl in Nha Trang burned herself to death to protest Taylor's policies. Khanh, who was still maneuvering in the background, some said with ambitions to become chief of state, had to fly to Hue and Da Nang to persuade demonstrators to paint over anti-Taylor wall slogans.

Events continued to elude the control of the embassy during the latter part of January and February. Khanh claimed to have reached an agreement with the Buddhist leaders, in signed form, providing for their acknowledgement that the armed forces had to assume control of the government, their commitment to support unconditionally a military government for two years, their agreement to change their leadership and not engage in politics, a commitment by the armed forces to guarantee religious freedom, and a commitment by the armed forces to support democracy at a later date.<sup>285</sup> The ever-changeable Khanh thereupon told the Armed Forces Council in a series of meetings on January 25, 26, and 27 that Huong had to be dismissed and the military had to take over. A number of those present, including Generals Dong, Thieu, Nguyên Huu Co, Huynh Van Cao, and Cao Van Vien, were against the decision but went along with it. The Armed Forces Council charged Khanh with responsibility "for solving the present political crisis."286 The Buddhists announced they were calling off their anti-government activities.<sup>287</sup> They had with their tactics of violence succeeded for the second time in 14 months in bringing down a civilian government. Hardly had this change occurred, however, than the Buddhists demanded that Khanh return the agreement he had signed with them.<sup>288</sup>

After lengthy meetings of the Armed Forces Council, the generals decided to entrust the government to Phan Huy Quat, the medical doctor who had been Bao Dai's first education minister and who later as defense minister had presided over the formation of the Vietnamese national army. With military approval, Quat named a cabinet with both civilian and military representation. He chose as his deputy prime minister the lawyer and VNQDD leader Tran Van Tuyen. In an attempt to preserve the appearance of some legality, the Armed Forces Council chose Suu to remain as head of state and said the October 20, 1964, provisional constitution was still in effect, although some changes would be necessary. A series of other measures, taken mostly as promises, were announced.<sup>289</sup> After another coup attempt by General Lam Van Phat on February 19 was put down, Khanh left the country on a vague mission overseas, much to Taylor's relief. It seemed to the Americans that things in Saigon might at last settle down and the country could get on with winning the war.

### FAILED ATTEMPTS AT NEGOTIATION

The winter of 1964–1965 was a time of negotiations among the South Vietnamese. At the central level, negotiations went on almost continuously among the generals within the Military Revolutionary Council, then the Provisional Leadership Committee, and finally the Armed Forces Council; between Khanh as commander in chief and all the various political and religious groups (Dai Viet

and other parties; the Buddhists, who operated their popular salvation councils in Central Vietnam; the Catholics; the Cao Dai; the Hoa Hao); between the military and the civilians overall about the form of the government; and even with groups in the population such as the leaders of an uprising among the Rhade tribesmen in Darlac who rebelled against the government in September and who soon constituted themselves into a formal organization which they called the United Front for the Struggle of the Oppressed Races, known by the acronym FULRO.<sup>290</sup> Locally, negotiations were continuing on almost a daily basis between civilian and military officials and the local popular salvation councils, students, and other pressure groups to settle disputes of a political nature. In addition to formal negotiations to settle disputes of one kind or another, there was another substratum of informal negotiations going on involving "out" politicians, such as the returned Hoang Co Thuy, who sought the support of interested groups for a political comeback.<sup>291</sup>

It is amazing that with all this negotiating, with claimants to power in Saigon succeeding one another with alarming rapidity, the majority nationalists in the NLF did not succeed in opening negotiations for a share in power in a government that could have ended the fighting before the advent of American troop units. A generally acceptable basis for such a power-sharing arrangement obviously existed in the form of a gradual withdrawal of American advisers in return for a withdrawal of the DRV's soldiers from the South pending a discussion of moves to achieve reunification of North and South Vietnam. One would have expected this to happen if the nationalists had been free to act within an NLF that genuinely represented the South Vietnamese population. In spite of the NLF's propaganda about restoring peace and forming a coalition government, however, no non-Communist group embraced the NLF, not even the leaders of the Unified Buddhist Association, whose intent was not, according to an embassy analysis in late January, "to attain peace at [the] cost of Communist domination," 292 no matter what some foreign observers thought.

The failure was not for lack of overtures to the NLF. Khanh, in a gesture of conciliation, released the wife of Huynh Tan Phat, vice president of the Central Committee of the NLF and one of its party controllers, from prison along with other political prisoners on May 1, 1964. Perhaps as a result of this gesture, Phat carried on a secret correspondence with Khanh. In the second of two letters he sent Khanh, Phat commended him for his public stance against American intervention in South Vietnam's domestic affairs, having in mind no doubt Taylor's reaction to the December 20 affair. But, beyond saying that "whatever our differences of political opinion, we can join together and coordinate our efforts to accomplish our supreme mission, which is to save our homeland," Phat did not offer any prospect of negotiation between the NLF and the Saigon government.<sup>293</sup> Reports of these contacts came to the ears of the embassy in early February and were not welcomed by Taylor.<sup>294</sup> Khanh believed it was his image as an "American puppet" that deterred non-Communists in the NLF from trying to make an approach to him.<sup>295</sup>

Non-Communist members of the NLF did make approaches to two less prominent respected Southerners, however, which, in contrast to Phat's sterile letter to Khanh, seemed to be more promising in the way of bringing about at least a cease-fire. The first approach came through Le Van Hoach, the Cao Daist who had once been the president of the provisional government of Cochinchina and who had served in Khanh's government and claimed to have been in touch with the NLF for several months. Hoach had a brother, Le Van Huan, who was with the NLF. According to Hoach, the unidentified NLF member said the NLF would be amenable to the idea of a cease-fire and negotiation for a specified period with the end in view of creating a government of national union. The NLF would not require the departure of the Americans as a precondition of the talks and would agree to their remaining while a settlement was worked out. When asked what Hanoi would say to such proposals, Hoach replied that his contact had informed him that the NLF was capable of detaching itself from Hanoi, despite the supplies of food and arms it had received from Hanoi. In fact, the contact said, the NLF was contemplating some act to demonstrate its independence from Hanoi such as taking a position opposite to that of the DRV on the subject of the Commonwealth mission, a mission that was trying to open peace talks.<sup>296</sup>

The second approach was made to Father Ho Van Vui, a Catholic priest who served as Archbishop Nguyên Van Binh's representative on the Interfaith Council that had been formed in the wake of the religious clashes the previous August. Father Vui was a strong believer in governmental representation according to regional differences, pointing out that 10 million of the population of South Vietnam were Southerners, 3 million were from the Center, and 1 million were Northern refugees. He said the majority of the NLF members were Southerners and were represented by the Dan Chu Moi (New Democracy) Party, who constituted the NLF's regional and popular forces, furnished logistical support to the regular forces, and controlled the NLF's finances. He believed it might be possible to detach the Dan Chu Moi Party from the Vietnam Workers' Party element in the NLF if the Saigon government signaled its willingness to enter into negotiations with the former. The Dan Chu Moi Party had made at least four overtures to Khanh; as proof of this he had a photocopy of a handwritten letter to Khanh dated October 23, 1964, signed by the president and secretary of the Dan Chu Moi, Nguyên Thanh Ton, and Le Van Tuy and bearing the NLF seal. The letter set forth preliminary conditions for talks between the Dan Chu Moi and Khanh, including a cease-fire and governmental aid for reconstruction of hamlets and villages destroyed by the war. The letter contained no demand for American withdrawal as a precondition to talks. Father Vui did not explain how putative negotiations between the Saigon government and the Dan Chu Moi could be initiated other than under the control of the Southern members of the Vietnam Workers' Party.<sup>297</sup>

Certainly, a decision on such an important matter as opening negotiations with the Saigon authorities in 1964–1965 would have had to be made by the NLF Central Committee, and as the standing committee of this body was con-

trolled by the party center, no decision that went counter to party policy could even be discussed, much less approved. Robert K. Brigham, who has studied the relations between the NLF and the party center, was unable to document a single instance between 1960 and 1975 in which the Southern Communists who led the NLF (and, after 1969, the Provisional Revolutionary Government) prevailed upon the party center to adopt their policy proposals, although such evidence may be hidden in the party archives.<sup>298</sup>

While the party was willing to have the NLF, whose program, after all, contained something for everyone, attract Saigon's leaders to its side for political and propaganda advantages, it was adamantly opposed to having it enter into any kind of negotiations that would affect the power structure in South Vietnam. Even the holiday cease-fires periodically announced by the NLF were unilateral actions taken without any prior discussion of a quid pro quo with Saigon. The party leadership may well have debated the best strategy to follow to bring down the Saigon regime; to project these debates into differences between the "NLF" and "Hanoi" is unscientific. The party leadership, both in the "NLF" and in "Hanoi," was resolved as a matter of dogma on the need for strict control of the NLF by the party, which, taking into account all factors, had elaborated another conception of negotiations, one that would ensure that the non-Communist Southern nationalists would not survive as a viable political force. NLF members acting contrary to the party center's instructions would likely have subjected themselves to serious punishment. An attempt by General Khanh in 1966 to open a dialogue with an NLF member in Paris to arrange a "Southern solution" by Southerners, for example, came to nought.<sup>299</sup>

Thus, for the moment at least, in spite of promised demonstrations of the NLF's independence from Hanoi and letters bearing seemingly authentic signatures and seals, there seemed to be little likelihood of detaching the non-Communist majority of the NLF from the NLF's Communist controllers, even if such an attempt had been approved by those in power in Saigon, which itself was unlikely because, as Khanh's experience had recently shown, such moves might lead to the withdrawal of American support. One of the sanctions available to the party center to enforce its policy of no uncontrolled negotiations with the Saigon government, which appears to have been used on a number of occasions, was to tip off the Saigon police anonymously about the identity of any person who presented himself or herself as representing the NLF.

Although Communist infiltration of the Buddhist, student and other non-Communist protest groups was suspected, and the turmoil played into the hands of Communist strategy to destabilize South Vietnam, the Communists took care to maintain themselves under cover. The party's objective was to demoralize the South Vietnamese Army (ARVN) and force the leaderless population to embrace the NLF, paving the way for a repetition of the August 1945 coup d'état in Hanoi. This plan was only foiled by the fact that the army did not crack, although it had been a close thing: a report that ARVN soldiers had taken part in an anti-government, anti-American demonstration in Hue at the end of January was taken seriously enough to cause General William C. Westmoreland,

the commander of MACV, to go personally to investigate.<sup>300</sup> The talk of a negotiated settlement peaked in March, with Tri Quang and other Buddhist leaders making vague statements favoring an end to the war and the withdrawal of foreign forces.<sup>301</sup> Three leaders of so-called peace groups were put across the bridge at the Ben Hai River.<sup>302</sup>

Communist infiltration of the police had been going on since the November 1, 1963, coup. In the immediate aftermath, Colonel Tran Ba Thanh became deputy director of the national police. There were strong grounds for believing that he was a Communist agent. He released some key Viet Cong prisoners, destroyed Viet Cong dossiers in police archives, and placed at least one known Viet Cong agent in a key position within the police structure. Although Thanh was ousted when Khanh seized power, the Saigon police and security services did not recover their anti-Communist capabilities for some time.

The NLF, too, had its soldiers of fortune such as Conein, this time in the person of Albert Pham Ngoc Thao. Thao, who came from a family of Catholics, had been director of the Viet Minh officer's training school (Thien Ho) in the Plain of Reeds in 1947. He had then managed to infiltrate the government through his Catholic connections and under Diem had risen to be province chief of Kien Hoa. After November 1, 1963, he appeared to be extremely knowledgeable about every intrigue, volunteering information to the embassy about factions within the Military Revolutionary Council. In August 1964, when he was Khanh's press officer, he came to the embassy bringing reports of cabinet reshuffles and plans for new constitutions and National Assembly elections. Khanh tried to exile him to Washington, but finally his involvement in the coup attempts of September 13, 1964, and February 19, 1965, brought his efforts to spread confusion and sow discord too much prominence; he was tried and sentenced to death in absentia and later executed as a Communist agent.

In the context of these Communist tactics of destabilization, the vibrant Saigon press, which seemed to elude every successive government's attempts to clamp down on it, played a role also. All too frequently, Saigon newspapers printed rumors about the involvement of prominent figures in corruption and other illegal activities in efforts to discredit them and force their replacement. Staunchly anti-Communist figures such as General Dong and Admiral Cang found themselves victims of these veiled attacks.

It was testimony to the resilience of the South Vietnamese population that amid all this, on May 20, 1965, elections for municipal and provincial offices were held and there was an average of five candidates per provincial council seat and nine per municipal seat. Seventy percent of those registered exercised their right to vote.<sup>304</sup>

## BATTLEFIELD ESCALATION

The party center was experiencing growing difficulty in forming armed units in the South and, judging the Southern forces to be still weak, took the decision in September 1964 to start sending regular units to the South. To reinforce the command structure, the party sent General Nguyên Chi Thanh to take charge.<sup>305</sup>

The character of the DRV's infiltration of men into the South to prosecute the war was changing. During 1959–1960, some 4,500 infiltrators were reported; during 1961, some 5,400 infiltrators were reported, almost all of Southern origin; during 1962, some 13,000 infiltrators were reported, again mostly Southerners; during 1963, the number of infiltrators dropped to about 6,200. But in the first eight months of 1964, about three-quarters of the 4,700 infiltrators reported were of Northern origin, according to a study by MACV. Although the ARVN had found on the bodies of Viet Cong soldiers as early as 1960 photographs showing them wearing DRV uniforms, it was not until July 1964 at Nam Dong, near Da Nang, that the ARVN found regular soldiers among the dead wearing their DRV uniforms and carrying identification cards.

The Northern effort was also marked by the improved quality of arms and other supplies being sent into the South. The ARVN began capturing AK-47 assault rifles during 1964, marking a transition in the Communist arsenal from homemade and captured weapons to front-line Soviet and Chinese weaponry. In February 1965, a transport ship was sunk off the coast of Phu Yen Province; its cargo was found to include some 4,000 weapons, large quantities of ammunition, and some 500 pounds of medicine. The weapons and ammunition came from the USSR, East Germany, Czechoslovakia, and China. Hanoi packing slips were found in the medical containers.<sup>307</sup>

The first constituted unit of the DRV army to be sent to fight in the South was the 95A Infantry Regiment of the 325A Division (the 325th Division had earlier been split into the 325A and 325B Divisions), stationed in Quang Binh Province. On November 29, 1964, the division held a departure ceremony for the 95A Regiment and the lead elements of division headquarters, and immediately afterward trucks transported the troops by night to Lang Ho, where they would begin their march south along the Ho Chi Minh Trail. They were followed in early December by the 101A Regiment and the main division headquarters. By early February 1965, the last elements of the division's third regiment, the 18A, were transported to Lang Ho to begin their march south. The entire division was to reassemble in the Central Highlands by the end of March 1965 to participate in Military Region 5's spring-summer campaign. 308

When the Viet Cong mortared the air base at Bien Hoa on the morning of November 1, 1964, the first anniversary of the coup,<sup>309</sup> and exploded a car bomb under the Brink bachelor officers quarters in Saigon on Christmas Eve, there was no reaction from the Americans. The South Vietnamese wondered how much loss of face the Americans could suffer, because these actions were directed against the Americans, not themselves.<sup>310</sup> Then on February 7, 1965, the Viet Cong shelled installations at Pleiku, killing eight Americans, wounding 126, and destroying 10 American aircraft. Finally, the Americans reacted.

General Khanh flew to the Pleiku airfield, where he found McGeorge Bundy and General Westmoreland already there. They informed him that they were recommending to President Johnson that regular air raids be started against North Vietnam. The policy of "sustained reprisal" was outlined for President Johnson in a paper prepared by the members of the Bundy mission.<sup>311</sup> Khanh assented but

insisted that the South Vietnamese air force at least participate in the raids. <sup>312</sup> The decision-making at this unplanned, accidental meeting of Americans and South Vietnamese showed clearly where sovereignty lay. When the new government took office on February 18, it did not review the situation. Thereafter, Taylor and Johnson arrived at the prime minister's office twice a week with a roll of maps to brief the South Vietnamese on what targets were being bombed. The cabinet did not even schedule the bombing as an agenda item for discussion at its weekly meetings. Similarly, the use of American air power in South Vietnam (which from July 1965 onward included raids by B-52s) was not discussed between the two governments. <sup>313</sup>

As the quality of the forces and the armament opposing them rose, the hard-pressed ARVN was increasingly on its own, except for the vital element of American air fire support and transport. The dissolution in May 1964 of the MAAG, which was folded into MACV, meaning that the advisory and support functions no longer had a separate chain of command, had a bad effect on ARVN morale. Nevertheless, the South Vietnamese, recalling their experience with the French, rebuffed American efforts to place the ARVN under American command.<sup>314</sup>

In these circumstances, the major battles the ARVN fought in late 1964 and early 1965—in the An Lao valley in Quang Ngai in December, at Binh Gia in January, in Quang Ngai again in May, and at the district town of Dong Xoai in Phuoc Long Province in June—revealed an ARVN that, while inferior to the enemy in strategic direction and still not freed from the concept of static defense of fixed points, was capable of fighting well when it had to. Casualties in these initial battles were heavy. At Dong Xoai, the ARVN lost between seven and eight hundred killed; the gunfire could be heard in Saigon during the night-time curfew. At Binh Gia, a Catholic refugee settlement, the ARVN made the mistake of committing its forces piecemeal; its dead were carried off the battle-field in oxcarts. In 1965, South Vietnamese casualties were eight times those of the Americans.<sup>315</sup> The South Vietnamese air force also was coming of age, as was shown by its first retaliatory air strike against the North on February 8 with 24 A1E Skyraiders led by Ky, which destroyed 90 percent of its targets without the loss of a single pilot.<sup>316</sup>

The landing of American troops in constituted units in South Vietnam came as a surprise to the South Vietnamese. As the first Marines were coming ashore at Da Nang on March 8, the Americans asked Quat to draft a communiqué announcing the landing. Quat's chief of staff, Bui Diem, prepared the communiqué together with Manfull, stating in the usual diplomatic language that the landing of two battalions of Marines had occurred "with the concurrence of the Vietnamese government." Although Quat had not requested American troops, neither had he explicitly opposed the idea in an "exchange of views" several days earlier with Taylor.<sup>317</sup> He was instinctively as much opposed to the Americanization of the war as Diem had been; the difference lay in the fact that his bargaining leverage was much less than Diem's had been.

Taylor also had "grave reservations as to [the] wisdom and necessity of so doing." Taylor's reservations, however, insofar as they took political factors into

account, stemmed from the likely effect on the South Vietnamese government. "Once it becomes evident that we are willing to assume such new responsibilities, one may be sure that GVN [Government of Vietnam] will seek to unload other ground force tasks upon us." Taylor at least insisted on the concurrence of the host government, something which he believed would not be difficult to obtain.<sup>318</sup> The Americans called their landing force an expeditionary corps before they realized what an unfavorable connotation attached to this term in the minds of the Vietnamese and changed the name.

It was equally clear to Hanoi that the American forces landing in South Vietnam would be a big factor to contend with on the battlefield. In mid-August, in the first victory of American troops, a Marine force of regimental strength from the Third Marine Division, guided by reliable information from the Vietnamese, trapped the First Viet Cong Regiment in its base area on the Van Tuong Peninsula on the Quang Ngai-Quang Tin border and in two days of heavy fighting inflicted casualties of 563 confirmed killed and an estimated 1,000 wounded, effectively putting that unit out of action. The regiment possessed well-fortified and wellconcealed positions in hundreds of caves and bunkers, and many of the Marine casualties were inflicted by small arms fire from the rear of the advancing troops. The Marines captured scores of weapons, including mortars. At this low point in South Vietnamese morale, the American victory was particularly sweet.

On the political front, on the other hand, the party center judged the entry of American ground troops to be a blessing in disguise. The advantages which it could derive from this development were threefold. First, the presence of large groups of American soldiers among the South Vietnamese population would lend credence to the DRV's propaganda about the United States waging a colonialist war. Second, the operations of American units separate from the ARVN increased the possibility of inflicting casualties on the Americans, which would lessen the American public's acceptance of the war. Third, the large American presence guaranteed that the United States would seek a major role for itself in eventual negotiations to end the war.

The South Vietnamese reacted to the landing of American troop units in their country with moderation. This was due partly to the fact that many had become accustomed to the American military advisory role and partly to the initial relative infrequency of contact with these units. They understood, from their experience of the war, the military necessity of the American troops, and they respected the reputation for combat effectiveness and formidable firepower of the American troops. If anything, there was a tendency to be too optimistic, to hope that the Americans would resolve the conflict quickly and bring back peace. Some intellectuals, however, mainly in Saigon, feared that their country would become a Cold War battleground for an extended period, with a consequent escalation of violence on both sides.

There were, of course, expressions of generalized xenophobic reactions, most notably from among certain student, Buddhist, and Northern Catholic émigré groups, which were usually tied to concern over conscription or frustrated political ambitions. Southerners and most Catholics genuinely welcomed the Americans for the most part. Causes of resentment were usually due to localized incidents, such as traffic accidents, instances of alleged preferential treatment given to Americans as customers, and inflated prices charged by some merchants. The Catholic newspaper *Chinh Luan* carried a series of articles on the impact of Americans in Da Nang, in which wide circulation of dollars debasing the piaster, bartering of gasoline for local purchases creating fire hazards, and an increase in prostitution were all ascribed to the presence of American military personnel.<sup>319</sup> However, those who spoke out too openly in favor of the American presence risked retribution from the Viet Cong; one such was *Chinh Luan*'s editor, Tu Chung, who, after receiving threatening letters signed by Vo Cong Minh in the name of the Saigon–Gia Dinh branch of the NLF, was assassinated in broad daylight in front of his house in Cholon.<sup>320</sup>

Delegations of private Americans, mostly educators and clergymen, were another form of American presence that the South Vietnamese encountered in the summer of 1965 for the first time; these groups wanted to find a peaceful solution to the war and opposed what they saw as their government's increasing commitment to a military campaign. A delegation from one such group, the Fellowship for Reconciliation, was received in Saigon in early July by Tri Quang. The impression made was unfavorable. Tri Quang told an embassy political officer that he would be very distressed at the state of American public opinion if the delegation was typical. He said he had found these intellectuals absolutely ignorant of conditions in Vietnam, while they claimed that 40 percent of Americans agreed with them. He said that when he talked to them about "peace" and "ending the war" they constantly misconstrued his meaning and he had to explain carefully what he meant. He told the group that he naturally opposed war, but that war at this point was necessary in trying to obtain the kind of peace the Vietnamese people desired. Tri Quang told them that nobody could fault them for talking about a peaceful solution if they wanted to, but this was not yet the right time to discuss the modalities of possible peace talks, for by so doing one was likely to concede to the Viet Cong more than necessary. He said that the Viet Cong conceived of several ways in which they could gain victory, including forcing an American withdrawal, taking part in a "government of national union," or being accepted as a party to any negotiations; if they could have won any one of these conditions as concomitants of negotiations, they would have succeeded in their efforts to exact a price much higher than they should get. Tri Quang said he reiterated to his visitors that acceptance of the NLF as a negotiating party would be unacceptable to the Vietnamese people, who wanted nothing more than that the Front disband and go away.<sup>321</sup>

## THE FOUR POINTS OF PHAM VAN DONG AND TRAN VAN DO

On April 8, a month after the American troop landing at Danang, Premier Pham Van Dong, in an address to the second session of the Third National Assembly, set forth the DRV's policy in four points. The second point, that pending the peaceful reunification of Vietnam, while Vietnam was still temporarily divided into two zones, the military provisions of the 1954 armistice agreement should

be strictly respected, was the usual DRV stand. The third point, however, that the internal affairs of South Vietnam be settled by the South Vietnamese people themselves in accordance with the program of the NLF, marked an escalation. In essence, if Dong's four points were followed to the letter, an NLF-dominated government in Saigon would proceed to reunify Vietnam peacefully, and the DRV would be left as the sole sovereign government in Vietnam which the United States would have to recognize. This was the ultimate goal. In the short term, the goal was to bring about negotiations between the NLF and the Americans as a means of weakening, and eventually destroying, the Saigon government. To this end, the party center was to embark in July on a worldwide campaign to boost the image and standing of the NLF.

The American Embassy had been thinking about the problem of negotiations since January. Deputy Ambassador U. Alexis Johnson had been in the American delegation at Geneva and so was sensitive to the Saigon position and saw the military, political, and diplomatic implications of the DRV's proposals more clearly than practically any other American. Above all, Johnson was acutely aware that the DRV's proposals were intended not only to bring about a cessation of hostilities on its terms but one that in the process would destroy the Southern administration and the non-Communist parties that underpinned it. The general trend of the embassy's thinking, as set forth in a number of telegrams, might be summed up as a return on both sides to a respect for the 1954 armistice provisions, beginning with a gradual de-escalation on the battlefield while talks among the Saigon government, the DRV, the United States, and possibly others got underway through appropriate channels.<sup>323</sup> There appeared to be a general acceptance of the 1954 terms as a desirable endpoint, even among Washington officials such as William P. Bundy, who thought that the United States should keep exclusive control over any negotiations.<sup>324</sup> The point on which the Saigon embassy and Washington differed, and were to continue to differ in the coming years, was the question of the NLF's participation in such a peace process, which Washington saw as a largely non-consequential issue and Saigon saw as a core issue.

Johnson also reminded Washington officials (who tended to view the Vietnam problem in terms of the battlefield, which fudged the distinction between the DRV and the Viet Cong) of the need to consult with the Saigon government in preparation for eventual negotiations. Johnson was in his fifth-floor office at the embassy at 39 Boulevard Ham Nghi drafting a message on this very subject to Taylor, who was on a visit to Washington, when the Viet Cong exploded a car bomb in front of the building on the morning of March 30, killing two Americans and 20 Vietnamese and wounding nearly 200 people. Most of the Vietnamese victims were innocent pedestrians or patrons of a café across the street. On April 1, President Johnson sent letters to the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives requesting an authorization to build a new embassy building in Saigon.

In an effort to meet Pham Van Dong's third point, which was obviously the key (everyone could readily agree to the second point), Tran Van Do, the for-

eign minister of Geneva, issued his own four points in June. The first point contained the demand that the DRV dissolve its puppet organizations in the South and withdraw its troops and cadres from the South. The second stated that the South Vietnamese (implying that this was meant to include former members of the NLF as individuals but not the NLF as an organization) could then decide their own future through democratic processes. The third provided for a withdrawal of foreign troops from the South. The fourth concerned effective guarantees. 326 If the DRV dissolved its puppet organizations in the South and withdrew its troops and cadres from the South, this would ensure strict respect for Article 14(a) of the armistice agreement prohibiting interference by one zone in the administration in the other zone, which was part of the military provisions of the armistice agreement. Do's four points, therefore, by answering Dong's third point, opened the way to a negotiation on the four points taken as a whole. The objectives of both sides were now clear. The South sought to restore respect for the military provisions of the 1954 Geneva Agreement, in particular Article 14(a). The North, behind the camouflage of the NLF, sought to overthrow the Saigon government and institute the party center's rule over the South.

But if negotiations were to come about, the Saigon government would have to make a credible claim to some sort of legality, if not legitimacy. The events of December 1964 had blurred the constitutional legitimacy of any group presuming to speak in Saigon's name, as Bundy pointed out. 327 The legality of such authorities, dependent as they were on the military, was also questionable. In these circumstances, it is hardly surprising that high officials in Washington trying to come to grips with the problem of Vietnam saw little distinction to be made between whatever individual or group happened to hold power at the moment in Saigon and the NLF. Visiting American officials continued to treat their South Vietnamese counterparts with the deference due to courteous hosts, but in the corridors of Washington there was little respect for the standing these gentlemen enjoyed among their countrymen or vis-à-vis the Americans.

In June, Quat's government faced opposition, this time from the Catholics. Suu and Quat formally resigned, handing the government over to the generals, who chose Ky to become prime minister. A new "provisional" charter, brief and hastily written, was promulgated on June 19, in which it was stated that until a permanent constitution could be established the sovereignty of Vietnam was temporarily vested in the armed forces, to which all governmental authority was assigned. The leaders of the new setup were the president of the Central Executive Council (Ky), the president of the National Directory Council (Thieu), and the secretary-general of the latter body (Pham Xuan Chieu). 328 Ky announced the composition of the government<sup>329</sup> and a new, ambitious, and "revolutionary" program of action. 330 One of the first acts of the new government was to break diplomatic relations with France. The break was announced casually and without fanfare by Foreign Minister Do at a news conference that dealt with several other matters of greater urgency. The stated reason for the action was simply to show the government's "disagreement with Gaullist policies" that favored its enemies.331

Huong's short-lived government had proved that there was no necessary correlation between sovereignty and effective government; one could have one without the other. Huong saw the humbug in much American thinking about the Viet Cong and their "revolution," as the perceptive American journalist Richard Critchfield wrote. Americans such as John Paul Vann looking at the success of the Viet Cong in the South Vietnamese countryside concluded that the Viet Cong were "social revolutionaries." The problem was that these Americans never had the opportunity of living for any period of time in villages "on the other side" to see for themselves the benefits which this kind of "revolution" brought—summary justice with people's tribunals and exemplary public executions, denunciation of one's neighbors, conscription, forced labor, and hours of tiresome political meetings at which the American aggressors and their puppets were denounced. Huong saw that winning the war by turning South Vietnam into a mirror image of the regimented society of the North, controlled by a totalitarian party, would be a sham victory indeed. He knew that the peasants wanted not so much revolution as law and order, government that governed responsibly, and a decent, normal life.332

The military was unlikely to be able to provide the people with the satisfaction of this wish. A survey by the embassy in October found that, while the fear of a Viet Cong victory had receded in people's minds and doubts about American intentions had been largely swept away, there was no widespread acceptance of the Ky government. At the time, the major preoccupation of the South Vietnamese was the damage being inflicted on their country and society as the war intensified. This was manifest in the concern about inflation, which Ky's government seemed unable to control. There was a worrying tendency to equate rising prices with the presence of American troops.<sup>333</sup> In response to public opinion, Ky and the Directorate (the vaguely French-sounding name by which the Armed Forces Council was now known) began talking about establishing a civilian advisory council.<sup>334</sup> Many, including Tri Quang, were skeptical, however, that the generals would appoint members to such a council in disregard of the results of the previous May's voting for members of provincial and municipal councils.<sup>335</sup> However, the Directorate allowed the issue of constituting the council to drag on inconclusively.

The tendency in Washington to place the Saigon government and the NLF on an equal footing was most evident in a series of memoranda circulated by George Ball. Ball's approach to the problem put the Geneva history aside altogether. In the first of his memoranda, written in May, Ball suggested allowing the Viet Cong to continue "local administration" in their areas of control on a temporary basis; the memorandum illustrated the difficulty of offering a credible cease-fire to nationalists in the NLF.<sup>336</sup> In the second, Ball suggested making a "controlled commitment" for a trial period of three months, which, if it did not work out, would justify American disengagement; "the Saigon Government is becoming more and more a fiction," Ball wrote.<sup>337</sup> In his third memorandum, circulated on July 1, Ball posited that the war was being lost and urged the administration to cut its losses; it saw the Saigon government as an obstacle to the negotiation of a settlement.<sup>338</sup>

Foreign Minister Do's four points were included in the proclamation issued in Saigon on the eleventh anniversary of the signature of the armistice, in which the puppet political organizations in the South were spelled out as being the NLF and the People's Revolutionary Party. 339 At the end of July, however, in preparation for a planned public statement by President Johnson announcing an increase in American troop levels, Ambassadors Taylor and Johnson discussed with Ky and Thieu the substantive content of the announcement, particularly as it affected Saigon. The draft shown to Ky and Thieu included a section on "the program of peace" that contained the phrase "for the people of South Viet-Nam—on both sides of the current contest—it will bring opportunity for an active and honorable part in the peaceful life of a freely growing society."340 In presenting the language agreed by the South Vietnamese to President Johnson, however, McGeorge Bundy included in a list of new positions the statement "an offer of hope for the Viet Cong if they will turn from war to peace."341 The Viet Cong had been implied, but not specifically mentioned, in the language agreed to by Ky and Thieu, and thus Bundy was engaging in conniving at a falsehood. Near the end of his press conference on July 28, President Johnson was asked if he would be "willing to permit direct negotiations with the Viet Cong forces that are in South Viet-Nam." His reply was:

We have stated time and time again that we would negotiate with any government, any place, any time. The Viet Cong would have no difficulty in being represented and having their views presented if Hanoi for a moment decides she wants to cease aggression. And I would not think that would be an insurmountable problem at all. I think that could be worked out.<sup>342</sup>

Ky and Thieu remained silent about this seeming contradiction with respect to the NLF between Do's four points and President Johnson's July 28 statement, but Do was led to wonder how any tenable negotiating position could be held for more than 24 hours if there were two parties engaged, more or less independently, in the drafting. For if Hanoi had to disband its puppet organizations in South Vietnam, how would the Viet Cong be represented in negotiations with the United States? But the NLF responded immediately to the opening. In a format reserved for important pronouncements, the NLF Central Committee issued a statement on August 3 that was carried almost simultaneously by Liberation Radio and Radio Hanoi on August 6 declaring that it was "useless" to negotiate with the United States while the latter continued to send troops to invade the South, while "the South Vietnamese people's sovereignty is still reserved for [the] U.S. imperialists by [the] country-selling authorities," and while the Front did not have a "decisive voice and role." The NLF was already setting preconditions for negotiating with the Americans.

Thus, the position of South Vietnam under American sovereignty changed in subtle but significant ways in 1964–1965. In preparation for eventual negotiations, a contradiction had emerged between Saigon and its American ally with respect to the participation of the NLF. But, equally significant, the gener-

als at the beck and call of the Americans were changing the character of the war. From a war to defend a legal and legitimate government against violations of the 1954 Geneva Agreement committed by the DRV, the war was becoming one simply between two parties equally guilty of aggression. For bombing the North was far different from secretly dropping commando teams into the North to encourage the population to hope for liberation, as Diem had authorized, and the war was turning into a contest to see who could inflict the most damage on the other. The Saigon government explained in a letter to the ICC that although it had limited itself to defensive measures up to then it now had to take action against the DRV's strategic bases used for training and infiltrating into South Vietnam.<sup>344</sup>

Thieu and Ky, under pressure from their colleagues in the Directorate, abandoned Diem's legal interpretation of South Vietnam's obligations under the Geneva Agreement<sup>345</sup> and started claiming that South Vietnam was not bound by the agreement because it had not signed it, a position that called into question the very existence of the ICC. Foreign Minister Do warned about the implications of this change of position to no avail. Claiming it was not bound by the agreement, Saigon could hardly hold Hanoi to its observance. As Do had foreseen, Hanoi benefited from the change because it emerged as the only party to the conflict calling for a return to the Geneva Agreement, the perfect cover for its escalation of the conflict on the battlefield.

At the beginning of August, just as Parisians were beginning their summer holiday, Ball sent an envoy to Paris to make contact with Mai Van Bo. The envoy was Gullion, who had retired from the Foreign Service in 1963 and was serving as dean of the Fletcher School at Tufts University. Gullion, from long experience of the French in Indochina, and determined to preserve the secrecy of his mission, did not go through the Quai d'Orsay; instead, he arranged to meet Bo at his apartment, where he was greeted at the door by Bo's small son, who dutifully asked for Papa. 346 The introductory meeting between the two men on August 6 was rather stiff and formal. But Gullion had the idea of taking up Dong's four points, thereby opening a dialogue with the DRV about respect for the military provisions of the 1954 armistice agreement, which had been President Kennedy's idea. The DRV's violations of Articles 10, 19, 24 and 27 of the armistice agreement had been a matter of record since 1962.<sup>347</sup> Now there was the introduction of DRV army personnel into the South as well. If Pham Van Dong wanted to talk about respect for the 1954 agreement with the Saigon government and its allies, that would be fine. Gullion had brought his version of the four points.<sup>348</sup> Bo spoke from notes. A professional diplomat, he did nothing to betray the fiction that his visitor was a private individual, like those American clergymen, professors, and journalists, all of them well meaning, who were beginning to show up in Paris to probe the DRV's position on peace negotiations, but he knew everything he said would be reported back to Washington, where it would be carefully scrutinized. Bo also was conscious that his words would find their way back to Hanoi, through a hidden tape recorder or by an actual note-taker concealed in his house, and therefore he repeated a number of doctrinaire positions.<sup>349</sup>

The second meeting between Gullion and Bo took place on the afternoon of August 13. The atmosphere was more negative than at the first meeting. Again, there was a discussion of Dong's four points, and again the discussion tended to go in circles. Bo asked Gullion whether he had seen that afternoon's edition of Le Monde, which contained the text of an interview of Ho Chi Minh by Philippe Devillers. Devillers had been in the United States and Gullion had met with him, a fact he considered related to his present conversation.<sup>350</sup> Devillers had in fact met in Washington with American officials in May and offered to contact Bo concerning possible discussions between the two sides.<sup>351</sup> In the interview, Ho said the reunification of Vietnam would be achieved by peaceful means on the basis of the free consent of the South and the North in accordance with the program of the NLF and the program of the Fatherland Front. The last phrase was a new addition to the four points. In answer to a question of whether a solution to the Vietnam problem was the responsibility of the DRV and the United States or of the NLF and the Saigon authorities, Ho answered that the four points provided a clear answer and that there was "no question of the 'Saigon authorities,' artificial creations of the Americans despised by our people and whom no one takes seriously."352

The third meeting between Gullion and Bo took place on August 18. Gullion judged it the most positive so far. He received the impression that Bo was prodding him to put forward some formulation on South Vietnamese representation in negotiations. There followed a long discussion of a modified version of the four points Gullion had given Bo at their first meeting. As Dong had made respect for the military provisions of the 1954 Geneva Agreements one of his points, Gullion's second point read that strict compliance with the military provisions of the Geneva Agreement must be achieved. This wording would have allowed the United States in the negotiations, aside from discussing South Vietnam, to raise the question of the DRV's violation of Article 4 of the armistice agreement on Cambodia as well.

At their fourth meeting on September 1, Gullion had a stronger impression than previously that Bo was fearful of getting out of line with Hanoi. He also sensed that Hanoi did not want to talk at that point.<sup>353</sup> In fact, politburo member Le Duc Tho, who was leading a delegation to Paris, met with Bo on August 26 and passed on the party center's orders to him to harden his position on Dong's four points.<sup>354</sup> The role of the NLF as spokesman for the South Vietnamese was emphasized by Pham Van Dong in a speech to the National Assembly on August 30, whose significance was quickly picked up by Hanoi watchers in Saigon. In view of the party center's decision, Bo did not appear for a planned fifth meeting with Gullion on September 7, and the two did not meet again; it would be three more years before substantive negotiations between the United States and the DRV began. Gullion's meetings were kept secret from the Saigon government.

#### AMERICAN DECEPTIONS

A suggestion by Harriman, who was serving as ambassador at large, to pick up the Bo connection again in December, during a pause in the bombing of North

Vietnam decided by President Johnson, was not followed up. 355 But Johnson wanted to launch a diplomatic offensive to emphasize his desire for peace, and he sent Harriman to a number of foreign capitals on an exploratory mission. Here the dangers inherent in the split in perception of the problem of negotiations between Washington and the embassy in Saigon became apparent. After their conversations with Harriman, Polish Foreign Minister Adam Rapacki and his entourage telegraphed their interpretation of the American position to their allies in Hanoi.<sup>356</sup> When Ambassador Lodge, back in Saigon for a second tour, saw the cables he was scandalized. Harriman had apparently assented to independent NLF participation in future negotiations, and had even not demurred at a suggestion by Rapacki (apparently first made by Jean Chauvel, who had been in Hanoi a few weeks previously) that an invitation could be extended to the NLF by the Soviets, more or less following the precedent of the invitation to the Viet Minh to Geneva in 1954.357 "It strikes at the heart of our moral position in Vietnam," Lodge cabled. 358 The main substantive result of President Johnson's well-intentioned peace initiative had been to signal to Hanoi that the Americans would, in the final analysis, accept the NLF. The South Vietnamese were sufficiently alarmed by the reports they were receiving of the American position that they sent their ambassador in Washington to seek reassurances from the State Department<sup>359</sup> and their ambassadors elsewhere on similar missions. 360 In Saigon, the Buddhist Institute's daily newspaper wrote in an editorial series on self-determination that too many foreigners, including Americans, were making statements about Vietnam's future without respect for Vietnamese sovereignty.361

The 1965 and subsequent American bombing pauses gave rise to various diplomatic initiatives, all buoyed on hope and most doomed to failure, by foreign visitors to Hanoi itself. The pitfalls were indeed numerous. As rapidly as the would-be intermediaries embarked from whichever point on the globe they began their journey and arrived in Hanoi, they discovered the reality of a country under siege and a leadership apparently inflexible on the question of negotiating with the adversary. Time and time again, the same cast of characters made appearances to greet these visitors, beginning with the Canadian Blair Seaborn of the ICC, who was entrusted by the Americans with a message for Hanoi in June 1964. The greeters were Colonel Ha Van Lau, who had been on the military commission in Geneva in 1954 and was now responsible for other war duties; Ta Quang Buu, who had signed the 1954 armistice agreement; and Pham Van Dong, also of Geneva, who gave the authoritative reply to whatever questions the visitor asked. If the visitor had a special claim, he was granted an audience with Ho Chi Minh. No matter how well briefed these emissaries were by American officials, their conversations in Hanoi led to a great deal of splitting of hairs about what had been understood, and even actually said, especially when languages such as Polish and Italian were interpreted into Vietnamese and back and when the would-be intermediaries were not too precise in their note-taking.

All this diplomatic coming and going constituted for the leaders of the DRV a precious source of information about openings they might exploit to bring

down the Saigon government by conducting a diplomatic offensive against the United States. They did not wish to humiliate the United States, they repeatedly stressed to their successive foreign visitors, further buoying the latter's hopes for "peace." In minds of the DRV leaders, the Polish government retained a place of special trust because its support of the DRV was exemplary and in its commissioner to the ICC in Vietnam it possessed a valuable potential intermediary with the Americans. Accordingly, they floated a "peace" initiative during 1966, using as a messenger ICC Commissioner Januscz Lewandowski, whom they knew well. Lewandowski had a conversation with Pham Van Dong on June 6, a report of which does not appear to have surfaced yet. Word of this conversation was given to Lodge on Lewandowski's return to Saigon by Lodge's good friend Italian Ambassador d'Orlandi. After consulting Washington, Lodge met Lewandowski himself.

Rapacki and his entourage of Vietnam specialists returned to the charge, compiling a set of 10 points that were said to be based on Lewandowski's conversation with Lodge that Lewandowski was authorized to present to Hanoi on his next visit as Warsaw's view of the American position on the war. This involved further consultations in Washington, Warsaw, and Italy. On November 25, Lewandowski presented the 10 points to Pham Van Dong. Dong requested Lewandowski to schedule another meeting with Lodge and to deliver to him, without making reference to Dong, the following message: "If the USA is ready to confirm the views expressed in the talks between Ambassador Lodge and Ambassador Lewandowski then it can do it through the DRV ambassador in Warsaw."364 At a second meeting with Dong on November 28, Dong asked Lewandowski to sound out Lodge on the American attitude toward talking with the NLF, and for Warsaw to place pressure on the Americans to halt the bombing. Dong ended this meeting by embracing and kissing Lewandowski.<sup>365</sup> It was not until Lewandowski's return from Hanoi that Lodge saw the 10 points that had been presented to Hanoi as representing the American position. Of these, the second point was the most important because it contained the phrase "the present status quo in South Viet-Nam must be changed in order to take into account the interests of the parties presently opposing the policy of the United States in South Viet-Nam," meaning the DRV and the NLF. Lodge told the Pole that, pending advice from Washington, he could say "off hand that much of what he [Lewandowski] cited was in keeping with the sprit of our policy."366 The Department maintained certain reservations about the 10 points as they had been given to the DRV, but there was not time for a thorough review as Lewandowski was pressing for a meeting in Warsaw between DRV and American diplomats without delay. The meeting was scheduled for December 6. The reason the scheduled meeting did not take place was that the American, John A. Gronouski, remained at the Polish foreign ministry instead of calling on the DRV embassy, as the latter had been expecting.

Thus the "peace" initiative, named "Marigold" by the Americans, fell through. But it provided the DRV leaders with proof that sometime in the future, when conditions were right, they would be able to engage the Americans

in negotiations for a settlement in the South. The significance of the episode is that the DRV leaders had used the Polish ICC commissioner as an intermediary to initiate exchanges with Ngô Dinh Nhu in 1963; now they did the same thing with the Americans, completely leaving aside the junta of the generals in power in Saigon.

The Americans, wishing to avoid a repetition of the flurry of South Vietnamese inquiries about the "peace" initiative of the previous December, took care to keep the "Marigold" exchanges secret from the Saigon government. It is probable that the South Vietnamese were aware of the meetings, if not of their content, for Lewandowski's visits to Hanoi were public knowledge and Lodge's and Lewandowski's repeated visits to d'Orlandi's Saigon apartment would easily have been spotted by the Saigon police. The Americans tried to keep the South Vietnamese in the dark. It was only after Lewandowski began leaking the "Marigold" story when the initiative collapsed that the State Department instructed Lodge to prepare a line for use with Ky if the latter raised questions of him. Lodge should tell Ky that the United States felt responsibility to follow up leads, although most of them did not go anywhere, and if there were any real prospect of discussions with Hanoi he would be consulted.<sup>367</sup> When "Marigold" became the subject of press speculation, the Department told Lodge the time had come to tell Ky and Do a little more about the "third-country messages" the Americans occasionally received. These countries "are on occasion drawing conclusions we do not believe warranted." If anything of real substance or importance happened, the Americans would, of course, be in touch with the Saigon government at once.<sup>368</sup> It was not until a month later that the State Department believed Lodge should give Ky a "fill-in generally." 369 The South Vietnamese continued to play dumb. Ky dropped a hint, however, telling Lodge that Catholic leaders were becoming alarmed about "peace" talk. Ky was gracious and understood it was important to try to achieve some kind of understanding without making Hanoi lose face. <sup>370</sup> The South Vietnamese read the whole story of "Marigold" in 1968 in a book published by two enterprising American journalists, Stuart Loory and David Kraslow.

In July 1967, a visitor with a special claim to Ho's friendship arrived in Hanoi. He was Raymond Aubrac, a Frenchman who had met Ho in 1946 during the Fontainebleau negotiations, when he was general secretary of the French ministry of reconstruction. He had asked Ho how he liked his accommodations, and Ho had replied that he did not like hotels and yearned for a garden. Aubrac said that his house had a large garden and Ho was welcome to use it. Ho thereupon invited himself for the following Saturday afternoon, and during that visit indicated he would welcome an invitation. Finally, Ho and four aides moved into Aubrac's house and stayed for nearly two months. Nine years later, Aubrac met Ho again, this time in Peking, and acceded to Ho's request that he stop over in Hanoi on his way back to Paris to help in difficult negotiations over French property in North Vietnam.

Aubrac took annual leave from his post as director of the Program-Liaison Division of the Food and Agriculture Organization and traveled to Phnom Penh

in the company of Herbert Marcovich, a molecular biologist at the Institut Pasteur, who was armed with orders to conduct a scientific liaison mission with corresponding institutes "in the Far East." The trip was their own idea, but it had been urged on them by a Harvard professor named Henry A. Kissinger, who had met Marcovich at a conference the previous month and had later been introduced to Aubrac. Kissinger had been acting as a consultant on Vietnam to the Departments of Defense and State, and had made fact-finding trips to Saigon beginning in 1965. Marcovich had asked Kissinger whether a visit of two French scientists to Hanoi might prove fruitful. Kissinger told Marcovich that he had no official status with respect to negotiations on Vietnam but that he thought a French mission to Hanoi would be most useful in conveying basic American receptivity to an honorable settlement of the war. He observed that the Johnson administration had become very distrustful of a bombing pause because Hanoi had used it to step up the flow of supplies to the South. Any end to the bombing, or even a pause, would, therefore, as an absolute minimum, have to include assurances that there would be no reinforcements; in other words, that the rate of supply into the South would not exceed a minimum level of what took place in the face of bombing. Aubrac had impressed Kissinger as a "calm, purposeful and confident" individual whose only interest was to promote peace. He was an international civil servant and wished to remain one. He would not let himself be used for propaganda by either side. Before he came to power, Mendès-France had tried to use Aubrac's close acquaintance with Ho, but Aubrac refused because he did not wish to act as fact-finder for an opposition leader.

After conducting their business in Phnom Penh, the pair took the ICC plane to Hanoi, carefully avoiding publicity. There, having met with Colonel Lau and Buu, Aubrac and Marcovich had a meeting with Pham Van Dong on the morning of July 24. Marcovich outlined as a private idea a two-part proposal for an end to the bombing coupled with an assurance by Hanoi that the rate of reinforcement to the South would not be simultaneously stepped up. Aubrac interrupted to say that the control problem would have to be solved and that Hanoi should make proposals. Dong replied that he had been wondering when that issue would be raised. He rejected the idea of strict controls. "We want an unconditional end of bombing and if that happens, there will be no further obstacle to negotiations," he said. After discussion of other matters, Dong concluded: "You see, dear friends, that the problem is very complicated. You may think your travels are useless. In fact you have given us much to think about." That afternoon, Aubrac had a private meeting with Ho. On the afternoon of the following day, the two Frenchmen had a second meeting with Dong at an hour that had been listed on the official program they had been given for meeting an NLF representative. Dong spoke this time from notes, making the customary propaganda speech enumerating the victories of the Vietnamese over the Mongols and since. However, when he had finished, he asked "What do the Americans want?" The conversation then returned to the question of the meaning of the term reinforcement. Marcovich observed that if negotiations went on for any length of time, the problem of reinforcement would be serious.<sup>371</sup>

#### Unrest among the Highlanders

The veteran highland Viet Minh leader Y Bih Aleo had joined the NLF in 1961. The NLF faced competition in recruiting reputable highland leaders, however, not only from the Saigon government but also from Sihanouk. In July 1964 at a meeting in Mondolkiri Province with highland leaders, Lieutenant Colonel Les Kosem persuaded them to merge their own organization with similar organizations devoted to winning autonomy for the Chams and the KKK. This was a scheme hatched by Kosem's French adviser at a time when French intelligence was setting up its base in Phnom Penh, and it fit into Sihanouk's long-standing scheme to gain influence in the highlands on Cambodia's eastern border and to reabsorb Kampuchea Krom. This was the background to the emergence of FULRO, the United Struggle Front for the Oppressed Races. The flag of FULRO was three horizontal stripes of dark blue, red, and green, with three white stars representing the Cham, Khmer Krom, and highlanders, whom the Cambodians euphemistically called "Khmer Loeu," or highland Khmer. The references in its pamphlets to "imperialist Americans" owed their origin to Sihanouk's covert support for FULRO, although Americans suspected Viet Cong inspiration and exploitation of the rebellion.<sup>372</sup>

On the night of September 19, a full-scale rebellion broke out among some 3,000 highland soldiers in camps run by the American and South Vietnamese Special Forces. The revolt was well organized, with flare signals, concerted troop movements, the hoisting of the new flag, the killing of Vietnamese personnel in some of the camps, and the taking of hostages. The rebels proclaimed themselves to be acting in FULRO's name. Their attitude toward the Americans was ambivalent, as they recognized that, because of their communications with Saigon and their command of air power, the Americans served as their main protection against the Viet Cong. The rebels announced their intention to free the highlands of Vietnamese.

The rebels intended to capture Ban Me Thuot, and they briefly took over the radio station on the town's southern outskirts on the morning of September 20. In the town they picked up Y Bham Enuol, the nominal president of FULRO who had signed a manifesto of the rebellion. In the days that followed, tension grew as the ARVN drew up plans to reoccupy the camps by assault. However, the situation was saved by the calm intervention of the American advisers on the spot, who single-handedly argued with the rebels for peace and eventually led them on a march out of Ban Me Thuot. The rebellion fizzled out; about 1,000 rebels under their leader Y Bham Enuol crossed the border into Cambodia, where they established their base at Camp Le Rolland and would remain as a source of future unrest in the highlands.

In July 1965, three battalions of FULRO troops approached Ban Me Thuot to seek an accommodation with the South Vietnamese. They brought from Y Bham Enuol written proposals for an agreement that would have allowed them to defend their villages themselves. The delegates agreed to a compromise arrangement with the ARVN commander, General Lu Lan, but this plan was thwarted by the high command.

By the summer of 1968, Sihanouk was fully occupied with his "Khmer Rouge" problem at home and had lost interest in meddling over the border in South Vietnam. Following exchanges of messages with the self-exiled rebels at Camp Le Rolland, Prime Minister Tran Van Huong signed a note guaranteeing safe passage for Y Bham Enuol and a FULRO delegation to meet in Ban Me Thuot with government officials in early August. A large delegation from Saigon, including highlander members of the National Assembly and several ministers, attended the meeting. Y Bham Enuol appeared at the Bu Prang camp with his escort of some 500 soldiers and representatives of the Cham and KKK; they were flown to Ban Me Thuot by Air America planes. The conference began on August 3, and for four days the bargaining on the highlander demands was tough. The exchanges were continued in Saigon; after Y Bham Enuol's return to Cambodia they were continued by messages. An agreement was finally reached on December 19 that would allow Y Bham Enuol to return "with honor and respect." The plans, however, fell afoul of Colonel Kosem, who was still active and determined to prevent a reconciliation between FULRO and the Saigon government. By February 1969, nevertheless, 2,017 FULRO troops had rallied to the government and were organized into Regional Force units. 373

## THE NEW MANDARIN CLASS CRUSHES A POPULAR REVOLT

In Washington, officials may have been embarrassed by the caliber of the men in power in Saigon, but to Lodge, General Nguyên Cao Ky was the Vietnamese leader he had been searching for since 1963. Not only did Ky embody the new efficiency of the younger ARVN officers, he was also highly motivated and spoke in terms of victory against the Communists. He showed he was willing to follow orders from the Americans, and to prove it he would lead his planes to bomb anywhere, even over North Vietnam, often at the risk of his life. Here at last was someone who was free of the hesitations and ambiguities of the older generals. Ky's idea of wielding political power was to threaten would-be coup makers with bombing their troops. Ky even talked like an American. Reporting his impressions to Washington after traveling with the prime minister in the countryside, Lodge wrote:

I was favorably impressed by the way in which Ky handled himself. Unlike some of his predecessors, he stands up straight, speaks without notes, and without a hat (something Big Minh could never do). He knows how to charm the crowd. I watched the faces of the people, the way they laughed at his jokes and the obvious satisfaction they took in looking at him. I have never seen a Vietnamese who had his political appeal—and I have known Diem, Minh, Khanh, and Quat.<sup>374</sup>

Ky and his fellow generals represented a class that had its precedents in the mandarins of the early days of French colonial rule. The mandarins then had seen the futility of resisting the French in the face of the collapse of legitimate rule as represented by the Hue court, so they had chosen to serve them as they had once served their emperor. In 1964 and 1965, emerging from the chaos of

street rioting that followed the collapse of legitimate authority, the generals placed themselves at the orders of the Americans. It was for them a way of still being obeyed by their countrymen, although they exercised little or no real power, which was in the hands of the Americans. Their role was to ape the Americans, to flatter them, and to cling to them as tightly as possible. In the spring of 1966, when they were faced with a major popular challenge to their rule, they even passed resolutions of gratitude for American aid. 375

The challenge came from the Buddhists of Central Vietnam, who, having tasted power without responsibility once before, thought they would be able to turn the lever against the Directorate represented by Ky and his fellow generals. The Buddhists had taken steps following the overthrow of Diem, with the demise of Decree No. 10, to bring the church up to date. A second unification congress meeting at the Xa Loi pagoda in Saigon in 1964 created the Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam. The Buddhist Institute in Saigon, a key institution acting on behalf of the Church, which was prohibited from taking part in politics, issued a communiqué on March 12 deploring the absence of effective institutions to inspire prestige at home and abroad and to settle the fundamental problems of an independent and democratic country. The communiqué recognized the validity of four points: (1) the generals and officers who had contributed to the 1963 revolution should be restored to their positions so they could take part in the reconstruction of the country; (2) the generals serving at home or abroad should return to their purely military duties; (3) the nation urgently needed fundamental institutions characteristic of independence and democracy, a National Assembly, and a government of national solidarity; and (4) the government should implement without delay what it had promised even a small part of its promises—for the revolution, particularly the social revolution related to the life of the masses.<sup>376</sup> Although couched in the customary revolutionary rhetoric, the communiqué was believed to be the work of the moderate Thich Tam Chau.

The South Vietnamese were sensitive to the fact that Generals Thieu and Ky held office at the sufferance of their military peers and without any popular mandate. In October 1965, 48 provincial council chairmen had signed a petition demanding a return to an elected civilian government. Thieu and Ky were in no hurry, knowing full well that the Americans could see no civilian leader on the horizon worthy of serious consideration.<sup>377</sup> During their absence from Saigon for a summit meeting with President Johnson in Honolulu, Lieutenant General Pham Xuan Chieu, the secretary-general of the Directorate, took it upon himself to start contacting the 80 nominees for a "Democracy-Building Council," whose names had not yet been announced, to draft a new constitution.<sup>378</sup>

Prodded by what the Buddhists called their struggle movement, the Directorate decided to move toward the speeded-up constitutional council by agreeing on March 25 to form a body composed of elected representatives of the 43 provincial and municipal councils, with an equal number of members selected from religious and social organizations.<sup>379</sup> The generals convened a National Political Congress, at which Thieu gave the keynote address; he was well received and a decree was signed providing for free universal elections for a Constituent Assembly to be held within three to five months, at which time the present government would resign.<sup>380</sup> The Buddhists boycotted the first two days of the proceedings.

The Buddhists' launching of the struggle movement coincided with a move by the generals in Saigon to charge General Nguyên Chanh Thi with deliberate insubordination and remove him from his post as I Corps commander. Because Thi was of more common origin than the other generals he enjoyed considerable sympathy, and the decision to remove him became a cause easily taken up by agitators in Hue and Danang, although it had nothing to do with the legitimate grievances expressed by the Buddhists. Lodge had heard good reports of Thi's cooperativeness and devotion to pacification by the Marine generals in I Corps who worked daily with him.<sup>381</sup> For more than a year, reports that Thi was appointing his supporters to posts in Central Vietnam had been coming in. After a two-day visit to Quang Ngai in April 1965, for example, Foreign Service Officer John D. Negroponte reported that a civilian doctor, Bui Hoanh, a Thi supporter, VNQDD member, and Buddhist, was set to be appointed province chief in place of an army officer who did not get on with Thi. Thi's men had also taken over as chiefs in four districts and as a regimental commander.<sup>382</sup>

The struggle movement evoked little response outside Central Vietnam, but by the beginning of April reports from Hue indicated that law and order had collapsed there; participation in local demonstrations included virtually all police, significant numbers of ARVN personnel, and about 1,000 of the 5,000 civil servants in the city. The radio stations in Hue and Danang, in the hands of the demonstrators, spewed out a virulent mix of anti-government and anti-American slogans. Because the Unified Buddhist Church had formed local people's salvation councils down the coast as far as Phan Thiet, the potential for trouble had spread. "Ky has had no success in placating or buying off his enemies," a memorandum to President Johnson from one who recalled a similar situation read. "The Buddhists are out to win big and will not be placated by anything short of capitulation." 383

On April 4, Ky requested the use of American aircraft from Lodge to fly troops to Central Vietnam. Lodge, who of course was anxious not to let political conflict detract from the war effort, immediately agreed. However, because of the calling of the National Political Congress, it was not until the early hours of May 15 that the troops moved into Danang, after a tense standoff. They secured the mayor's office, the radio station, the I Corps headquarters, and other military and police installations. The dissidents fell back inside several Buddhist pagodas. There was considerable loss of innocent life from sniping and tank gunfire. Total Vietnamese casualties were estimated at 150 dead and 700 wounded.<sup>384</sup> In this way, the closest thing to a popular uprising in South Vietnam was put down by the new mandarins, acting for the Americans, and order was restored to Central Vietnam.

### THE FRENCH AGAIN

French policy following the overthrow of Diem was based on the following analysis: the Saigon regime could not win the war politically or militarily, despite American support. Because it was identified as a colonialist ally of the

West, the government's attempts to prosecute the war against the Viet Cong with American support would be discredited in the eyes of the masses who were both nationalist and neutralist at heart. A breakup of the present regime and a breakdown of the war effort were thus inevitable. A neutralist regime was inconceivable unless the Viet Cong respected its neutrality, which in practice meant that such neutrality would be dominated by the Viet Cong. Therefore, it was with the Viet Cong that the West had to come to terms, in much the same way that the French had dealt with the FLN in Algeria.

Fortunately for the West, the Viet Cong, though demonstrably Communist-dominated, had strong nationalist roots and included some essentially nationalist elements. The West should contact and encourage these elements. In addition, for ethnic, cultural, and historical reasons, the Viet Cong wished to maintain their independence from China and from North Vietnam. Thus, by playing on both North and South Vietnamese nationalistic tendencies, it was theoretically possible to preserve the formal independence of South Vietnam under a Viet Cong or coalition regime and to push the North Vietnamese regime toward a kind of unavowed neutralism, which would be approved by Moscow. Thus, Chinese and Soviet hegemonic tendencies and Chinese expansionism would be curbed by an apparent Communist victory in Vietnam. The above policy could best be carried out in the framework of a general neutralization of Southeast Asia, including Thailand. American military withdrawal from the region was, of course, implicit. While the eventual success of the policy required American consent, the leading diplomatic role would be played by France. The assumption as to the nationalist/neutralist orientation of both the Viet Cong and North Vietnam was vigorously propagated in Paris by Ho's unofficial representative, Nguyên Van Chi, who was in regular contact with Edmond Michelet, a member of the Constitutional Council and former minister of justice. Michelet, in turn, had put Chi in touch with Pierre Maillard and staff members at the Elysée.<sup>385</sup>

On April 2, 1964, Ambassador Bohlen had a 45-minute discussion with de Gaulle about Vietnam. Bohlen reported de Gaulle's obvious contemptuous dislike of the South Vietnamese and their government. Throughout the conversation, the president made disparaging references to the fighting ability, morale, and general character of the Vietnamese people. He did not consider that there was any real government in South Vietnam. Diem, who had had a real government, had lost the support of his people and been eliminated. He was succeeded by someone whose name he could not remember, and now they had "this Khanh." (He had not yet heard of Ky.) He told Bohlen that the attitude of any Vietnamese government toward France was a matter of complete and utter indifference.<sup>386</sup> As for the United States, it was embarked on a hopeless enterprise. De Gaulle said that the United States had always worked against France in Indochina, which led Bohlen to rejoin that whatever may have been the impression created by the actions and statements of Americans in other periods, he could state on the authority of his having then been in the Paris embassy that this was certainly not true for the years 1949-1951. De Gaulle's ungrateful comment about the lack of Vietnamese fighting ability overlooked the 48,922 Indochinese who served under the tricolor between 1914 and 1918 on the European battlefields and included the *bataillons de tirailleurs indochinois* who fought at Fort Douaumont, the Chemin des Dames, and Saint-Dié. They were memorialized in the colonial garden at Nogent-sur-Marne, a stone's throw from the Elysée, and in the Hong Hien pagoda they had built in 1917 in Fréjus. But de Gaulle's magisterial ability to overlook almost half a century of military history from World War I to Dien Bien Phu is hardly surprising in view of his record of dismissing the whole history of the Vichy years. It was largely on the basis of such conversations that Bohlen recommended that Paris not be chosen as the site for any but procedural negotiations with the DRV.<sup>387</sup>

On July 28, a group of students, provoked by reports of de Gaulle's remarks about their country at a press conference, pulled down the French war memorial in Cong Truong Chien Si, the former Place Joffre, in Saigon, where the last soldiers of the French expeditionary corps had held a ceremony on April 10, 1956, before marching down Tu Do to board their ships. This action did not ease the government's relations with France, although it refused to make an apology, arguing that the monument was Vietnamese property.

De Gaulle paid his first visit to Indochina in 1966, and his host, Prince Sihanouk, laid on all the pomp and circumstance at his command for the occasion. The high point was a speech de Gaulle gave before a carefully assembled crowd of 100,000 in the national sports complex in Phnom Penh on September 1. The speech, which reflected Manac'h's drafting, consisted mainly of a long lecture on the short-sightedness of the United States. De Gaulle made the specific demand, possibly as a result of having received a letter from Ho Chi Minh the day before, 388 that the United States declare itself prepared "to repatriate its forces after an appropriate and fixed time." Taking his usual liberty with history, de Gaulle stressed the need for a political settlement that would "re-establish and guarantee" the neutrality of the countries of Indochina foreseen in 1954. It was obvious to all, he said, that the future of these countries could not be determined by a faraway power such as the United States; but he did not spell out how "neutrality" would apply to North Vietnam, if at all, or mention the DRV's violations of the 1954 and 1962 agreements it had signed together with France, violations which France had never condemned, or, of course, its encroachments on the soil of Cambodia and Laos, neutral states, which did not bode well for guarantees of a "neutral" South Vietnam.

Sihanouk was disappointed by de Gaulle's meager promise of aid, which he needed to fill the gap left by withdrawal of the Americans, but his self-esteem was greatly heightened by de Gaulle's holding up Cambodia as a model for the rest of Indochina. In Hanoi the speech was received with satisfaction; although de Gaulle had not mentioned the NLF by name, at least he had said that the war had revived in South Vietnam "in the form of a national resistance." The wonder was that de Gaulle's naive statements were enough to keep the lights burning late into the night in the world's chanceries as diplomats tried to decipher what the gibberish could possibly mean. De Gaulle's singular failure to address

the Vietnamese nationalists and their legitimate concerns raises questions about his grasp of the importance of the nation-state in Indochina.

By 1968, King Savang Vatthana, who had been the most pro-French of the Indochinese leaders in the immediate post-colonial period, was openly talking about the perfidy of de Gaulle. Apologizing for his "indiscretion," Savang told Sullivan that the French were the last people in the world to "lecture" others about the war in Southeast Asia. It was France that had started the war by its stupidity in attempting to re-establish its colonial control in 1945. It was France that had created the Viet Minh. It was France that lost its war and abandoned Southeast Asia. If ever a nation or a leader had a moral mandate to be silent on a subject, France had it on Southeast Asia. Morality seemed to be a word which had lost its meaning in the French language.<sup>389</sup>

While the French policy expressed by de Gaulle no longer reflected the concern for the autochthons of earlier "colonial" Frenchmen in Indochina, de Gaulle did not speak for all the French on the topic of Indochina. Many ordinary French citizens sympathized with the suffering Indochinese. In a drive lasting only 24 hours, they donated about 2 million dollars to aid Lao refugees and war victims; most of the donations were very small.<sup>390</sup> Also, some members of the French Embassy in Saigon privately expressed shame at their government's policy toward Indochina.<sup>391</sup>

## THE QUEST FOR CONSTITUTIONALITY

The Saigon government issued the promised election decree law on June 19, 1966, setting forth the regulations for candidates and voters for election of a Constituent Assembly. Lodge brought his influence to bear on Ky to reverse a technical disqualification on Phan Khac Suu's candidacy and to allow Dang Van Sung, the Dai Viet leader and newspaper publisher, who also talked in terms of social revolution, to run. Dr. Phan Quang Dan also ran. Reports from Central Vietnam also spoke during July of Viet Cong raids against the premises and persons of the VNQDD, continuing the 20-year-old struggle between these implacable enemies; in Tam Ky on July 16, the Viet Cong attacked the VNQDD headquarters, killing a number of party members. The leading VNQDD candidate, Phan Thong, lost both his legs in the attack but sent word to the province chief that he would not be counted out and intended to run. 393

On election day, September 11, 80.8 percent of the 5,288,512 registered voters went to the polls to elect candidates for 117 seats. The Americans stayed inconspicuously in the background. Voting was orderly, and there appeared to be no fraud. The voters talked freely of Viet Cong intentions and plans to disrupt the election, and they disregarded the Buddhist leaders' attempt at a boycott. The Constituent Assembly reflected regional diversity and included among its members 34 Buddhists, 30 Catholics, 10 Hoa Hao, five Cao Dai, and seven Confucianists. By profession, it included 23 teachers, 22 businesspeople, 20 members of the military, 18 civil servants, eight lawyers, five doctors, and seven farmers.<sup>394</sup>

The elaboration of a constitution took up most of the remainder of the year and early 1967. The constitution promulgated by Thieu on April 1 provided for

a system with strong presidential powers and a bicameral legislature, not that different from the American system.<sup>395</sup> The presidential election campaign lasted 15 days. The most frequently heard theme was that Thieu and his running mate Ky had compromised South Vietnamese independence and sovereignty and had needlessly prolonged the war, causing casualties by ineffectual rule and personal enrichment. (Ky had spent \$3,000,000 in American aid funds shortly before the election to renovate the Independence Palace.<sup>396</sup>) Presidential and Senate elections were held on September 3, 1967, and were relatively fair by all accounts, with 4,868,281 or 83 percent of registered voters voting. The Thieu-Ky ticket won a 34.8 percent plurality. The big surprise was the relatively strong showing of Truong Dinh Dzu, an experienced lawyer and gifted public speaker, whose ticket received 17.2 percent of the vote. In his initial speeches in the campaign, Dzu appeared no more dedicated to peace than the other candidates, although he had chosen a dove as his symbol and spoke scathingly of the government. But he quickly sensed the receptivity of his audiences to a campaign aimed at peace, and late in his campaign he developed a peace program. This program involved proposing to the United States an unconditional halt to the bombing of North Vietnam; talks between Saigon and Hanoi aimed at halting the infiltration of men and equipment into the South; talks with the United States and other allies to reach agreements on troop levels, the period during which allied troops would be stationed in Vietnam, and timing of their ultimate withdrawal; talks with the NLF; and negotiation of an international guarantee through a reconvened Geneva conference to support the arrangements reached between the parties concerned.<sup>397</sup> Other tickets in the presidential election were formed by Phan Khac Suu and Dr. Phan Quang Dan (10.8 percent), and by Tran Van Huong and Mai Tho Truyen, an old Southern mandarin (10.0 percent).

While Huong and Truyen made a poor showing nationally, they swept Saigon and did well in the city's suburbs. They also favored negotiations between Saigon and Hanoi. Thieu's platform in the campaign consisted of a nine-word slogan: "To build democracy, solve the war, and reorganize society." Huong's ran to several thousand words and was more in keeping with South Vietnamese aspirations. It contained a strong section on the rule of law to protect individual liberty and the sanctity of the family. Launching his campaign before an audience of religious leaders, members of the Southern landed gentry, professional men, lawyers, doctors, university professors, and journalists, Huong uttered these words:

Once the people have lost confidence, the government has no more authority and must count on force. If the government must count on force because it has lost authority, then the state will have lost the moral foundations of self-defense, development and self-determination; such is the basic psychological fact concerning Vietnam today. Only communism can move into such a moral vacuum.<sup>398</sup>

The Senate elections on the same day elected 60 senators. Elections for the 137 seats in the Lower House were held on October 22, completing the National Assembly. 72.9 percent of registered voters chose from 1,172 candidates

for the Lower House. Catholic candidates made a particularly strong showing, winning 35 seats; Buddhists won 52 seats and the remaining 47 seats were divided among other religious groups. Thirty-two deputies were Northerners, 44 were from Central Vietnam, and 59 were Southerners. Among those elected was Ho Huu Tuong, the 57-year-old former Trotskyite. The election of 1,400 local officials the previous spring and summer completed the attempt to restore sovereignty to the people.

With the inauguration of President Thieu and Vice President Ky on November 1, 1967, the fourth anniversary of the first coup, the second Republic of Vietnam came into being. Nguyên Van Thieu was born of humble origins on December 24, 1924, in Tri Tuy hamlet, Thanh Hai District, near Phan Rang in ancient Champa, the youngest of seven children. He attended primary school in Du Khanh hamlet and received a traditional upbringing, where his father stressed the Confucian virtues of filial piety, righteousness, loyalty, courage, respect, magnanimity, sincerity, earnestness, and kindness. He was an excellent student in high school, studying French and English. Thieu had memories of being bombed by American planes when the Japanese occupied his village in 1945 and of joining a rescue team to sift through the rubble for survivors. Shortly before the end of the war, Thieu joined the Viet Minh, who for a time made him a youth leader and later a district chief in his native Ninh Thuan Province. He questioned Communist doctrine and was warned he was on a list for assassination. He fled to Saigon and enrolled in the first officer class of the military academy of the State of Vietnam. In the service, he earned a reputation as a bright, skilled, and ambitious officer. He married a Catholic in 1951 and in 1957 was himself baptized. However, he never joined the Can Lao; he joined the Dai Viet instead. As a colonel commanding the 5th Division, he was instrumental in the attack on the Gia Long Palace in Saigon on November 1, 1963, which was to come to haunt him.399

In his inaugural address, Thieu talked of his peace plan:

Many times we have made it clear that we want nothing more than the withdrawal of North Viet-Nam's aggressor troops and an end to their subversion and terrorism in South Viet-Nam. Peace will then be restored immediately.

Thieu said that, as in 1954, members of the NLF could now make a choice: those who believed in Marxism could freely return to the North, while those who shared the ideals of freedom and democracy could remain in the South.

> I will make a direct proposal to North Viet-Nam's government to sit down at the conference table in order that the governments of South and North can directly seek together ways and means to end the war. 400

The United States was represented at the inauguration by Vice President Hubert H. Humphrey. A meeting at the palace was the occasion for Humphrey to warn Thieu bluntly that the Vietnamese would have to make significant changes if American support was to continue. Thieu started to reply, but Humphrey interrupted: "Perhaps I haven't made myself clear." Thieu was not used to being lectured by visiting foreign politicians, and Humphrey's impolite remark must have reminded him of Taylor's question to him, Ky, Thi, and Cang at the embassy on December 20, 1964, "Do you all understand English?" The meeting with Humphrey left a lasting impression on him, as did the lukewarm support for his proposal for negotiations between the South and the North from the Americans.

# The Tet Offensive and the Start of Negotiations

Beginning in 1965, the DRV began to invite selected Americans to make brief and carefully planned visits to Hanoi. Among those who were candidates were journalists, since the DRV had been closed to American journalists since 1955. The large number of American journalists covering the war in South Vietnam were ruled out, but the press department of the DRV foreign ministry had in hand a stack of visa applications from journalists abroad. In December 1966, the DRV decided to invite an influential American journalist, apparently with the aim of recording civilian damage and casualties from the bombing at a moment when the raids were close to Hanoi. The choice fell on Harrison Salisbury of *The New York Times*.

Salisbury was taken on guided tours, on which he was escorted, according to Swedish diplomats, by the Australian Communist agitprop agent Wilfred G. Burchett, 402 although he did not say so. One of the highlights of his visit was an interview with Nguyên Van Tien, the "delegate" in the NLF's "embassy" in Hanoi. Salisbury's report of the interview was printed on the front page under the headline "Aide Says Liberation Front Is Independent of the North."403 In a separate but related development, Salisbury had a four and one half-hour interview with Pham Van Dong, who displayed something of Diem's love of monologue. Dong showed a rare bit of anger when he rejected the idea that the North wanted to "annex" the South. No one in the North, he insisted, had this "stupid, criminal" idea in mind. 404 Dong's comment showed two things: first the confidence of the party leadership in being able to reunite Vietnam primarily by political manipulation; and second the degree to which the party's strategy depended on the instrumentality of the NLF, the efficacy of which was shortly to be put to the test.

The party center made a new evaluation of the situation in the spring and early summer of 1967. Militarily, the strategy of committing large units to direct attacks against the ARVN and American troops, which had been employed in the 1964–1965 and 1965–1966 winter-spring campaigns and which was associated with General Nguyên Chi Thanh, the head of COSVN, had proved costly in men and matériel. DRV army units, equipped with new arms landed at Sihanoukville, had tangled with the Americans and their helicopters in the Ia Drang valley in November 1965, and had been badly bloodied. The buildup of American forces that took place in 1966 made the prospect dim indeed that the strategy of direct attacks using main force units could succeed, and by the be-

ginning of 1967 American forces were mounting large-scale search-and-destroy operations against traditional base areas such as War Zones C and D, forcing the Communists to seek safety in Cambodia, away from the population centers. General Thanh himself died in the summer of 1967. And the war had been carried to the North in the form of American bombing. Clearly, on military grounds alone, there was a need for a new strategy.

After eight years of effort and sacrifice, the party seemed to be failing in its mission of liberating the South by reliance primarily on political methods. It had failed to exploit the chaos in South Vietnam in 1964, 1965, and especially in 1966, when it had been hoping for big results. 405 Its use of subversion and coercion had largely failed. When Tran Bach Dang, one of the Communists in the NLF, told a COSVN meeting that, while the party's proselytizing and mobilizing efforts with the Saigon intellectuals, students, and Buddhists had met with brilliant success, a similar effort with the workers "was not worth shit (*xe qua*)," he was severely reprimanded and removed from his party position. 406 In fact, the South had a flourishing labor movement with more than 200,000 trade union members that proved to be virtually impervious to Communist penetration.

The ongoing constitutional developments in South Vietnam, forced by popular pressures, boded ill for the party's ongoing efforts to boost the image of the NLF, an organization that had yet to demonstrate any popular following to buttress its claims to legitimacy. If the party waited too long, leaders might emerge who would command a greater measure of Southern popular support than Thieu, Ky, and their military cohorts. If the Hanoi regime was to maintain its traditional independence of decision-making from its Soviet ally (when President Johnson met Soviet Premier Kosygin at Glassboro, New Jersey, in 1967, and sought his help in Vietnam, he was unable to get anywhere), its growing dependence on its Chinese ally, in the face of the prolongation of the war and the economic dislocation due to the American bombing, would be an adverse factor. These developments argued for a renewed effort to smash the Saigon regime once and for all.

On the diplomatic front, the party had achieved some success in Communist and some non-aligned countries in promoting the NLF as an independent entity. The DRV continued to maintain publicly, in the face of all the evidence to the contrary, that its army was not engaged in the South, but the visible presence of Northern forces in the South was known in world capitals. The massive violation of the sovereignty of Laos and Cambodia required to keep these Northern forces supplied and up to strength, while camouflaged to the extent possible, was a continuing embarrassment. Prince Souvanna Phouma drummed on this theme, with documentary proof to boot, in his speeches at the United Nations and elsewhere abroad, and he still commanded respect in spite of the party's efforts to portray him as an imperialist lackey; Prince Sihanouk was an uncertain element, in the party center's view, and could turn against the DRV at any moment. The most positive factor diplomatically for the DRV was the American bombing of the North. In September 1967, in the debate in the General Assembly of the United Nations, 45 countries called for a halt to the bombing; only the countries with troops fighting in South Vietnam expressed unreserved support for the American position, a proof of the effectiveness of the DRV's propaganda.

We may assume that this problem of strategy taxed Le Duan's mind heavily. What to do? Falling back on the experience that he knew best, the war against Bao Dai and the French, he had to plan a military campaign that would be of large enough scope to produce a psychological shock on the battlefield and then immediately use this shock to engage the enemy in negotiations in which the party would have the upper hand in order to win political concessions of lasting value. Yet, a replay of Dien Bien Phu and the Geneva conference appeared not to be in the cards. In particular, American air power represented a powerful deterrent to adopting a strategy based on the siege of fixed positions.

#### "GENERAL OFFENSIVE GENERAL UPRISING"

By June 1967, a solution to the problem appears to have been sketched out, at least in broad outline, and couched in the terms of a collective party decision, as was the leadership's habit. The DRV's diplomats abroad were recalled to Hanoi to receive new instructions, which was only the second time this had occurred. The Americans had encountered no success in their efforts to open negotiations with Hanoi behind the backs of those in power in Saigon, but the party had taken the measure of these attempts and was well aware of what was possible on this front. The problem was to create the appropriate circumstances in order to avoid the trap of having negotiations lead into the blind alley of some sort of standstill cease-fire that would result in the legitimization of the Saigon authorities. In this kind of strategy, the American airmen captured in raids over North Vietnam could prove to be a valuable bargaining chip.

The DRV's security forces began a campaign to weed out those officials who favored concessions to obtain a negotiated settlement, as well as other "peaceniks." In the autumn, over 200 party members accused of dissent were arrested, including Hoang Minh Chinh, the superintendent of the party's school of political studies, Colonel Le Trung Nghia, the director of the DRV's intelligence agency, the deputy chairman of the state science committee, and the chief of the finance section of the ministry of light industry. The standing committee of the National Assembly enacted a secret decree designed to eliminate domestic opposition to the regime's plans for the conduct of the war.<sup>407</sup>

In an article published in *Nhan Dan* and *Quan Doi Nhan Dan* in mid-September, since celebrated as a "blueprint" of the coming offensive, Defense Minister Giap spelled out in scarcely veiled terms its principal objectives. The article called for an attack against urban areas in the South coinciding with an uprising among the Southern population. Accordingly, the targets would be the ARVN and Saigon's administrative structures. With aid and encouragement, the South Vietnamese people and ARVN units would stage a mass uprising, thereby toppling the Saigon regime. In these circumstances, the American forces in South Vietnam would not dare to use firepower indiscriminately against Communist forces hidden behind the popular shield and would be compelled to negotiate with a new coalition government their withdrawal. The change in targeting from the Americans to the ARVN was the single most significant aspect of the plan concealed in Giap's article.

Giap's article also contained an oblique assurance to the Chinese, who were advocating a strategy of patience and protracted war, that the American reaction to the offensive would be strictly limited both geographically and in terms of the military instruments (in other words, no atomic weapons) deployed. Finally, the element of surprise was crucial to the success of the offensive, and in this regard it turned out that Giap and his colleagues had decided to follow the example of Nguyên Hue in his attack against the Chinese occupiers of Hanoi at Tet 1799; the offensive would be timed to start during the holiday, the Tet Mau Than, at the end of January 1968.

In preparation for the offensive, the NLF repeatedly broadcast during September its political program, which guaranteed freedom of religion, of thought, of association, of movement, and of work. It particularly appealed to South Vietnamese officers and officials to defect, promising them a warm welcome. In December, the embassy had to issue a statement denying that a secret meeting between Ambassador Bunker and an NLF representative had been thwarted by the police; the alleged meeting concerned an exchange of prisoners, and accounted for the resignation in protest of national police chief General Loan. 408 The denial was not believed by many, and the Saigon press gave prominent coverage to the story. 409 Also, a captured Viet Cong agent claimed to have been authorized to open a negotiating channel with the United States. At the same time, rumors, probably spread by Viet Cong agitprop agents, swept through Saigon that by some sort of pre-arrangement the United States had secretly agreed to a coalition government. In January, General Hoang Xuan Lam, the I Corps commander, received a letter from the NLF chairman for Central Vietnam stating a desire for peace, denouncing the American "invaders," and expressing a desire to talk with Lam. The circumstances of delivery of the letter spoke for its authenticity, but the intention behind it was murky, and it was treated with the usual caution. 410

A Viet Cong form revealed preparations by the NLF for a four-part survey of each block, ward, and precinct in Saigon. The first part covered the location of streets, major buildings, police stations, and checkpoints; the second part listed families and their social class; the third recorded the names of South Vietnamese officials and other opponents; and the last section of the survey identified families whose members were active in South Vietnamese political organizations and the attitudes of these individuals toward the Viet Cong. At the same time, arms, many of recent manufacture that had been delivered under fresh aid agreements with China and the Soviet Union, were smuggled into the cities and concealed.

With preparations for the military and political aspects of the coming offensive under way, the DRV launched a diplomatic offensive timed to precede the coming military offensive, with the objective of opening negotiations with the United States. The DRV communicated with the Americans through the Rumanian deputy foreign minister, Gheorghe Macovescu, who visited Hanoi on December 14–18. American air strikes were going on in the immediate vicinity of Hanoi during this time; in other words, the war was finally coming close to the party Central Committee headquarters, the offices of the security

services, and the other institutions without which the party center would not be able to function. Macovescu had meetings with Prime Minister Pham Van Dong and Foreign Minister Nguyên Duy Trinh, following which the Politburo met on the morning of December 18. That afternoon Trinh met again with Macovescu and read from a prepared text. Eleven days later, in a speech at the Mongolian Embassy, Trinh changed the formula concerning the DRV's conditions for opening negotiations with the United States.

Since January 28, 1967, this formula had been that a halt to the American bombing "could" lead to negotiations. Now Trinh stated that "after the United States has ended unconditionally the bombing and all other acts of war against the DRV, the DRV will hold talks with the United States on questions concerned." The statement was broadcast in English by Radio Hanoi on January 1, 1968. To make sure the significance of Trinh's words was not lost, the DRV chargé d'affaires in Vientiane called on Prince Souvanna Phouma at 10 that morning to invite his attention to the statement; the prime minister asked the chargé to cable Hanoi for clarification of the time frame for beginning peace talks and told the Americans of the conversation, offering to act unofficially as an intermediary if requested. 411

On January 3, the United States ordered a stop to bombing within five miles of the center of Hanoi until further notice. Two days later, Macovescu visited Washington and met with Secretary Rusk and Harriman, President Johnson's ambassador at large, who had previously met with Rumanian Foreign Minister Ion Gheorghe Maurer. Macovescu told the Americans he had presented their viewpoint on negotiations to Dong and Trinh. This was that the United States was ready to cease bombing if, within a reasonable period of time, the DRV would come to serious and productive discussions/negotiations and if the DRV would not take advantage of the bombing halt to increase its infiltration into the South. At their meeting on December 18, Macovescu said, Trinh read the DRV position as he subsequently stated publicly, and in answer to Macovescu's questions had shown flexibility in discussing Dong's Four Points and had indicated that their acceptance was not being held as a precondition to negotiations. Macovescu also reported that there was no mention in Hanoi of involving the NLF in the discussions, although his interlocutors obviously reserved the right to raise the NLF as part of the discussion of the Four Points. 412 After this meeting, Macovescu returned to Hanoi, where he stayed from January 22 to 28; he told Trinh that he believed that the minimum conditions had now been created to stride forward on the road to negotiations.<sup>413</sup>

The South Vietnamese and Americans made little or no preparations in advance to defend against the offensive, for several reasons. First, they misread the references in Giap's article to the failure of the Americans to obtain a quick victory to mean that a protracted war, rather than a sudden offensive, was to be expected. Second, they did not believe, on the basis of the evidence available, that the South Vietnamese in the cities would stage an uprising against the Saigon government, and so the Communists' talk of such an uprising lacked credibility. But partly the failure to prepare to defend the cities was due to the

fact that the Americans, unaware of the change in the Communists' planned targeting, were expecting the Communists to try to make the siege of Khe Sanh (which began in earnest in mid-January) a modern Dien Bien Phu, and they prepared to prevent this at all costs. As it turned out, this represented a Communist success in terms of deception, although Giap paid a heavy price for it.

In the final months of 1967, the ARVN and the Americans engaged the Communist main force units in a series of battles on the borders of South Vietnam with Laos and Cambodia. In the American command's view, these engagements proved the correctness of the strategy of pushing enemy forces deeper into the jungles and mountains and using American forces to provide a shield for the densely populated coastal areas of South Vietnam, where the slow work of pacification continued against the local Viet Cong infrastructure. The strategy was conceptually sound, as it deprived the Viet Cong of main-force support, but it left the cities open to sneak attack by infiltrating forces.<sup>415</sup>

At Qui Nhon on January 28, the local military security service received from agent sources several reports concerning secret meetings of Viet Cong cadres in the city. During a cordon and search operation at two of the meeting places, the service apprehended 11 enemy cadres, both male and female, and seized from their possession two tape-recordings. The tapes contained an appeal to the local population to take up arms and overthrow the government. They also announced that "the forces struggling for peace and unification" had already occupied Saigon, Hue, and Da Nang. Upon interrogation, the cadres disclosed that Communist forces were going to attack Qui Nhon and other cities during Tet. After listening to the tapes, Lieutenant Colonel Pham Minh Tho, the province chief of Binh Dinh, alerted ARVN troops in Qui Nhon and then played the tapes over the telephone to the JGS headquarters in Saigon.

Starting at 9:45 A.M. on January 30, Radio Saigon announced the cancellation of the Tet truce, which had gone into effect throughout the country except in I Corps (where the situation around Khe Sanh remained threatening) at 6 P.M. on January 29. However, with many of the ARVN soldiers visiting their families, many units were only at half strength. Beginning at about 3 A.M. on January 31, as families were celebrating the Tet holiday, Communist forces launched coordinated attacks all over South Vietnam. By the end of the day, 27 of South Vietnam's 44 provincial capitals, five of its six autonomous cities, 58 of its 245 district towns, and more than 50 hamlets had been attacked. Although most of these assaults failed to penetrate the defense of these urban centers, the Communists either infiltrated or fought their way into Saigon, Quang Tri, Hue, Da Nang, Qui Nhon, Nha Trang, Kontum, Ban Me Thuot, My Tho, Can Tho, and Ben Tre. In most cases, the Communists were driven out within two or three days, but very heavy fighting continued for some time in Kontum, Ban Me Thuot, Can Tho, and Ben Tre, and in Saigon and Hue the battle was protracted.

The Communists concentrated on destroying government installations, command centers, radio stations, air bases, lines of communication, and prisons. Two weapons used for the first time in the attacks were PT-76 tanks and 122-mm rockets. The forces that conducted the initial attacks were all local

units, including sappers and infrastructure units. Their mission was to capture and hold designated targets until reinforcements could move in from outside the town. Accompanying attacking elements were political cadres who were assigned to coax the local population into rebellion. For example, the Viet Cong planned to capture alive the commanders of the 7th and 9th ARVN Divisions in the Mekong Delta and force them to order their units into submission, but they were foiled. The Communists' targeting of prisons led to a government decision in the immediate aftermath of the offensive to transfer important Viet Cong prisoners and hardened criminals to the penitentiary on Con Son island, the former Poulo Condore.

In Saigon, the principal objectives were the Joint General Staff headquarters, the Independence Palace, the American Embassy, Tan Son Nhut air base, Radio Saigon, and navy headquarters. Except for Tan Son Nhut, the primary unit of the attacking forces was the C-10 City Sapper Battalion, with a strength of 250, consisting entirely of men who had been living under cover in Saigon as *cyclopousse* or taxicab drivers or in other occupations. The battalion's orders were to attack and gain control of these objectives and hold them for 48 hours.

At the JGS headquarters, the mission was to occupy the general officers' quarters and capture alive those generals found at home or detain their family members as hostages. The platoon that arrived by bus to break through Gate No. 5 was distracted by the presence of a U.S. Military Police jeep and was caught in an exchange of fire, which resulted in the failure of the mission. The unit assigned to break through Gate No. 4 at the same time, the 2nd Battalion (Go Mon), arrived late along the railroad track but penetrated the gate and swarmed inside the large compound. The attackers overran the Armed Forces Language School and the quarters of the JGS Headquarters Company. Although the defense was light, the attackers dug in instead of expanding their control, apparently misled by signs into believing they were in the general headquarters of the armed forces. They were overcome by the arrival of two airborne companies. At noon, President Thieu, who had returned in haste to Saigon from My Tho, landed in the JGS compound by helicopter and convened a meeting of his cabinet.

At the Independence Palace, a 34-man platoon of the C-10 Sapper Battalion attempted to crash through the main gate, but it was repelled by the presidential guard and police and had to take refuge in an unfinished high-rise building across the street, where, over the next few days, all but two of its men were killed. Three blocks away along Thong Nhat Boulevard, a similar suicidal attack was staged at the new six-story chancery building of the American Embassy, which had been completed at the end of 1967. The sappers used satchel charges to blow a hole in the reinforced concrete wall along the sidewalk at 2:45 A.M. The two leaders of the attack were killed almost immediately in an exchange of gunfire with MPs in which two MPs were killed. The other attackers, who had been serving as porters, failed to use their satchel charges to gain entry to the chancery and instead spent their time returning fire amid the large circular flower tubs on the lawn. By 9:15 A.M., the attack was over and the embassy

was declared secure. All in all, 17 of the 19 attackers were killed and five Americans were killed.

In the attack on Radio Saigon the sappers disguised themselves as field police troopers and rapidly overwhelmed the squad defending the downtown audio and recording studio. The chief of the transmitter station, located at Quan Tre several miles away, immediately switched off the lines to the studio and used a standby studio to broadcast recordings without any interruption. Listeners thus heard nothing abnormal on the air waves. By 7 A.M. paratroopers had recaptured the main studio and it was functioning again; it started its regular daily program with Vice President Ky's broadcast to the nation.

At navy headquarters on Bach Dang Quay, the attack was short-lived; it ended as soon as it began at 3 A.M. The ill-fated attacking squad of 12 sappers rode in two passenger cars. The cars were stopped at a checkpoint and 10 of the sappers were killed in the ensuing exchange of gunfire. The two others were captured and disclosed that their orders had been to take command of all ships moored alongside the quay and use them to transport people from other areas to Saigon to take part in the uprising.

The Viet Cong attack on Tan Son Nhut air base was resisted by paratroopers who had been awaiting transport to I Corps and other troops, who were joined by American troops. The three attacking battalions were driven back, leaving 300 dead at one of three gates assaulted.

Despite the failure to capture and hold their six major objectives, the Viet Cong had penetrated several other areas in the vicinity of the capital. They occupied the Phu Tho race track to the west and were to attack the nearby Chi Hoa prison complex, but were unable to do so because they lost contact with their two guides. The Viet Cong also put up fierce resistance on the northern outskirts of the city in their attempt to cut land communications with Bien Hoa and Vung Tau. The Viet Cong captured 12 105-mm howitzers at a base at Go Vap, but the defenders had disabled them before withdrawing and also the headquarters of the ARVN armor command, where they failed to commandeer any armored vehicles as they had planned.

The Viet Cong infrastructure was vital to the Communists' plan. Many of the agents surfaced during the attack and performed subversion. Some of them had passes to government and American installations and curfew passes. They served as guides and informants in areas under Communist control, identifying government officials, policemen, and military officers. They also acted as propaganda agents.

By the second day, as many as 15 Viet Cong battalions had been introduced into the Saigon area, Cholon, and Gia Dinh Province. They occupied a northern suburb of Saigon, the 7th and 8th precincts in Cholon, the Phu Tho race track, and parts of a few city blocks in Saigon itself. They broke down into small elements, taking shelter in people's homes, organizing defensive positions in high-rise buildings and even in the An Quang pagoda and the nearby children's hospital, awaiting the main force reinforcements they had been promised.

In Hue, the situation had been tense for some time prior to the offensive due to the pressure on Khe Sanh and reports of DRV troop concentrations north of Quang Tri. The attack on Hue was therefore not entirely unexpected. Lunar New Year's Day passed uneventfully, however, until 3:40 the next morning, when the Communists struck with a fierce preparatory fire of 122-mm rockets and 82-mm mortars. The attacking forces initially consisted of two infantry regiments, two sapper battalions, and one artillery battalion, assisted by sappers already in place within the city. One regiment attacked the headquarters of the 1st ARVN Division, located at Maung Ca post in the northern corner of the citadel, and the other the MACV compound, the Thua Thien sector headquarters, and the police headquarters on the opposite bank of the Perfume River. At the time of the attack, the only troops present in the city were the headquarters troops at Maung Ca. Two kilometers southeast was an armored cavalry squadron at An Cuu, and 17 kilometers northwest along Route 1 was an airborne battalion. The closest American troops were at Phu Bai, 8 kilometers southeast, where the 3rd Marine Division had its headquarters.

The battle for Hue was long and drawn out, and its tide was symbolized by the flag fluttering from the tall pole at the southeast wall of the citadel, first Republic, then NLF, then Republic again. During their month-long occupation of parts of the city the attackers freed some 2,000 prisoners from the municipal prison, most of whom served as coolies or combat replacements. They also proceeded to set up their own administration in the city. The man chosen to be mayor, who was later tracked down and arrested by the government, turned out to be a former chief of the Hue police, who had been involved in the Buddhist insurrection two years earlier.

The local Viet Cong infrastructure with ruthless efficiency had compiled lists of government officials. According to accounts of survivors, the first thing the Communists did was to divide the city into areas and put each area under the control of a revolutionary committee. All inhabitants were required to report to and register with the revolutionary committee of their area. They were also to turn in all weapons, ammunition, and radio receivers in their possession. After registering, they were left to return home. During subsequent days, many were asked to report again and were never heard from again. Later information revealed they had been ordered to dig "shelters." When the Communists were driven out, most of these mass graves were discovered after diligent and systematic searches. Those within the city limits, such as those on the campuses of the Gia Long and Gia Hoi high schools and in the vicinity of the Tang Quang Tu pagoda, were found early on. But several others would never have been discovered had they not been pinpointed by Viet Cong defectors. These were located in outlying areas such as the forests surrounding the tombs of Emperors Tu Duc and Minh Mang.

The killing of some 3,000 people in Hue by the Communist occupation force was one aspect of the general offensive that DRV officials did not like to talk about. When Richard J. Barnet visited Hanoi in 1969 as a representative of the Lawyers Committee on American Policy towards Vietnam, he requested

information about it. He was promised documents, but they were never forth-coming. Perhaps these officials were embarrassed by Barnet's questions about whether the killings had been carried out as part of a program of political reprisals or whether they occurred in a battlefield situation. They were perhaps too vivid a reminder of the latent violence that underlay the NLF program, especially the clause that authorized its members to severely punish the brutal die-hard agents of the U.S. imperialists. An American reader might have supposed that this punishment might have involved some sort of fine or imprisonment.

On February 26, the Communists were finally driven out of Hue. After being forced onto the defensive, the ARVN fought gallantly and continued to fight well despite persuasive appeals from the Communists to surrender. A case in point was the 81st Ordnance Company, which, with only 80 men, sustained combat for 15 days to safeguard its stock of 1,400 M-16 rifles and found a way to remove them before its compound was overrun by the enemy. In other areas, the Regional Force and Popular Force troops also resisted valiantly until they ran out of ammunition and had to withdraw. The ARVN casualties were 213 killed and 879 wounded. American casualties were 53 killed and 380 wounded. Communist casualties were counted in the thousands. On the part of the civilian population, however, the losses in both human and material terms were extremely heavy. Approximately 80 percent of the houses near the citadel had been destroyed. In addition to the hazards of war, the people of the city suffered from food and water shortages and from the smell of putrefying corpses. 418

#### PUBLIC OPINION ON TET

From the American point of view, the conventional wisdom has been that the general offensive general uprising of 1968 was a military defeat but a political victory for the Communists. The aberration of the Communists' only major effort to capture an American target in the offensive, their attack on the American Embassy in Saigon, resulted in the biggest psychological shock of the offensive, which was felt mainly in the United States. The embassy attack brought home to Americans that no place in South Vietnam was completely safe in this kind of war. At a deeper level, it served to lend some credence to Giap's propagandistic statements about a protracted war that might last another 10 or 20 years. This shock was particularly acutely felt among American policymakers, among whom the first hints of a possible defeat began to emerge, since it was clear that American forces in South Vietnam were stretched thin and might have to be increased even further; this was the effect produced by the actions of 19 enemy supporters.

From the South Vietnamese point of view, in contrast, the failure of the general uprising represented a major political defeat for the Communists. Like a cold breeze, a member of the Saigon security forces has written, the offensive seemed to awaken them from a lethargic slumber. Everybody became sober and alert, fully aware of what was at stake. It was a moment of truth. Initial bewilderment and terror gradually gave way to consciousness and self-assurance. Even though the war had stepped into their hitherto secure habitat, and after

meeting face to face with an enemy whom they had so far only heard about through all sorts of myths, the urban people still kept their faith intact and never even thought of defeat.<sup>419</sup>

The popular mood verged on overconfidence. People rushed about to avoid being caught in crossfire, but they never panicked. Perhaps in their fleeting contacts with the Viet Cong they had not been impressed. They had seen in those young and plain peasant faces nothing but innocence and immaturity, and they suddenly felt a strong surge of compassion and pity. They had seen that these troops were fighting without the support of artillery or tanks. And, unconsciously, they made a comparison and came to the conclusion that it was most unlikely that the paratroopers, the Marines, and the Rangers could ever be subdued by peasants. No, they were convinced that the Republic could not lose the war, especially considering the presence of the Americans.

As their homes were turned into battle positions behind which the intruders had entrenched themselves, the urban population suddenly became conscious of their duties to defend not only themselves but their nation. There were many instances reported in which during the fighting ordinary persons pointed out Viet Cong hideouts to the authorities, or even, as happened in Hang Xanh District, Gia Dinh, villagers attacked suspected Viet Cong with sticks and captured six of them. Thus, the idea of self-defense gradually took shape and became stronger. It was a neglected feeling that had not surfaced for a long time. Dissent disappeared as if by magic. All those who professed to be opponents of the regime suddenly found all polemics hollow, almost ridiculous. They felt the need to contribute constructive ideas to steer the nation away from possible demise.<sup>420</sup>

When American installations were not attacked, other than the embassy, the population recalled the rumors of a secret deal between the Viet Cong and the Americans to install a coalition government; now these rumors had proved false. In the same manner, during the Peloponnesian War, rumors of a secret arrangement to betray Athens had been lent credence by the citizenry. A surprising number of Vietnamese, including some at middle levels of the government and military, apparently believed, or pretended to believe, that there had been collusion between the Americans and the Viet Cong, according to a survey of public opinion. The survey found difficulty in pinpointing the reasons for these suspicions. Those who held them often had clearly been influenced by the heavy dose of Viet Cong propaganda about the "puppet government" before the onset of the offensive, or by recent stories in the Saigon press about secret dealings between the embassy and Viet Cong emissaries. In other cases the beliefs appeared to spring from a general suspicion of American intentions and objectives. No doubt the widespread perception that nothing happened in Vietnam unless the United States government wanted it to happen played a part. 421 A similar survey in the provinces revealed a polarization of feeling about the war and a demand for tougher measures against the Viet Cong, particularly in towns that had suffered much destruction. 422

The first action taken by the JGS after the initial shock of the offensive was to conduct an emergency operation to clear the enemy from Saigon, the symbol of governmental authority. As an expedient to assemble enough forces for the effort and to set an example, it was decided to turn all staff and service personnel of the JGS into combat troops with the exception of a few key staff elements, and the chief of the JGS personally took command of the relief forces. Several battalions were thus activated overnight, and it was truly an unprecedented sight to see colonels and majors acting as platoon leaders and company grade officers carrying rifles as simple privates. In Saigon and in other cities, servicemen on Tet leave reported to city garrison headquarters anxious to get back to their units. Because of a shortage of transportation, the JGS authorized all sector headquarters to employ these servicemen for immediate combat duty in their home towns until security had been restored.

In addition to such measures of expediency, the JGS, pending passage by the National Assembly of a general mobilization bill, recalled to immediate active duty 65,000 retired servicemen who had less than 12 years of service. This bill was passed on June 15 and signed into law on June 17. By this law, the draft age range was extended from 18 to 38 instead of the then current range of 19 to 39. Those who belonged to the 17 and 39–43 age classes were required to join the People's Self-Defense Forces, which came into being in April. This removed an obstacle to manpower procurement that had been maintained by the Assembly. Under the new law, the IGS estimated that the armed forces would receive an additional 268,000 men by December. What it did not expect was that three months ahead of schedule nearly 90 percent of that quota would have been met. The popular response to mobilization was unprecedented, and it overwhelmed processing and training capabilities. By September, 240,000 draftees had beaten the deadline by volunteering or reporting to draft centers ahead of schedule. Most remarkable was that a majority of these draftees were urban youths. The surge of volunteers was such that basic training had to be reduced from 12 to 8 weeks.

Nowhere in South Vietnam had the people risen up to support the NLF, not even in towns that had formerly been Viet Minh bases such as Qui Nhon. NLF Secretary-General Nguyên Van Hieu's 1962 statement that "we represent only the will of the people of South Vietnam"423 had been contradicted by the failure of the general uprising to take place as planned in 1968. This represented as close a test of the NLF's claims to stand for a program of peace and progress as any. The "will of the people of South Vietnam" turned out to be something completely different from what the party had predicted. Even with the full force of its attacks, the NLF had not been able to generate as much revolutionary fervor in the cities of the South (or to sustain that fervor for as long as) the Buddhist struggle movement in Danang and Hue in 1966, which had been completely non-Communist. The South Vietnamese people, indeed, informed by what they had seen with their own eyes, had read about in their newspapers, and heard about on their radios, had concluded that the NLF did not stand for peace but for war; not for prosperity but for destruction; not for independence but for dependence; not for neutrality but for participation on the side of the

anti-imperialists; and not for democracy but for class struggle. There was anger that the Viet Cong had reneged on their promise of a seven-day Tet truce. Viet Cong propaganda suffered a further credibility gap when it broadcast reports of destruction of specific targets in the city that the people could see with their own eyes were false. The conclusion was inescapable: the party had seriously misread the opinions of the people in the South. As had happened so often before, its dogmatic acceptance of Marxist-Leninist theory, in which the real feelings of the people counted for little, had shut out Vietnamese reality.

A memorandum bearing the signature of Bay Hong, the code name of Pham Hung, the high-ranking party functionary who had taken over as leader of COSVN after General Thanh's death, which was circulated just a few days after the offensive had been set in motion, tried to hide the full extent of the failure by asking for even more sacrifices. Following usual Marxist-Leninist practice in which the party is far-sighted and above blame, the failure was attributed to such technical factors as insufficient efforts at proselytizing, lack of continuity in propaganda, and interruption of communications. The memorandum then emphasized:

The primordial thing we have to understand is that our General Offensive General Uprising has been conceived to defeat a stubborn and reactionary enemy who has more than 1.2 million troops, all equipped with modern weapons. Ours is a strategic offensive of long duration, which consists of several military campaigns and popular uprisings intended to shatter every enemy counterattacking effort. As such, it has to be an extremely arduous fight.

We must continuously attack the enemy and deny him the chance to rest and to reorganize. We must attack the enemy repeatedly, three or four times if need be, in those areas under contest, and we must not withdraw just because we fail in our first effort.<sup>424</sup>

In the wake of Tet, the DRV began drafting students for the first time. Writing long afterward, General Tran Van Tra, the commander of the NLF forces at Tet, gave this verdict:

Our shortcomings and weaknesses were that we were not able to destroy a significant number of enemy forces and their top leaders. The operations were not effective enough to lend leverage to the people's uprising. Mass organizations and proselytization forces were not adequate to encourage the people to rise up en masse.<sup>425</sup>

Two photographs taken during the Tet offensive illustrated better than words the differences in perception of the war between the South Vietnamese and the Americans. In Hue, a U.S. Marine Corps photographer on February 24 caught Sergeant P. L. Thompson sitting on the throne in the royal palace, his legs casually crossed, his rifle at a 45-degree angle, in a posed photograph that, to my mind, sums up the meaning of the battle and the war; the symbols of sovereignty here, so lacking in drama, would scarcely be considered worth no-

ticing if they had not been preserved in an official archive for future generations to ponder. 426 The second photograph, filled with drama, like Browne's photograph of Thich Quang Duc five years before, had immediate impact on public opinion. During the fighting at close quarters in Saigon, General Nguyên Ngoc Loan, the chief of police, was caught by Eddie Adams of The Associated Press shooting a Viet Cong prisoner in the head. Americans viewed the photograph as an example of summary justice meted out by an unpopular and corrupt Saigon government. The background was known only to the Vietnamese, however. The man in the photograph had used children as a shield so his Viet Cong squad could withdraw under fire. Some of the children had been killed, and when he saw their bodies, General Loan was filled with anger. One Vietnamese who witnessed General Loan's action said later when he read the American news reports "I had the feeling that they [the Americans] didn't understand the reality of the war."427 Loan held no grudge against Adams for the outcry that resulted, and when the two men met a few days later charitably pretended the incriminating photograph had been the work of a Vietnamese photographer. Years later, Adams attended Loan's funeral and expressed regret for the fact his photograph had been misunderstood and had caused difficulties for Loan.<sup>428</sup>

# OFFICIAL CONVERSATIONS IN PARIS RETWEEN THE UNITED STATES AND THE DRV

The first phase of the offensive clearly began to abate during the first week of March. A respite, no matter how brief, was needed by the battered Communist forces in which to prepare for the next phase. It was during this respite that the DRV made its next move on the diplomatic front toward achieving its immediate objective of opening negotiations on favorable terms with the United States; such negotiations would form an important part of the party center's strategy for annihilating the nationalists in South Vietnam and in Indochina.

President Johnson announced on March 31 that he was ordering a halt to bombing north of the 20th parallel. The immediate vicinity of Hanoi was not being heavily bombed at the time, and in any case the navigational station atop Phou Pha Thi had been lost on March 11 to DRV commandos who scaled the cliff on the west side, thereby eluding the "highly trained and experienced" force that Sullivan had promised would ensure the security of the outpost against attack. The Americans manning the station defended themselves as best they could with the individual weapons they had been issued the week before, but they were soon overwhelmed. General Singkapo, who had been the commander of the Pathet Lao forces assigned to the area of Phou Pha Thi, later declared that some injured Americans were captured at the site and sent to North Vietnam in accordance with standing policy. 429 Although President Johnson's announcement did not entirely meet the DRV's demand for ending "unconditionally the bombing and all other acts of war against the DRV," even insofar as that half of the territory under the administration of the government in Hanoi was concerned, the DRV responded on April 3 that nevertheless the DRV was "prepared to send its representative to meet and to determine with

the U.S. representative the unconditional cessation of the bombing and all other acts of war against the DRV, so as to start the talks."<sup>430</sup>

Foreign Minister Tran Van Do, on a mission in Wellington as observer at the annual SEATO ministers' meeting, was outraged that the Republic of Vietnam had not been consulted about the American decision. 431 Ambassador Bunker's instructions from Washington reflected the stock the Americans, and particularly Harriman, placed in preserving the secrecy of their contacts with Hanoi. Bunker had informed Thieu on January 20 only in the most general terms of American probes of Trinh's public statement of December 29, without revealing the Rumanian contacts. Bunker told Thieu that there existed a distinction between the contacts to explore Hanoi's position or possibly to set up any serious discussions and the discussions themselves. This was a distinction that the Vietnamese would readily understand. He assured Thieu that "any further decision will be a matter of full consultation with you and with our Manila allies." To this, Thieu expressed no reservations. 432 It was the violation of this engagement that infuriated Foreign Minister Do. The administration faced embarrassment once secret contacts abroad became public because the South Vietnamese had 500 foreign correspondents living in their capital, many of whom were in close touch with their bureaus in Washington and elsewhere around the world, and who were under no obligation to keep reports of such contacts secret from the South Vietnamese.

After numerous exchanges about a suitable venue, in which Phnom Penh and Warsaw were rejected by the United States, the two sides agreed on Paris, and the foreign ministry in Saigon issued a communiqué saying it agreed on a partial cessation of the bombing of the North as a first step toward negotiations. The agreement on the venue coincided with an upsurge in the fighting as the second phase of the Communists' general offensive opened on May 5 with attacks on Saigon and other cities. Again, the targets were South Vietnamese government installations, and the tactics used by the Communists were the same. All ground attacks ceased on May 12, but they were followed by the fiercest rocket attacks on Saigon to date. These were Chinese-made 122-mm rockets, which, fired from improvised earthen launching pads, were extremely inaccurate. Many of the rockets fell in Khanh Hoi, the docks area of Saigon that had been bombed by the Americans in 1944, and other slum areas. During 12 days of rocket attacks in June, more than 100 civilians were killed and more than 400 were wounded.

Unable to prevent his ally from accepting the DRV offer of talks, Thieu had the foreign ministry issue a communiqué agreeing to a partial bombing halt as a first step toward the opening of talks. As the framework of such talks had not yet been clarified, Thieu ordered Acting Foreign Minister Pham Dang Lam to set forth the government's position to Bunker. The government agreed with an American reply to the request for a meeting with the government of Hanoi for exploratory talks. In the first phase, the United States should only listen to Hanoi and report. When Hanoi made proposals, the United States should merely report these proposals to the government and other allies before reply-

ing. The reply to Hanoi's request for total cessation of the bombing of the North should provide for reciprocal actions by Hanoi. The government wished to have their point of view considered in connection with an agreement for total cessation of bombing. For the duration of the talks, there should be close liaison and consultation with the government, which wished to be present at the site of the talks, with a government liaison officer being kept fully informed. The United States should avoid positions which could create difficulties for South Vietnam. It should be made apparent in the eyes of the world and South Vietnamese public opinion that all decisions were being taken in close consultation with the government. In reporting this position to Washington, Bunker commented that "I would hope that we could go as far as practicable in assuring GVN [Government of Vietnam] that we would not convey substantive answers on major proposals made by Hanoi without consultation with GVN and other allies." Up to that point, the Americans had not even given the South Vietnamese an assurance that a liaison officer could be present at the site of the talks.

The official conversations, as the talks were called, opened at the International Conference Center on the Avenue Kléber on Monday, May 13. The American delegation was led by Harriman; that of the DRV by Xuan Thuy. It was obvious from the start that discussion of a halt to the American bombing of the North might lead to discussion of the situation in the South. Indeed, the DRV's April 3 statement had implied that there would be a start to talks on other, unspecified "problems of interest to both sides" after a bombing halt went into effect, and the highest levels of the American government were anxious to find out what Hanoi would offer in terms of the war in the South in exchange for a cessation of bombing. French diplomatic channels had already confirmed that the NLF expected to enter the negotiations; in a letter dated April 5 to the French ambassador in Phnom Penh, Louis Dauge, the NLF's Nguyên Van Hieu had replied to questions submitted to him by the former, notably saying that "the NLF is not concerned with this stage of talks," but was concerned with the following stage "when [the] fate of South Vietnam is discussed."

The Saigon government's position, quite reasonable in the circumstances, even overlooking the South Vietnamese participation in the bombing of the North, was that while the bombing of the North was a proper matter for discussion between Washington and Hanoi, the appropriate parties to discuss the situation in South Vietnam were the Saigon and Hanoi governments. The Americans, from their side, had also broached the possibility that participation in the talks might be expanded. At their meeting on January 6, Secretary Rusk had given Macovescu a written statement for transmission to the DRV stating that "obviously it will be important at an appropriate time, in conjunction with the serious discussions, to accommodate the interests of all parties directly concerned with the peace of Southeast Asia."

Almost from the start, the official conversations entered areas of the constitutional and political situation prevailing in the South. Feelers put forth by the Americans to try to determine what Hanoi would commit itself to in exchange for a bombing halt inevitably got into discussion of such matters as the presence

of DRV troops in the South, the status of the DMZ, and troop withdrawals from the South. Harriman talked grandiloquently about "one man, one vote," as if the problem were to eliminate voter registration fraud in New York electoral politics. At the session of May 20, the DRV delegation elaborated on the April 3 formulation by stating that "the two parties then [i.e., after a bombing halt] will hold conversations on the questions that would seem to them should be raised, that is, questions relative to a political settlement of the Vietnamese problem, on the basis of the 1954 Geneva accords."

During April, the government in Saigon made a maximum effort to concert its position with the United States and its other allies (South Korea, Thailand, Australia, New Zealand, and the Philippines). Thieu realized that the Americans would be making more demands on his government as the exchanges with Hanoi proceeded, and saw these allied consultations as a form of protection, not entirely adequate in view of the fact these governments were subject to American pressure, but at least providing some insurance against the most flagrant violations of the sovereignty of a state that had diplomatic relations with some 60 foreign countries. Ambassador to Washington Bui Diem arrived in Paris as Saigon's liaison officer and issued a statement saying "The Government of the Republic of Vietnam, as a government elected democratically and in accordance with the constitution of the country, is the only legitimate representative of the South Vietnamese people. No other political grouping, no gathering of subversive elements, can lay claim to this title."<sup>437</sup>

But as the talks in Paris got under way, Thieu faced mounting concern and unhappiness in the National Assembly over the fact that the government was not a participant in the official conversations. By May 14, 70 lower-house deputies had signed a request for a debate on the Paris talks. The veteran independent legislator Ho Huu Tuong opened the debate by noting that Vietnam had been at war for nearly a quarter century. Several deputies urged the recall from Paris of Bui Diem's liaison mission. Among these was Tran Ngoc Chau, who later was arrested as an agent of the party center. Le Van Dien, a former Can Lao member from Central Vietnam, said "Our allies say one thing and do another" and urged a campaign of street demonstrations to oppose the lack of respect for Vietnamese sovereignty. The Saigon press, however, saw in Tuong's position a tinge of defeatism that could open the way to a coalition government.

Thieu was hoping for a state visit to the United States that would bolster his standing at home and in Paris. He wanted to address a joint session of Congress and issue a joint communiqué that would reaffirm the American commitment to South Vietnam. American officials pointed out that the major difficulty in enhancing the Saigon government's prestige was the DRV's refusal to deal with it. In this situation, publicly proclaiming Saigon as "the spokesman" for "our side" would not accomplish the purpose, as Hanoi might very well respond by designating the NLF as the spokesman for their side. It was preferable, they thought, for the American delegation to word its statements from the outset in the sense that they were at the table because they had come to help the Republic of Vietnam defend itself, thus laying the groundwork for

later references to "those countries assisting the GVN [Government of Vietnam]," or "as a country assisting the GVN, we believe, etc." By this kind of wording, they thought, they could build up the position of Saigon without running into problems with the NLF. Once Saigon was at the negotiating table, there would be time to work out "which of us says what most effectively on each issue."

Le Duan soon sent one of his trusted lieutenants, Le Duc Tho, to Paris to join the DRV delegation as special adviser to Xuan Thuy; he arrived on June 3. Soon after Tho's arrival, Xuan Thuy's formal statements began emphasizing the illegality and illegitimacy of the Saigon government and its institutions, as well as the competence in all matters of the NLF. Tho's presence meant that private contacts at a high level could go on simultaneously with the exchanges over the conference table at the Avenue Kléber that began each Wednesday morning at 10:30, which dealt with laying out each side's position on the origin and causes of the war. The tea breaks in these sessions, in which the delegates chatted informally, afforded the opportunity of such contacts. It was noticeable that these tea breaks grew longer as time went on.

At the tea break on June 19, which lasted about 40–45 minutes, Harriman and Vance sat with Tho and Thuy. The Americans complained about the escalation of the fighting in the South since March 31. Tho rejoined that what happened militarily in the South was beyond the control of the diplomats in Paris; it was an objective fact that had to be recognized. Harriman and Vance said that the infiltration of DRV troops into the South had reached an all-time high in May and it had become necessary to increase defensive air attacks. Tho said "That underscores what I said about the objective military facts being beyond our control here. There has never been a settlement of military matters without agreement first on a political solution." Thuy added that he hoped it would be possible to find a good solution. Harriman and Vance said they shared this hope. 441

The growing length of the tea breaks had not gone unnoticed in the Independence Palace in Saigon. By coincidence, on June 19, 90 lower-house deputies signed a petition to place the question of peace and negotiations on its agenda. Although the debate was generally calm and constructive, it reflected the prevailing uncertainty about American intentions. The deputies decided to recommend to the government that it seek clarification on a number of points. The most important from their point of view were the absolute rejection of any coalition government, the need for a time limit on the Paris talks, and the demand that the talks be stopped if the attacks on the cities of the South continued. The deputies also recommended that the government request the United States (1) to affirm that any elections in South Vietnam should be carried out by the legally elected government of the Republic of Vietnam according to the constitution; (2) to declare that it will continue to support the government against Communist aggression; (3) to make clear that the Paris talks were only preliminary in nature and that the government would play the principal role when peace talks occurred; and (4) to affirm that the United States understood that the government would not accept an imposed, unacceptable solution to the

war.<sup>442</sup> The Assembly's recommendations were in many ways a throwback to the resolutions passed at the National Congress of October 1953, where American support had also been in doubt.<sup>443</sup>

At this point, Bunker questioned the restrictive guidelines he had received regarding his briefing of Thieu and the allies on the private talks between Harriman and Vance and their DRV counterparts. He said he understood the reasons for not describing these in detail to the allies but felt that a distinction should be made with respect to the top Saigon leadership. Withholding the substance of the private exchanges would only increase suspicions. "As I have said before, we can bring along the GVN leadership on these talks if we are frank and forthcoming with them." Harriman replied that the Saigon leadership could be briefed on the June 19 tea break, with the exception of Tho's remark on agreement first on a political solution. He added that the delegation did not believe it was desirable to call undue attention to it until they were able to determine its meaning more clearly. 445

The State Department agreed with Harriman and inquired anxiously whether the delegation had included Tho's "enigmatic comment" in the briefing they had given Ambassador Bui Diem. If so, the Saigon embassy should take the position that "we do not repeat not really see its significance." In other words, the instructions were to play it dumb. There was no thought given to asking the South Vietnamese for their views on the significance of Tho's remark. In the future, the delegation was to append to its reports on the private meetings its recommendations on what portions could be passed on to Saigon and to the allied ambassadors. Harriman and Vance were instructed to probe the meaning of Tho's remark at the tea break on the following Wednesday. The Department perceived an implication that Tho was "inviting us to move to substantive discussions at least on a tea break or private basis even without the bombing being stopped."

Looking ahead to the time when the talks would be expanded to include the Southerners, the Americans had latched onto a simple formula that avoided for Saigon the problem of dealing with the NLF, which was explained to Thieu and his advisers in a series of consultations that began on May 2. This came to be known as the "our side, your side" formula, under which the American and Saigon delegations would be referred to as "our side" and the Hanoi delegation and whatever other individuals the Hanoi delegation brought to the conference table would be referred to as "your side." Thieu, with great hesitation, accepted this formula but, reluctant to shock public opinion with the prospect of his government's meeting with the NLF, did not make his acceptance public. For the Americans, Thieu's acceptance represented "an important step forward since the alternative to this formula might well be a break-up of the talks."448 Harriman now tried to "nail down" Thieu's acceptance. 449 At their next consultation meeting on June 25 with Bunker and his deputy, Samuel D. Berger, Thieu, Ky, and Tran Chanh Thanh, a lawyer who had been at Geneva in 1954 as an observer and who had now replaced Do as foreign minister, discussed this formula at some length. There were frequent protracted exchanges in Vietnamese, the Americans noted. Ky summed up: "If we were men of principle we would refuse such an arrangement, but as practical men and realists we must accept." The Americans concluded that Thieu's government accepted the formula with the understanding that it would play the major role on "our side" and that Hanoi would be present on "your side."

There was also some discussion of an eventual cease-fire, with Thanh, using the language from Geneva 1954, saying that areas where Communist forces were stationed should be considered provisional regrouping areas rather than zones of administration. Logically, the cease-fire line should be the 17th parallel, Thanh said. Bunker suggested that in the future they schedule a regular consultation meeting each Friday. They agreed that their next meeting be devoted to a review of "elements in the Geneva Accords that might apply to a settlement and international guarantees of [a] peace settlement."450 Thieu and his advisers felt that if the political situation was going to be placed on the conference table in Paris for negotiation, his side should at least have some juridical basis on which to stand, and that basis was most appropriately the terms of the 1954 accords. As the successor to the French high command, which had signed the armistice agreement with the Viet Minh, the Republic of Vietnam had a right to expect that the terms of the armistice agreement would be respected by both sides, implying a withdrawal of foreign military forces and bases and mutual non-interference in the administrations in each zone pending reunification of the country.

At the next tea break, on June 26, Vance, in Harriman's absence in Washington, presented to Thuy and Lau a "Phase A, Phase B" formula for discussion of the bombing cessation and what would follow. The formula had been suggested by Soviet Ambassador Zorin at a courtesy call on Ambassador Sargent Shriver two days earlier. It obviously came out of consultations between the DRV and the Soviets. Thuy reacted favorably to the Americans' suggestion that future discussions of the proposal be conducted in secret sessions, possibly at locations outside the Kléber conference hall.

The American position on the validity of the 1954 accords had been ambiguous for years. The accords had figured sporadically in the State Department's thinking, paradoxically as a result of the DRV's often repeated claims (1) that it was observing their terms, and (2) that they constituted a basis for settlement, as phrased in Pham Van Dong's four points of 1965. Gullion's discussions with Bo in Paris in 1965 had, notably, revolved around a possible restoration of the 1954 accords, but this approach had not subsequently been pressed. In a long telegram drafted by William Bundy, the Department sent its working analysis of the 1954 accords to the Saigon embassy. Listed under "central principles" were observation by both sides of the provisional demarcation line at the 17th parallel pending reunification; separate administration of the two zones pending reunification; withdrawal from South Vietnam of all foreign troops, including those of the North; the prohibition of foreign bases; a cessation of hostilities; international supervision adequate to deter violations; and reunification after the restoration of peace. There was a long discussion about

withdrawal of foreign troops. "Both of us [the Republic of Vietnam and the United States] agree flatly that NVN [North Vietnamese] military forces are totally subject to withdrawal," the Department wrote. At some point, it added, the DRV might raise a demand for war reparations, but that demand would be resisted and countered. 452

In the consultation meeting on June 28, Thanh read a statement. "We consider the Geneva Accords of 1954 as mainly a military agreement, not a political settlement. There are some political clauses but they are in the Final Declaration and not in the body of the agreement." With respect to withdrawal of foreign forces, Thieu indicated this was based more on individual loyalties than on formal unit designations. "It's all one army," he said. "Regular forces, regional, provincial, local guerrillas. They are all in the enemy army. We do not wish to make a distinction between the liberation army and the NVA. Both Northerners and Southerners can stay if they accept the constitution. Hanoi cannot ask us to send back to the North Northerners who wish to stay. Southerners who wish to go north are free to do so."453 This was a policy effectively responding to the DRV's propaganda claim that as Vietnam was one country the North had a right to send its soldiers into the South; Thieu's statement pointed out the contradiction between the DRV's claim to respect the 1954 accords and its claim to have a right to send troops into the South. In point of fact, by 1968 recruits entering the liberation army were about 50 to 75 percent Northeners because of the heavy losses suffered in the general offensive.

Thieu and Thanh did not question Bunker about his presentation on the meetings in Paris, from which he had omitted, on instruction, any mention of the Soviet role. The "Phase A, Phase B" formula was described to Thieu as foreshadowing a possible agreement on what might follow a bombing cessation and would only go into effect once the bombing had ceased. The Americans also decided among themselves not to keep Bui Diem in Paris informed about the private meetings;<sup>454</sup> Rusk was urging him to establish contact with the DRV delegation, and the Americans feared that such contacts might produce evidence of leaks about what the Americans and the DRV had discussed at their private meetings.

Thieu continued to show interest in the question of the 1954 accords as they applied to the present situation, and at the opening of the July 9 consultation meeting he suggested that they continue discussion of them. He also said at the meeting's conclusion they would like to talk at the next meeting about a cease-fire and what portion of the 1954 accords were applicable to a new settlement. From Paris, Harriman was encouraging Bunker to use the consultations to get Thieu to face up to his government's own responsibilities and to start thinking about the situation once American and DRV forces were withdrawn from the South. He also argued that the United States had to retain maximum flexibility, and the embassy should make efforts "to keep the GVN from expecting more from [the] USG than we will deliver." It had not been lost on the DRV delegation that Bui Diem had to visit the American Embassy, where Harriman and Vance had set up shop, each day to gather what tidbits he could on the progress of the official conversations; the Americans did not go to him.

The Americans had informed Thieu that a visit to the United States on the scale he was contemplating was out of the question. "A state visit with any real length or exposure would involve hostile demonstrations that would negate its image value both here and in SVN [South Vietnam]," a cable to Bunker read. 457 In its place, a summit meeting between the two presidents was arranged in Honolulu. In the communiqué issued on July 20, Presidents Johnson and Thieu affirmed that the Republic of Vietnam "should be a full participant playing a leading role in discussions concerning the substance of a final settlement" and should consult with one another and with their allies. At the same time, opponents of the Saigon regime who agreed to renounce force and to abide by the constitution were guaranteed a place in the political process. 458 Thieu's national security adviser, Nguyên Phu Duc, later wrote how he obtained William Bundy's acceptance of the definite article "the" to precede the phrase "leading role" in their drafting of the Honolulu communiqué, but how, when they had taken the draft to show Dean Rusk, Bundy had been overruled. The Americans did not allow themselves to be moved by the logic advanced by Duc and Foreign Minister Thanh, and Johnson's undoubted charm played a part as well in disarming the arguments of the South Vietnamese. But Duc suspected that underlying Rusk's refusal was an American design to negotiate with Hanoi an extrication from the war.459

#### THE ENTRY OF THE NATIONAL LIBERATION FRONT

The size of the DRV delegation in Paris grew from an original 35 to 72 by the beginning of July. By August, the DRV delegation's public statements at the Avenue Kléber were demanding that the United States recognize the NLF and discuss matters relevant to South Vietnam with it. At the same time, the tempo of the private meetings again picked up. These developments coincided with the third phase of the Communist general offensive, for which preparations, including a record high infiltration rate, had been detected months in advance, and which began with utter predictability on August 17. It was a concerted effort simultaneously in the I, II, and III Corps areas. The attacks were by artillery rather than by ground forces. Also, there were no plans for proselytizing in this phase; the "general uprising" objective had been dropped.

The party center calculated that at the expense of a small loss of credibility among the people of South Vietnam large gains could be achieved on the diplomatic front. It should have been no surprise that the South Vietnamese, having just suffered the onslaught of the Communist offensives in February and May, should have been unwilling to accept the prospect of the NLF as a partner in a "peace government." Beneath the propaganda, what the Communists meant by "peace" was obviously a situation in which their nationalist opponents had all been disarmed and their foreign allies had been bound by a negotiated agreement to stand aside while the Communists assumed control peacefully. Far from succumbing to war-weariness, the Southerners emerged from the attacks more determinedly anti-Communist than ever. To compensate for this unwelcome development, and in an attempt to blur public perception of the NLF as

warlike, the party created yet another front organization, the Alliance of National, Democratic, and Peace Forces, composed of bourgeois intellectuals led by lawyer Trinh Dinh Thao, which was highlighted for a time by Communist propaganda but then faded from the scene. The DRV's good faith in these maneuvers was further undercut by the release by the royal government of Laos of a white book in Paris in July documenting the DRV's violations of the 1962 accords. He DRV's propaganda harped on the theme that the warlike Saigon government was the main obstacle to peace, a simple thesis aimed at American public opinion with the object of bringing pressure to bear on the American delegation. The party also counted on the help of the French.

The Indochina policies of France, the host country of the official conversations, were now firmly in the hands of Etienne M. Manac'h, the director for Asia and Oceania at the Quai d'Orsay. A Breton socialist, since assuming his position in 1960 Manac'h had gained control over the ministry's channels of communication to Southeast Asia as well as a guiding hand in shaping the public views of his foreign minister by providing him with the information upon which the French official position came to be based. Most important, he had acquired an influence over de Gaulle (whose ideas about Indochina were naive in the extreme) through having drafted the latter's convoluted statements in 1963 and 1966 and having brought the negotiations to the French capital, thereby adding luster to the president.

Manac'h's journal is full of self-congratulatory observations of the fact that France had a policy of its own and a role to play in the outcome in Indochina and was not acting in the matter of the talks between the United States and the DRV merely as a neutral bystander. Reading his journal, indeed, one has the distinct impression the writer is an adept at the ideology of wars of liberation, whether from reasoned conviction or from his barely concealed anti-American sentiments. Manac'h professed to believe firmly in the sanctity of the struggle for national liberation in South Vietnam and the worthlessness of the Saigon government. In his view, the Saigon government was totally dependent on its American sponsors and certainly would one day come to its senses and drop the burden of continuing to support it. The inconvenient government in Saigon would disappear, he believed. When that happened, the NLF would have a large role to play in determining the future of South Vietnam, as it should.

Instead of sending an official note to the consulate general of the Republic of Vietnam—it would have been normal diplomatic practice to inform a friendly concerned government of the host country's arrangements for the conversations—Manac'h contrived to ignore the representatives in Paris and instead sent a verbal message with Nguyên Quoc Dinh. Dinh, who had attended the 1954 conference and lived in Paris, had been invited by Foreign Minister Do in March to visit Saigon in order to share his views of the attitudes of de Gaulle and other French officials and private citizens toward the Saigon government. This obvious slight was Manac'h's way of showing the Saigon government that the French government considered it unworthy of formal dealings and in particular did not intend to jeopardize its snug relations with Hanoi by

making any written commitments. For whatever it was worth, the verbal message was to the effect that France sincerely desired the friendship of the South Vietnamese, based on France's sense of moral obligation to the anti-Communist South Vietnamese, who had fought for and with the French and held French citizenship. France had cultivated the friendship of Ho and other DRV leaders in an effort to counterbalance the Chinese Communist influence in Hanoi (a statement that Manac'h certainly would not have wished to see find its way to Peking). To attain influence in Hanoi, the French government had given the DRV information on American attitudes toward it and on American determination to continue the war despite growing anti-war sentiments among the American people. The French government had also cautioned the DRV against overestimating the degree of influence on President Johnson exerted by external and internal pressures. The French government offered Paris as a site for peace talks and was prepared to take all necessary measures to ensure that the Saigon government had all necessary facilities and that its delegation was not harassed by hostile street demonstrations.461

The Saigon government issued a communiqué on May 4 gamely stating the hope that the French government would follow the traditional policy of a third state entrusted with a good offices role and that it would be "strictly impartial to both sides."462 Manac'h continued to treat the Saigon government as a pariah and from the start smoothed the way for the DRV to introduce the NLF into French diplomatic corridors. At a meeting on May 4 with embassy officials, he claimed that his government was under pressure from Hanoi to authorize the opening of an NLF press office in Paris. He proceeded to point out that all the allies of the United States were presently represented in Paris and that his government, if requested, would authorize Saigon to send a liaison officer to Paris. Pursuing this non sequitur, Manac'h asked whether in the substantive phase of the talks the United States might find it "useful" to have NLF press representatives in Paris. The Americans replied that they had no new instructions since Manac'h had raised the subject with them the previous autumn and that at that time they had been strongly opposed because it would add status to the Viet Cong. They did not know of any change in the position, but they suggested that Manac'h raise the subject with Harriman when the latter arrived in Paris in a few days' time. 463 Whether Manac'h did this or whether he acted on his own initiative I do not know, but on May 14 he informed John Gunther Dean, the embassy officer responsible for liaison with the French on the Vietnam negotiations, that visas had been granted to two NLF officials waiting in Prague. 464 Dean was not duped about where this would lead.

At the first procedural meeting Colonel Ha Van Lau and Nguyên Minh Vy proposed that the official conversations be limited to citizens of the United States and the DRV, and Cyrus Vance and Philip C. Habib of the American delegation accepted this. Dean understood the ambiguity inherent in this formula and pointed it out to the French. 465 The DRV's constitution affirmed the territorial unity of Vietnam; at the same time, the DRV affirmed the competence of the NLF to be the sole authentic voice of the people of South Vietnam.

The reality was that NLF representatives were to be invited to Paris by the French government, with the concurrence of the head of the American delegation, on the grounds that it would be "useful." Australia's observer at the Paris talks, Ambassador David Anderson, made representations to Manac'h to delay the arrival of the NLF, but to no avail.

Manac'h's actions were consistently on the side of the NLF. He sent assurances to Nguyên Van Hieu in Phnom Penh regarding French agreement to the opening of the NLF information bureau, precursor of the NLF delegation, then apologizing for a few days' delay; facilitated the issuance of necessary entry visas in their DRV passports by French embassies in Moscow, Algiers, and so forth, and of residence permits, press passes, and so forth in Paris; intervened in the debate within the French government over the question in order to bend protocol to allow the NLF delegation to fly the NLF flag at its villa and on its car; channeled letters of credence, even when they were couched in propagandistic terms; and made appointments for them with the secretary-general and the minister, all the while keeping the busy minister informed by a stream of notes on significant current developments. In October, when a breakthrough in the official conversations seemed to be imminent, Michel Debré was on a visit to Washington and Manac'h sent him a message suggesting he gain the ear of President Johnson for agreeing to deal with the NLF as an independent entity in the coming phase. Manac'h had scruples, however, about appearing to be the NLF's advocate and signed the name of Hervé Alphand, the secretary general of the Quai, to his telegram. Johnson did not take the bait.

The speculation about a breakthrough was accompanied by a battlefield lull occasioned by the withdrawal of Communist units across the borders for refitting. Manac'h told Debré that an embassy officer had intimated to him that this might be sufficient to bring about a cessation of American bombing, and Harriman was obliged to intervene to correct this false impression. 466 Frenchmen of Manac'h's ilk, in addition to their contempt for Americans, harbored a superior sense of Vietnamese subtleties that they believed enabled them to perceive significance where others could not. There was nothing subtle in the propaganda the DRV churned out, and Manac'h had long granted its delegate general in Paris, Mai Van Bo, this privilege, allowing him to hold press conferences to state that "American aggression has contributed to the political and moral unity of the country."467 He did draw the line, however, at allowing the French Communist Party to organize street demonstrations in favor of its NLF comrades, not out of fear of the kind of violence that had shaken the capital in May, but because he thought such demonstrations would afford the Americans an excuse to demand the negotiations be shifted to a more neutral site. When the French government allowed a Hanoi-sponsored war crimes tribunal, of which Colonel Ha Van Lau, a member of the DRV delegation, was a key figure, to hold public meetings in Paris and the equally pro-Hanoi International Association of Democratic Lawyers to hold a convention in the city in which the United States appeared certain to be denounced for its aggression in Vietnam, the Department instructed the Paris embassy to lodge a stiff protest. 468

Manac'h recorded his frequent lunches and dinners with the DRV and NLF representatives, where he dropped a bon mot here, a word of advice there. It was largely due to Manac'h's influence that a French television crew was stationed in Hanoi, and its frequent presentations on the eight o'clock evening news broadcasts were favorable to the DRV. Mai Van Bo commented that his government gave the French crew all the help it could, adding "after all, we are very encouraged in this by the Quai d'Orsay."469 Manac'h took obvious pleasure in his renewal of acquaintance with the NLF leaders whom he had met in Phnom Penh in September 1966. He regarded them as hardy guerrilla fighters rather than the VIPs that they actually were, protected from danger by large security forces in their Cambodian hideouts when they were not being wined and dined in world capitals. In contrast, he wrote that he attended a reception where he was "obliged to welcome Vice President Ky in the name of the Quai," a chore made somewhat less disagreeable by the figure of Madame Ky. On occasion his partisanship led Manac'h into logical contortions. Having received a telegram from the French consulate general in Saigon citing an AFP dispatch that the NLF flag was flying on the villa in Le Vésinet where Madame Binh had taken up residence and asking how this should be explained to the Saigon government, Manac'h coolly replied that the French were obliged to treat all four delegations with impartiality. As France had not recognized the NLF, it was considered to be a "private collectivity." If the "Saigon authorities" objected to the flying of the NLF flag, it would lead France to treat it not as a simple emblem but as the symbol of sovereignty.<sup>470</sup> Discussing his effort to persuade skeptical members of the government to allow the NLF to fly their flag on their car, Manac'h reported gratefully a comment made to him over lunch by the journalist Olivier Todd, who observed "Why not? The Pantin football team flies its own emblem." The scene was so bizarre as almost to defy imagination. Manac'h explained his decision to recommend rejection of a request by the Republic of Vietnam to re-establish diplomatic relations on the grounds that to do so at that delicate juncture might upset the negotiations; as this feeble excuse shows, he had not forgiven Saigon for the cavalier manner of the break in 1965. 471

Whether Manac'h, with his undeniable intelligence, genuinely believed that the NLF, behind all its superficial emblems of autonomy, exercised a real independence vis-à-vis Hanoi or whether he was just playing along is difficult to judge. Not all foreigners were prepared, like Harrison Salisbury, to accept the independence of the NLF. Sainteny, who admired the DRV leaders without harboring any illusions about the glory of wars of national liberation, drew from two conversations he had with Tran Buu Kiem in Phnom Penh in June and July 1966 a more nuanced appraisal of the relationship and one that was probably closer to reality. Exemption had emerged from the shadows in September 1946 as secretary-general of the Provisional Executive Committee of Nam Bo which had been endorsed by the party center as "the sole depository of the powers of the DRV in Nam Bo" to apply the provisions of the preliminary convention and the modus vivendi in Cochinchina; other members of this committee had been Pham Van Bach, Nguyên Binh, and Ung Van Khiem.

taken off the shelf by the party center, dusted off, and presented to the world as the NLF's "foreign minister." Vietnamese nationalists such as Pham Dang Lam, who arrived in Paris in August to act as liaison officer and later as head of delegation, had a facility to see through the images that captivated foreigners and never had the slightest doubt that the independence of the party functionaries who controlled the NLF and claimed to speak for the South Vietnamese people was sheer pretense. Lam expressed amazement that Salisbury, who had lived for years in Stalinist Russia, had not recognized a Potemkin village when he was shown one in Hanoi. 474

This was precisely the difficulty raised by Harriman's suggestion to Bunker that he begin to prepare the government of the Republic of Vietnam for a future in which the United States and the DRV would have withdrawn their troops from the South. 475 What was Harriman's idea about the NLF? On the record, he had told the DRV delegation that the NLF acted "as an arm of aggression from the North."476 If this was indeed so, how would the Saigon government be expected to negotiate a political settlement that would not be subject to Hanoi's dictates, even in the hypothetical absence of DRV troops? If the NLF were autonomous, the attempts to arrive at a peaceful settlement with the NLF's non-Communist majority that had been made since 1965 would have long since ended the war. Harriman seems to have favored dealing with the NLF, however, on practical matters like the release of American POWs. He communicated with the NLF in Phnom Penh through the journalist Robert Shaplen, using the facilities of a third-country embassy, an arrangement that Shaplen kept secret from his colleagues. When the NLF released three American POWs in November 1967, Harriman wrote to Shaplen: "You should assure NLF that USG and all Americans [are] grateful for release [of] these PW's." Shaplen replied that he was preparing a letter to Nguyên Van Hieu commending the NLF for its humanitarian action and "reiterat[ing] briefly what we had in mind and what we stood willing to do," possibly a reference to a POW exchange that took place the following January. 477

Ha Van Lau and Nguyên Minh Vy held their third private meeting with Vance on the evening of August 4, during which Lau asked for clarification of the items to be discussed in Phase B. At their previous private meeting, Vance replied, most of the time had been spent on discussing the first item under Phase B, the restoration of the DMZ. Now he would discuss the other items in Phase B. The second was no increase in American or DRV troop levels in the South after cessation of the bombing. Lau indicated that he was clear about this proposal. The third item was that substantive talks would begin as soon as the bombing ceased; either side would be free to raise any subject relevant to a peaceful settlement. Vance said he thought there could be no question about that item because the DRV had proposed discussion of other matters of interest to both parties after a bombing cessation. Lau again said he understood the proposal. Vance said the next point was related to the preceding one. During the substantive talks "our side" would include representatives of the Republic of Vietnam, while the DRV side could include whomever they wished. Lau said

he understood the point but would reserve comment. Vance said the next point was that there be no attacks against major population centers such as Saigon, Hue, and Danang while the talks proceeded. The remainder of the meeting was taken up with restatements of position on the origin of the war and with the DRV's insistence the bombing cessation be unconditional; when Vy was asked whether he had rejected the two-phased approach, he replied "No, but the unconditional cessation of bombing must come first and, if there are to be two phases, they must be viewed in that light."478

Things moved another step ahead at the DRV's press conference following the plenary session on August 7. Nguyên Thanh Le, the DRV spokesman, asserted that the United States should deal with the DRV on broad matters and with the NLF on internal South Vietnamese matters. This prompted Secretary Rusk and Vance to suggest to Harriman that he join the issue on the "our side, your side" formula at the following Wednesday's Kléber session—in effect putting the formula on the public record. The advantages they saw in doing so were that it would "smoke them [the DRV] out and put them on the spot on what is in fact a key issue" and that it would place the United States behind a reasonable and constructive proposal. The disadvantages were that it would air an issue that had heretofore been discussed only in private meetings and that it would come as a shock in South Vietnam, where the "our side, your side" formula had never been made public. 479 Harriman immediately objected to the suggestion, saying that going on the record would lead the DRV to reject the formula publicly and "make it harder for them to accept GVN participation later on."480

A somewhat different reaction came from Richard C. Holbrooke, a member of the American delegation, who, along with two other members, Daniel I. Davidson and John D. Negroponte, had an informal and relaxed dinner with Phan Hien, the North American desk officer at the DRV foreign ministry and a member of the DRV delegation. A discussion of the "our side, your side" formula led to lively discussion of the legitimacy of the Saigon government; the Americans said whether Hien wanted to think of it as a puppet or not, the Saigon government spoke for several million South Vietnamese. 481

Holbrooke returned to Washington almost immediately afterward and drafted a suggested talking paper, approved by Benjamin H. Read on Rusk's behalf and sent to Paris and Saigon, that emphasized the importance of having the DRV delegation understand the importance the United States attached to the Saigon government's participation in substantive talks, reflecting the very basis for the American commitment to genuine self-determination for South Vietnam. This importance could be conveyed by Vance in his next private meeting with Lau in the form of a clarification of the "our side, your side" formula.

"We are willing to accept any internal arrangements chosen by the people of SVN without external interference of any sort," the paper read. "On the other hand, we will not permit imposition, whether by force of arms or negotiations, of a political system from without, e.g., from NVN, nor do we wish to impose a political system on SVN ourselves." The paper also suggested an alternative to the "our side, your side formula" in the event that the DRV rejected it. "The US would have no problems with direct discussions here in Paris, or elsewhere, between the GVN and DRV on matters of mutual concern. Nor would the US be concerned should representatives of the GVN and NLF desire to meet either in Paris or in some other location, and conduct direct and secret talks at which the US was not present." In discussing the advantages of their talking paper, Holbrooke and Read pointed out "any 'solution' to the political problems of the South to which the US would be a principal party would be likely to be attacked and repudiated by key elements in SVN primarily because of the US role. But if we make it clear to both Hanoi and Saigon (and publicly) that we would not negotiate for the settlement in the South, then we would be clearing the decks for whatever emerges from the talks the GVN would conduct." Such an approach, of course, would have concorded well with the "central principles" enumerated in the Department's cable of June 27.

Harriman and Vance replied that the talking paper was a constructive proposal and that the delegation would be prepared to proceed along the suggested lines at the next private meeting with Lau. 483 In Saigon, however, where the talking paper arrived on the eve of the third phase of the Communists' general offensive, Bunker's reaction, particularly to the idea of the government talking to the NLF, was negative, and consequently he did not put it to Thieu. 484 Bunker reported to Rusk that Thieu had assured him he was trying to open a channel of communication to the DRV and NLF representatives in Paris. 485 The private meeting of Harriman, Vance, Lau, and Vy on August 19 failed to gain the DRV's acceptance of talks with the Saigon government, and the DRV delegates fell back on a repetition of Pham Van Dong's four points of 1965. 486 The talking paper therefore died almost as soon as it was written, as did a further contingency paper identifying matters for negotiation on which the United States or the Republic of Vietnam could be expected to take the lead;<sup>487</sup> the fundamental issues raised by these papers about the relationship between the Saigon government and its large ally in the negotiations went unresolved and would remain unresolved until the signing of the agreement of January 1973. Harriman and Vance took the opportunity of the tea break on August 21, in which Thuy and Lau were joined by Tho, to affirm they were open to private meetings "at any time." The DRV delegates said they would think the suggestion over and let the Americans know in due course, Tho observing that "any negotiation includes both official and private meetings."488

At a meeting in Washington with Harriman on September 17, President Johnson laid down his position, using precise language:

The simple fact is that the President could not maintain a cessation of the bombing of North Vietnam unless it were very promptly evident to him, to the American people, and to our allies, that such an action was, indeed, a step toward peace. A cessation of bombing which would be followed by abuses of the DMZ, Viet Cong and North Vietnamese attacks on cities or such populated areas as provincial capitals, or a refusal of the authorities in Hanoi to enter promptly into serious political

discussions which included the elected government of the Republic of Vietnam, could simply not be sustained.

The President indicated—and Harriman agreed—that the participation of the GVN was the most important of the conditions; but that all three had to be satisfied.<sup>489</sup>

At a meeting with Vance on October 3, President Johnson repeated the importance he attached to the understandings underlying a bombing cessation and the need to resume bombing if these understandings were violated; Vance, without hesitation, indicated his agreement with this position.<sup>490</sup>

At the beginning of October, calculating that President Johnson wished to announce a complete bombing halt before the presidential election on November 5, the DRV side hardened its position in Paris, while quietly withdrawing 60,000 troops from I Corps into North Vietnam, an action that had no military significance but which it knew would be interpreted as a gesture of goodwill and would thus serve to bind the Americans into an agreement. On October 3, the party center sent a four-point directive in which the third point was:

The DRV thinks it possible to hold a four-party conference to discuss a political solution to the Vietnam question, but the Saigon administration should recognize the NLF, accept a policy of peace and neutrality, adopt a positive attitude towards the setting up of a coalition government, and show its goodwill. 491

The problem for the American delegation was to carry out President Johnson's instructions to obtain the DRV's acceptance of participation in the next phase of the negotiations by the Republic of Vietnam when the DRV, in accordance with its policy since 1963, refused to deal directly with the "puppet" Saigon government. At a private meeting between Harriman, Vance, Tho, and Thuy on October 11, Thuy asked: (1) if the United States would stop the bombing when it received a clear answer to the issue of the participation of the Saigon administration; and (2) if the United States would consider an affirmative answer on Saigon's participation as reciprocity for the bombing cessation. Harriman answered "No" to the second question, and said he would have to refer the first question to Washington for an answer.<sup>492</sup> The next day Valentin Oberemko, minister-counsellor of the Soviet Embassy, called on Vance and delivered two messages. The first stated: "I have good reason to believe that if the US stops unconditionally and completely the bombardments and other acts of war against the DRV, the delegation of the DRV will agree to the participation of the representatives of the GVN in the talks on the problem of [a] political settlement in VN. Thus these talks would be held by reps. of the DRV, the USA, the NLF and the Saigon government." The second stated: "I can tell you also on good authority that if the question of the unconditional and complete cessation of bombardments and all other acts of war against NVN is resolved positively and promptly, the delegation of the DRV is ready to discuss seriously, and in good faith other questions relating to the political settlement in VN,

provided of course that the other side would also act seriously and in good faith." 493 Suddenly, on the afternoon of October 13, the DRV delegation received explicit instructions from the party center stating that if the United States stopped the bombing the DRV would agree to the convening of the enlarged conference, "but the United States should consent to talk to the NLF and the Saigon administration should change its policies. Only then can the four-party conference be held." The instruction also set the condition that the date of the opening of the four-party conference depended on discussions between the United States and the NLF, and it forbade the DRV delegation to discuss this matter with the Americans. 494 This instruction, no doubt reflecting the thinking of Le Duan, was so far out of the realm of reality that Le Duc Tho immediately returned to Hanoi, apparently to persuade the party leaders that the prospect of a bombing halt should be seized, even if it meant putting aside temporarily the goal of having the Americans talk to the NLF about substance.

On October 15, Harriman and Vance, in accordance with their instructions, read a five-point message indicating that the United States was prepared, depending on the DRV response to the American presentations on acceptance of Saigon's participation, respect for the DMZ, and cessation of shelling of South Vietnamese cities, to order the cessation of bombing and all other acts involving the use of force against the North if the latter agreed to begin serious talks in which Saigon's representatives participated on the day following the bombing cessation. Thuy said the DRV would be ready the day after unconditional cessation of the bombing to discuss with the United States the manner of convening a four-party conference (that is, a conference in which the NLF would be one of the four parties) but objected that by demanding that the DRV talk to Saigon the United States was imposing a new condition. He said that Harriman and Vance had answered his October 11 question about whether if he agreed to Saigon's participation after the bombing cessation the United States would indeed stop the bombing. 495 The question had been intended to sound out the degree, if any, to which Saigon exerted a veto over American decisions. The DRV negotiators had noticed that in spite of their protestations of the sovereignty exercised by the Saigon government, the Americans never said "We will have to consult with the government of the Republic of Vietnam before we give you an answer to that." At the regular tea break the next day, Thuy apparently accepted the American conditions; this became known as the October 16 understanding with respect to the bombing halt, which remained unwritten.

President Thieu continued to protest, with annoying logic, that, as he put it in his state of the union speech on October 7, "In fact, the basic issue is not the end of the bombing. The basic issue is the end of the war. To confuse the issues is not only to obstruct a prompt restoration of peace, but also to create the danger of an extension of the war." Thieu was apparently briefed by Bunker on October 13 on the content of the understanding between the United States and the DRV. Bunker made it clear that there could be no public mention of reciprocity or of conditions to the cessation of bombing. Thieu was not satisfied with this out-

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come, however. His main concerns were that the cessation of bombing would look to the public like it was unconditional and that the NLF would be present in Paris, in return for which the only concession the DRV had made was to agree to the "participation" of the Republic of Vietnam, whatever that meant.

Amid considerable agitation and confusion in Saigon caused by rumors of an imminent bombing cessation Thieu gave a radio address on October 19 in which he hinted for the first time he might refuse to accept a deal negotiated secretly by the Americans and the DRV. His resistance was stiffened when he learned from Huong on October 21 that South Korean Ambassador Shin Sang Chul had asked Huong whether he was aware that the Americans had informed President Park of South Korea that Thieu's government had already accepted an American proposal for a bombing halt. Nguyên Quoc Dinh had told Thieu that he was sure President Johnson would not "sell out" the Saigon government and had encouraged Thieu to trust the Americans until they showed evidence they were working against the best interests of the South Vietnamese people. Now such evidence seemed to have emerged. The question uppermost in Thieu's mind was whether the Vietnamese nationalists could stand another settlement secretly negotiated between their foreign allies and the Communists, like the agreement of 1954.

Sentiment in Saigon against an unconditional bombing cessation and against negotiations with the NLF (as distinct from the DRV) was riding high. On the same day as Thieu's speech, the Senate adopted by a vote of 39 of 42 senators a declaration opposing any bombing cessation that was not accompanied by reciprocal concessions from Hanoi. 497 The House of Representatives met the same day and after one hour of debate decided to open its session to the public. The House leaders completed a draft resolution and approved and sent it to Thieu and released it to the press on October 21.498 The resolution rejected an unconditional bombing cessation and posed the three conditions of the October 16 understanding. The resolution also stated that the NLF could not be accepted in peace talks "in any manner." The co-drafter of the resolution was deputy Tran Ngoc Chau, who was later arrested on suspicion of being a Communist agent. 499 It was surprising, to say the least, that the unwritten words of the October 16 understanding in Paris should have been found within a week in a written document distributed to the press in Saigon; Harriman, fearful the DRV would break off the talks, suspected a leak in Thieu's entourage and resolved to tell Bunker even less about what transpired in the private meetings in future.

Further private meetings between Harriman and Vance and Thuy and Lau on October 17, 21, 24, 26, and 27 were concerned mainly with the DRV's demand for, first, a joint communiqué, and then a secret minute in which agreement on the new, four-party conference would be formalized. The Americans rejected both demands, having been warned by Bunker that these documents seemed intended to prove that the Americans recognized the NLF as an equal party to the negotiations. On October 29, however, Vance warned Lau that the Americans had certain "complexities" to deal with before announcing the bombing cessation. <sup>500</sup>

The "complexities" had to do with Saigon's misgivings over the conditions governing the cessation of bombing. These misgivings were set out in a letter President Thieu sent to President Johnson on October 30 in reply to one received the previous day in which Johnson asked Thieu's cooperation in taking a step for peace in the form of a bombing cessation. <sup>501</sup> Thus, it was not until 1:30 A.M. on October 31, however, that Harriman and Vance, after pleading certain "complexities," were able to inform Thuy and Lau that President Johnson would issue the orders to stop all air, naval, and artillery bombardment and all other acts involving the use of force against the North at 7 or 8 P.M., EST, October 31. <sup>502</sup>

In the final days leading to President Johnson's announcement, Thieu continued to press for guarantees that the Republic of Vietnam would have a leading role in the forthcoming negotiations as he had understood the position to be when he had accepted the "our side, your side" formula on June 25. As he and his team of Ky, Foreign Minister Thanh, and special adviser Nguyên Phu Duc put it to Bunker, Berger, and Martin Herz on October 23, they were prepared to go into the negotiations provided that (1) Hanoi signified it would talk with their government; (2) Hanoi signified that it would talk seriously, "without ruses (making their government talk only with the NLF) or propaganda"; and (3) the Americans would see to it that the NLF did not participate as a separate entity. The Americans responded by saying that they believed on the basis of what the DRV had told them that it was prepared to negotiate seriously and that it understood that serious negotiations required it to talk to the Republic of Vietnam. They said they would make every effort to keep the negotiations moving along serious lines, and if the DRV attempted to bypass or ignore or freeze out the Republic of Vietnam or to maneuver the Republic of Vietnam into a position where it would have to talk bilaterally to the NLF they would repudiate such tactics and make clear that the conference could not proceed on such a basis. They said that they not only agreed with Thieu and his team about the lack of status of the NLF but would support them in their efforts to show that the NLF was a mere emanation of Hanoi. 503 Harriman, however, rebuffed Thieu's conditions, informing Bunker that it was not possible to add to the demands the Americans had made of the DRV by reopening the discussion of what would follow the bombing cessation. Procedural matters, it had been agreed, would be taken up at the first meeting, at which, of course, the Republic of Vietnam was expected to be represented.<sup>504</sup>

Thieu counted on the joint communiqué announcing the cessation of bombing to make his government's position clear. Thieu and Bunker, after having worked on drafting and redrafting this document since October 19, had agreed on a version *ad referendum* on October 28. Bunker believed a joint statement was "essential to avoid [giving the] impression there are serious divergences in our positions." This version read in part that the two presidents had reached their decision "because they have good reason to believe that North Vietnam intends to join them in deescalating the war and to enter into serious and direct talks with the Government of the Republic of Vietnam and the

United States Government on the substance of a peaceful settlement. They therefore have concluded that this step would contribute to progress toward an honorable and secure peace."506

Bunker had requested from the Department "some reaffirmation" of the points he had presented to Thieu and his team in their consultation meeting on October 23. It would be best, he said, to have a written instruction from which he could read to them. He had received none, however. Thieu sent Ambassador Lam to talk to Harriman and Vance to find out what the real situation was. Lam's first meeting with Harriman and Vance on October 17 was inconclusive, and he was merely told that "President Thieu was fully informed of all that had been going on." The next day Lam returned to the embassy and talked with Habib. Lam said he was uncertain on the basis of what he had received from his foreign minister what was meant by Saigon's participation in the talks after the cessation of bombing. When Habib repeated the our side, your side formula, Lam replied that he thought the foreign minister had not understood the formula.507 Lam, acting on instruction from President Thieu, saw Harriman again on October 28. According to the American record of the conversation, Lam said that even if the our side, your side formula was accepted, it was a necessary prerequisite to serious negotiations for peace that Hanoi declare that it agreed to talk to his government as his government was prepared to declare it would talk with Hanoi. Harriman again put Lam off, saying these were matters for Presidents Johnson and Thieu to discuss, and he would not get involved. 508 Lam returned to the embassy on the afternoon of October 30 and submitted to Habib a list of questions to get a precise understanding of Harriman's point of view. Among the questions was: "Can we [the United States] give assurances that Hanoi will accept negotiating directly with the GVN?" He requested answers in writing. Afterwards, Harriman saw Lam briefly and, having read the questions, gave him a note saying all the questions had been discussed by Ambassador Bunker with the appropriate GVN officials in Saigon.<sup>509</sup> Lam's cable from Paris reporting these matters threw into doubt the agreement that had been reached on a joint announcement of a bombing cessation, according to Foreign Minister Thanh; Lam was ordered to return to Saigon immediately,<sup>510</sup>

According to the South Vietnamese version of the conversations, Harriman's language with Lam was blunt, reminiscent of his severe and undiplomatic condemnation of Diem in 1961. He reportedly said, "The Government from [of] Vietnam does not represent all of the people of South Vietnam; the government does not control all of the territory of South Vietnam. You will do well to remember that we have 500,000 troops in South Vietnam; it is difficult to get Hanoi to agree to anything."511

A series of last-minute meetings among Thieu, Ky, Thanh, and Duc and Bunker, Berger, and Herz was unable to break the impasse a few hours before President Johnson was scheduled to announce the bombing cessation. Distrust grew visibly as the discussion dragged on; when Bunker assured the South Vietnamese that Hanoi had agreed to their draft communiqué, they showed him Lam's report. Bunker had unknowingly misled Thieu, but whether Harriman

had deliberately misled Bunker remains a matter of speculation. The last meeting started at 10 P.M. on October 31 (Saigon time) and lasted seven hours. That night the Communists again shelled Saigon, killing 19 early morning worshippers when a rocket hit a Catholic church.<sup>512</sup> Bunker's patience had been stretched thin, but, very charitably, he defended Thieu, pointing out that "we have put Thieu under such constraints of secrecy which he has observed, that he feels he needs more time to bring them [Thieu's associates] along."<sup>513</sup>

#### THE CONDITIONAL BOMBING CESSATION

In these circumstances, on October 31 President Johnson went ahead and announced that the bombing would halt completely and that an enlarged regular session of the Paris talks would take place on November 6. The United States had been informed by the DRV that representatives of the NLF would also be present. Representatives of the Republic of Vietnam would be free to participate. As a precautionary measure, the telegram informing all American diplomatic posts of the president's announcement warned that "while we have been in consultation" with the government of Vietnam and other allies in Paris, "we cannot guarantee their public statements will wholly coincide with President's."514 Johnson's phrase "free to participate" was like a slap on the face. The South Vietnamese had been shocked first by Johnson's March 31 announcement about not being a candidate in November, then by the street disorders in Paris in May and in Chicago in August, and lastly by the brutal Soviet repression in Czechoslovakia (in August), which the DRV applauded. The first two of these developments seemed to put the whole concept of Western democracy and its viability in question, while the latter served in their eyes to prove, once again, the true face of communism.

Radio Saigon announced that the United States had "unilaterally" decided to halt the bombing and that Thieu would make an address concerning the bombing halt to a joint session of the National Assembly on the morning of November 2.515 Thieu's office issued a communiqué saying the government did not oppose the bombing halt and stressing the "unity and determination" between the republic and its allies. "The great strength of our people and army, the increasing efficiency of our public institutions, the unanimous devotion to a single purpose of our army, people, and government, these constitute the fundamental strengths of our national government, of the independence of [the] country, of our liberty, and of peace," the communiqué said. 516 But informed South Vietnamese were shrewd enough to see that their ally, the United States, had stopped the bombing without so much as getting a formal request from their government to do so, just as the Americans had begun the bombing three and a half years earlier without consulting them. These were the sort of people that Harriman had been urging that Thieu take into his government to broaden it, but they thought to themselves: If this is the kind of humiliation our government can expect from the Americans, why join the government?

The public reaction to the announcement was, accordingly, less eloquent, less guardedly diplomatic, and more emotional than Thieu's. The president

was enthusiastically received when, accompanied by Ky, Prime Minister Huong, and most of the cabinet, he went before the National Assembly to state the government's position. Thieu told the Assembly that conditions for direct and serious talks between Saigon and Hanoi did not yet exist, and so the Republic of Vietnam would not attend the November 6 session in Paris.<sup>517</sup> His speech was interrupted by applause 17 times by the audience, who on several occasions broke into cheers. At the conclusion, he was given a standing ovation. Immediately following the joint session, while many lower-house deputies and newsmen were still on the floor, the Senate convened to hear Senator Tran Van Lam read the text of a strongly worded communiqué that had been issued the previous day by the Independence Bloc of the Lower House. The communiqué condemned "the egotistical and arbitrary action of President Johnson." In a confused and emotionally charged atmosphere, the Senate, which up to then had been cautious in expressing its sentiment, adopted the communiqué by acclamation. At that point, several senators, led by the Northern Catholic Nguyên Gia Hien of the Greater Solidarity Force, seized Vietnamese flags from the podium and marched into the street. Cries of "On to the American Embassy!" were heard. A group consisting of between 20 and 30 senators and others, including some lower-house members, marched out into Lam Son Square and up Tu Do Street in the direction of the embassy but soon broke up. Another group led by lower-house chairman Nguyên Ba Luong marched to Independence Palace, where it was met by Thieu, who quoted from Radio Hanoi broadcasts calling the bombing halt a great victory and saying that the Republic of Vietnam's presence at the conference table would not imply the DRV's recognition of that "administration." 518 Saigon had witnessed a brief revolutionary moment, and it was not the kind of revolution the Americans were always talking about.

Press reaction was also violent. In side-by-side accounts of the Communist shelling of Saigon and the bombing halt, many Saigon newspapers emphasized the American nature of the initiative—seven of them used the word "unilateral" in their headlines—and reported the critical comments of public leaders. In an interview with *Thoi The*, Senator Tran Ngoc Nhuan termed the bombing halt a "betrayal." General Duong Van Minh, who had earlier returned from exile in Bangkok, was quoted as saying the bombing halt was a "surrender." A few people expressed a measure of approval of the bombing halt. In a Thoi The interview, lower-house deputy Tran Cong Quoc termed the decision "a good act." Tin Sang repeated a BBC interview with Thich Thien Hoa who called it a "step forward." In the same interview, Father Hoang Quynh said the decision could be considered "a last chance for the Communists to show the level of their goodwill."519 Senators Hien and Nhuan were among 12 senators who sent a telegram to President Johnson protesting against "the breaking of the Honolulu engagement"; most of the signatories were Northern Catholics, although two were Cao Dai and one was Hoa Hao. 520

An embassy survey of public opinion in the Mekong Delta, where the bombing halt and its military implications figured as less important an issue than the recognition of the NLF, found that the attitude of most government officials, both elected and appointed, military and civilian, Buddhist and Catholic, and of teachers and labor union leaders was one of widespread support for Thieu's November 2 speech. Among workers and peasants, however, the reverse opinion prevailed, and many felt that the bombing halt was a sign that the war would soon end, while the status of the NLF mattered less. <sup>521</sup> Senator Tran Van Lam, a reputable older Southern politician, told the Americans that the NLF had begun to make soundings among prominent South Vietnamese about possible contacts but that these had ceased when the agreement between the Americans and the DRV emerged in Paris; enveloped in the usual ambiguity of meaning, the mirage of talks between the nationalists in the NLF and the Saigon government vanished into thin air. <sup>522</sup>

In Paris, in a way that suggested it had not given any quid pro quo for the bombing halt, the DRV delegation issued a communiqué saying that Harriman and Vance had informed Xuan Thuy of President Johnson's decision to halt the bombing and his announcement of the enlarged meeting on November 6. This news had been conveyed to Hanoi. 523 The cessation of the bombing was received by the population of North Vietnam with their customary calm and composure, the correspondent of the French news agency reported. The following day in Paris, however, the Communists took another slice of the salami. Xuan Thuy held a press conference at which he repeatedly referred to the November 6 meeting as a four-party conference. 524

The director of the NLF information office, Pham Van Ba, had arrived in Paris on October 11 and had moved into a \$600-a-month suite on the Boulevard Suchet. In his smartly tailored suit and hat he looked like any Saigon bourgeois, in contrast to his comrades from the North in their ill-fitting Soviet-style suits. The NLF delegation, led initially by Mrs. Nguyên Thi Binh, a granddaughter of Phan Chu Trinh, and at a later date by Tran Buu Kiem, both veteran party members, arrived in Paris from Moscow, where they had been waiting, in the first days of November. The French had issued them laissez-passer (travel permits) designed to emphasize their separate identity from the DRV.<sup>525</sup> Mrs. Binh opened her first press conference with the statement that "the party has sent me here to Paris to take part in the preparatory conference to the four-party conference which opens on November 6, as was agreed to by President Johnson in his speech of October 31."526 From his years of service to the NLF, Kiem had been spotted as a close subordinate of Le Duan's. After the victory, Mrs. Binh would be rewarded for her faithful service to the party with a high sinecure in the socialist republic.

The right of the United States to proceed with the negotiations without the Republic of Vietnam was asserted by a number of prominent Americans, among them Senator Mike Mansfield, who said in an interview, "If the Saigon government does not see its way clear to send representatives to Paris, then we should in our own self-interest conduct negotiations without them." However, the American delegation refused a suggestion from the DRV delegation to begin discussions with only three parties present.

When Colonel Nguyên Huy Loi, who was appointed to be the military adviser to the Saigon government's delegation, reached Paris in December, he was invited by Vance to come in to his office in the embassy for an exchange of views. Vance asked him for his government's evaluation. When Loi demurred, saying his delegation had not yet arrived and he could not speak officially, Vance pressed him for his personal view, as Loi had been in charge of training district officers under the pacification program. "Mr. Ambassador, we are winning the war," Loi said. He was stunned to hear Vance reply: "Colonel, you are totally wrong. We can never win this war militarily. We are here to reach a compromise." <sup>528</sup>

## **Looking Back**

The sequel to the overthrow and murder of Ngô Dinh Diem was a rapid escalation of the war, accompanied by the entry into the war of American forces on a large scale on the ground, at sea, and in the air. In Laos, the nationalists, led by the king and Souvanna Phouma, continued to suffer the consequences of the train of events set in motion by the disastrous 1962 agreement on neutralization. In Cambodia, the nationalists preserved the fiction of control of the situation even while it was escaping their grasp. American diplomacy was of little help to them, in spite of the presence in Phnom Penh of an American ambassador, Philip D. Sprouse, whom Sihanouk trusted and respected. Sihanouk's repeated entreaties for a statement of American recognition of Cambodia's territorial integrity within its borders as defined by past treaties fell on deaf ears in Washington, where high officials, warned by the Saigon and Bangkok embassies of dire consequences for American relations with the host governments, kept silent. The trouble with puppets is they must be propped up, and for the Americans to negotiate a modus vivendi with Sihanouk treating of the Vietnam-Cambodia border risked turning popular sentiment, and not least in the ARVN, against the puppet generals in Saigon. Thailand had suddenly become a strategic base for American prosecution of the war in Laos and North and South Vietnam, and so could not be offended. Thus doubly, the ability of the United States to stake out an independent position in favor of Cambodian neutrality disappeared with the events in Saigon on November 1, 1963. The result was Sihanouk's decision to mortgage the future of Cambodia to the Communists, greatly complicating the situation of the nationalists.

With the party center diligently undermining their efforts, the South Vietnamese set to work to rebuild a viable constitutional structure out of the wreckage of the first republic. But the Americanization of the war, while it enabled the battlefield situation to be stabilized, carried with it an ever greater diktat of the South's affairs, made plain by Harriman's remark to Ambassador Lam in Paris during their confrontation over representation in the negotiations at the end of October 1968. The South Vietnamese resented this deeply, as is evident from the wild applause that greeted President Thieu in the National Assembly on November 2 after the American announcement of the bombing cessation over the North, the second major unilateral decision in seven months.

The need for the United States to extricate itself from the war was understandable in circumstances where the cost in lives and treasure had become high and President Kennedy's exhortation to Americans to defend liberty at whatever price had been discounted by the American Establishment. But the assumption by the United States of the leading role in negotiating a political settlement involved the United States in a contradiction: this assumption of responsibility implied precisely the kind of continued guarantees to the government of the Republic of Vietnam of military power that the Americans were no longer willing to provide.

With hindsight it becomes clear that a major aim of the DRV in the official conversations with the United States was to sow the seeds of distrust between the two allies, the Republic of Vietnam and the United States. Opportunities for accomplishing this abounded particularly after the initiation of private talks between the DRV and the Americans. When Harriman and Vance in June decided not to keep Ambassador Bui Diem, Saigon's liaison officer in Paris, informed of what transpired at their private meetings with the DRV for fear that evidence of leaks might spook the DRV, they were playing into the DRV's game plan. This accounted for Ambassador Lam's complaint to the Americans that his government had not fully registered what was being negotiated in Paris, and for the last-minute arguments between the South Vietnamese and the Americans over the procedures for holding the enlarged conference. For it is evident from the diplomatic record that Harriman had accepted, as he had done at Geneva in 1961, the word of a Soviet diplomat regarding what he, Harriman, interpreted to be a commitment. Both with Pushkin's word that the Soviet cochairman would police implementation of the accord on the neutrality of Laos by the DRV and with Oberemko's magic formula for resolving the problem of Saigon's participation in the enlarged conference, Harriman was being naive in the extreme. In the first case, he failed to see that the DRV, as a sovereign government, would not necessarily follow Moscow's orders. And in the second, he may not even have realized that Oberemko's formula emerged from the latter's consultations with Le Duc Tho, who almost certainly suggested the two-message format of October 12. In his first message, Oberemko stated that the DRV would accept Saigon's participation, and in the second he stated that the DRV would engage in serious talks on a political settlement. Harriman took this to mean the DRV would talk to Saigon, thereby meeting President Johnson's condition, although the DRV had given no such commitment. How could negotiations be carried on in such circumstances?

In their conversations with American journalists covering the Paris talks, after the first few months of breaking the ice, the DRV delegates sometimes expressed the view that Thieu would eventually betray the Americans. <sup>529</sup> In fact, what happened was exactly the opposite, something that in 1968 was unimaginable to us, naive as we were.

# 9. The End of the Non-Communist Nationalists

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### The Fetish of the Secret

In Indochina, the foreign press was always poking into everything. A party of well-informed correspondents had discovered one of the DRV's base camps in Cambodia in 1967. The officially secret bombing of Cambodia in the spring of 1969 was almost immediately reported in the press, outraging American officials. Three intrepid reporters in Laos hitchhiked to the CIA's base at Long Cheng, supposedly off limits, in February 1970 before they were arrested and allowed to leave, minus their notes and their films. A published report of the delivery of AK-47 rifles from American stocks to Lon Nol's army in April 1970, based on a cable from the Department of State to Phnom Penh, triggered an even more unusual measure: 81 high-ranking officials of the Departments of State and Defense were required to sign individual statements to the effect that they were not responsible for the leak.

The not-so-secret "secret war" in Laos originated because of official secrecy covering American bombing. Souvanna Phouma finally abandoned the secrecy policy. In March 1969, he told the Soviet ambassador in blunt terms that he, Souvanna Phouma, was responsible for the American bombing.<sup>5</sup> In the Lao Presse of June 13, the prime minister justified the bombing on the record for the first time; in a report of his interview with a correspondent of the Japanese newspaper *Yomiuri Shimbun*, he was quoted as saying

The bombing carried out by American air forces in Laos in the frontier regions are a fact which follows from the Geneva Accords of 1962. In Geneva, the countries signing these agreements guaranteed the independence, neutrality and territorial integrity of Laos. The moment that one signatory did not respect the agreements it became part of the duty of all of the other signatories to intervene to assure respect for the agreements of 1962. If North Vietnam wants the bombing to stop, it is necessary that it withdraw its troops from Laos.<sup>6</sup>

Sullivan, in Washington as deputy assistant secretary for Far Eastern affairs, remonstrated that Souvanna Phouma's statement had put the United States in

"a difficult position." The flaw in the no-acknowledgment policy advocated by Sullivan and others, of course, was that the DRV was a totalitarian society, whereas the United States was an open society with a free press. To the extent that the press revealed what American officials did not, the credibility of the latter suffered. While making the Americans pay dearly for their violations of the agreement, in terms of propaganda, the party center enjoyed virtual immunity to bad publicity about its own interventions. One of the effects of the official secrecy policy was to leave it up to Radio Hanoi or Radio Peking, who had their own correspondents with the Pathet Lao–DRV forces in Laos, to break the story of American casualties in military action. American officials put President Nixon himself in the position of unknowingly lying about American casualties in Laos by not briefing him properly before he issued a statement on the subject in March 1970.

Prior to a visit to Washington in October 1969, and on the heels of a successful offensive that had succeeded in capturing the Plain of Jars, Souvanna Phouma told American officials of his launching of a diplomatic initiative toward the DRV, both to forestall an expected counteroffensive and as an attempt to re-establish the tripartite coalition on a workable basis. Just before the prime minister had left Laos and at his request, French Ambassador Ross had transmitted to the DRV chargé d'affaires, Nguyên Chan, a request that the DRV use its influence on the Lao Patriotic Front to arrange internal conversations among the Lao factions in order to permit a de-escalation of the war. Chan sent the request by cable to Hanoi but had received no response prior to Souvanna Phouma's departure.<sup>8</sup> As it turned out, Souvanna Phouma's initiative came to nothing. After he completed his visit to Washington, Souvanna Phouma wrote a letter to Secretary of State William Rogers suggesting simple, accurate, and logical wording to explain the American air strikes publicly; the State Department decided to keep the prime minister's letter secret "for possible use in conjunction with the [Symington] hearings."10 The Americans stuck with the secrecy policy.

Souvanna Phouma, a master of the French language, was punctilious when it came to the facts about American intervention in Laos; his diplomacy depended on exact wording. When the press used words loosely, Souvanna Phouma's diplomacy threatened to unravel. When *The New York Times* printed a dispatch from its correspondent in Vientiane a fortnight before the prime minister's trip to the United States under the headline "U.S.-Backed Laos Troops Capture Two Rebel Areas," Souvanna Phouma protested to the correspondent. The dispatch contained no information about American involvement in Laos that was not less than eight years old. The fifth word in the first paragraph of the dispatch, however, was "secret." The text of the dispatch was entered into the *Congressional Record* by Senator John Sherman Cooper, sponsor of an amendment to a military authorization bill unanimously adopted the previous day designed to prevent American troops from being committed to combat in Laos or Thailand, with the comment that the actions described in the dispatch showed "a very striking similarity to the way we became involved in the war in Vietnam." <sup>12</sup>

The embassy was spurred to action on receiving the published text of the dispatch; it investigated in particular one detail from the final paragraph report-

ing that an American CIA agent had been killed by gunfire at an advanced post the previous week. The correspondent, T. D. Allman, provided the name of the CIA agent when asked by an embassy officer. The embassy at first drew a blank, but when informed later by another journalist that Allman claimed to have actually seen a report of the death it was able to match the name with that of a five-day-old premature baby whose grandfather was employed by Air America and whose mother's address was indicated on the report of death as c/o Air America, Vientiane. Further investigation revealed that Allman had been in the consular office to apply for a new passport and had been permitted to use the typewriter at the desk of a local employee to prepare his application.<sup>13</sup>

On Souvanna Phouma's return, he took up the case of the offending dispatch, and in a letter of reply Allman furnished copies of a number of his dispatches, including those in which he reported the prime minister's denials of American troops in Laos. He expressed regret that some journalists and senators in the United States had misinterpreted the phrase "American participation. . . . now extends to the field level" to mean that American troops were present.

> In conclusion, I must tell your Highness that as a journalist working in Laos one faces many difficulties in reporting the news. The North Vietnamese government does not admit the presence of its troops in Laos. The Pathet Lao does not permit western journalists to visit the Pathet Lao zone. Your government does not permit journalists to visit Long Cheng and other important areas. The American government does not admit its military role in Laos.14

The American role in the war at the field level dated from the crisis of the spring of 1961 when American advisers in uniform accompanied Laotian troops in battle, CIA agents were working with the Meo, and Air America was flying to far-flung airstrips, all of which could accurately be described as "field-level" participation. By 1969, however, "secret" had become the magic word. A hysteria gripped official Washington, as had happened in 1963. News stories from Indochina were fed directly into the Congressional Record and into the questions formulated by subcommittee counsel; they were even inserted verbatim into the record of subcommittee hearings. There was a whiff of gunpowder in the tropical night air, and it was heady stuff for those of us sitting on the sidelines. Allman boasted to fellow correspondents at the bar of the Hotel Constellation that he could be assured of front-page play in The New York Times for his dispatches from Laos if they contained the word "secret" in the lead paragraph, and indeed there seemed to be a correlation. 15

Despite his efforts, Allman was not awarded the Pulitzer Prize for International Reporting in 1970. The prize went instead to the freelance journalist Seymour M. Hersh, who had uncovered an even more sensational secret than the American participation in the war in Laos: American soldiers had massacred between 200 and 500 Vietnamese civilians in Son My village, Son Tinh District, in the coastal lowlands of Quang Ngai Province, on March 16, 1968, apparently in retaliation for the constant toll taken on their buddies by booby traps laid by

the Viet Cong. They had fallen into the Communists' pattern of exacting reprisals. Hersh had worked for the Associated Press in the Pentagon in 1965 and, like Halberstam, was hawkish on the war; it was the corruption of the system of rotating army officers to Vietnam to win promotions that turned him against the war. <sup>16</sup> Hersh's story, in the judgment of the administrator of the prize, produced a reaction in his students that was "frantic to the point sometimes of hysteria" and was a natural entry for a Pulitzer Prize. <sup>17</sup> In 1972, the prize was awarded to *The New York Times* for the publication of thousands of purloined secret documents. Decidedly, covering the war had taken second place on the agenda of much of the American press to uncovering official malfeasance or a semblance of it.

Those who kept secrets the best, however, were on the other side. Throughout the war a pleasant Vietnamese fellow named Pham Xuan An could be met at the Givral coffee shop on Tu Do in Saigon, where he socialized with American reporters and traded gossip; as a stringer for *Time* and a colleague of Robert Shaplen of *The New Yorker*, the dean of American Vietnam political reporters, he was also invited to MACV background briefings. A number of journalists, in their innocence, dedicated their books to him. <sup>18</sup> It was not until after 1975, and after he had been evacuated along with other Vietnamese employees of American news organizations that he threw down the mask and revealed himself to have been all along an agent of the DRV with the rank of colonel.

The Lao were particularly unfortunate in that the chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee confessed he did not know a great deal about Laos, <sup>19</sup> for a subcommittee of that committee opened hearings in October 1969 into the American commitment in Laos. Under the guidance of its chairman, Senator Stuart Symington, the subcommittee proposed nothing less than to reveal to the American people the story that the government was keeping an official secret. Symington himself had been a frequent visitor to Laos, where he received embassy briefings.

On the first day of the hearings, Committee Chairman Senator J. William Fulbright tackled Sullivan, the first witness for the administration, with a line of questioning designed to show that the United States had little vital interest in Laos. Brushing aside the 1962 Geneva Agreement on the Neutrality of Laos, 20 Fulbright tried to maneuver Sullivan into admitting that the government was deceiving the American people and the Congress about the extent of American involvement. Pulbright declared himself unable to see "any particular reason why the North Vietnamese want Laos. Pulbright declared himself unable to see "any particular reason why the North Vietnamese want Laos. Pulbright declared himself unable to see "any particular reason why the North Vietnamese want Laos. Pulbright expressed sullivan's prior explanation about how Laos fit into the ICP long-term strategy: But they have always maintained as their ultimate objective the establishment of their control over the territories that these people work in. Pulbright expressed doubts as to Souvanna Phouma's credentials as a neutralist. He is an ally except we do not have a treaty with him, Fulbright observed. He is not neutral as between the North Vietnamese and ourselves, is he? He does not profess that? Sullivan started to explain that the United States supported non-aligned

India, which had been attacked in 1962 by China. Seeing Fulbright on thin ice with this line of questioning, Symington interrupted to change the subject.<sup>24</sup> Among the senators, Mansfield stood out as not taking part in the official-baiting, along with Fulbright and Symington.

For someone who had exercised responsibility in Laos, Sullivan proved to be a weak witness, failing to remember, for example, whether the committee had been briefed on the 1962 agreement and its implications feigning to ignore Souvanna Phouma's requests for assistance, even one he had made during his most recent visit a few days earlier.<sup>25</sup> Under insistent questioning, Sullivan was hesitant about the real American objective in Laos, seeming to agree at one point in the hearings that it was the prosecution of the war in neighboring Vietnam<sup>26</sup> and at others that it was the preservation of the integrity of Souvanna Phouma's government<sup>27</sup> and Laos as a buffer to protect Thailand. <sup>28</sup> This weathervane-type behavior suited the purposes of the senators, who themselves knew exactly where they wanted to point. Sullivan ended up conceding that not only was there no commitment, written or understood, by the United States to the defense of Laos, but that in his opinion Souvanna Phouma believed he had no commitment from the United States.<sup>29</sup> Sullivan made feeble excuses when confronted by the subcommittee counsel with a quote of Souvanna Phouma saying during his visit that President Nixon understood "what the duty of the United States is in this regard, namely, to protect the independence, the territorial integrity, and the neutrality of Laos."30

As Rusk had repeatedly testified before the Committee, the 1962 Geneva Agreement had provided the legal basis for American actions in Laos in defense of that state, a member state of the United Nations, at the request of the royal government. The agreement implied a commitment to the neutrality of Laos, the breaking of which by one of the other signatories would imply a state of war, as Rusk had informed the senators. There was nothing of the weathervane in Rusk. The transcripts of Rusk's briefings in executive session in 1962 and 1964 had not yet been published, however, giving the senators' claim that the administration was keeping them in the dark about actions that were illegal some plausibility. No one seemed to remember the categorical public pledge Kennedy had made on July 23, 1962.<sup>31</sup> The two-faced nature of this exercise in deliberate obfuscation was illustrated by Walter Pincus, one of the Symington subcommittee's investigators and himself a former journalist, who described gleefully how he had caught the Nixon administration out by accepting an invitation to fly as an observer in an American forward air controller's plane in Laos, something that was allegedly illegal under the 1962 agreement.<sup>32</sup> The senators' view was accepted as the mainstream view by a whole generation of Americans. John Hart Ely, in a lengthy treatise arguing the illegality of American actions in Laos, completely ignores the binding nature of Rusk's signature on the 1962 agreement.<sup>33</sup> Whether it represented a commitment or not, the agreement had one aspect on which Sullivan waxed eloquent: that it set "a pattern of peace with further compromise between ourselves and the Soviet Union."34

True, the Lao had no inherent reason to have their autonomy and their right to request defense assistance treated by American legislators as anything but a sideshow of their more powerful neighbors, South Vietnam and Thailand; hearings on Capitol Hill were a particularly American kind of folklore. It was not that they had not tried to get the message across. On February 24, 1965, the National Assembly passed a resolution denouncing DRV violations of the 1962 agreement. A copy of the resolution was dispatched, through the embassy and State Department, to Vice President Humphrey as presiding officer of the Senate. No mention was made of this matter in the Symington hearings, nor of the manifesto sent by assemblyman Chao Sopsaisana to Congress.<sup>35</sup> Roland A. Paul, a subcommittee counsel, showed momentary interest in the whereabouts of the Lao faction leaders, but when informed by Sullivan that Prince Boun Oum na Champassak had suffered a heart attack the previous day he did not pause to express sympathy for the old anti-Japanese guerrilla fighter and prime minister of what the press had called the "pro-American government" of 1961-1962 before going on to the next question. <sup>36</sup> The senators were less interested in educating themselves about Laos and its problems than in using the press to score political points. Souvanna Phouma, ironically, was to outlast Fulbright in elective office.

The Symington hearings were a big step toward removing the moral basis for American involvement in Laos of the sort that had been expressed by Paul Guest in 1951. Fulbright's committee had held hearings during 1966 on the American involvement in Vietnam, and the bold words pronounced by President Kennedy in his inaugural address about America carrying the message of freedom to the world were already forgotten barely five years after they had been spoken. It was all right for Sullivan to tell the senators there was no commitment, but some of those who had come from the Laos mission and who had served under Sullivan there did feel some commitment to the people they were aiding. At the end of the hearings, Sullivan felt the need to appeal to the senators to make clear to the other witnesses that they were loyal men doing a job "that they should be proud of, and that there is no indication that they should go back feeling that they have been doing anything wrong." "

The senators' self-serving but ultimately self-defeating line of questioning was also harmful to another group of Americans—the POWs in the hands of the enemy. The signature of the 1962 Geneva Agreement by the American, DRV, and other foreign ministers, so cavalierly dismissed by Fulbright, placed the United States in a firmer legal position in Laos with respect to the right of its POWs to humane treatment under the 1949 Geneva Convention, and on this basis the International Committee of the Red Cross did intervene on their behalf with the DRV's agents in Laos. This was unlike the situation in Vietnam, where the only legal protection afforded POWs, meager as it was, was the 1964 Tonkin Gulf Resolution in which the Congress, on the basis of reports of DRV attacks against American ships, affirmed its support for the administration's retaliatory actions. Even a history of the POWs published by the Office of the Secretary of Defense ignores the legal protection afforded by the 1962 accords

in the enemy's hands in Laos.

and the requests for assistance by the legal government and argues that the situation of the POWs in Laos was worse than in Vietnam on this account.<sup>38</sup> But the senators' dismissal of the 1962 agreement should be borne in mind by future students in assessing the vociferous demand in Congress for the signature of a new agreement that would guarantee the return of POWs at practically any cost; it was the families of the missing, not the Congress, who first took up the cause of demanding information about the hundreds of American servicemen

If much of the war was secret, it turned out that so was the search for peace. The question that demands an answer is why the search for a peaceful solution had to be, in the title of a book by two journalists, "the secret search for peace in Vietnam."<sup>39</sup> There was nothing so dishonorable about seeking peace that it had to be kept secret. In retrospect, President Thieu, who had nothing to hide, made a mistake in 1968 in agreeing to Ambassador Bunker's injunction of secrecy surrounding the Paris official conversations in 1968. Not being a party to these conversations, he was not legally bound to respect their secrecy, and he should have portrayed the bombing cessation for the conditional deal it was.<sup>40</sup>

The answer to the above question is that the search for peace had to be kept secret in order to satisfy the DRV, whose style of negotiating, already apparent in 1954, was to engage in secret diplomacy in order to split off one ally from another. When President Nixon made public the record of the private talks with the DRV in January 1972, the DRV reacted strongly and accused him of breaking their agreement for secrecy. Le Duc Tho and Xuan Thuy repeatedly rebuffed Kissinger's invitation to announce their private meetings, even after they had been detected and reported in the press. Nixon himself, in announcing the final agreement to the American people in January 1973, alluded to the need to avoid public discussion of the negotiations while they were in progress, which "would not only have violated our understanding with the North Vietnamese, it would have seriously harmed and possibly destroyed the chances for peace."41 The style of diplomacy adopted first by the Johnson and then by the Nixon administration in order to satisfy the DRV led to one party's being told one thing and another party's being told another on the nationalist side, a style that did not encourage trust. The American diplomats with whom the DRV was most comfortable dealing, Harriman and Kissinger, were people who had no qualms about engaging in this sort of duplicity if it served their short-term ends.

In the Nixon administration, the fetish of the secret reached the point where even the highest officials were routinely not informed about decisions for war and peace in Indochina. Secret understandings with the enemy and secret commitments to allies gave rise to subterfuge and manipulation that were quite contrary to the American character. The corrosive effects of this secrecy on the body politic were recorded by the American press and find their full reflection today in the documentary record of the diplomacy of the period. They led, eventually, to a secretary of state's not only misleading foreign heads of state, but also knowingly lying to a Congressional committee in hearing.

# Vietnamization of the War, Americanization of the Peace

Dean Rusk had since 1961 tirelessly repeated the theme of "aggression from the North," as if North Vietnam and South Vietnam were two distinct countries, which struck some people as absurd. But of course the "aggression" thesis could be applied to a civil war. The issue was more than semantic, however. The problem facing the Saigon government and its allies was whether the necessary measures to prevent the DRV from enforcing, by force of arms, its claim to be the sole legal and legitimate government of all Vietnam could legally and morally be justified.

### THE QUESTION OF LEGITIMACY

In early August 1968, at a moment when the State Department had communicated the "central principles" that should govern a negotiated settlement of the war, and barely two days before Harriman and Vance spelled out for Lau and Vy in their private talks what items the Americans proposed to discuss under Phase B of the plan for substantive negotiations, including the "absolutely fundamental" requirement that the Republic of Vietnam be represented, Philippe Devillers, the leading French authority on the history of Vietnam, published a front-page article in *Le Monde* titled "On the Legitimacy of Power in Vietnam."

Reviewing the crucial events of August 1945, Devillers repeated the thesis he had affirmed in his 1952 landmark book<sup>42</sup> that "this government of the new 'Democratic Republic of Vietnam' . . . was without any possible doubt the legitimate successor of the dynasties which, over a thousand years, had made Vietnam the most powerful State of Indochina." While recognizing Bao Dai's accomplishments in proclaiming the independence of Vietnam and in unifying the three kys prior to his abdication, Devillers passed over the transition from Bao Dai's legal and legitimate government to the seizure of power by the armed agents of the Viet Minh in August 1945. His argument for legitimacy forced him to place great weight on the French government's actions in signing the preliminary convention of March 6, 1946, the agreement between Generals Salan and Giap of April 3, 1946, and the modus vivendi of September 14, 1946. He went on to argue that the State of Vietnam, which exercised de facto authority over the territory controlled by the French expeditionary corps, was neither legitimate nor legal, in spite of the treaties of June 4, 1954, which had not been ratified by the French National Assembly. His reasoning led Devillers to conclude that the present negotiations might be seen as simply a continuation of those of 1954 at Geneva, with the United States, the successor of France, having to negotiate with the DRV the new date for evacuation of its troops and military bases and the new date for elections to reunify Vietnam.<sup>43</sup>

Devillers failed to note that the three agreements he cited between France and the DRV in 1946, which he considered to be the basis for French recognition of the legality of the other signatory, had not been ratified by the National Assembly, any more than had the treaties of June 4, 1954. Indeed, the Vietnam-

ese nationalists' diplomatic and non-violent struggle to achieve their independence from France and establish their own sovereign government within the French Union is omitted in this one-sided and simplistic interpretation of history, as if they were no more than rebels against the legally constituted government. Devillers's argument against the legality of one of the Associated States (in his article Devillers did not contest the legality of the non-Communist regimes of Cambodia and Laos) would logically force him to question the legality of the French Union under the French constitution of 1946, of which these states were a part.

The corollary of Devillers's reasoning insofar as it placed the United States in the position of successor to France in Vietnam does not stand up to scrutiny, either. Secretaries Marshall, Acheson, and Dulles had all supported the nationalists' quest for independence from France from the very beginning of the futile attempt by the French to reassert their sovereignty over Vietnam by force of arms on December 19, 1946, as this book has shown. The historical evidence shows that at every step since Bao Dai's letter to President Truman of August 31, 1949, up until November 1, 1963, the United States had proceeded on the basis of assisting the legal government of a sovereign state. That is to say, the consistent American position of support for the independent government in Saigon dated from well before the 1954 armistice, and the United States, no more than the 35 other foreign governments who recognized the State of Vietnam, could be considered the "successor" of France, whose position on the issue of the sovereignty of the State of Vietnam had been completely different.<sup>44</sup> Much less could it be argued that the United States had assumed the obligations France had assumed at Geneva on July 20, 1954. It was not President Johnson's character to negotiate with the DRV the terms of an American withdrawal from Vietnam in the absence of any input into the negotiations by the Republic of Vietnam, successor to the State of Vietnam, as Mendès-France had done with Pham Van Dong at Geneva in 1954. The only sense in which the United States could have been considered the "successor" of France in Vietnam was if it had waged an aggressive war to impose its sovereignty on the Vietnamese as the French had done. Despite Harriman's considerable duplicity, in 1968 the United States had not yet adopted this position.

Gullion's eloquent argument for de jure recognition of the State of Vietnam in January 1950 had decided once and for all the question of whether the United States had grounds for considering the State of Vietnam a legal entity, and the American recognition of the State of Vietnam on February 7, 1950, had proceeded on that basis. However one viewed the legality of the regime of President Thieu in August 1968, a regime that had emerged from successive coups d'état, the Americans were wedded to it, for better or worse. The answer to the question whether the half million American troops in South Vietnam were there as defenders of a legal, constituted order, or as aggressors against a sovereign power depended on it. The American delegation made a strong defense of the Republic of Vietnam as a sovereign international entity in its opening statement at the September 25, 1968, meeting at the Kléber conference hall.

Two of the principal underlying objectives of the DRV, it soon became apparent, were to compel the United States to undermine the "fascist, warlike" Saigon regime and deprive it of any vestige of legality and legitimacy and to recognize the DRV as the sole legal government of Vietnam, as manifested in the invitation to discuss a new, long-term relationship between the DRV and the United States, a quest the DRV leaders had pursued since 1945. At the time Devillers published his article, a time when serious negotiations on South Vietnam had not yet started, there was still no question of a secret bilateral deal between the United States and the DRV at the expense of the Republic of Vietnam.

## THE START OF THE PARIS CONFERENCE ON VIETNAM

President Thieu made sure that the first session of the enlarged conference did not take place until January 25, after Richard M. Nixon had been inaugurated.<sup>45</sup> The delay in the opening of the enlarged conference embittered some in Johnson's administration, who saw Thieu as having deliberately stalled in order to swing the election in Nixon's favor. William P. Bundy, assistant secretary of state for Far Eastern and Pacific affairs at the time, has claimed that an intercepted cable of October 27, 1968, from the South Vietnamese embassy in Washington (an early instance of "bugging") conveyed to Thieu a promise of a later favor from Nixon, including a possible visit to Saigon before inauguration if he were elected. 46 In spite of Thieu's admiration for President Johnson, he had little reason to favor Humphrey's election; Humphrey's public statements during the campaign were sufficient grounds for Thieu's deciding that a Humphrey presidency would be a disaster for South Vietnam. In any case, as the South Vietnamese objections to the arrangements in Paris made clear, there was a more fundamental reason for Saigon's delay than a crude attempt to play American politics.

If anything, the perception of a play on politics was stronger on the South Vietnamese than on the American side. The embassy's subsequent soundings of public opinion in about half the provinces of the Mekong Delta showed that "[the] timing of [the] bombing halt is considered to have been connected with [the] Humphrey candidacy."<sup>47</sup> Vice President Ky told legislators that the bombing halt decision was a sellout designed to assure Humphrey's election.<sup>48</sup> The diplomatic record shows no evidence of a political scheme tied to the election, but Thieu may well have felt the same way as Ky, according to interviews with the principals concerned.<sup>49</sup> As a result, Thieu and Ky enjoyed a momentary upsurge in popular support due to their defiance of their American ally, the power of the weak over the strong.

The Americans would not wait indefinitely, however. The South Vietnamese were left to make the best of the "our side, your side" arrangement. The National Security Council met to consider the impasse and on November 23 recommended acceptance of a newly drafted Vietnamese-American statement of understanding that satisfied the government's requirements and approved the dispatch of a delegation to Paris. A Saigon proposal to constitute a single delegation on "our side" under Saigon's leadership had been vetoed by the

Americans on the grounds that their constitution did not allow such a delegation of authority. The agreement was the fruit of lengthy discussions and exchanges of drafts and was spelled out in statements released simultaneously in Saigon and Washington. The Saigon statement noted that the Americans had submitted a text satisfying the major points in President Thieu's speech of November 2 and respecting the sovereignty of the Republic of Vietnam. The American statement said: "The substantive position of the United States Government will be based on respect for the sovereignty of the Republic of Vietnam, and on the joint communiqués of Manila and Honolulu." It also stated that in the Paris meetings the delegation of the Republic of Vietnam "will take the lead and be the main spokesman on all matters which are of principal concern to South Viet-Nam." But addressing reporters in Washington, Bundy was forthright in admitting that the DRV still had not given any commitment to engage in political talks with the delegation of the Republic of Vietnam. The French Embassy noted this troubling omission and reported it to Paris.

The compromise seating arrangement subsequently worked out was that the delegations sat equally spaced around a large circular table, so that Thieu could imagine that his delegation was facing a single adversary across the table and the DRV delegates could imagine that the NLF delegation by their side represented a separate and equal participant while they addressed the Americans, ignoring the "puppets" at their side, whose "participation" the DRV had agreed to in the October understanding with the Americans. Thieu and his colleagues successfully lobbied with the Americans to insist on the absence of flags or nameplates in the conference hall. This arrangement was accepted on January 18 by the DRV, which was anxious to keep the bombing cessation, which had been linked to the holding of the conference, and the participation of the NLF and to avoid having to negotiate these advantages all over again with the new American administration. Thus, the conference, which was considered two-sided by Saigon and its allies and four-party by the Communist world and the Directorate for Asia and Oceania of the Quai d'Orsay, finally got under way. On December 20, its delegation alerted the Saigon government that the Communists had proposed releasing a number of American POWs at a location 50 miles north of Saigon, the site to be marked by an NLF flag. The Americans were requested to send five officers to the site to receive the POWs. No mention was made of any participation by the Saigon government, but Harriman argued for going ahead with the proposed scheme.

By now, Harriman, who habitually talked about the "Vietmanese," had made himself persona non grata with the nationalists, and in December the Saigon delegation asked for his replacement. Even after he had left office, Harriman continued harassing the Saigon government, claiming, for instance, that the lack of progress in Paris was due to Thieu's refusal to negotiate seriously with the DRV and NLF, and obliging the foreign ministry to set the record straight. The new head of the American delegation was Henry Cabot Lodge. Thus, one after the other, two of the principal plotters of the overthrow of constitutionality were called upon once more to play roles in the long-running

Vietnam affair. The transition between Harriman and Lodge was seamless. Although Manac'h noted in his journal that in Nixon's nomination of Lodge the Vietnamese had found the return of an old friend, the contrary was true: Thieu and Ky were familiar enough with Lodge's role in 1963 to be suspicious of his motives, and their experience of Lodge's willingness to play a secret game with the other side, as in the "Marigold" affair, did not endear him to them.

But it was a different and more subdued Lodge who showed up in Paris; he was, for one thing, no longer talking about himself as exercising the powers of a French high commissioner. In his relations with the South Vietnamese, he avoided making threats, he no longer brought his bagman Lucien Conein with him to remind them that he had overthrown one government and could overthrow another if they misbehaved. Lodge passed up the opportunity to negotiate a deal with the DRV behind the back of the Saigon government that would have sacrificed the latter in exchange for an American withdrawal from Vietnam, while the White House was moving in that direction. Even as he sat at the circular table with Ambassador Pham Dang Lam on his right facing the two Communist delegations whose leaders put as much space between them as possible, he tried to avoid the appearance of master and puppet. Perhaps he had invested too much of himself in the restoration of constitutional process in South Vietnam during his second tour as ambassador (the constitution took effect barely a month before he departed) and in particular in the emergence of Ky and Thieu. Perhaps he foresaw that such a deal would sacrifice too much of the American interest that he had worked for in Saigon or merely wished to avoid having the consequent opprobrium attached to himself. Whatever was the case, the DRV delegation was not at all pleased with the new Lodge, who seemed, in contrast to Harriman, unapproachable.<sup>56</sup>

By 1969, the war for the support of the South Vietnamese had basically been won by the Saigon government and its allies. Roads and canals had been reopened and were full of traffic, and the economy was reviving. The Phuong Hoang (Phoenix) program, a resurrection of Diem's 1956 denunciation of Communists campaign, supported by the CIA, was tearing out the guts of the Viet Cong's Mafia-like shadow administration at the village level that preyed on the ordinary people for taxes and recruits. Defections from the Communist ranks had reached an all-time high. In the III Corps area, 3.2 million of the rural population lived in government-protected hamlets, 41,000 lived in Viet Congcontrolled hamlets, and 50,000 lived in contested hamlets.<sup>57</sup> Voters turned out in large numbers to elect hamlet chiefs and village councils in early 1969. Terrorism remained a constant threat, but it was subject to control by careful police work, whose importance in this new phase was emphasized by Sir Robert Thompson in a report to President Nixon. The offensive capability of the enemy depended on the regular armed forces of the DRV, but the armed forces could no longer count on their traditional base areas within South Vietnam, such as Zones C and D and the U Minh forest, and therefore were dependent on bases outside South Vietnam. On the DMZ, a tenuous understanding prevailed: no crossing of the DMZ, no bombing in North Vietnam. In Laos, Ambassador

Sullivan was preparing to depart, having pursued his Soviet-based, don't-rock-the-boat policy, and for four years the trucks rumbled down what was jokingly referred to as the Averell Harriman Memorial Highway, round the clock, round the year. In Cambodia, the DRV still enjoyed free use of sanctuaries for resting, re-fitting, and re-deploying its troops. As long as these threats remained, South Vietnam could never be really secure, with or without American troops. This was the challenge of diplomacy that faced the Republic of Vietnam and the United States in the spring of 1969, just as momentous changes were about to be introduced by the Nixon administration in the disposition and mission of its forces committed to the war. The war was to be "Vietnamized," an American term taken over from the French meaning that Vietnamese troops were to replace American troops on the battlefield.

Illustrative of the changed position on the battlefield was the fourth and final phase of the Communist general offensive, which began on February 22, without benefit of surprise. Because of the fact that the Communists took advantage of the dry season and the bombing halt to infiltrate fresh supplies into the South, they were enabled to conduct infantry attacks and attacks by fire against more than 100 targets across the country. These included rocket attacks on Saigon, Hue, and Danang. Many of the rockets landed in Khanh Hoi near the Saigon docks, making the completely indiscriminate nature of the attacks evident. The embassy plotted the exact impacts of the Chinese-made 122-mm rockets. The toll on civilian life was high; one rocket landed in the compound of the Grall Hospital. President Thieu issued a statement calling the rocketing evidence of the failure of the enemy's Tet Ky Dau (1969) general offensive. Thieu himself was in a buoyant mood and brimming with self-confidence.

Bunker interpreted the rocketing as the clear violation of the October 16 understanding that it was and concurred in General Creighton Abrams's request for authority to mount a 96-hour retaliatory air and naval strike against the part of North between the DMZ and the 19th parallel. <sup>62</sup> But the State Department deferred consideration of retaliation for the time being on the grounds that events thus far had not produced the "unequivocal evidence" needed to justify a military response before public opinion both at home and abroad.63 The Department's response to Bunker represented the first documented instance, to my knowledge, in which domestic American opinion directly imposed limitations on the freedom of action enjoyed by the Americans in the negotiations. The embassy spot-checked the reactions of government leaders, the National Assembly, labor, youth, business, and other elements of public opinion and found little expectation that the Americans would retaliate against the North. Doubts about the reliability of the American commitment that had been latent or unexpressed since the cessation of bombing had reappeared, the embassy reported, and it saw this as one of the purposes of the attacks. Public opinion generally viewed the attacks as signs of weakness rather than strength on the part of the enemy.<sup>64</sup> Bunker expressed gratitude for President Nixon's condemnation of the attacks at a news conference on March 4 but again warned that the enemy was probing the will of the Americans, and if the challenge were

allowed to go unmet the value of future understandings with the enemy would be seriously undermined. <sup>65</sup> More pertinent, perhaps, was the fact that the Communists, by deliberately and openly violating one of the three clauses of the October 16 understanding without provoking an American response, had sent a message that another clause, that with respect to Saigon's participation in the negotiations, could equally well be ignored.

A conspicuous feature of the ground attacks in the fourth phase of the Communists' offensive was the absence of local forces and the reliance on main force units in all attacks. Even so, there was a high desertion rate among such forces, reflecting morale problems in the DRV camp. For the first time since Giap's article, COSVN admitted the need to preserve forces when it issued Directive No. 55 in April. This directive stressed in effect: "Never again, and under no circumstances, are we going to risk our entire military force for one offensive. On the contrary, we should endeavor to preserve our military potential for future campaigns." At the beginning of March, Nixon had secretly ordered the bombing of the DRV's sanctuaries in Cambodia.

Power in Saigon continued to elude the party. While continuing its subversion in the population at large, it also pursued the age-long vendetta against the organized nationalists, such as the VNQDD. On March 5, Prime Minister Tran Van Huong narrowly escaped an assassination attempt by a man dressed in the uniform of an ARVN Ranger riding on the back of a motorbike who fired six shots at Huong's car two blocks from the American Embassy.<sup>67</sup> The party shifted its focus to using the Americans to leverage the ouster of Thieu's government, using as pressure points the American POWs it held, the demand at the Paris conference for Thieu's replacement, and, increasingly, the exploitation of anti-war groups, for whom peace had come to be equated with the United States stopping its war-making effort.<sup>68</sup> These tactics were designed to produce a crack in the ARVN that could be exploited to produce the general uprising sequel to the general offensive and to put pressure on the Americans to make rapid concessions on military and political issues under discussion in Paris. At the plenary session on May 8, the NLF delegation put forth a 10-point overall solution.

De Gaulle left the political scene in March 1969 following the defeat of a referendum on an obscure issue of regionalization of administration that he chose to interpret as a personal rejection by his ungrateful countrymen. Soon afterward, Manac'h relinquished his hold on the Asia-Oceania desk at the Quai and departed for his new post as ambassador to Peking. These departures temporarily ushered in a more even-handed French policy toward the protagonists at the conference on the Avenue Kléber.

# Upping the Ante: The Provisional Revolutionary Government of the Republic of South Vietnam

With the negotiations getting under way, the party center took steps beginning in April 1968 to tighten its disciplinary rule over the NLF to prevent any unauthorized contacts with the Saigon government on a local level that hopes of a cease-fire might inspire, of the kind that had taken place just before the Tet

offensive with General Hoang. People's liberation committees and people's liberation councils were to be constituted in liberated villages either by election or appointment. Following the precedent in the Viet Minh, these bodies were to form a "revolutionary administration." This was presented to the world as democratic, although a directive from higher headquarters stipulated that if possible two-thirds of the members of people's liberation councils were to be party members and "in newly liberated villages, party members should be in sufficient number to exercise party leadership." It said: "Considering the party's concept on class struggle, various party committee echelons must thoroughly understand that the revolutionary administration is a public organ of the party's absolute power for repressing the people's enemy, i.e. the U.S. imperialists, their lackeys, and the anti-revolutionary elements." <sup>69</sup>

In line with this new emphasis on revolutionary organization, the announcement of the formation of the Provisional Revolutionary Government of the Republic of South Vietnam (PRGSVN), which changed nothing on the ground, was intended as a morale-booster for the NLF rank and file. On May 23, 1969, two delegations of the central committees of the NLF and the Vietnam Alliance of National, Democratic, and Peace Forces held a consultative conference to discuss the convening of a congress of national delegates to elect a provisional revolutionary government. The delegation of the NLF was headed by Nguyên Huu Tho. The delegation of the Alliance was headed by Trinh Dinh Thao. The Congress of National Delegates of South Vietnam was held June 6–8, 1969, and was attended by 88 delegates and 72 guests.

In the basic resolutions of the congress, Article 1 provided that the political regime of South Vietnam is the Republic of South Vietnam, with the motto "Independence, Democracy, Peace and Neutrality." After articles dealing with domestic and foreign policies designed to appeal to the widest audience possible, the resolution in Article 4 stated "Vietnam is one, the Vietnamese people are one. The Vietnamese people's right to fight for the protection of their fatherland is the sacred, inviolable self-defense right." Article 5 spelled out the political program: vigorously lead the resistance toward victory, form a provisional coalition government to organize free general elections, elect a national assembly, promulgate a constitution, and designate the official government of South Vietnam. Reunification was to be achieved peacefully step by step on the basis of agreement between the two zones without foreign interference.

The PRG was to have a chairman and vice-chairman. The chairman was the veteran clandestine party member Huynh Tan Phat, described as usual as a Saigon architect; the minister to the chairman's office was Manac'h's friend Tran Buu Kiem; the foreign minister was Mrs. Nguyên Thi Binh, who replaced Kiem as head of the Paris delegation when the delegation switched its name from NLF to PRG.<sup>70</sup> The justice minister was Truong Nhu Tang and the health minister was Dr. Duong Quynh Hoa.

The meaning of these proceedings was evident to trained observers. The "Republic of South Vietnam" was invented out of whole cloth, as the French had invented the Autonomous Republic of Cochinchina.<sup>71</sup> It possessed limited

sovereignty, and the use of the term "provisional" indicated it was intended to serve an interim role pending popular elections under the party's control. It had no publicly announced head of state because its head of state was Ho Chi Minh. The DRV's recognition of the "Republic of South Vietnam" included no statement of respect for sovereignty in the Western sense and was in any case simply an appeal to Southern nationalism for purposes of seizing power from "the Saigon clique" by a combination of legal and illegal means.

In Hanoi, Ton Quang Phiet, secretary-general of the National Assembly's standing committee, said that in view of the formation of the PRG there were adequate conditions for organizing new elections to the National Assembly.<sup>72</sup> On March 6, 1971, the seventh session of the third legislature of the National Assembly in Hanoi gave unanimous approval to a resolution "ending the term of the National Assembly deputies elected by the South Vietnamese people on January 6, 1946." New elections took place on April 11. The representation of the South Vietnamese people in the National Assembly through the PRG remained a secret, however, in order to maintain the fiction of the "independence" of South Vietnam until the party's control had been assured.

# PROBLEMS OF DRUG ADDICTION AND RACIAL CONFLICT AMONG AMERICAN SERVICEMEN

As Vietnamization of the war took hold and American troops were relieved of much of the ordeal of combat, draftees found themselves spending months in aimless, endless garrison duty, confined in bunkers and behind concertina wire. They had no way to spend their money, except on R&R trips. The anti-war protests they read about seemed to them to rob the war effort of its legitimacy and further eroded their morale. Such circumstances created the conditions for a major drug epidemic, for drugs were available locally. The growing drug problem, along with other problems in the military such as the collapse of discipline, racial conflict, and the revelation of atrocities committed by American soldiers, may have spurred President Nixon to accelerate troop withdrawals from Vietnam in 1970 and 1971.

The smoking of opium in Indochina had a long history, and under the French government general the marketing of opium was a state monopoly and an important source of tax revenue. Although localized opium trading continued after 1954, the production and marketing of high-grade heroin, a chemical derivative of opium, did not start until 1969. In that year, a complex of seven laboratories opened in the Golden Triangle of Laos, Burma, and Thailand. Since the early 1950s, the area's drug merchants had been producing both smoking opium and crude, granular No. 3 heroin to service the mainly Chinese addicts in Bangkok and Hong Kong. Starting in 1969–1970, however, these syndicates used their supplies of opium to manufacture a pure, powdery No. 4 heroin that could be smoked in an ordinary cigarette without any trace odor.

In mid-1970, heroin addiction spread with extraordinary speed through the ranks of the 450,000 American soldiers in South Vietnam. The epidemic was encouraged, paradoxically, by a campaign to suppress the use of marijuana. As an official report concluded, "The upshot was that GI's who had been smoking only 'grass' turned to heroin, which was initially passed off to them as non-addicting cocaine. They reasoned that the substance itself, heroin, and the smoking of it were more easily concealed from prying eyes and noses than marijuana." Thus, at all major American military bases and social clubs, tiny plastic vials of 96 percent pure heroin became readily available for sale to soldiers for only \$2 or \$3 a dose, sold by Vietnamese civilians among others. By mid-1971, there were more American heroin users in South Vietnam (81,300) than in the United States (68,000).

The heroin traffic led to reports of the involvement of high-ranking officers in both the Lao and South Vietnamese military. It was reported that General Ouan Ratikoun, the chief of staff of the royal Lao army, owned the region's largest heroin laboratory, which processed under its distinctive "Double U-O Globe Brand" label some 100 kilograms per day of raw opium into heroin for export. The American Embassy in Vientiane and the CIA station were accused of doing little or nothing to put a stop to this traffic, which made use of RLAF transport aircraft or civilian airline planes. Allegations that Air America pilots were knowingly transporting opium or heroin aboard their aircraft were investigated and found to be groundless. Following the promulgation of anti-narcotics laws in Laos in November 1971, Air America was authorized to conduct body searches of all passengers in Laos. Three heroin factories at Ban Houei Sai burned in the summer of 1971, and their equipment was dug out and evacuated in March 1972.

Bunker took up the drug problem with President Thieu. Noting that drugs were cheap and available in South Vietnam, he noted that "the habit acquired abroad was translating itself into a rapid rise in crime rates in the United States where drugs were expensive."

The autochthons had become accustomed in 1945–1954 to seeing the African soldiers the French had brought with them to reoccupy Indochina and to fight their war against the Viet Minh. The African troops constituted a significant portion of the troops involved on the French side and became a focus of Viet Minh anti-war propaganda. Thus, the arrival of large numbers of African Americans in the American expeditionary force in Vietnam was not particularly new. As racial tension mounted, however, the Vietnamese came to doubt the view they had of the United States as a tolerant democracy. They saw American military police arresting African Americans for demonstrating against claimed discrimination. The DRV tried to make African American soldiers the focus of anti-war propaganda but with little success; the protesters, while feeling the same sense of futility of the war as many whites, were concerned more about evils in the heart of American society.

As American troops stayed in Vietnam, the children of the union of such soldiers with Indochinese women became a more visible segment of the population. These children were known by the name Amerasians. Abandoned in many instances by their fathers, they, too, were the objects of discrimination on the part of the society in which they lived, and many ended up in the United States after their plight became widely publicized.

# Cambodia into the Cauldron

By 1969, it was no longer possible to deny the serious turn for the worse that Cambodia's economy had taken; from an average growth rate of 2.5 percent between 1959 and 1963, the growth rate of gross national product per capita became negative after 1965. Large and growing budget deficits were recorded in 1968, 1969, and 1970. The state sector was a source of continuing deficit and drain on the rest of the economy, whose agricultural base, characterized by low paddy yields and lack of investment, was stagnant. Economic experts maintained that the entire Cambodian economy was badly in need of overhaul.

Along the country's eastern border, the drain of resources to the DRV and NLF was exacting a high price for the mortgage Sihanouk had made in 1964. Rice exports, which in 1965 had been the country's principal export earner, were down (see Table 2). Informed estimates by diplomatic sources in Phnom Penh of the quantities of rice sold clandestinely to the Vietnamese Communists ranged from 100,000 to 250,000 tons annually. Also, for the first time since the 1950s, the royal government was facing a serious internal insurgency, that of the Khmer Rouge, which raised again the prospect of deepening expenditures on the military.

Desperate to raise cash revenue for the state in the short term, Sihanouk authorized the opening of a gambling casino in Phnom Penh; money fever seized large sections of the population and contributed to the further impover-ishment of those classes least able to gamble. All these developments discredited Sihanouk, who was still regarded as a father figure by most Cambodians. While he was not yet targeted by the Khmer Rouge, who found a ready personification of their enemy in Lon Nol and his "fascist clique," and while he was not personally tainted by scandal, some in Sihanouk's entourage, particularly in the family of his consort, Monique, were perceived as ominous and corrupt influences. As early as February 1967, rumors of impending sudden changes involving Sihanouk had reached King Savang Vatthana of Laos.<sup>78</sup>

#### SIHANOUK TURNS AGAINST THE COMMUNISTS

The first tremors of sudden change were felt in August 1968. Again, rumors reached Laos, apparently originating with Lao diplomats in Phnom Penh and nourished by reports of travelers and by interpretation of some Cambodian radio broadcasts. The essence of the rumors was that Sihanouk had decided to

Table 2. Cambodia, Rice Exports, 1965–1969 (in tons)

1965	563,770
1966	199,049
1967	222,876
1968	251,782
1969	102,767

Source: Le Cambodge Economique (Phnom Penh), No. 46, June 19, 1970, p. 2.

crack down on collaborators with the Viet Cong, that he had ordered some officials involved therein executed, and that the government was to be dismissed in favor of a more pro-Western team headed by Lon Nol.<sup>79</sup> A broadcast reported that a special session of the National Assembly and the Council of the Kingdom on August 24 passed a resolution to confer full powers on Sihanouk under Article 15 of the constitution. The stated reason for this was that Cambodia faced external menaces and aggressive acts as well as traitorous activities of Cambodian rebels, who were leading the country toward catastrophe.<sup>80</sup>

Sihanouk had maneuvered the full powers for himself, as was his wont, because the reports he was receiving (principally from the French) of the official conversations in Paris led him to conclude that a negotiated end to the war in Vietnam was likely within the foreseeable future. The day when he would be left to face a belligerent and victorious DRV seemed to be fast approaching. As a protective measure, he issued a statement saying that any agreements regarding the border between Cambodia and Vietnam that were negotiated without the participation of Cambodia would be considered by the royal government to be null and void.

He sought relief from his predicament by initiating a rapprochement with the United States. He had little to fear from the United States, his French contacts told him, because the United States was on the way out in Southeast Asia whatever happened and would not expand the war to Cambodia. As he had done in the past, when he was faced with a threat from one side in the Cold War he made an alliance with the other side. Thus, in September, just as the official conversations reached the threshold of a package agreement, Sihanouk let it be known that he would welcome the re-establishment of diplomatic relations with the United States, provided the latter was willing to recognize Cambodia's frontiers de facto, if not de jure. In such an event, he would be willing to see the establishment of an embassy of up to 100 personnel, "including military attachés and even the CIA." He was no longer pretending that he had no knowledge of Viet Cong bases on Cambodian soil. "Of course" there are Viet Cong bases in Cambodia, mostly staffed by the North Vietnamese, he told B. K. Tiwari, an Indian journalist. "But what can I do?" One of the reasons the re-establishment of relations with the United States would be beneficial in Sihanouk's mind, the Indian surmised, was that travel by American military attachés to the region of the bases might dispose the Viet Cong to leave.81 (In 1967, thanks to information supplied them by MACV, three visiting American journalists, Horst Faas and George McArthur of the Associated Press and Ray Herndon of United Press International, had discovered and reconnoitered such a base, which showed signs of having been hastily evacuated by its occupants.)

An official government report made public in October 1968 contained evidence that armed Vietnamese continuously installed themselves in certain border districts of Svay Rieng Province. Sihanouk himself led a vociferous public campaign to denounce the presence of Vietnamese Communist forces on Cambodian soil. At a press conference on March 28, 1969, which was broadcast on the radio, Sihanouk denounced "before world opinion" the growing infiltration

and displayed a detailed map showing the bases. These charges, in the opinion of the Canadian ICC commissioner, constituted prima facie evidence of a violation of the 1954 cease-fire agreement on Cambodia by one of the signatories, and the Canadian delegation proposed such an investigation. The proposal was not taken up by the Indians and Poles. But Sihanouk found another means of deterring the Communists, giving his tacit agreement to the B-52 raids against the sanctuaries President Nixon had ordered.

After an exchange of letters between Sihanouk and President Nixon, the United States declared its recognition of Cambodia's territorial integrity within its present frontiers in April. The re-establishment of diplomatic relations followed on June 11, 1969, in the person of a chargé d'affaires, Lloyd M. Rives. An invitation to visit Cambodia was extended to President Nixon at the end of July, and instructions were issued to the press to avoid criticisms of Nixon's Asian policies and to say as little as possible about American air attacks along the borders. Sihanouk also made approaches for aid to the Soviets, who produced little, and the Chinese, who sent a mission to reform the management in Chinese-donated factories but without visible result. They also promised a long-term loan on very favorable terms that could be negotiated, they said, by Son Sann, the governor of the national bank.

In May, a group of 640 Khmer Serei with all their equipment turned themselves in to the royal army. Their leaders were later suitably rewarded with army rank at a ceremony presided over by Sihanouk and Lieutenant General Lon Nol. While the background to this rallying remains unclear, it appeared to indicate that the Khmer Serei had been abandoned by their sponsors, and from that moment on they no longer were an armed threat to Sihanouk.<sup>83</sup>

Increasingly frequent clashes between the royal army and the Vietnamese Communists led Sihanouk to rationalize his rapprochement with the United States. In a press conference on April 16, he said "The Communists attacked us too soon, while I was still anti-American. They should instead have encouraged us to remain anti-American. But now there is no more interest in our remaining so."84 In May he accused the Vietnamese Communists of expansionist designs on Cambodia, which forced the latter to issue another in their long series of ritual protestations of respecting Cambodia's territorial integrity. Passing through Phnom Penh on his way to take up his new post as ambassador in Peking, over cognac at a French Embassy lunch with the ambassadors of the DRV and the PRG on May 19, 1969, Manac'h gave them the latest news from Mai Van Bo, Ha Van Lau, and Tran Buu Kiem and assured the DRV ambassador in response to his anxious inquiry that there was no question, in Manac'h's opinion, of a re-establishment of diplomatic relations between France and the Republic of Vietnam. 85 This official reassurance must have come as a great comfort to the Communists in view of the difficulties they were experiencing with Sihanouk's government.

On May 25, Cambodian troops stationed in Bo Kheo clashed with DRV troops, and on the nights of June 8 and 9, a Cambodian army camp at Voeune Sai in Ratanakiri Province was attacked by a mixed force of Khmer Rouge and

DRV troops. In late June, Cambodian units were continuously involved in clashes with the Khmer Rouge. The fighting was intense because the Khmer Rouge were equipped with modern weapons of all types, which had been supplied to them by the Vietnamese. Vietnamese prisoners taken in these engagements were sent to Phnom Penh. Confronted with this evidence of cooperation between the Khmer Rouge and the DRV, Sihanouk ordered the flow of supplies to DRV troops limited. The manner in which supplies were delivered in the northeast in June 1969 was described in a CIA intelligence report. Three Cambodian army trucks bearing license plate numbers 7821, 8124, and 9654 loaded with rice and weapons from a warehouse in Phnom Penh made trips on a Saturday and Wednesday at the end or middle of each month to a DRV base area about 12 kilometers north of Camp Le Rolland in Mondolkiri Province, approximately eight kilometers from the Quang Duc Province border. The one and one half-ton trucks were under the supervision of Colonel LesKosem, who was Lon Nol's officer in charge of relations with FULRO, the Montagnard autonomy movement encouraged by Sihanouk. On arrival, the DRV soldiers paid Kosem's agent accompanying the shipment, and the money was handed over to Kosem on returning to Phnom Penh. Kosem handed the money over to Sihanouk personally.

Sihanouk ordered Lon Nol to confront the DRV and PRG ambassadors with the information he had about Vietnamese installations on Cambodian territory. At the same time, apparently for insurance, he recognized the PRG. These measures brought Huynh Tan Phat hurrying to Phnom Penh on a friendship visit from June 30 to July 5. In spite of embraces, exchanges of congratulations, and statements affirming the indestructible solidarity between Cambodia and revolutionary Vietnam and the broad smiles caught by photographers on the faces of Phat and his escort, Lon Nol, the visit failed to change Sihanouk's course, and the prince let it be known that he had no faith in the Vietnamese Communists. Notwithstanding, PRG propaganda painted the visit as a glowing success. The cutoff of rice to the DRV troops in the northeast, however, produced an outbreak of attacks against Cambodian army outposts. According to Colonel Kosem, the hungry troops also mistreated the civilian population, producing a refugee exodus.<sup>86</sup>

Confronted with these problems, Sihanouk convened on August 4, 1969, a national congress at his state palace consisting of the members of the National Assembly, the Council of the Kingdom, and various other public bodies, but excluding the left entirely, to constitute a "salvation" government. The congress was called upon to nominate 10 persons to constitute this government. Not surprisingly, the most votes went to Lon Nol (115 votes), then to Prince Sisowath Sirik Matak (99 votes), Prince Norodom Kantol (96 votes), and Sihanouk's son Prince Naradipo (90 votes).

Lon Nol and Sirik Matak declined, but while Kantol was beginning his consultations Sihanouk suddenly intervened to throw the ball again into Lon Nol's hands, telling him he expected the general to follow through. Sihanouk knew full well that Lon Nol was a man full of complexes who spoke in obscure

parables and did not remotely possess the qualities needed to deal with the critical situation. Moreover, Sihanouk was fully aware of how deeply Lon Nol and his cronies were involved in the trafficking of arms, rice, and other supplies to the Viet Cong with its lucrative emoluments. Sihanouk was certain he could trust Lon Nol completely to implement his neutralist and opportunist policies and that he would make a convenient fall guy if they failed.

Lon Nol presented his government before the National Assembly on August 13; it consisted of seven of Sihanouk's faithful followers and five rightists. After a debate lasting 11 hours, in which all the issues that had heretofore been taboo were raised by the deputies, including the casino, the arms and rice trafficking, the management of state enterprises, and the unemployment problems of young people, the Assembly gave its approval by a vote of 72 out of 75. Sihanouk remained silent in his palace. He received the members of the new government and assured them of the wide powers with which he had entrusted them.

In spite of his deteriorating relations with the Vietnamese Communists, Sihanouk was the only head of state to attend Ho Chi Minh's funeral in Hanoi. Nevertheless, it was noted that the speech of Cambodia's delegate to the UN General Assembly that autumn no longer castigated the "American aggression in Vietnam" as in the past but merely called for the withdrawal of foreign troops from South Vietnam, which Nixon was embarked upon in any event. The royal government requested the ICC to adjourn sine die effective December 31.87 Sihanouk had always considered the ICC as infringing on Cambodia's sovereignty, and it had contributed nothing in 16 years by way of securing Cambodia's borders against its enemies. A more immediate motive may have been that the DRV, as it was entitled to do as a signatory under Article 16, was privately threatening Sihanouk that it would request the ICC to investigate the American B-52 bombing of the border camps, which was causing much trouble for COSVN. The ICC served as a platform for Cold War vitriol to the end. Prince Sihanouk offered a farewell dinner to each delegation. At the dinner for the Canadians, who had invited the British ambassador, the exchange of toasts was dignified and inoffensive. At the dinner for the Indians, who had invited both the British and Soviet ambassadors, the exchange was inoffensive and appropriate. At the dinner for the Poles, finally, "the toasts went with the company," as Rives put it, the company being the chiefs of mission of the Soviet Union, the DRV, the PRG, North Korea, East Germany, Cuba, Bulgaria, and Czechoslovakia. Sihanouk thanked the Polish delegation for its conscientiousness in participating in the investigations of the numerous aggressions by the Americans and South Vietnamese. The Polish commissioner in his reply went overboard in his denunciation of "the generalized American aggression."88

But President Nixon's gradual withdrawal of troops from South Vietnam, far from reassuring Sihanouk, made him more nervous than ever. As usual, Sihanouk's contemporary writings (as opposed to those written with benefit of hindsight) are the best source for his motivations. In a long article titled "The U.S. and Us" published in the journal *Le Sangkum* in December, Sihanouk castigated the "armed, badly inspired, badly conceived interventions, and even

the sacrifices, of the United States" in the past that had "finally favored the advance of communism in the minds and on the ground which brings communism to the frontiers and even to the interior of Cambodia much more rapidly than would have occurred normally." But looking to the future, Sihanouk wrote "I do not believe that America, even if it wants to, can disinterest itself from Southeast Asia or even from non-Communist Indochina." He wrote, "They will be obliged in their own interest to support the popular nationalists in their resistance against the new imperialism, that of Asiatic communism."89 In January 1970, he went so far as to subscribe to the domino theory, writing that "the Viet Minh and Maoist danger would arrive at the doors of Thailand, Singapore and Malaysia" if Cambodia and Laos went Communist.

A further and serious border incident coincided with these developments. American planes bombed the border village of Dak Dam in Mondolkiri Province on November 16 and 17, 1969, killing a number of Cambodian villagers. This time, however, Sihanouk's reaction was different, possibly as a result of information he received from the American military. "Who triggered the Dak Dam incident?" he asked in a speech on December 15 in Kampot Province. "It was the Viet Cong who fired at the Americans from our territory. When the Americans got hit, they became angry and bombed us. Then the Viet Cong and the Viet Minh fled, and only Khmer inhabitants were left to become victims. That is the whole story."90

It was in December, after yet another international film festival in Phnom Penh in which Sihanouk won the lion's share of the awards, that Sihanouk began to be aware of the danger to his personal position from the new willingness to discuss taboo subjects in the National Assembly, and, according to some reports, contemplated ascending the throne again. When he attempted to send emissaries to the countryside surrounding the capital to mobilize crowds to demonstrate their fidelity before the palace, Sirik Matak, seeing a maneuver to outflank the Assembly, used his authority as interior minister to order provincial officials to advise the peasants to stay in their villages, which they did.

On December 26, on the eve of the 28th National Congress of the Sangkum, four ministers or deputy ministers resigned and two other deputy ministers withdrew their resignations at the last minute. All were faithful Sihanoukists. There was no official explanation, but it was assumed that the resignations were intended to dislocate the government. The contrary happened, due to Sirik Matak's decisive response; he accepted the resignations, and three days later he rejected Sihanouk's request that the ministers' departure be postponed until Lon Nol's return from France.<sup>91</sup> It was an unprecedented test of strength. Sihanouk assembled 1,500 followers to bring pressure on the government, but the latter, supported by the Assembly, brought in 1,000 of its followers and forced Sihanouk to back down. It was a public humiliation such as he had never experienced. Finding that he lacked the votes to carry off his favorite tactic of forcing a choice between himself and his opponents, Sihanouk asked the Assembly simply to reaffirm its loyalty to him, which it did.

A few days after this congress, the prince's cabinet announced he would leave at the end of February for much-needed rest and medical treatment in France. Meanwhile, he checked into a Phnom Penh hospital. On January 5, it was announced he was leaving the hospital that afternoon. At the stated time, the prince's motorcade left the hospital without him. Monique left alone later that evening and went to Chamcar Mon, apparently to pack. The following day, Sihanouk himself emerged, and after a stop at the royal palace, drove directly to Pochentong, where he boarded a plane for France to rest at the crown's villa at Mougins, as he had often done in the past. His sudden mysterious departure meant the cancellation of an already announced week-long trip with the diplomatic corps and his absence during a visit by Pham Van Dong, scheduled, it was rumored, to begin on January 26. It was the action of a man who was worried about his health and who felt no particular concern about his personal position. He told diplomats at the airport he intended to be back in time for the festival of the sacred furrow on May 24.92

Even though Sihanouk had temporarily cowed the Vietnamese Communists into silence, Cold War alliances continued to hold Cambodia in their grip. As the Vietnamese Communists had so often done in the past, it was the embassies of the other countries of the socialist camp in Phnom Penh that now took up the cries of outrage at violation of Cambodia's borders by the imperialists. It was noted that the Czechs and East Germans excelled in this regard. Conversations with Soviet, Czech, and Polish diplomats revealed fears in the socialist camp at the end of 1969 stemming from five factors: (1) the renewal of American-Cambodian diplomatic relations; (2) the royal government's efforts to liberalize the economy and turn to a more capitalist course; (3) the beginning of cooperation between the Cambodian military and American military attachés on the border incidents, which was viewed as very dangerous; (4) unpublished agreements resulting from the visit to Cambodia of the foreign ministers of Singapore and the Philippines; and (5) the conviction that the United States was behind the termination of the ICC in Cambodia.<sup>93</sup>

One of the effects of Sihanouk's anti-Vietnamese zig in his zigzag course was to fuel Lon Nol's long-standing ambitions of reclaiming the rights of the Khmer Krom against the Vietnamese. Sihanouk himself had written of the KKK that they were "authentic Khmer patriots who fight against all Vietnamese." Contacts between the KKK leaders and the Phnom Penh government, where Lieutenant Colonel Les Kosem, once again, had been given the liaison responsibility, increased. The South Vietnamese government provided financial and arms support to the KKK troops, which were formed loosely into battalions. The KKK provided recruits for the Civilian Irregular Defense Group (CIDG), the successor organization to the CIA-financed Village Defense Program when the latter was taken over by the Special Forces in July 1963, but the Americans criticized the KKK men for their lack of discipline and likened them to bandits.

Lon Nol, who had been in France since October 23, officially for health reasons, prolonged his stay in order to meet with the head of state to pledge his loyalty and seek instructions, returning to Phnom Penh only on February 18.

During Lon Nol's absence, the leading role in the government was assumed by Prince Norodom Sirik Matak, who had a good understanding of economic matters and had strong backing from the Assembly. Sirik Matak proceeded in short order to close down the Mutual Aid Fund, to which the managers of all state enterprises had been in the habit of contributing funds that Sihanouk disposed of as he saw fit and without any accountability; to prohibit ministers from sending files directly to the head of state, as had been their custom, and to order them to submit them to the prime minister, who would decide which ones warranted the attention of the head of state; and to place the police, which was the source of much corruption and was headed by Sihanouk's brother-in-law Oum Mannorine, under the authority of the army.

Immediately upon his return to Phnom Penh, Lon Nol announced the withdrawal from circulation of the 500-riel banknote, knowing this action would deprive the Vietnamese Communists of currency to carry on their food and arms trafficking, and suspended the immunity from customs inspection of diplomatic pouches, which the Communists used as a channel to replenish their coffers. <sup>95</sup> Lon Nol also began a tour of the eastern border provinces to inform the officers and their men of his ideas about the military situation and to ask them to prepare for the future struggle against "the hereditary Vietnamese enemy." It is likely that similar messages were addressed to the KKK across the border in South Vietnam. In January and February, there were clashes between the Cambodian army and the Vietnamese Communists, and in February, Cambodian forces began shelling the Vietnamese bases.

On March 8, that is to say less than three weeks after Lon Nol's return, demonstrations against the Viet Cong, obviously organized by local authorities on orders of the government, occurred simultaneously at Svay Rieng, Chantrea, Kompong Rau, Rumduol, and Romeas Hek, close to the border. The population in these areas had been suffering from the exactions of the Vietnamese Communists, who restricted their movements, requisitioned oxcarts and men for their transport needs, and, in some sectors, even established local administrations full of red tape.

Lon Nol's message to the KKK to be ready for struggle was gladly received by the KKK troops in South Vietnam. They thought that Sihanouk would return to Cambodia and together with Lon Nol drive the Vietnamese out of Cambodia and also out of Kampuchea Krom. This was the struggle, long awaited, that they thought Lon Nol had in mind. Accordingly, they made secret preparations to go across into Cambodia. But word of the preparations reached Colonel Michael Healy, the commanding officer of the 5th Special Forces Group, who discussed the new developments with Son Ngoc Thanh in Saigon. Thanh was skeptical of Lon Nol's ability to seize the opportunity offered by Sihanouk's absence. He would wait for a call to join the government in Phnom Penh, which he was sure would come. "If Lon Nol goes to the left or right, I will kill him. If he goes straight ahead, I will support him," he reportedly said. He did favor sending KKK troops to Cambodia. He placed greater priority on defeating the Khmer Rouge than in attacking the Vietnamese, however; there were only 3,800

of them, and he claimed to know exactly where they were located. General Creighton Abrams, the MACV commander, refused to commit the Americans to support the KKK in Cambodia, for which he thought there would be little enthusiasm in Washington, but he told Healy that he would agree to release nine battalions of the KKK, three battalions at a time, from the CIDG program, "to go where they want." The South Vietnamese, who had operational control of the CIDG program, were alarmed at the prospect of losing such a significant force but were mollified by Healy's promise to replace the departing men with new Khmer Krom recruits from the regional and popular forces.<sup>96</sup>

Sihanouk, in Paris, was informed of the demonstrations and remained unruffled, calling them "natural" developments; reports circulated in government circles that he had expressed his satisfaction in a message to Lon Nol. On the morning of March 11, however, things went farther. Several thousand demonstrators marched to the embassies of the DRV and the PRG in Phnom Penh to vent their anger. The demonstrators and their banners were well orchestrated by Our Mannorine of the police and by the army command—that is to say, they had Sihanouk's blessing. The mass was made up of students, supported by civil servants and military men in uniform. A contingent of two to three hundred KKK men had been added, however, and these men broke into the buildings, emptied filing cabinets, destroyed equipment, and rough-handled embassy personnel. Outside, cars were burned, and private houses and shops owned by Vietnamese were looted. On the afternoon of the same day, a demonstration took place in front of the National Assembly to deliver a petition demanding the evacuation of the Viet Cong from the border. The deputies and members of the Council of the Kingdom, acting in concert as the kingdom's parliament, voted a resolution requesting the government to take steps to this end. Sirik Matak canceled the trade agreement with the PRG on March 12.

It seems likely, as it was said in government circles, that Lon Nol was following Sihanouk's instructions. Sihanouk was about to leave Paris for Moscow and Peking, and it is possible, even likely, that he saw the demonstrations as reinforcing his hand when he asked his friends in these two capitals to bring pressure on the Vietnamese. But events had turned grave. He had probably not authorized the sacking of the embassies, although his instructions to the government, if such existed, have been lost forever in the destruction of the Phnom Penh archives. What is certain is that he sent a telegram to his mother, whose text is cited by Meyer, expressing his understanding of the motives that induced the anger of his compatriots but adding that Cambodia's salvation did not lie in sacking embassies. He was sure, he wrote, that the recent events had been wished and organized by unnamed persons who sought to destroy Cambodia's friendship with the socialist countries and to throw Cambodia into the arms of an imperialist capitalist power. These persons had taken advantage of his absence, and he therefore proposed to return in order to talk to the nation and the army.<sup>97</sup> Had he done so, he almost certainly would have reversed the situation.<sup>98</sup>

Sihanouk announced on March 12 that he would ask the Russians and Chinese to put the Viet Cong on notice "to leave us in peace." If the Viet Cong

did not put an end to their intervention in Cambodia, the rightist faction would see its influence grow. "The gentlemen of the right have no need to organize a coup d'état against me; I am not really attached to power," Sihanouk said in a television interview. This was a lie, as his subsequent actions prove, but the tactics behind the lie were sound: he would brandish the scarecrow of the unerringly loyal Lon Nol before the Russians and Chinese in order to obtain their support against his opponents on the right and the left and against the Vietnamese Communists. He told French journalists that if Moscow and Peking refused him their support, they would have only themselves to blame for his "becoming pro-American." On March 13, he complained to American journalists that when he asked Mai Van Bo to intercede with his government to bring about the withdrawal of DRV forces from Cambodia, he received an evasive answer. Queen Kossamak advised her son against an early return, according to General Riche, the royal family's doctor, and this may have proved decisive, for Sihanouk apparently still had no idea of how close to the precipice he was. 100

Lon Nol was keeping the absent prince informed about all developments in Phnom Penh and of the government's determination to follow a policy of strict neutrality. But when he offered to send Prince Kantol as representative of Queen Kossamak and Second Deputy Prime Minister Yem Sambaur to Moscow to confer with him, Sihanouk refused. Amid conflicting reports of when the prince would return, the situation in Cambodia continued to degenerate. There were further anti-Vietnamese mob actions on March 12 and 13. "The government, taking into account the general feeling of the Khmer people," a diplomatic note said, "immediately notified the chargés d'affaires of the two embassies of its decision to call upon the said armed forces to leave Cambodian territory not later than dawn on March 15, 1970." The ultimatum was an important step toward reclaiming the rights of a neutral state under the Hague Convention of 1907, which Sihanouk had effectively abrogated six years before by deliberately disregarding Cambodia's obligations under the convention. The convention gave a state the right to oppose the actions of belligerents on its territory in violation of its neutrality. The diplomats of the DRV and PRG, having had enough of Lon Nol's tricks but probably fearing further violence, had retreated to the safety of friendly embassies; as good Marxist-Leninists, they were not used to being warned of risking the people's ire in the streets.

A meeting of the parliament on Monday morning, March 16, to hear Oum Mannorine defend himself against charges of corruption and to hear Sosthene Fernandez explain lapses in the performance of the security services in the same case adjourned after a large demonstration outside demanded the indictment of civilian and military officials responsible for having connived with the Vietnamese Communists. When a small group started to distribute tracts accusing Sihanouk of treason and selling Cambodia to the Vietnamese Communists, they were set upon by the crowd. They were saved from lynching by police and military in civilian dress who spirited them away in cars. By its size and by its obvious relation to what was going on inside the Assembly, the demonstration recalled that of June 11, 1960, when Sihanouk had been appointed head of state.

Inside, the deputies met in special plenary session, and some, such as Trinh Hoanh, who was close to Sirik Matak, criticized Sihanouk (without naming him) and his wife. The debate was carried outside by loudspeaker, but the crowd had dispersed in the intense heat of the day. Only a few people, perhaps plainclothes police, stood in the shade of the tamarind trees across the street. To the south, in front of the Botum Vadey pagoda, a section of military in uniform was camped. At 12:30, when the debate grew more virulent, the loudspeakers were cut off. That evening, after the close of debate, the radio gave no inkling of the situation.

The following day, Queen Kossamak addressed to the parliament a moving appeal on behalf of her son. Sihanouk, however, had, unwisely forced the issue of his own status by declaring in a small closed meeting that he would punish his enemies, with Lon Nol heading the list, when he returned. A secretly made tape-recording of the prince's words was dispatched to Phnom Penh, where it caused panic; remembering the executions of Khmer Serei agents and Khmer Rouge at Sihanouk's order, Lon Nol and his followers were convinced their heads were on the block.

#### SIHANOUK DEPOSED

On March 18, the day Sihanouk left Moscow, with no assurances that any Soviet pressure would be brought on the Vietnamese, the parliament convened again to consider the cases of Oum Mannorine and Sosthene Fernandez. Before dawn that morning, Sirik Matak and two army officers entered Lon Nol's house, woke him up, and demanded that he sign a document approving the deposing of Sihanouk. Lon Nol hesitated, and Sirik Matak cried out, "Nol, my friend, if you don't sign this paper, we'll shoot you!" Lon Nol burst into tears, pulled himself together, and signed the paper. 102 That morning also, Rives was called in by the Cambodian army's acting chief of staff and read a paper saying that despite rumors to the contrary, the royal government's policy of neutrality would not change. 103 The foreign ministry sent to the embassy a note protesting the firing on Cambodian territory by American and South Vietnamese helicopters; two days previously, four similar notes to the embassy had protested incidents during February that had violated Khmer territory. 104 Indeed, with alarming neutrality, the foreign ministry continued regularly to protest DRV-Viet Cong incidents of attacks on Cambodian soil. 105

At the request of the acting president of the Assembly, In Tam, Sirik Matak read a communiqué from the royal government dealing with recent events and restating the government's policy of strict neutrality and complete independence. In Tam then called on deputy Sim Var to speak, but before the latter had had a chance, In Tam announced that the government had requested a closed-door session of the parliament. The session was broadcast live. 106

The session began with Sim Var stressing the seriousness of the situation caused by the presence of Viet Cong troops on Khmer territory and calling for giving the government full power to deal with the situation. Deputy Trinh Hoanh then took the floor to voice his concern over the situation and explained

how constitutional procedures had to be followed to give full power to the government and to proclaim a state of emergency. In Tam then took the floor again and appointed a committee to study procedures to give the government full power. Other deputies continued the debate, including Ung Mung, Douc Rasy, Uch Ek, and Danh Sang. Much of this debate was couched in language reminiscent of Sihanouk's June 13, 1960, message to the nation, in which he had castigated "imperialist governments hostile to our neutrality which are threatening our independence, territorial integrity and the very existence of our nation." Deputy Thach Chan noted that Article 15 required the declaration of a state of emergency. In Tam then ordered the drafting of a resolution declaring a state of emergency. The resolution was read out by Trinh Hoanh and adopted unanimously. Because of the occupation of Khmer territory by the Viet Cong and because of the activities of certain traitors who had sold out the country, it stated, a state of emergency was proclaimed and the Lon Nol government of national salvation was given full power in conformity with Article 15.

In Tam then spoke again. He announced that Queen Kossamak, in two letters and in a subsequent private meeting, had expressed displeasure with demonstrations taking place in the country and asked that the Assembly withdraw its support for the demonstrators. If the parliament did not do this, it should relieve Prince Sihanouk of his power so he could not be held responsible for the situation that had developed in his absence. In Tam confessed he did not know what to do, given this choice.

Deputy Trinh Hoanh then took the floor and began criticizing Sihanouk for protecting the Viet Cong and acting in complicity with foreigners. He called Sihanouk a dictator and accused him of giving protection both to the smuggling activities of his wife and her family and to dishonest officials and businessmen in order to please his wife and his mother-in-law, who had made a fortune selling positions in the administration. He accused the prince of making hardships for the people by opening the state casino, of constantly changing his views, of demagoguery, of executing a large number of peasants without trials, of wasting national funds, of blindly following his wife's advice, of showing disrespect for the people's opinion, and of violating the constitution. Trinh Hoanh also stressed the necessity "of getting rid of the Sihanouk yoke" and proposed a vote to withdraw confidence from the prince. A number of deputies, including Sim Var, Ung Mung, Hoeur Lay In, Prom Seng, and Uch Ek, followed Trinh Hoanh, denouncing the prince in similar terms and approving the proposal to withdraw confidence from the prince.

Phuong San, a member of the Council of the Kingdom, then took the floor and inquired about the constitutional procedures that had made Sihanouk head of state. Acting chairman In Tam told him that the prince had not been voted into office but had been made head of state by demonstrators during the time of Chuop Hell, who was president of the National Assembly, and Pho Proeung, who was prime minister. After a further exchange of questions and answers, Phuong San declared himself satisfied with the motion. Deputy Koam Reth said he did not want to place his confidence in the prince any more.

Following the speeches of the deputies, In Tam announced that a vote of confidence in Prince Sihanouk was in order. The 92 members of the combined National Assembly and Council of the Kingdom voted unanimously against the prince. In Tam then announced that Prince Sihanouk was no longer head of state. The deposition took effect at 1 P.M. on March 18, 1970. Cheng Heng, president of the National Assembly, was "entrusted with the function of chief of state till the next election of a true chief of state in conformity with the national constitution." <sup>108</sup>

The vote by the freely elected Cambodian deputies was a remarkable display of the Cambodian democracy that Sihanouk had tried for years to squelch. They may have been giving vent to their anger pent up over many years, as Meyer says, 109 but they were completely within their constitutional rights in acting to depose Sihanouk as head of state, as the parliament had sworn him to this position on June 20, 1960. The throne being temporarily vacant, the occupant of the post of head of state was subject to constitutional provisions concerning his length of tenure and his replacement in case of need. Only the king was named for life. The head of state had no more rights than a Regency Council. Indeed, if he considered himself sacred, inviolable, and named for life, he would be preventing the eventual return of a king to the throne. He would be regarded as a usurper. It followed that the mandate of the head of state was only temporary, precarious, and revocable. Under Article 30 bis of the constitution, the term of office of the Regency Council (or in its absence, by implication, that of head of state) had to be prorogued at the beginning of each legislature, and therefore, constitutionally speaking, the mandate given Sihanouk in 1960 should have been renewed periodically since then. Finally, as specified in Article 122, in the absence of the head of state, the president of the National Assembly assumed the position of head of state pro tem. 110

Although the Chinese media had maintained a total silence on the events in Cambodia, the Chinese leaders were filled with great anxiety. At 2 a.m. on March 15, an official awakened Ambassador Manac'h and asked him to come to the foreign ministry urgently. The Chinese wanted an Air France Boeing 707 to be placed at their disposal between March 18, when Sihanouk was scheduled to arrive in Peking, and March 20 in order to fly the prince to Phnom Penh. From the French ambassador in Moscow, Manac'h learned that the Chinese were urging Sihanouk to fly to Phnom Penh aboard a French plane from Peking. But Queen Kossamak had again advised her son to delay his return. He had decided, it was reported, to remain in China until March 24, when there would be a regularly scheduled Air France flight from Shanghai to Phnom Penh. Air France was reporting technical problems with landing a 707 at the Peking airport. The Chinese were insistent on their original plan; Chou En-lai himself was behind it.<sup>111</sup>

At the Moscow airport on March 18, Sihanouk was informed of the Cambodian parliament's vote by Kosygin, who had rebuffed from the beginning his request to intervene with the Vietnamese "to help me contain the pressure they exert on my country by the occupation of a portion of our territory." The

previous day Pravda had carried on its front page a press statement reporting the observation by both sides that American aggression was the main cause of the "aggravated situation in Indochina." 113 Obviously, the party center had let its Soviet ally know that in its present difficult situation any encouragement given to Sihanouk's madcap scheme to deprive it of its secure bases in Cambodia would be considered an unforgivable breach of proletarian internationalism, or in crude terms a stab in the back, although here again we must await the opening of the party archives to know the exact language. A PRG spokesman was quoted in *Pravda* as telling Soviet newsmen that his government respected the inviolability of Cambodia's borders and blamed the trouble on the usual "reactionary forces led by U.S. imperialism."114

In light of Kosygin's rebuff of his overture, Sihanouk had given his reluctant agreement to the Chinese plan, but now the situation had changed again. Pochentong was closed to traffic. Radio communications between Phnom Penh and Peking had been cut. Manac'h had given up the plane idea. Sihanouk's plane arrived in Peking at 10 A.M. on March 19 to a subdued welcome by Chou. Still, for another day Sihanouk remained undecided about what to do. His close adviser Penn Nouth, traveling with him, told Manac'h on the morning of March 20 that Sihanouk was thinking of retiring to France. Manac'h made no response to this suggestion. And in the immediate future there were official conversations with Chou scheduled for later that day. 115

In a long and confused statement distributed to the press late on Friday, March 20, containing numerous distortions and legal errors and obviously drafted in considerable haste, Sihanouk attempted to defend himself against his "absolutely illegal" deposition. He said that there was no provision allowing the parliament to depose a head of state (which was, strictly speaking, correct) "who is implicitly appointed for life" (which was incorrect). He said the only way he could be deposed was by a national referendum. He was prepared to enter such a contest. Aside from the fact that the Phnompenhois were thoroughly familiar with Sihanouk's mock referenda, the legal fact was that Article 95 reserved the right to initiate a referendum to the Assembly, a provision that Sihanouk had on several occasions overlooked. He complained that the parliament had not even invited him, the accused, to present a legal defense before it. He accused "the coup d'état group" of deliberately destroying the peace and political stability the country had enjoyed by organizing demonstrations that were far from spontaneous and by using racist and ultra-nationalist demagoguery to incite his compatriots to attack Vietnamese civilians. 116

On Saturday, March 21, Sihanouk had a long talk with Manac'h. He informed him that Pham Van Dong was arriving secretly in Peking that very afternoon and that his Chinese hosts, after having their own discussions with the Vietnamese visitor, would arrange a tripartite meeting for him on the following day. Once again, Manac'h was passive, offering no alternative suggestions about how the prince might conduct himself at this critical moment. In taking his leave, Sihanouk told Manac'h: "You can be sure that I will return to Cambodia. But—and I regret telling you this—it is no longer impossible, from now on,

that I shall return in solidarity with the Communist forces. It is an eventuality, naturally, that I would have liked to be able to avoid."<sup>117</sup>

Sihanouk's stunning decision was already made on Sunday morning, March 22, according to Manac'h's journal. Sihanouk was lodged in a villa next door to Pham Van Dong in the western suburbs of Peking and so could come and go on foot. There were several of these private meetings in addition to the three-cornered ones. The prince had resolved, in concord with his two partners, to head a popular movement, a united front of nationalist forces in Cambodia against Lon Nol and Sirik Matak. The struggle would be pushed not only to the overthrow of the government in Phnom Penh but also to the ouster of foreign imperialist forces from the Indochinese peninsula, Sihanouk told Manac'h. Sihanouk would travel to Hanoi in a month's time. In the course of this visit, Pham Van Dong would declare publicly the commitment he had offered in Peking secretly, but with Chou as witness, namely to respect the territorial integrity of Cambodia. 118 On March 23, Sihanouk addressed an appeal to his countrymen in his capacity of "legal head of state." He announced the dismissal for high treason of the cabinet headed by Lon Nol, the National Assembly headed by Cheng Heng, and the Council of the Kingdom. A government of national union would be formed. An army of national liberation would be trained and put into the field to fight the reactionary traitors and their American imperialist masters to the death. A National United Front of Kampuchea (NUFK; in Khmer Renaksey Ruop Ruom Cheat Kampuchea) was being established with the double mission of overseeing the liberation of the country and its reconstruction after the victory. 119

The opportunity to spare Cambodia the needless agony of the war and destruction implied in Sihanouk's appeal slipped by without being seized; first by Sihanouk, who could have been in no doubt of what his decision implied for his country and its people but who nevertheless rejected almost out of hand the alternative of peace, and second, and no less important, by Manac'h, the only Westerner on the scene at that critical moment and one who was, moreover, in the prince's complete confidence. The representative of the country whose officials (especially Manac'h from his high post at the Quai d'Orsay) had for years proclaimed the "neutrality" of the countries of Indochina as the only possible solution to the war, remained silent while Sihanouk, the leader of one of those countries, told him to his face he intended to jettison neutrality by throwing himself into the arms of the Communists, a silence that showed better than words the utter worthlessness of previous French proclamations. It was not until March 23—too late—that Manac'h, on instructions from Paris and stating what had been obvious all along, handed Penn Nouth a message for Sihanouk that the French believed that only neutrality could save Cambodia from war. 120

The opportunity had lain in the conciliation of Khmer nationalists among themselves in the days preceding March 21, the day on which Cheng Heng, president of the National Assembly, was confirmed by the two houses and took the oath of office before them. <sup>121</sup> The son of peasants, a man of no political ambition, Cheng Heng wanted nothing more than to slip quietly into a ceremonial role in the splendor of the Chamcar Mon Palace. He had risen rapidly

through the ranks of the provincial civil service and had been elected a deputy for the first time in 1958. He knew much about agriculture and had been deputy minister of agriculture in the first and second Pho Proeung cabinets in 1960 during Sihanouk's maneuvers to get himself elected head of state. Cheng Heng became a large landed proprietor and experimental farmer. But he owed much to Penn Nouth, who, recognizing his administrative talents, had treated him almost like an adopted son. If these two men, who shared a larger vision of a neutral, prosperous, and independent Cambodia and who were both blameless in the events of March, had been able to get together in Phnom Penh before Sihanouk sealed the compact with Pham Van Dong, the consequences of Sihanouk's tarrying abroad might have been overcome. The prince's differences with "the coup d'état group" might even have been papered over or some compromise found based on a commitment to a new and more rational policy toward the Vietnamese. There were those even in Sihanouk's own family who would have made sacrifices to bring about reconciliation. Aside from his mother and her counsels of moderation, Sihanouk's eldest son, Norodom Yuvannath, was reported to have approached the French in Hong Kong to facilitate the issuance of a visa to him to visit Laos, apparently with the objective of appealing to King Savang to support Sihanouk's return. Although Savang was no great friend of Sihanouk, there were in his mind grounds for questioning the legitimacy of his deposition, and he had hesitated to accept the credentials of a new ambassador who claimed to represent the state of Cambodia. Nothing came of Yuvanath's approach, however, because the Lao government refused him a visa with the explanation that Laos did not wish to be drawn into an internal Cambodian dispute. 122

The American failure to make a public declaration of support for the continued neutrality of Cambodia in the immediate aftermath of March 18 (except for President Nixon's answer to a question at his press conference on March 21) played into the hands of Sihanouk, Peking, and Hanoi, allowing them immediately to monopolize the interpretation of the events in Cambodia. After carrying Sihanouk's statement of March 20, the New China News Agency (NCNA) published two accounts on March 23. The first was a straightforward report that Sihanouk had been deposed in a coup d'état on March 18. The second cited Western press reports to buttress the charge that the coup was led by two Cambodian leaders who were both "staunch pro-Americans," that it was engineered by the CIA, and that it was accompanied by the arrival at a Cambodian port of an American ammunition ship. The agency went on to quote an account of the coup by T. D. Allman in the British newspaper The Guardian. 123 By March 23, even Penn Nouth, a reasonable man of some age and experience, brushed aside Manac'h's remark that the State Department was behaving oddly for a coup-maker and said that certainly neither the CIA nor the Pentagon could be considered innocent. 124 In point of fact, an American ship, the Columbia Eagle, and its cargo of bombs had been detoured into Cambodian waters by a crew mutiny. On March 26, to bolster the circumstantial case for the American hand, NCNA detailed American attempts to oust Sihanouk since 1958 and for the first time publicly charged American instigation of the coup. 125

The fact that Peking still kept its ambassador in Phnom Penh and avoided direct attacks on Lon Nol and Sirik Matak suggested to American China-watchers in Hong Kong that the Chinese were still looking for a deal with the government in Phnom Penh that might accommodate both their historical endorsement of Sihanouk and his entourage and their immediate objective of keeping the American military out of Cambodia. 126 The Chinese knew both Lon Nol and Sirik Matak well, the former from his frequent visits to Peking on behalf of Sihanouk, and the latter from his tour as Cambodian ambassador in Peking. Lon Nol disclosed to French Ambassador Louis Dauge on March 27 that he had written to Chou to send personal regards and assure him he wished to maintain friendship between Cambodia and China. 127

In a speech in Moscow on April 21 at Lenin centennial ceremonies, Le Duan said, "It is quite obvious that the American imperialists intend to widen the war throughout Indochina." The perception that the war was widening was to prove extremely damaging to the administration's efforts on both the military and diplomatic fronts; cadres in the propaganda department of the party center in Hanoi must have taken sardonic satisfaction from reading on their AFP news ticker the reports of protests in Washington against the widening war. The DRV leaders counted the French government's decision to maintain its embassy in Phnom Penh as a setback, however, and Le Duc Tho, who had had a meeting with Kissinger in Paris on April 4, made a veiled threat that French economic interests in Indochina would suffer as a consequence. <sup>128</sup>

#### THE COMPACT OF PEKING

The compact that was struck among Sihanouk, Chou, and Pham Van Dong in their secret meetings on March 21, 22, and 23, the exact terms of which remain secret to this day, reflected the character of the three men: Sihanouk, vain as always and ready to join whomever was at hand, regardless of ideology, to cling to power; Chou, pleased to demonstrate his loyalty to an old friend; and Dong, eager as ever to seize the opportunity offered the party to advance its revolutionary objective.

It was not in Sihanouk's character to retire from the scene, as another statesman might have done, confident that his work on behalf of his country's peace and neutrality would outlive him. Nor was Sihanouk's sudden decision to lead the resistance against Lon Nol surprising, given the ability he had shown to switch sides in 1945 and 1969. This ability allowed him to adopt for his policy a neutrality that consisted of bending to the will of whichever foreign power happened to be the strongest at the moment: France (1941–1945); Japan (1945); France (1946–1954); the United States (1954–1958); China (1956–1967); the United States (1969–1970); the DRV (1970–1973).

Sihanouk's decision in Peking was informed by two considerations. First, his thirst for revenge against the traitors Lon Nol and Sisowath Sirik Matak. He had always considered Sirik Matak an enemy whose ambition was to ascend the throne, but it was the thought that the loyal Lon Nol had double-crossed him that angered Sihanouk above all else. Here, the autocrat masquerading as a demo-

crat showed through. Sihanouk's consort, Monique, may have tipped the scales; she told him he would be a "sissy" to give in to a few "petits salauds" who owed him everything, Nay Valentin remarked to the Dutch chargé d'affaires. <sup>129</sup> Second, his decision, which he declared to Manac'h, <sup>130</sup> to fight Lon Nol to the end. The Khmer Rouge urged this, suspecting already in 1970 that the DRV would reach a secret deal with the Americans that might harm the revolution in Cambodia.

In his blind thirst for revenge and his embrace of an all-or-nothing scheme, Sihanouk showed his willingness to do violence to the institutions of the Khmer state in order to satisfy his personal need to hold on to power. He allied himself with the only people who could bring him back to power—the DRV and the Khmer Rouge. There was ample precedent for his willingness to see violence used. He did not much care what happened after he had accomplished this end. In short, the compact was for Sihanouk much more than just an opportunity to save face, as one historian has interpreted it. 131 Sihanouk had been in the habit of bringing back to Cambodia exiled potential opponents in order to make use of their services He had done this with Son Ngoc Thanh in 1951 and Prince Sisowath Yuthevong in 1946. Now he himself, a prince in exile, was to be brought back to his country by the Khmer Rouge and made use of. In Cambodian history, the kingdom's rulers have been judged by the uprightness of their life and the degree to which they brought happiness to their people. Sihanouk no doubt foresaw the suffering of his people and the devastation of his country that would ensue from his decision to embark on a "war of liberation," the consequences of which have still not been overcome today. Sihanouk, according to Khmer tradition, was an unworthy ruler.

Chou's position was in keeping with his role as host, but it went well beyond that. There was certainly the long history of China's relations with Sihanouk's regime, going back to 1954, and Chou's personal role in that conference in support of Cambodia's untrammeled sovereignty. That much was understood. But in acting as witness to Pham Van Dong's commitment to respect Cambodia's territorial integrity, Chou made himself the guarantor of a Cambodia that would not be prey to the DRV. China was at last emerging from the long chaos of the Cultural Revolution and under Chou's able direction was intending to resume its role on the international diplomatic stage.

While reporting all Sihanouk's exchanges with the DRV, PRG, and Pathet Lao leaders, the New China News Agency made no mention of any of the meetings among Chou, Dong, and Sihanouk. Under Chou's directing hand, the Chinese were cultivating their traditionally close relations with Sihanouk but maintaining a certain distance from all-out support, which the Chinese had probably decided upon as the best strategy for putting the full blame for intervention in Cambodia on the United States without tying their own hands. The Chinese were taking care that military pressure on the Lon Nol government was applied by proxy and in a manner that maintained their freedom for political maneuvering. <sup>132</sup>

Both Chou and Sihanouk knew that following the "liberation" of Cambodia from Lon Nol and Sirik Matak there could be no return to the royal regime,

even a royal regime without a king. Instead, there would be a people's democracy of some sort. And in this future people's democracy China had its partners. Unknown to either Sihanouk or Manac'h, the Chinese were hosting Saloth Sar and a delegation of the Communist Party of Kampuchea (CPK) in Peking at that very moment. The CPK offered Peking the attraction of having its direct representative within the Cambodian "liberation front" to ensure its independence from the party center in Hanoi. The CPK claimed to have an army inside Cambodia fighting against the Lon Nol "reactionaries," and Sihanouk had to acknowledge the CPK's participation in the new front in view of the facts that he as yet had no army of his own and that he was unable for reasons of amourpropre as well as from political consideration to state publicly that DRV troops were fighting in his name. His declaration of war of March 23 put the DRV at the end of the fourth paragraph, vaguely referring to "fraternal countries waging the common struggle." And so Chou's role in the compact assumed yet another, and important, aspect. Was there any disloyalty to Sihanouk in Chou's masterminding of this situation? As long as Sihanouk stuck by the CPK, there obviously was none. The question was, how long could Sihanouk stick by the Khmer Rouge, whom he hated instinctively?

For Pham Van Dong, the compact provided what the party center only dared dream of, a situation in which nationalists under Sihanouk—and Sihanouk was the very symbol of Cambodian nationalism—fought the American imperialists and their lackeys Lon Nol and Sirik Matak in a war to the end. The nationalist leaders having destroyed one another, the party center would then be in a position to step in and pick up the pieces, subjecting the leaderless population to the dictates of the party. All it required was to give substance to yet another united front organization in the form of the NUFK, such as the Lao Patriotic Front. What the party center did not foresee was that the Khmer Communists would prove to be even more nationalist than Sihanouk and would immediately expel the DRV and its agents from Cambodia once they had achieved power.

The immediate strategic effect of the compact of Peking was to legalize (at least, so we must suppose in the absence of documentation) the DRV's clandestine sanctuaries in Cambodia and to legitimize the Khmer Rouge. Instantaneously, the zone held by these two armed forces became "liberated areas," just as had happened with the zone held by the DRV and Pathet Lao in Laos in 1961 when Prince Souvanna Phouma accepted them as allies. At one fell swoop, these vast areas of Cambodia became a granary capable of feeding all the DRV troops facing southern South Vietnam, as the unlamented Nguyên Binh had predicted in his report to the party center in 1950. COSVN, which had been holed up in the Mimot rubber plantation, where there were many Vietnamese workers, would be free to operate virtually throughout Cambodia. The troops under its command, which in the immediate future would furnish the new front with its military power, would be able to turn Cambodia into a new battlefront. The DRV, naturally, did not publicize the commitment Dong had given Sihanouk, with Chou as a witness, which Sihanouk referred to in his second message to his people as constituting a renewal of the de jure recognition of Cambodia's sovereignty by the DRV and the PRG "upon the word of its [the DRV's] very high-ranking leaders and in [the] presence of no less important witnesses." <sup>133</sup> In the party's view, this question could wait to be worked out in the spirit of proletarian equality once the Communists were in power.

In Manac'h's mind, as nearly as one can judge from his journal, there was the usual underlying hatred for the Americans and his fascination with "liberation wars," both of which inclined him to treat Sihanouk sympathetically in his aggrieved state of mind and to overlook the certain consequences for Cambodia. For Manac'h was at heart a moral coward, as shown by an incident that occurred five months before Sihanouk's arrival which he describes in his journal. While leading the French community on its customary All-Saints Day pilgrimage to the small French cemetery in the countryside east of Peking to lay flowers on the tombs, Manac'h, easily recognizable in the group by his car flying the tricolor which his driver had parked by the roadside and which he left to walk across the fields to the cemetery, was approached by a Eurasian who claimed to be the orphaned daughter of one of the Frenchmen buried there. This young woman implored him on grounds of her double nationality to take her under French protection and issue her a passport. Manac'h, fearful of creating an incident with the cemetery's caretaker and other Chinese watching from a distance, declined and only took down her name and address. This man who prided himself on being on familiar terms with Chou En-lai and being received in audience by Mao Tse-tung left the woman in the full knowledge of the danger to which her courageous approach had exposed her. "It seemed to me prudent to put an end to this encounter," Manac'h writes, simply. "I gave the signal to leave."134 And it was only a question of issuing a passport, to which she was legally entitled. Contrast this with Sainteny's action in smuggling three Hungarian engineers and their families, eight persons in all, who were recalled to Budapest for their solidarity with the rebels in 1956, out of Hanoi concealed in oil drums to safety aboard a French plane bound for Laos, passing checkpoints on the road to the airport and under the noses of planeside guards, when the government was well aware of their presence at the French general delegation, where they had sought asylum.

Thus responsibility for the plunge into civil war and eventually into genocide in Cambodia must fall above all on the heads of Sihanouk and Manac'h, even though they have managed to escape it for these many years. Sihanouk has all too often in his career as a ruler and political leader, which spans the entire period from 1941 to the present, been judged as a symbol rather than the mortal full of foibles that he is.

#### HESITATIONS AND ANGUISH

As swiftly as Sihanouk and the Communists moved to reach decisions in Peking, the nationalists in Cambodia and South Vietnam and their American ally moved with seemingly deliberate lethargy. In a declaration to the nation on the evening of March 20, Lon Nol reaffirmed his government's policy of independence, neutrality, and territorial integrity and pledged it to "officially use every

means, including political, diplomatic, and international, to have respected the territorial integrity of our national territory." Lon Nol made no mention of the ultimatum of March 13. Lon Nol and Sirik Matak, relying on diplomatic efforts, appealed again on March 25 to the DRV and PRG for negotiations. But, with Sihanouk enlisted in their cause, the DRV and PRG assumed an obdurate attitude and pulled their remaining staff out of Phnom Penh on March 27, the day that had been agreed upon for a new meeting. Their ICC plane flew to Vientiane, where the 29 diplomats spent the night in the lounge at Wattay, leaving the next morning for Hanoi. 137

Rives, who had received on the morning of March 18 the specific assurance that Cambodia's policy of neutrality remained in effect, urged caution in public statements on the situation in Phnom Penh lest rumors and speculation trigger a "violent anti-Cambodian move" on the part of the Vietnamese Communists.

We wonder if [a] statement could be injected somewhere in [a] press or other conference to effect that [the] USG fully recognizes and supports Cambodian neutrality. However, if such [a] comment [were to be] made it would be most important that there should be no remarks about NVN/VC presently in Cambodia. Even in reply to questions re these latter, no statement should be made other than this is [a] problem for [the] RKG [Royal Khmer Government] and does not affect our support for [the] RKG policy of neutrality.<sup>138</sup>

President Nixon took the advice Rives had volunteered, and when he was asked at a news conference the next day about the situation in Cambodia, he replied:

I will simply say that we respect Cambodia's neutrality. We would hope that North Vietnam would take that same position in respecting its neutrality. And we hope that whatever government eventually prevails there, that it would recognize that the United States interest is the protection of its neutrality.<sup>139</sup>

It is doubtful that Nixon's reply came to the attention of the principals in Peking. With an eye toward the danger of precipitate action by the DRV, Secretary Rogers assured Rives that "we have tried to minimize public comment." A misleading memorandum to Rogers from the director of intelligence and research, Ray S. Cline, containing the statement "we do not expect any drastic changes in major government policies or any immediate and significant Communist military or political initiatives" may have contributed to Rogers's inclination to say and do nothing. Thus, Sihanouk's sudden alliance with the Communists caught Washington unprepared.

But some of Rogers's subordinates were already thinking about the implications of events in Cambodia. The State Department forwarded to Henry Kissinger at the White House on March 19 a paper on Cambodia under a covering memorandum bearing the name of Jonathan Moore of the East Asia Division. The paper said:

- 1. There is a likelihood that the Cambodian Government will try to keep its neutral, balanced posture, along with increased efforts to restrict the VC/NVA and to improve its economy. We should emphasize that our policy is to continue to support Cambodia's independence, neutrality and territorial integrity. We should not try to force Cambodia into our camp, and should be careful to keep a low and somewhat detached posture with the Cambodians for the present. . . .
- 3. The Cambodians could ask us to provide U.S. troops to fight the VC/NVA inside Cambodia, either to oust them from the country on [sic] in the event that injudicious action by the Lon Nol/Sirik Matak government against the Vietnamese Communists, or a decision by the latter not to tolerate direct Cambodian pressure, led to open VC/NVA intervention. If confronted with this situation, the U.S. should avoid getting sucked into a major role. We should attempt vigorously to get international action to protect Cambodia. We should undertake greatly to improve confidential cooperative communications and intelligence on location and activity of enemy units and, at most, provide limited support such as air and artillery support for Cambodian forces operating against the VC/NVA and air strikes on VC/NVA base areas in the border areas only. 142

Kissinger did nothing to state American policy publicly. The Department asked Rives what the American attitude toward Sihanouk and Lon Nol should be (perhaps the basic issue that demanded a decision), what the United States should do if the Lon Nol government asked for military or economic help, what the American position should be if the DRV intervened directly with military force to reinstate Sihanouk, and what the possibilities were for a package deal to bring back the ICC to supervise the referendum Sihanouk had proposed on March 20 and at the same time restrict somewhat the DRV's use of Cambodia "without forcing VC/NVA into desperate measures."143 These were all questions after the fact. It was not until April 3, again after the fact, that the Department got around to informing the Soviet Union that the United States favored efforts to preserve and protect Cambodia's neutrality.<sup>144</sup> A similar message to Soviet Ambassador Anatoly Dobrynin delivered while Sihanouk was still in Moscow might have accomplished much. Signs were already appearing, however, of Kissinger's wanting to cut Rogers out of the loop of policymaking in Indochina, and this undoubtedly affected the Department's ability to marshal its diplomats on the scene into some sort of coherent preventive action. 145

Rogers sent President Nixon a memorandum on March 31 assuring him that "our diplomatic position is further strengthened by the fact that we have scrupulously stayed out of any involvement in Cambodia's internal affairs." One man's claim of achievement is another's recipe for disaster. Rogers listed the diplomatic initiatives the Department was considering "to avoid another major involvement in a Southeast Asian country." Not one of these initiatives took into account the fact that Peking was an interested party in Cambodia and was playing host to Sihanouk. For instance, a conference of regional foreign ministers was seen as a hopeful avenue of approach to the problem; but the

omission of China, which was also a Southeast Asian country, seemed guaranteed to turn the proposed conference into another loud anti-Communist exercise orchestrated behind the scenes by the Americans rather than a constructive effort to ease, much less solve, the Cambodian situation. But Rogers seems to have had only a vague idea of what was transpiring in Cambodia, in spite of the hour-by-hour reporting of events by Rives. Outgoing telegrams from the Department spoke of "the new government" in Phnom Penh, and as late as April 25, in an address to the American Society of International Law, Rogers talked of "both Prince Sihanouk and his successor, Prime Minister Lon Nol."

Illustrative of the confusion in American diplomacy, in Saigon Ambassador Bunker received instructions on March 28 to see President Thieu urgently about press reports that ARVN units (without their American advisers) had penetrated two miles inside Cambodia and were providing cross-border air and artillery support to the Cambodian army; he was also instructed to make clear that the United States was against these actions "until this matter can be considered at the highest level." The telegram bore the clearance of Brigadier General Alexander M. Haig, Jr., Kissinger's assistant. 47 What had happened was that hapless Cambodian commanders along the border, sensing the sudden aggressiveness against their units by the DRV units which had always been there, were calling for artillery support from across the border to aid their defense. The main consideration behind the American démarche to Thieu was that, in Bunker's words, the administration would be subject to the accusation from its critics "that the South Vietnamese government is drawing the U.S. into an expanded war." This would seriously jeopardize the administration's "efforts to maintain our present level of domestic support for our over-all Viet-Nam policy." Bunker was not ruling out that changed circumstances in the future might require a reconsideration of the decision to suspend the ARVN's operations. Just to be sure the message got across, Bunker sent General William B. Rosson to talk to General Cao Van Vien along the same lines. Thieu understood the message perfectly. He had just visited IV Corps and had talked to ARVN unit commanders who had told him what they were hearing from across the border. He had exhorted them to be very careful not to stage offensive operations. Much to Bunker's relief, Thieu agreed that "in the meantime" crossborder operations would be suspended.<sup>148</sup>

After a "wider ranging but somewhat less clearly focussed" discussion with Thieu about the situation in Cambodia, Bunker proceeded to give his view of what American policy should be (he had as yet received no clear directive from Washington other than, based on press reports, to ensure the stoppage of all cross-border operations). It seemed to him that the common objective should be to enable the Lon Nol government to attain its objective of a truly neutral Cambodia and to take measures necessary to get the Vietnamese Communists out of the country or at least to make their environment as inhospitable as possible, Bunker reported. This did not mean expanding the war, which could be a very risky business. Therefore, they should not think about how they could carry the war into Cambodia but rather how they could help to strengthen the

Lon Nol government or at least refrain from doing anything that might embarrass it. Thieu said he agreed with this analysis. At the same time, he felt that Lon Nol's diplomatic attempts to get the DRV and PRG to leave Cambodia were bound to fail. The DRV would exploit Sihanouk's name and link up the Sihanouk forces with the Khmer Rouge.

There are two noteworthy aspects of Bunker's statement to Thieu, which was not a casual conversation but a search for answers by two allies faced with an immediate problem, militarily and diplomatically. Bunker had anxiously sought Thieu out and impressed on him the urgent nature of their talk. First, there was no discussion of any threat to the security of either the American troops or the ARVN in South Vietnam from the situation in Cambodia. Second, helping to strengthen the Lon Nol government, even supposing that this could be achieved, was not likely to bring about the peaceful withdrawal of the DRV's troops from Cambodia, an objective that Sihanouk, a statesman on the world stage, had failed to achieve. Indeed, the Saigon newspaper Chinh Luan pointed to the dangers lurking in the Cambodian and American domestic situations and seems to have been ahead of the diplomats on this one. 149 Many Saigonese had not forgotten the Communist violation in February 1969 of the Paris understanding about shelling the South Vietnamese cities, which had met with no American military reaction. Thus, precious time was lost at a critical moment before the DRV's troops along the Cambodian border had organized themselves to undertake their new mission after Sihanouk's declaration of war of March 23.

The DRV's troops rapidly consolidated their control over Cambodian territory that was poorly defended by the Cambodian army, whether it was supported by the ARVN from across the border or not. American reporter Donald Kirk records running into a group of DRV soldiers at a village along a road west of the Seven Mountains region about 10 miles from the border on April 3. They said they were fighting for Sihanouk. A man who identified himself as the village chief handed him copies of a crudely printed piece of paper reporting Sihanouk's broadcasts from Peking urging police and army personnel to desert their posts. The Cambodian script over Sihanouk's signature was preceded by a sentence in Vietnamese saying "From the great leader Sihanouk to military officers, soldiers, and civilian officials." The accusation of American complicity in the ouster of Sihanouk, whether true or not (and Le Duc Tho told Kissinger at their June 26, 1971, meeting "I temporarily accept that you did not stage the coup in Cambodia,"151) was superb propaganda material to make possible the recruitment of a guerrilla army from the largely rural population of the "liberated areas."

The harried Cambodian unit commanders and local civilian officials were at a loss about what to do. A few listened to the appeals of the Vietnamese and joined "Sihanouk's army." But most resisted as best they could. The Vietnamese burned down police stations in the district towns of Svay Rieng and the other border provinces to demonstrate to the population how helpless the government in Phnom Penh was to defend them. On March 26, Lon Nol's younger

brother Lon Nil, who was police commissioner at Mimot, was assassinated. That same day, from scattered places along the border, most notably in Kompong Cham Province, long lines of trucks carried peasants on the roads leading to Phnom Penh. The peasants thought they were going to Phnom Penh to welcome Sihanouk on his return and were expecting to receive the usual princely gifts of money and bolts of cloth in the name of the Sangkum. Peasants, of course, did not usually travel by truck, and therefore the movement had been carefully planned and coordinated. Two deputies who tried to explain to the peasants that they had been misled were killed. Lon Nol, reacting to the provocation, turned the brutal methods with which he had put down the Samlaut rebellion on these innocent peasants; there was heavy loss of life.

The recruitment on Sihanouk's behalf extended to the civilian Vietnamese population as well. The consequences of this became evident to Kirk on the morning of April 10 at the town of Prasaut just east of the Svay Rieng provincial capital. There, in a farmers' cooperative warehouse on the eastern edge of town, almost 100 Vietnamese, half of them women and children, who had been rounded up by the Cambodian army two days previously on suspicion they included spies and propagandists for the Vietnamese Communists, had been mercilessly gunned down. Cambodian army officers told foreign journalists the internees had been caught in a crossfire between the defenders of the town, who were entrenched in foxholes on the other side of Route 1 which ran through the town, and an attacking Vietnamese Communist force. But clearly they had simply been massacred as hostages when the attack materialized during the night.

The Prasaut killing was part of an orgy of killing of defenseless Vietnamese, recorded by foreigners, that was a stain on the Lon Nol government's reputation. Monsignor Henri Lemaître, apostolic delegate in Saigon, brought some of this evidence to light, including an account from a survivor of a massacre of Vietnamese on an island in the Mekong near Phnom Penh and his own talk in hospitals with Catholic Vietnamese wounded who had been used as human shields placed by the Cambodian army between themselves and advancing Vietnamese. <sup>152</sup> After such atrocity stories surfaced, the repatriation of some 300,000 Vietnamese from Cambodia to South Vietnam was arranged. But the sight of bodies of victims of these pogroms floating in the rivers that flowed into South Vietnam had a tremendous psychological effect on the ARVN soldiers who suddenly found themselves inside Cambodia supposedly to defend the regime responsible for these crimes; they did not treat the civilian population with tender mercy. The war in the more populated southern parts of the border provinces was becoming nasty, and it was only beginning.

There was an exchange of correspondence between Lon Nol and President Nixon in early April, but it concerned a proposal for Article 4 consultations on Laos. Lon Nol took the occasion in his reply to point out the "very alarming" situation in Cambodia. Lon Nol said he had appealed to the Geneva co-chairmen and the president of the ICC for the reactivation of the ICC in Cambodia. <sup>153</sup> On April 14, Lon Nol made a radio appeal in Khmer and French for "all unconditional foreign aid, from wherever it may come, for the salvation of the

nation." Lon Nol wrote again to Nixon on April 20 requesting arms aid and the dispatch to Cambodia of the KKK from South Vietnam. Four days later, Lon Nol addressed another letter to Nixon in which he said "The situation of our country grows a little worse each day," and appealed again for the dispatch of the KKK.<sup>154</sup>

President Nixon had to balance the sentiment of his critics, which was running strongly against providing aid, against Lon Nol's appeals. Senate Majority Leader Mike Mansfield made a statement on April 2 cautioning President Nixon against providing aid to the Lon Nol government.

May I say also that I am very much pleased with the attitude of our Government in the Cambodian situation. We have assumed the lowest kind of low profile. We have not indicated any other than ordinary interest in what is going on there. We hope that there will be no intervention. There is no prospect of that, at the present time, or of an aid program.

... I am sure that the President will be aware of the developments and that he will do the best he can to keep our intervention in Vietnam from spreading further, to maintain the neutrality status of Cambodia, and to do what can be done, indirectly, to bring about a settlement.<sup>155</sup>

The problem was that to maintain their neutrality the Cambodians needed aid, and aid foreshadowed intervention. Mansfield was well known to the Cambodian elite, and his statement stimulated letters from both Peking and Phnom Penh. In a cable delivered to Mansfield by the French Embassy in Washington, Sihanouk, taking his usual liberty with the facts, blamed the Nixon administration for "the installation in Phnom-Penh of an illegal, dictatorial, bellicist and racist government, practicing genocide without precedent in modern history, with the exception of the monstrous crimes of the Hitlerian regime." This last was an interesting allusion in view of what Sihanouk's newfound associates would become responsible for in a few years' time. Nixon dismissed Sihanouk's charges, after Mansfield showed him the cable, as a parroting of the Communist line. Manac'h, ever eager to be of service to the prince, delivered Mansfield's reply and thanks to Sihanouk, who was attending the Canton conference.

The letter from Phnom Penh was altogether more moderate in tone. It was an eloquent and courageous attempt to set the record straight on the arguments raised by Mansfield's opposition to American intervention in Cambodia and to the supply of aid.

Permit us, Senator, to draw your attention to an erroneous interpretation of the very grave events which Cambodia is actually facing. We know and respect your courageous position against military intervention by the United States in South Vietnam and, knowing this, we are very astonished at your position with regard to the intervention by the armed forces of the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese against neutral and pacific Cambodia.

We have never ceased to ask for bilateral negotiations to resolve the problem posed by the permanent Viet Cong settlement in Cambodian

territory, but as you know, we have run up against a categorical refusal by the DRV and the PRG of South Vietnam. Today the armed forces of these two neighbors are overtly on the attack against our country and the Khmer people are obliged to defend themselves against these foreign invaders, that is, to wage a war which they did not want and for which they were not prepared. <sup>158</sup>

The letter was signed by Ong Sim, the president of the Council of the Kingdom, now renamed the Senate, and Ek Yi Oun, the acting president of the National Assembly, the members of which had been elected in what was probably the freest election in Cambodia's history. There is no evidence that Mansfield replied to the legislators' letter. <sup>159</sup> One by one the American public figures who had supported the nationalists in the bright days of Kennedy's presidency were deserting them.

Sihanouk's new role as spokesman for the Communist-organized and -directed united fronts in Indochina received great fanfare at the Summit Conference of the Indochinese Peoples held near Canton on April 24 and 25. The final statement paid him the extraordinary tribute of calling him the originator of the conference; Samdech "Head of State" could feel once again that he was running the show. Notable attendees besides Sihanouk and his "delegation of the Cambodian people" were the front leaders from Laos, Prince Souphanouvong, Phoumi Vongvichit, and Khamsouk Keola, representing "the Lao people," and from South Vietnam Nguyên Huu Tho, Nguyên Van Hieu, and Trinh Dinh Thao, representing "the people of the Republic of South Vietnam," as well as Pham Van Dong, Hoang Quoc Viet, Hoang Minh Giam, and Nguyên Co Thach, representing "the people of the DRV." The DRV delegation deliberately kept a low profile in the proceedings. The final statement, however, consisted of the tributes to the valiant struggle for liberation of the oppressed peoples of Indochina and the parallel condemnation of the cunning and ferocious American imperialists which long had been the stock in trade of the party center's propaganda department. In the United States, the Canton communiqué was described as "a program for peace" in an article by Jean Lacouture published in Foreign Affairs, then edited by Hamilton Fish Armstrong. 160 Publication of the article showed to what extent the old standard of furnishing readers with the facts, carefully set forth and weighed against contrary evidence, had fallen by the wayside in the establishment media. In a mea culpa published years later that is frank about his many errors of judgment about Indochina, Lacouture, an unabashed admirer of Sihanouk, posed the disturbing question of Sihanouk's alliance with the Khmer Rouge after 1979 but did not think to ask the same question with respect to his alliance of 1970.161 Sihanouk's proposal to hold a second summit conference of Indochinese "peoples" in Hanoi in 1971 was vetoed by his Khmer Rouge allies, much to Pham Van Dong's discomfiture. 162

#### A PECULIAR REVERSAL

Meanwhile, in Cambodia on the morning of April 29, 12 ARVN infantry and armored battalions totaling 8,700 men entered the Parrot's Beak, Svay Rieng

Province, and on the morning of May 1 American units joined them by crossing into Kompong Cham Province. Within a week, there were 31,000 American troops and 19,000 ARVN troops in Cambodia. President Nixon had secretly ordered the military to prepare contingency plans for the incursion as early as March 26,<sup>163</sup> but it had been repeatedly delayed by dissension at the top. The military had been looking since 1964 for an opportunity to clean out the sanctuaries. One and a half hours after the American troops crossed the border, Nixon went on television to address the nation. At times, he rose from his desk to point to places on a map of Indochina, as President Kennedy had done on March 23, 1961, in the middle of the Laos crisis. But the speech he gave was most peculiar in its own way.

Reversing the policy objectives Bunker had given Thieu barely a month before, Nixon justified the action by saying the actions of the Vietnamese Communists in the 10 previous days "clearly endanger the lives of Americans who are in Vietnam now and would constitute an unacceptable risk" to those who would remain there after the latest increment of troop withdrawals was effected. Thieu, who had favored action all along, must have been pleased that Nixon had finally concluded that the DRV's moves in Cambodia had proved sufficiently provocative to justify the "very risky business" of expanding the war Bunker had mentioned to him. But, he must have asked himself, if the limited assistance ARVN had provided to Cambodian commanders whose units were under attack had threatened to undermine the American public's support for the war effort, as Bunker had warned him, what would be the effect of a fullfledged incursion involving 31,000 American troops with air and naval firepower? However, this was Nixon's problem. Moreover, Bunker's objective of strengthening the Lon Nol government seemed to remain problematic and could hardly be advanced by the crossing of the border in force; indeed, this seemed to be the very sort of action calculated to embarrass it.

Lon Nol's government had not even been consulted. The prime minister learned the contents of Nixon's speech from Henry Kamm of *The New York Times*, who had listened to it on his radio at his hotel and afterward filled him in as a friendly gesture, knowing Lon Nol had no English interpreter of his own. While Kamm was at Lon Nol's office, Rives arrived bearing telegrams which had arrived that morning at the central telegraph office; the embassy lacked its own communications channel to Washington. Rives apologized for his inability to alert the government ahead of time. <sup>164</sup> Lon Nol reacted with genuine surprise to the news. He had been expecting the ARVN's action in Svay Rieng, but the commitment of American troops in Kompong Cham caught him off guard. He said he was considering lodging a protest against this violation of his country's territorial integrity. But "the Viet Cong are the first cause," he added, and then, with a laugh, said that the Americans were now acting "a little like the Viet Cong." He pointed out that he had requested arms, not men, from Nixon. "We would like our friends to give us the arms to do the operation ourselves," he said. <sup>165</sup>

The Lon Nol government's first official reaction to President Nixon's speech came from Foreign Minister Yem Sambaur, who told the Japanese ambassador in Phnom Penh on the morning of May 1:

It is true that the Communist sanctuaries within Cambodian territory threaten the security of American and South Vietnamese forces, and therefore it seems only natural that American and South Vietnamese forces come in. However, [the] official request made by [the] GOC [Government of Cambodia] was for material assistance only and therefore we cannot by any means approve or acknowledge [the] presence of foreign troops within Cambodian territory, in view of our neutrality. 166

Rives spoke to Yem Sambaur on the evening of May 2 and, in view of the absence of any official public statement, asked him if he had had time to study President Nixon's speech. The foreign minister replied that he had, and that he, Lon Nol, and Sirik Matak had discussed it that morning in view of questions raised by the press, among others, about whether the action constituted a violation of the Geneva accords in the Cambodian view. From the ensuing conversation, Rives noted that the government had no real desire to issue any protest. On the contrary, the foreign minister stated that they looked on the American— South Vietnamese intrusion as enforcement of the 1954 Geneva accords rather than as an action contrary to them. 167 Rives himself was not being kept informed; on May 4 he sent a telegram to the State Department saying "I would be much appreciative of some sort of sitrep [situation report] about what is going on re US/ARVN operations Cambodia."168 The official communiqué on Nixon's speech, when it was finally published on May 5, referred only to "the important measures" Nixon had announced without mentioning the incursion of foreign troops. 169 In a brief letter the next day, Lon Nol expressed his "deep thanks" for Nixon's "energetic stance in the defense of the just cause of Cambodia and for the necessary actions which you have judged wise to take in order to have respected its neutrality and in order to aid it in surmounting the tests which are placed upon it by the VC-North Vietnamese invaders and which seriously menace its survival."170

In his speech, Nixon had mentioned Cambodia's neutrality, which the United States had heretofore with great patience respected and the Communists had violated, no fewer than eight times. But the evident violation of Cambodia's neutrality by American troops that Nixon had decided upon was a defiance of Mansfield. In an attempt to limit the damage, perhaps, Nixon said that the aid the United States was furnishing Lon Nol would be "limited to the purpose of enabling Cambodia to defend its neutrality and not for the purpose of making it an active belligerent on one side or the other." 171 Nixon's action, predictably, sparked outrage among sections of the American public, particularly students, who, not being subscribers to Nhan Dan, had not read Sihanouk's declaration of war and the final statement of the Canton conference the previous week and interpreted Nixon's action as an expansion of the war. The Nixon administration, wrapped up in its own decision-making, which always tends to create the illusion of power and importance, had done as little to explain its policy toward Cambodia to the American public as it had to foreign nations. In Laos, Souvanna Phouma, eager as always for blows to be struck against the DRV so long as they were not in Laos, applauded Nixon for "an act of political courage." The most remarkable reaction to the invasion of Cambodia, however, came from Olof Palme, the prime minister of Sweden. In a May Day speech, Palme deplored the destruction and loss of life of ordinary people without making a single mention of the DRV troops in Cambodia.<sup>173</sup>

For Lon Nol's government, the most serious consequence of Nixon's action was to put an end to the tenuous dialogue that it had carried on over the previous six weeks with Peking. On May 4, Peking issued a government statement condemning as a "frenetic provocation" against itself the American incursion into Cambodia. Two days later, the Chinese ambassador presented a rather ambiguously worded note to the foreign ministry breaking relations. Since 1954, through the eras of Dulles, Rusk, and now Rogers, Peking's correct relations with governments in Phnom Penh had rested on the latter's efforts to keep the Americans at arm's length, and here the Americans were trampling over Cambodia in a big way with much attendant publicity.

According to a well-informed Asian ambassador in Peking, the Chinese, while sympathizing with Sihanouk's dilemma and continuing to treat him as a head of state, had never understood him to mean that he would form a government-in-exile right away. Rather, if "the people" overthrew Lon Nol and established a government of national unity, they would recognize such a government. Sirik Matak had reportedly told the Chinese ambassador in late March that his government did not intend to change its attitude toward Peking so long as Peking did not support Sihanouk in a civil war. Now, after six weeks of inaction between March 18 and May 1, all chances of a negotiated settlement were lost. As in April 1964 in Laos, the United States had failed to seize the opportunity offered by Chinese diplomacy, even by the indirect means that lack of diplomatic relations imposed, such as use of the public airwaves, and had left its friends in Indochina to pick up the pieces. There were to be no negotiations between the Lon Nol government and Sihanouk up to the very day that the Khmer Rouge entered Phnom Penh victoriously.

In an obviously carefully orchestrated scenario, at a press conference in Peking the next day, Sihanouk announced the membership of the political bureau of the NUFK and the formation of a Royal Government of National Union (RGNU) under the NUFK's leadership. Sihanouk described it as the "only legal government of all the Khmer people." The NUFK's political program had been announced the previous day, designed to appeal to the widest audience while preserving the underlying Marxist-Leninist definitions of all terms. The first part spoke of the coordination with the fronts in Vietnam and Laos and the establishment of a liberation army. The second concerned the construction of a democratic Cambodia. The third defined the front's foreign policy, in which neutrality and national independence would form the basis of the future regime. The program was very similar to those of the NLF and the Lao Patriotic Front; such programs were now being turned out on a mass assembly line at the party center in Hanoi. It is doubtful whether Sihanouk realized the fictitious nature of much of its content; what mattered, he thought, was that it would put him back in power in Phnom Penh.

The cabinet was headed by Penn Nouth as prime minister. In both the NUFK and the RGNU positions of influence were held by Khieu Samphan (minister of defense), Hou Yuon (minister of interior), and Hu Nim (minister of information and propaganda). These would be the principal representatives of the "resistance in the interior," as compared with Sihanouk and his entourage, who were confined, for the moment, to Peking and friendly foreign countries, but they would be responsive mainly to the CPK party center. Khieu Samphan would oversee the recruitment and training of the liberation army to be formed. A fourth member of the still-secret CPK leadership who had attended the Canton conference, Thiounn Mumm, would act as the party's liaison with the prince; he held the post of minister of national economy, which would allow him to spend his time in Peking drawing up the plans for a collectivized economy that were so dear to Saloth Sar, Khieu Samphan, and the other CPK leaders who had done their studies in France. Chau Seng, who had led the demonstrators outside the American Embassy in Phnom Penh on March 11, 1964, and who had fled to France when Sihanouk cracked down on leftists in 1968, returned from Paris and became minister in charge of special missions, also based in Peking, but equipped with a French visa in his passport that was authorized by Manac'h personally. Peking immediately announced recognition of the new government. Cambodian Ambassador Nay Valentin told Manac'h that all his staff had decided to return to Phnom Penh and were preparing to turn over the embassy to the RGNU; they would be repatriated to Phnom Penh aboard a Swissair aircraft that carried the personnel of the Chinese Embassy to Peking. 177

Militarily, the American incursion was in any case too little and too late. The effect on logistics was to hit only the distribution points for supplies. Although an estimated 40 percent of the DRV's stockpiles in Cambodia were captured or destroyed by the invaders, 178 the flow continued farther north. The DRV seized Attopeu on April 28-29, burning down all military installations in the town to save the Americans the trouble of bombing them but sparing civilian dwellings. Saravane fell on June 9, after one of those stranger-than-fiction Indochinese encounters. The commander of the DRV troops that had surrounded Saravane came into town to warn the governor to evacuate civilians, as his troops were going to attack. The threat brought a planeload of high-ranking officials from Vientiane to assess the situation, and an American military officer accompanying them had a brief game of tennis with the DRV commander on the tennis court of the governor's mansion. Seeing that the threat was real, the government, with the help of American C-130s, flew out the inhabitants of the town and surrounding villages who had walked in, although it did not fly out the governor's French car. 179 Attopeu and Saravane had never been held by the Pathet Lao or the Neutralists, so the violation of the 1962 cease-fire was patent, and the royal government protested again. But at the start of the rainy season, the DRV needed to have unimpeded use of the Kong River and its tributary system to float supplies into Cambodia now that Sihanoukville had been cut off as a port of entry for their arms. The Kong flowed into the Mekong inside Cambodia, and this provided a

superb supply conduit; with the capture of Kratie on June 5, the last governmentheld outpost on the upper Mekong vanished.

Also, COSVN was not captured, as President Nixon had hoped. In mid-March, COSVN had taken the precaution of moving its staff from their normal base in the Mimot rubber plantation some 50 miles north to a new site on the west bank of the Mekong, as documents captured in the operation showed it planned to do all along. 180 The abandoned log-covered bunkers, thatched huts, and connecting network of bamboo walkways and bicycle paths, sprawling for miles along the border and completely invisible from the air, amply justified the military's estimate of the importance of this command complex.<sup>181</sup> The incursion, which had temporarily disrupted COSVN's operations, bought a few months of time for the Americans in South Vietnam.

All during Wednesday, March 18, Radio Phnom Penh continued with its usual program. At about 6 P.M., however, it broadcast the news of the Cambodian parliament's vote. It then resumed its normal program. There was not a ripple of reaction among the capital's population. There were certain troops about, guarding strategic points around Phnom Penh and closing Pochentong airport to air traffic.

Sihanouk's initial indictment in Peking of the government and parliament on March 20, in which he defended himself emotionally against all the grievances that had accumulated against him, and the equally emotional statements made in the March 18 parliamentary debate lent his removal the aspect of a settling of accounts within the system and according to the methods of the system, as Meyer points out. 182 Looking back afterward, many were amazed that instead of the clean sweep of the ancient order with its quasi-feudal practices and its favoritism expected by many, particularly the youth, there was little change to show for the bold action in deposing Sihanouk. What else could the Lon Nol "salvation" government do but continue as before? Foreign Minister Norodom Phurissara resigned on March 19 and was replaced by Yem Sambaur. 183 A handful of former deputy ministers, colonels, and high-ranking civil servants were imprisoned or placed under house arrest. That done, the public noticed that the most notoriously corrupt civil servants, mandarins, and army officers, such as Sosthene Fernandez, promoted to general, were among the first to pledge allegiance to the new head of state.

Cambodia had not had a king for a decade, so it was only natural that with the advent of a head of state who was not a member of the royal family the trappings of the monarchy should be done away with. All streets, schools, and hospitals named after Cambodia's kings were renamed. Royal Air Cambodge was renamed Air Cambodge. The Hotel Le Royal changed its name to the Hotel Le Phnom. And the Royal Khmer Armed Forces changed their name to National Khmer Armed Forces. Lon Nol's government dropped the name royal. Queen Kossamak was expelled from her residence in the royal palace. Still, largely due to Sirik Matak's influence, the ruling team hesitated to replace the monarchy altogether and proclaim a republic. Sihanouk was tried in absentia on nine counts ranging from abetting the Vietnamese aggression to embezzlement and was found guilty on all counts on July 5.184

Whereas Sihanouk had treated the members of the Phnom Penh intelligentsia with contempt, Lon Nol openly welcomed them and asked them to work with him, giving them to understand that he intended to give up power in a few months. He adroitly established a national salvation committee to advise the prime minister and said its doors were open to all persons of talent. Then he released from prison 486 political prisoners, including Saloth Sar's brother Saloth Chhay and some under death sentence for Maoist activities. These steps gave the impression that a process of democratization had begun and that the authorities were now determined to respect popular aspirations. In fact, they masked the consolidation of power by the military. 185

In the vast areas of the countryside that had fallen under their control, which constituted almost all the northeast, southeast, and southwest, once the government's presence had been shut up in the towns, the Khmer Rouge made rapid progress in recruitment. In accordance with the pattern Communist front organizations had followed in Laos and South Vietnam, the NUFK began forming local governments. As the CPK had as yet few cadres, most of these local governments at first were dominated by Sihanouk's followers, who had strong family ties with the population, or by the Vietnamese cadres. In some of these areas, elections were held to choose hamlet and village leaders, and by most accounts they were open and fair. The CPK instructed its cadres to conduct themselves in a way that would not alienate the peasants and would gain their support. As a result, villagers who came under the control of the NUFK saw few changes in their lives for the first year of the revolution. There was, however, already evidence of the cruelty of the CPK cadres. From the very start, the Vietnamese sometimes had to intercede with them to protect foreigners who had fallen into their hands against harm, as related by an American journalist taken prisoner that May. 186

As it solidified its control over local government institutions, however, the CPK leadership was preparing to take over the NUFK organization once it was sufficiently built up. Leaving aside the hamlet (phum) and village (khum) levels for the time being, the CPK concentrated on putting its cadres in key positions at the district (srok), sector (damban), and region levels. Party members had the duty of "checking on their fellow man" and of "undergoing manual tests like workers and peasants" in order to make them "like the people." The secrecy that characterized the whole CPK enterprise was already well in evidence. Party members took new names and hid their former names so they were unknown to all but the top echelon. The central committee of the CPK itself went by the name Upper Organization (Angkar Loeu), which conveyed anonymity, authority, and, above all, unchallengeability. Saloth Sar, on his return to Cambodia from Peking, moved his headquarters southwestward into the Phnom Santhuk region just east of Kompong Thom in August 1970; ease of communication between this new headquarters and COSVN suggests that military cooperation with the DRV was continuing. The DRV had established for this purpose an

advisory organization patterned on the one in Laos, but relations between the Khmer Rouge and the Vietnamese remained tense.

In mid-1971, the CPK moved to achieve political predominance. In the villages, its tactic was to bring in new, younger, tougher cadres to replace both Sihanouk's followers and the cadres of the Khmer People's Revolutionary Party (KPRP), whom the party center in Hanoi was now sending down the Ho Chi Minh Trail after their enforced residence of 15 years in Hanoi and on whom it was counting to maintain control of the revolution in Cambodia. 187 The CPK made sure that these returnees were assigned to widely dispersed areas, where they could be more easily controlled and eventually removed by force; some of them were executed. Refugees and others fleeing the Communist-controlled areas described the new CPK cadres who took over as young "fanatics and zealots" whom they had never seen before and who had no ties with the population. Analysts have noted the absence in CPK publications of this period of any reference to Vietnamese assistance to the Kampuchean revolutionaries. By mid-1971, the recruitment of the "liberation army" had reached 100,000 to 150,000, according to calculations by a CIA analyst, composed of 20,000 to 30,000 main forces, 20,000 to 30,000 local forces, and 60,000 to 90,000 guerrillas and militia. 188

Also in mid-1971, the CPK began a campaign to undermine Prince Sihanouk's prestige and support in the countryside. While still acknowledging Sihanouk internationally as the leader of the RGNU and the NUFK, in the villages and hamlets CPK cadres set out to remove the prince from their political structure. Where their tactics encountered opposition from the population, the CPK cadres fell back on the line that as Sihanouk had "apologized" for "deserting the revolution" and remaining in Peking, he was allowed to remain head of the RGNU and NUFK. They told the people that when Sihanouk did return it would be as a private citizen.

Part of this campaign involved efforts to introduce social and economic changes in the villages they controlled. They eliminated symbols of the old regime, destroying schools and public buildings that Sihanouk's regime had built. In addition to destroying links to the old society, the CPK cadres began building toward a new one as well by initiating land reform, partially collectivizing agriculture, setting up cooperative stores, and either modifying or prohibiting certain traditional religious and social practices, such as temple festivals. In accordance with the CPK's heavy emphasis on class warfare, opposition to these changes meant the branding of the offender as a feudalist, a reactionary, or an exploiter of the people and a jail sentence, execution, or disappearance. These initiatives may have been connected with a CPK congress held in July 1971 at which a new central committee was elected, doubling its size.

Despite these much tougher conditions, Khmer Rouge–controlled areas still basically resembled pre-war Cambodian society. Peasants were still working individual plots of land, although they were not free to dispose of their crops, which was impossible in any case because the war had disrupted markets. Families still lived in their own homes in their native villages. Buddhist temples remained open and untouched, and a French visitor to a Khmer Rouge area

near Phnom Penh in February 1972 had the impression the Buddhist clergy exercised more influence over the people than the party's cadres. <sup>189</sup> Perhaps in an attempt to show that the old Cambodia existed in the midst of revolution, Prince Sihanouk was taken on a carefully escorted tour of some areas in Cambodia in March 1973. But for his former supporters, the choice was increasingly one of going along with the revolution or of attempting to flee to the relative safety of Phnom Penh, risking the retribution of Angkar Loeu in case of failure.

#### THE KHMER REPUBLIC PROCLAIMED

The military challenge facing Lon Nol's government after March 18, 1970, was by any measure formidable. His army of 35,000 was facing a total 65,000 DRV troops. His army had not experienced war since 1954. Most of the DRV troops were battle-hardened from years of combat in South Vietnam. It would be an exaggeration, however, to say that Lon Nol steeled his countrymen for the unequal struggle. He had formulated no preparations for war, and once he was in it he had no plan. Another reason for the poor performance of the Khmer army and its cocktail-party officers was that for years they had been corrupted by their cozy accommodation with the Viet Cong. ARVN officers found dealing with their Cambodian counterparts extremely frustrating. Lieutenant General Do Cao Tri complained that he had met with Major General Fan Muong at Svay Rieng and suggested that the ARVN open the road to Phnom Penh with tanks and personnel carriers and that the 2,000 Cambodian troops garrisoned in Svay Rieng be used to keep the road open. After checking with his superiors, General Muong agreed but shortly thereafter called off the operation because, as he put it, the garrison troops were too weak.

The KKK from South Vietnam, "which he sees as the key to his being able to hold on," Rives reported after a meeting with Lon Nol, 190 were utterly wasted. Instead of being delivered to the critical points of confrontation in the eastern part of the country, as Lon Nol had requested, four battalions of KKK troops mustered from the CIDG camps were flown aboard South Vietnamese C-119s to Pochentong airport, one battalion per night. They carried three days' worth of supplies and ammunition, but after that responsibility for feeding, quartering, and paying them was Lon Nol's. 191 There was no need for the KKK in Phnom Penh, as neither the Khmer Rouge nor the DRV forces were yet threatening the capital and relied on the Maoist principle of using the countryside to surround the cities. Perhaps truly bewildered by events, Lon Nol left these highly trained soldiers to vegetate in the sports stadium in Phnom Penh without adequate support and sanitation, increasingly demoralized and ready to victimize the Cambodian civilian population. In July 1972, the 48th Khmer Krom Brigade, the last major KKK unit intact, was surrounded by DRV and Khmer Rouge forces on Route 1 south of Phnom Penh, outnumbered two to one. They fought well but then started to run out of ammunition. They called for air strikes, but none came. Finally, as they were being overrun, they called for artillery fire on their own position. Of 600 men, 13 escaped alive. 192 This was the result of the incompetence of the high command and goes far to explain

Lon Nol's insatiable appetite for troops and equipment which he was to exhibit throughout the war, as well as his growing dependence on foreign aid.

After the start of the American incursion into eastern Cambodia and the break in relations with Peking, Rives made repeated attempts to disabuse Lon Nol of the notion that he could expect unlimited military aid and support from the United States in the future. Finally, in a one-on-one session on May 15, Rives tried to lay the cards on the table once and for all.

Not unexpectedly, Lon Nol's reaction was a little startled and had a somewhat annoyed tone. He indicated that now that Cambodia had chosen its position vis-à-vis communism, he felt it had [a] right to expect more than token assistance from [the] United States. If such assistance [was] not forthcoming, he did not see the use in continuing the struggle which involved Cambodian lives and property and [he] would make very clear to the Cambodian people and others why Cambodia were forced to give in, if it does.<sup>193</sup>

The following week, General Haig visited Phnom Penh and met with an interpreter with Lon Nol. He bore much the same message. This time it came from the White House. Haig informed the prime minister that President Nixon intended to limit the involvement of American forces in Cambodia. They would be withdrawn at the end of June. Then Nixon hoped to introduce a program of restricted economic and military aid. Hearing this, Lon Nol began to weep. Cambodia, he said, could never defend itself. Unable to control his emotions, he walked across to the window and stood there, his shoulders shaking, his face turned away from Haig. Haig then went across the room to try to comfort him, putting his arm around his shoulder, soldier to soldier, and promised him, through the interpreter, that Nixon supported him and would give him what help he could, despite the political constraints in Washington. 194 Rives never received a report of the conversation, but he noticed that thereafter Lon Nol no longer paid attention to his suggestions that he fight a guerrilla war against the Communists rather than a conventional war. 195 At the end of June, Lon Nol wrote to President Nixon expressing the wish that American forces "continue their beneficial intervention in Cambodia by land, air and sea in order to preserve the survival of the Khmer nation."196

Using the exceptional powers voted to the government by the Assembly, Lon Nol proclaimed martial law on June 1. On June 25, he followed this up by announcing a general mobilization. The project seems to have been a pet one with him, and he pored over it for months. The problems of implementation were formidable. As in many of the projects to which he set himself, he relied on his own experience, in this instance attempting to meld several different models, including the *chivapols* of 1954 and various schemes from South Vietnam, Taiwan, and China. He had dreams of forming the first divisions in the Cambodian army.

Lon Nol's biggest advantage was the popularity of the cause with the *Phnompenhois*, and his government fanned these flames attentively. Cambodi-

ans began enlisting in the army in large numbers to fight the Vietnamese Communists portrayed in official propaganda as the hated aggressors. The army swelled to 70,000 in the first two months and reached 180,000 by the end of the year. The volunteers, after receiving minimal training, were transported to the battlefronts along the main roads, which were still safe, in buses or Pepsi-Cola trucks. Students were swept up in the general enthusiasm; they staged anti-Communist rallies, posted signs and banners, and formed their own training regiments. The fact that many foreign governments continued their diplomatic relations with Phnom Penh helped. Largely for this audience, the government published a white book in October on the DRV's aggression.<sup>197</sup>

Losses mounted at an alarming rate. First, in the immediate aftermath of March 18, there was the government's failure to evacuate many of its troops from Ratanakiri, where they had been engaged in operations against the Vietnamese since the previous November. An American defense attaché who visited Labansiek, the last government stronghold on the east bank of the Mekong, at the end of May found the army evacuating dependents by air and digging in for an expected final battle with the Vietnamese, who were in the forests all around.

In the rest of the country, the Vietnamese cut roads with the intention of bottling up the Cambodian army in garrison towns in their first onslaught at the end of March. In response, Lon Nol determined in August, in the middle of the rainy season, to reopen the road leading to Kompong Thom, the center of a large rice-producing region. A long, sometimes disorganized column made its way northward but halted short of Kompong Thom, wary of strong Vietnamese forces holed up in the rubber plantations east of the road. The operation was repeated the following August, after Lon Nol had returned to Phnom Penh from abroad where he had recovered from a stroke, and this time the Vietnamese reacted. They launched a general assault from the Chamcar Andong rubber plantation on the column straggling along the road between flooded paddy fields, cutting it to pieces and preventing escape or reinforcement by blowing up bridges on the road. There was never an exact count, but the losses were put in the vicinity of 10 battalions of personnel and equipment plus the equipment of an additional 10 battalions and included some of Lon Nol's best infantry and armor units. The Cambodians were learning some of the lessons the ARVN had learned over the years, one of which was that the way to keep roads open was not to camp on them with large forces but to patrol them regularly with small units which could be immediately reinforced in the event of contact. From then on, Lon Nol's army posed little danger of a concerted offensive against the Khmer Rouge, as the Vietnamese main forces left the Cambodian battlefield in 1972 to concentrate once again on South Vietnam. Vietnamese sapper units still entered into action from time to time, as when they succeeded in blowing up virtually the entire Cambodian air force on the ground at Pochentong on the night of January 21–22, 1971.

The republic, long awaited by the Cambodians, was proclaimed on October 9, 1970. The Lao decried the bad treatment of the Cambodian monarchy; Souvanna Phouma had supported Prince Monireth for king in the wake of the events of March.<sup>198</sup> The republic shocked King Savang Vatthana, who hesitated

to accept the credentials of the republic's new ambassador to Laos. Nor was the new republic welcomed in Bangkok.

Under the guise of a state of national emergency, Lon Nol appointed a new government to rule by ordinance in October 1971. The constitution of the Khmer Republic required that a state of emergency had to be approved by the National Assembly, so Lon Nol simply suspended the Assembly. "Shall we vainly play the game of democracy and freedom which will lead us to complete defeat or should we curtail anarchic freedom in order to achieve victory?" Lon Nol asked in a hypothetical question he himself answered. "The government has made its decision. We have selected the way that will bring us victory." In doing away with the National Assembly, Lon Nol showed he had learned nothing from the French experience of 1946–1954. The last vestige of popular sovereignty disappeared in the Khmer Republic, and sovereignty was seized by a dictatorship held by Lon Nol and his coterie.

# Dealing with Kissinger: Le Duc Tho and Nguyên Van Thieu

Richard M. Nixon's candidacy for president was not universally welcomed by the Indochinese. Prince Souvanna Phouma's experience with the Eisenhower administration had been so bad that he swore he would resign if Nixon won the 1968 election. Ambassador Sullivan thought he was only expressing a preference for Humphrey, whom he had gotten to know well. On September 30, the prince inquired how the campaign was going, and when told that Nixon could win, he repeated in ringing tones his intention of resigning in that event. Sullivan reassured him that Nixon's recent record was entirely free of his past strictures against neutrals and neutralism and that he had considerable personal admiration for the prince for all that he had accomplished for his country in recent years. 199

Madame Ngô Dinh Nhu wrote to the President-elect and Mrs. Nixon from Paris, in a letter addressed only "New York City, New York, USA," to offer congratulations and to say that "among the American officials you were the only ones to have expressed to me public sympathy in November 1963."<sup>200</sup>

With the benefit of hindsight, President Thieu claimed that he, for one, never had any illusions about Nixon. He later claimed to have based his moves on what would give South Vietnam the most time to prepare for peace, whatever that might imply. "I did not base my policy on a single personality but on the U.S. policy. I understood that U.S. policy was to negotiate a coalition for South Vietnam, not to win a military victory. I never had any illusions that Nixon's policy was for us to achieve a military victory over the North Vietnamese."<sup>201</sup> But at the time Thieu had no inkling of how disastrous the new administration's Indochina policy was to prove.

It is something of a paradox that Nixon, who railed against the universities for being hotbeds of dissent to his actions in Indochina, chose a Harvard professor without any practical diplomatic experience to speak of to conduct the negotiations with the DRV. Dr. Henry A. Kissinger had several years of acquaintance with the Vietnam problem as an outside consultant before taking office as Nixon's national security adviser. In September 1965, Kissinger had written to Lansdale saying he planned a trip to Saigon to study the possibility of creating "a viable political structure in South Vietnam." Kissinger made another visit to Saigon in July 1966. Unger recollects that Kissinger was mainly interested in military solutions, more so than the people in the embassy in Saigon. Kissinger had then become the author of the talking points on a bombing cessation that Aubrac and Marcovich carried to Hanoi in 1967. Indeed, Kissinger referred to this involvement in Vietnamese affairs of his during his first meeting with Xuan Thuy on August 4, 1969, to buttress the image of himself as a peacemaker.

However, Kissinger seems to have formed a number of definite opinions about the South Vietnamese, even at that early stage, and to have expressed them. After one of his visits to South Vietnam, he remarked to that old conspirator Harriman that to many Vietnamese conspiracy had become a way of life, making political stability that much harder to achieve. <sup>204</sup> In September 1966, when he still stayed at modest Left Bank hotels in Paris, Kissinger unburdened himself of the opinion that while Thieu was worth more than Ky, neither seemed capable of inspiring in the army or people of South Vietnam a lasting fighting spirit. <sup>205</sup>

During his 1965 visit to South Vietnam, Kissinger met such diverse personalities as Phan Huy Quat, Tran Van Do, Thich Tri Quang, General Pham Xuan Chieu, Dang Van Sung, Mai Tho Truyen, Tran Van Tuyen, Father Ho Van Vui, and Vuong Van Bac.<sup>206</sup> Brilliant as he was (and he impressed many of the Vietnamese at their first meeting as brilliant<sup>207</sup>), Kissinger's view of South Vietnamese politics was always subordinated to his interest in big-power diplomacy, which made his conversations with the South Vietnamese difficult. Thus, when he happened to mention to Ambassador Bui Diem one day early in the administration that he was studying how the United States could help President Thieu with his domestic situation, for example, by making it possible for "all the nationalists to get together," Diem resorted to a method he had learned in order to check on how serious Kissinger was about an issue—bringing it up casually at lunches with Kissinger's aides to see how they reacted; he discovered that this idea enjoyed a low priority.<sup>208</sup> In response to a question at an American Foreign Service Association panel discussion in November 1968, before he assumed office, he said: "I must say I'm appalled by what we are doing now in relation to the government of South Vietnam. And I have not agreed with many of our policies before, but this sort of public demonstration I think is unforgivable."209

Kissinger's preconception of the Saigon government as weak and ineffective was one he carried into office in 1969. His three years of talks with Xuan Thuy and Le Duc Tho, in which they lectured him repeatedly on the history of the valiant Vietnamese fighting against great odds to defeat foreign invaders from the Mongols to the Chinese to the French, appear to have instilled in him an uncritical admiration for the Spartan discipline of Hanoi, which was better organized than Saigon and could control its population with uniformity and no

sign of dissent.<sup>210</sup> Kissinger does not seem to have questioned the Communist party's historical right to claim this inheritance as its own, and the blossoming of dissent in Vietnam once the war was over, particularly among intellectuals, seems to show how much the party depended on the foreign threat, real or imagined, to exercise its control. Very few of the Americans who visited Hanoi during the war, many of whom were intellectuals themselves, returned to the United States singing the praises of the regime, or even of the tiny elite that led it who proclaimed they were prepared to fight for 100 years; visitors did pay well-deserved tribute to the fortitude of the people who had to live under it, however.<sup>211</sup> It took only three days of initiation to Hanoi in February 1973 to disabuse Kissinger of his admiration. "The soggy weather, the Spartan austerity, the palpable suspiciousness combined in Hanoi to produce the most oppressive atmosphere of any foreign capital I have ever visited," was his judgment. He was relieved to get to the airport where the presidential aircraft awaited him.<sup>212</sup>

In historical terms, however, there was a grain of truth to the mental comparison Kissinger made. The contest *was* like Athens and Sparta, with Athenian prowess on the seas compensating to some degree for Spartan superiority in foot soldiers. In the contest between Saigon and Hanoi and their allies, air power allowed Saigon to balance the scales to some extent in battle, but not enough to secure final victory over its land-bound enemy. Also, the Spartans benefited from that faith and discipline that created their own advantage in overcoming material strength.<sup>213</sup> By the time Kissinger had his mind changed by his personal observation, the agreement had been signed and the squabbling Athenians had been consigned to their fate.

Kissinger had started talking as early as 1966 about the need to obtain Hanoi's guarantee of a "decent interval" between an American withdrawal from the war coupled with a cease-fire and its takeover of Saigon, when he thought it should be "at least eight years." <sup>214</sup> By 1968, when Daniel Ellsberg heard him mention the "decent interval" in private talks, it was down to "two to three years." <sup>215</sup>

Constitutional law was not Kissinger's forte. This is not necessarily to say he favored a coup d'état at any time to achieve American policy goals, although some on his staff did. The suggestion that President Thieu be overthrown like Diem if he became an obstruction to negotiations with the DRV was put in a memorandum to him by Roger Morris and Tony Lake. They wrote: "We must be prepared to exert means of imposing the settlement over Saigon's opposition. The stakes would warrant steps we have not contemplated since 1963." In their tense confrontation in Saigon in October 1972, Kissinger described President Thieu as "a loyal ally"; the description is apt, because it implies that Kissinger, in the final analysis, could count on Thieu's cooperation in his scheme, while it mattered little whether he showed any loyalty to Thieu.

Kissinger became convinced that the only way to end the war was through private talks. Once engaged, he cast himself more in the role of a mediator than in that of an advocate for one side. He was like an academician trying to solve the problem of squaring the circle by making subtle changes to the definitions of square and circle so that they gradually approached one another.<sup>217</sup> In an ar-

ticle in *Foreign Affairs* written before he assumed office, he said Hanoi could not be asked to leave its Southern allies "to the mercy of Saigon," as if the NLF were a group of politicians completely independent of Hanoi who were in danger of being arrested by the Saigon police for holding an unauthorized demonstration. Unfortunately, what Saigon needed, if it was not to be allowed itself to negotiate with the DRV, was an advocate who could negotiate in a skilled and knowledgeable manner, not someone who was always looking for a compromise as in a civil jurisdictional dispute. Kissinger's attitude led to his being distrusted and even hated by the South Vietnamese. His memoirs carry photographs of him smiling and shaking hands in the company of the DRV leaders; there is not a single photograph in this collection showing Kissinger even talking to President Thieu.

The DRV leaders were used to exploiting artificial deadlines to enforce terms secretly arrived at; they had done so with the French in 1954, with the Americans in 1968, and were to do so again in 1972. In this context, they were eager to resume private meetings with the new administration, and when Kissinger sent them a message through Sainteny on December 20 expressing a willingness to engage in "serious" talks, they responded favorably. Their position was founded on Pham Van Dong's four points. Discussion of the deeper questions related to a peaceful solution to the Vietnam problem awaited the opening of the conference, the reply stated. If the Americans so wished, however, they could communicate their ideas both general and specific for "serious examination" by the DRV.<sup>218</sup> On January 14, Le Duc Tho said that if Lodge wanted private talks, the DRV was prepared to hold them.

## THE TROOP WITHDRAWAL ISSUE

An analysis of the history of negotiations between the United States and the DRV on the two major issues at stake, namely the withdrawal of troops from South Vietnam and the political regime in Saigon, an issue which concealed the larger issue of American recognition of the DRV and its rights in the South, is complicated by the fact that the DRV resisted American efforts to negotiate military issues separately from political ones. This procedure resulted in each side advancing a series of packaged proposals, which were referred to according to the number of points they contained. Nevertheless, a historical analysis of these two issues is necessary because they were at the center of the outcome; it is possible, in no small measure, because Ambassador Bunker, being a methodical man, wrote out his talking points in extenso before each of his meetings at the palace with President Thieu.

Nixon had reportedly been giving thought to troop withdrawals since before his inauguration. Two months after taking office, at a press conference on March 13, he laid down three criteria for troop withdrawals. These were the ability of the South Vietnamese to defend themselves without American troops, progress in the negotiations at Paris, and the level of enemy activity. These criteria would allow Nixon to weaken the enemy to the maximum extent possible—by use of air power but also by quick operations such as the one against the Cambodian sanctuaries—and speed up the modernization of the ARVN

while withdrawing American troops as a visible demonstration that he was winding down the war. Nixon's strategy was designed to put his domestic critics, whose refrain was that the DRV was more serious about making peace than he, on the defensive, for if the DRV re-escalated the war while American troops were being withdrawn, it would take upon itself the onus of slowing or stopping the withdrawals altogether. At the same time, the strategy held the advantage for Nixon of avoiding giving any public commitment to the Saigon regime once the troop withdrawals had been completed; either successful completion of troop withdrawals or negotiating progress at Paris that eventuated in a peace agreement would make moot the question of whether the Saigon regime could defend itself without American troops. On April 30, Pham Van Dong received a report from Soviet Ambassador L. Sherbakov of a set of talking points on a Vietnam settlement that Kissinger had given Dobrynin a fortnight before. They included acceptance of a complete withdrawal of American troops, that is to say no residual force left in Vietnam, and of NLF participation in political life for a period of five years, after which reunification would not be opposed—the "decent interval" idea.219

Lodge held a private meeting with Xuan Thuy on March 22; the State Department advised Ambassador Bui Diem of the meeting, but there was no coordination between Saigon and Washington on the parameters for such discussions. At a private meeting between Lodge and Le Duc Tho on May 31, the United States proposed the mutual withdrawal of "non–South Vietnamese forces" while the DRV demanded the unconditional withdrawal of American and other troops allied with the Saigon government. The DRV had begun demanding the unconditional withdrawal of allied troops, as it had the unconditional end to the bombing the previous year; the line was set in a *Nhan Dan* editorial on February 12, at Xuan Thuy's presentation at the Avenue Kléber on the following day, and in DRV spokesman Nguyên Thanh Le's press conference on the same day.

President Thieu, having heard that Nixon intended to order the first troop withdrawal, took the initiative at their meeting at Midway on June 8 by suggesting a "redeployment" in order to get around the problem of seeming to abandon the mutual withdrawal position. Nixon did use the term "redeployment" in announcing his intention to withdraw 25,000 American troops beginning the following month, and as he spoke first he said he based his decision on the recommendation of President Thieu and General Abrams. Thieu then had no alternative but to add that the strengthening of the ARVN had "made it possible for me to inform President Nixon that the armed forces of Vietnam are now able to start the process of replacements of the American forces." General William B. Rosson attended a Vietnamese function at the Independence palace after Midway at which Thieu "said that Mr. Nixon's announcement regarding his [Thieu's] recommendation was erroneous, that he had made no such recommendation, and in fact that Nixon had told him that he had a mandate to withdraw the forces."221 To soften the blow, however, Nixon assured Thieu of eight years of continued support—four years of military Vietnamization during his first term and four more years of economic Vietnamization during his second. "You know, when Nixon decides to withdraw, there is nothing I can do about it. Just as when Eisenhower, Kennedy, and Johnson decided to go in, there was very little my predecessors had to say about it," he later told Chiang Kai-shek.<sup>222</sup>

Thieu believed, however, on the basis of a speech by Nixon on May 14, that the Americans had already reneged on Johnson's pledge to keep some American troops in South Vietnam six months past a DRV withdrawal.<sup>223</sup> At the same time, the administration stepped up pressure on Thieu to broaden his government, which, as the DRV was not talking with his delegation in Paris, had less bearing on the possibility of arriving at an accommodation in the negotiations than on Thieu's domestic political situation.

As Kissinger observes, the American military immediately recognized the troop withdrawal plan for what it was—a renunciation of attaining victory. General Abrams "could not possibly achieve the victory that had eluded us at full strength while our forces were constantly dwindling." This change was formalized in a new mission statement for American forces in Vietnam that was issued effective August 15, changing a declaration of intent to defeat the enemy and force its withdrawal to North Vietnam to providing "maximum assistance" to the South Vietnamese to strengthen their forces, supporting pacification efforts, and reducing the flow of supplies to the enemy. In his speech of November 3, 1969, President Nixon announced this decision.

At Midway, Nixon proposed that secret, private contacts be started with the DRV by the Americans at the presidential level. Thieu agreed, provided he was informed about any political discussions. Thieu believed the contacts would be aimed at producing the "serious talks" between Hanoi and Saigon that Bunker had promised the previous October and did not suspect that the Americans would use these talks to negotiate a settlement on American terms. <sup>227</sup>

On July 30, 1969, in the course of a round-the-world trip, Nixon paid a visit to Vietnam, his eighth, and he and Kissinger met Thieu briefly at Independence Palace in Saigon and again discussed troop withdrawals. "I understood Nixon," Thieu recalled. "But he never said to me that it would be a systematic timetable of withdrawals at America's initiative. He only spoke to me of the domestic difficulties he was having in the United States, and asked me to help him. He said to me, 'Help us to help you.'" I replied: "I will help you to help us." Neither Nixon nor Kissinger informed Thieu of their plan to have Kissinger meet in Paris with Xuan Thuy. The meeting was ostensibly to inquire if Hanoi had a reply to the undated letter to Ho that Nixon had given to Jean Sainteny in the White House on July 15 for delivery to Mai Van Bo and had been arranged with Xuan Thuy by Sainteny. It conformed to Nixon's statement to Thieu about presidential-level contacts.

Late on the afternoon of August 4, 1969, Kissinger, accompanied by Anthony Lake and Lieutenant General Vernon A. Walters, the military attaché at the embassy, made his way incognito from the American Embassy to Sainteny's apartment at 204 Rue de Rivoli to meet Xuan Thuy. The meeting, the first

between the two men, had raised expectations on both sides, according to Kissinger's memoirs and an account from the DRV side co-authored by a member of the delegation.<sup>229</sup> Xuan Thuy rejected Kissinger's call for separation of political and military issues, mutual troop withdrawals, and elections to be organized by Thieu for a new South Vietnamese government. He noted that President Nixon had called the Saigon regime legal and constitutional, whereas if they talked to each other "in a frank and realistic way" they would not speak of the legality and constitutionality of the Saigon regime. This was the heart of the matter, of course.

Thuy, in what Kissinger took as an encouraging sign, asked for clarification of the significance and relationship between the further withdrawal of American troops and the solution to all other issues. Kissinger replied that the DRV could regulate the American withdrawals by the speed of its own troop withdrawals from the South. If the DRV did not wish to have American and DRV troops treated as comparable, they could negotiate some form of correspondence. Thuy repeated that the withdrawal of American troops and other foreign troops on the American side had to be unconditional. Kissinger offered a total withdrawal of American troops with no provision whatever for residual forces and expressed a willingness to discuss the presence of the DRV's troops in South Vietnam on some basis other than reciprocity. His statement "but there would be no withdrawal of U.S. forces without the withdrawal of North Vietnamese forces" 230 was confusing in light of Nixon's already announced intention to withdraw troops unilaterally. He thereby confirmed the correctness of the deduction Thieu had made that President Nixon had abandoned the demand for mutual withdrawal. In point of fact, Kissinger, as the author of the Aubrac-Markovich feeler of August 1967 on a bombing cessation conditioned on the DRV's agreement to refrain from reinforcing its troops in the South, had already, unintentionally perhaps, but unmistakably, signaled to Hanoi that the United States was prepared to see the maintenance of the DRV's troops in South Vietnam.<sup>231</sup>

Thus, barely six months after its inauguration, the Nixon administration, largely to appease its domestic critics, had conceded one after another prior and simultaneous withdrawal of the DRV's troops from South Vietnam without a single reciprocal concession by the DRV. These concessions were camouflaged as part of a plan to achieve peace. On politics, it was true, there had as yet been nothing more than a statement by each side of its basic position. As for Thieu's expectation that the high-level American-DRV contacts would result in "serious talks" between Hanoi and Saigon, Kissinger merely repeated to Thuy complaints about the existing procedure at the Kléber conference hall. He was not about to hand over the negotiating role to Saigon. At the end of their initial meeting, Thuy, smiling as usual, stated that he wished "to meet with Dr. Kissinger again if we can make progress."

In what may be seen as a carefully prepared sop to its domestic critics or simply another sign of the disarray characterizing the administration's efforts to deal with the Vietnam problem, Defense Secretary Melvin Laird changed the threat against which the South Vietnamese were expected to defend themselves which constituted the first of the three criteria President Nixon had announced for governing the pace of troop withdrawals. Laird had visited Saigon in March, at which time he warned Ambassador Bunker and General Abrams about the forthcoming troop withdrawals. In a statement before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on November 19, however, Laird said the administration had worked out with the Saigon government "a new objective" for attainment by the South Vietnamese forces of a level of combat capability adequate to defeat not only the Viet Cong but the DRV forces as well. Bunker and Abrams were dumbfounded at Laird's erroneous statement. <sup>232</sup> On December 11, Bunker was authorized to inform President Thieu that Nixon planned to announce on December 15 the next troop withdrawal. "We would therefore welcome a statement by President Thieu at the time of President Nixon's announcement stating that GVN had advised U.S. of its readiness to undertake effective replacement of these forces, and that he agrees with decision." Thieu expressed appreciation to Bunker. <sup>234</sup>

Toward the end of 1969, Lodge resigned as leader of the Paris delegation. Jeffrey Kimball, who has examined Lodge's papers, cites a number of reasons advanced for the resignation—too many, in fact, to be credible.<sup>235</sup> They do not include another possible reason, the awkward position Kissinger's secret talks with the DRV had put Lodge in. He was sitting week after week next to the Saigon delegation without being able to tell them that Kissinger was carrying on negotiations about the most sensitive matters behind their backs with the men facing them across the table. Chauvel had been in much the same position at Geneva in 1954, but at least in his case the delegation that was being kept in ignorance by the French of the "underground talks" with the Viet Minh at the suburban villa represented, for the French, a pain in the neck with their anti-French attitude.<sup>236</sup> Lodge, on the contrary, had no reason to resent the people sitting next to him. He was not replaced as delegation head for several months, until the arrival of David K. E. Bruce, who had been ambassador in Paris in February 1950, when Secretary Acheson, at his strong urging, had recognized the State of Vietnam, thereby defining American policy in the conflict between the DRV and the State of Vietnam. The symbolism did not escape the DRV delegation.

Kissinger met Le Duc Tho for the first time on February 21, 1970, in the dingy living room of a house at 11 Rue Darthé in Choisy-le-Roi in the southern suburbs of Paris. General Walters translated into French what Kissinger said, and the DRV delegation's interpreter translated this into Vietnamese. Tho spoke in Vietnamese and the interpreter translated this into English. In their many meetings, Kissinger writes that he grew to understand that Tho, as the representative of the truth, had no category for compromise. "Any settlement that deprived Hanoi of final victory was by definition a ruse." Indeed, Tho belonged to that tiny brotherhood who made the decisions at the party center that were then transmitted to, and acted upon, in the name of "the people" by the apparatuses of the DRV government and the PRG and through secret party channels to the front organizations in South Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia. At this meeting, Kissinger said:

We recognize you have a special problem in placing your troops in South Vietnam on the same legal basis as the American troops in South Vietnam. You do not recognize your troops in South Vietnam as foreign troops and instead you have never officially stated that you have troops in South Vietnam. We recognize this problem and we respect your attitude. We are willing to find a realistic and not theoretical solution to this particular difficulty.<sup>238</sup>

This statement by Kissinger, in the absence of any reference to the military provisions of the 1954 armistice agreement, represented a major concession on principle. There were further meetings on March 16 and April 4. By June, according to a military historian who has studied the record of the directives Abrams was receiving, the notion that decisions on withdrawal increments would be based on the situation in Vietnam had become fanciful, and Nixon's three criteria ceased to be of any consequence. <sup>239</sup> Thereafter, Bunker was instructed only to report Thieu's reaction to Nixon's periodic announcements of troop withdrawals.<sup>240</sup>

As the autumn of 1970 approached, Kissinger found that in order to keep ahead of the domestic critics he had to propose in the negotiations a timetable for American troop withdrawals, which he did at a meeting with Xuan Thuy on September 7, 1970. Demonstrators in the streets of Washington were starting to wave NLF flags at their demonstrations. Kissinger vaguely referred to reciprocity on the question but did not specifically demand the withdrawal of DRV troops.<sup>241</sup> At another meeting with Thuy on September 27, Kissinger asked for release of American POWs as a gesture of goodwill. The previous day, Kissinger had lunched with Vice President Nguyên Cao Ky and Bui Diem and had not breathed a word to them about his secret rendezvous the next day. President Thieu was still going on the assumption that any negotiated settlement would necessarily involve the withdrawal of the DRV's troops from South Vietnam, and this explains his failure to protest the Americans' statements about complete withdrawal of American troops.<sup>242</sup>

In view of Kissinger's later claim that President Thieu was consulted at every step, it seems useful to consider for a moment what such consultations consisted of. In the case of President Nixon's major diplomatic initiative in the speech he made on October 7, 1970, the record is complete for historians to study. On September 13, Rogers alerted Bunker to the forthcoming initiative, in which Nixon would propose an internationally supervised standstill ceasefire throughout Indochina, an immediate unconditional release of POWs, an acceptance in principle that American troops would be withdrawn from Vietnam, and an expanded international conference to seek a negotiated settlement throughout Indochina. Rogers said Nixon expected the Saigon delegation in Paris would join in the initiative when it was made at the end of the month or in early October and instructed Bunker to secure President Thieu's general concurrence with the concept and, subsequently, coordination on more of its details.<sup>243</sup> Thieu told Bunker that the concept gave him no problems and he assumed the format would be the same as on previous occasions, with Nixon saying he was acting "after consultation" with the Saigon government.<sup>244</sup> On October 4, Bunker received instructions to inform President Thieu that Nixon would speak on October 7; the information was exclusively for Thieu, although it could "serve as his guide in arranging whatever consultative process he feels essential to his anticipated endorsement of president's proposal."<sup>245</sup> In other words, the "consultative process" (a typical Kissinger formulation) was essential to allow Thieu to publicly support Nixon's initiative, not to inform or obtain the advice of South Vietnam's government, armed forces, or elected legislature. The Americans did not send Bunker an outline of Nixon's speech, with the caution that the text would be worked on until the moment of delivery, until October 7 Saigon time.<sup>246</sup> Thieu commented that before finalizing his endorsement he would like to see the full text of Nixon's speech.<sup>247</sup>

This consultation between the two allies continued with exchanges of telegrams with Bunker seeking to ensure that Thieu's endorsement was properly worded so as to coincide with the American negotiating position (public and private) in Paris. Of particular concern was what Thieu said about the third point with respect to the complete withdrawal of American troops, which "was formulated with particular care" in Nixon's text; the principal danger was that this might "create major misunderstandings and problems in Thieu's mind" and appropriate language was suggested so as to avoid this. 248 Specifically, Bunker was told that "nothing in the speech should be construed as justifying the unilateral withdrawal of U.S. forces, except in the context of the Vietnamization program, unless it might occur on the basis of a settlement under the principles outlined in the president's speech of May 14, 1969."<sup>249</sup> This was the speech that Thieu had interpreted as the Nixon administration's abandonment of President Johnson's pledge to keep some American troops in South Vietnam six months past a DRV withdrawal. Thieu accepted all the suggestions handed to him by Bunker but couched the four-part proposal as his own government's and made no reference to Nixon in the statement issued on October 8.250 Ambassadors Bruce and Lam tabled the initiative at the Avenue Kléber.

In Hanoi's analysis, the discussion of draft bills in Congress setting deadlines for troop withdrawal placed Nixon before a dilemma: if he opposed them, the "peace mask would fall," and if the bills passed, Nixon would have his hands tied. "The Vietnamization strategy would be jeopardized." As Kimball astutely observes, Nixon needed his Vietnamization to succeed, not because of South Vietnam's prospects but because of the domestic pressures on him to withdraw American troops. Stalin had thought Roosevelt's constant references to Congress in their talks were just an "excuse" for not taking actions that Stalin wanted him to take. Stalin had the Paris negotiations, the DRV bettered Stalin by learning to turn Congressional opinion into a weapon.

Bunker, on Kissinger's instructions, informed Thieu on May 27, 1971, of a new secret meeting between Kissinger and Xuan Thuy set for May 31 (after a hiatus of some months), telling him "that we will follow up the other side's recent ambiguous public statements in Paris and discuss the relationship between ceasefire, POWs, and the U.S. withdrawals," and reaffirming "that we will not agree to the other side's political demands." There was more to it

than that, however. Kissinger informed Bunker on April 13 that he planned to table a concrete package at the new meeting and asked for Bunker's personal views on what the package should contain and on the perennial problem of how to "handle Thieu." Kissinger noted approvingly that Bunker had told General Alexander Haig that "we should test the other side's reaction before informing Thieu."255 Bunker responded by suggesting a two-part scenario. At a first meeting, Kissinger would establish whether Hanoi was interested in negotiating or not. Depending on the outcome, he would table a package at a second meeting. Bunker went on to suggest a package of six military steps, including a linked withdrawal of American troops and an exchange of POWs, at the completion of which the DRV would begin a withdrawal of its troops from South Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos, to be completed within six months.<sup>256</sup> On May 25, an impatient Kissinger informed Bunker the other side had accepted to meet on May 31 and outlined his strategy. Kissinger had modified Bunker's plan in two major respects: he would move ahead in the first meeting along the lines Bunker had suggested for the second meeting, he would avoid proposing specific dates in his opening statement, and on the question of withdrawal of the DRV's troops would only propose that "the peoples of Indochina should discuss this question."257 Now, adding further to the mischief, Bunker, possibly misunderstanding what Kissinger was proposing in Paris, wrote in a note to himself on that point that on completion of withdrawal of American troops and exchange of POWs, DRV troops would actually begin withdrawing from South Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos.<sup>258</sup> Bunker continued to put this interpretation on the point in the talking points he wrote for a meeting with President Thieu on June 3, and at that meeting told Thieu generally the package proposed to the DRV followed the lines of President Nixon's diplomatic initiative of the previous October, which had not mentioned any provision for withdrawal of DRV troops. Bunker reported no reaction from Thieu.<sup>259</sup> Kissinger, aware that he had received no authority from the Saigon government to drop the mutual withdrawal position, did not correct Bunker's misinterpretation of the American proposal.<sup>260</sup>

In the proposal he presented to Xuan Thuy on May 31, Kissinger specifically separated the withdrawal from South Vietnam of American and allied troops from that of the DRV's forces by, in his second point, leaving the withdrawal of "all other outside forces" to be discussed by "the Vietnamese and the other peoples of Indochina."

This was the weakest formulation possible, as it allowed the DRV to dictate any conditions it wished in such discussions without any time limit, assuming they were ever held, with the governments in Saigon, Vientiane, and Phnom Penh.<sup>261</sup> In the drafting of future American proposals, the issue of the withdrawal of DRV troops from South Vietnam would be couched in language such as "all armed forces of the countries of Indochina must remain within their national frontiers," which was a meaningless formulation so far as protecting South Vietnam went because, of course, Vietnam was one country, and was similar to the meaningless wording accepted by Harriman for Article 2(i) of the

Declaration on the Neutrality of Laos on the use of the territory of Laos by the signatories (i.e., North Vietnam) to interfere in "other countries" (i.e., South Vietnam). North Vietnam) to interfere in "other countries" (i.e., South Vietnam). Needless to say, Xuan Thuy reacted to Kissinger's dropping of any quid pro quo for the offer of a unilateral American troop withdrawal with attentiveness and even a display of uncertainty for the first time. He "was careful to leave open the possibility of accepting our basic approach, asked for time to study it, and suggested meeting again in about three weeks," Kissinger reported. Thieu's government, out of ignorance rather than disloyalty, maintained its demand for withdrawal of the DRV's forces, as was made clear by the foreign ministry in interviews. Note that the suggestion of the DRV's forces are was made clear by the foreign ministry in interviews.

Kissinger also proposed a cease-fire in place throughout Indochina, to become effective at the time when American troop withdrawals based on the final agreed timetable began. The Americans seriously misled their ally with respect to this issue also. The contingency of a cease-fire had formed the main subject of discussion between Bunker and Berger and Thieu and his aides in Saigon. In these discussions, the Americans led the South Vietnamese to believe that the enemy might at any moment propose a cease-fire or simply announce a ceasefire, as had happened every Tet. In this context, Thieu and his aides agreed that in case of such a "standstill cease-fire," which would be longer than a Tet truce, the opposing forces would necessarily have to be rotated and resupplied pending their final disposition. "We have at least planted the seed that some NVA resupply may have to be accepted and that an unqualified no-infiltration stand is too simple a concept," Bunker cabled.<sup>264</sup> But when Thieu accepted this flexibility, he was under the impression that the allies were insisting that the agreement for a final settlement provide for the withdrawal of the DRV's troops from the South once the cease-fire became effective. Nevertheless, Kissinger continued to talk about a prohibition against infiltration, which was a stand so weak as to be virtually meaningless once he had accepted the principle of the right of the DRV troops to remain in the South indefinitely following a cease-fire.

In fact, the DRV had been given to understand that the Nixon administration was anxious to wash its hands of the Vietnam problem and that concessions on these and even further issues might be forthcoming. Toward the end of January 1971, Sherbakov informed Pham Van Dong that Kissinger had told Dobrynin that if the United States undertook to withdraw all its troops by a certain time limit and possibly did not demand a simultaneous withdrawal of DRV troops, the DRV should undertake to respect a cease-fire during the American withdrawal plus a certain period, not too long, after the American withdrawal. Further, if the Vietnamese sides could agree on a reasonable compromise, and if thereafter war broke out again between North and South, that conflict would no longer be an American affair; it would be an affair of the Vietnamese, because the Americans would have left Vietnam.<sup>265</sup>

Kissinger's position was confirmed by none other than Chou En-lai, on the basis of their talks in Peking. Chou told the DRV leaders during a visit to Hanoi on July 13 that while the United States no longer demanded the withdrawal of their forces from South Vietnam, their forces had to be withdrawn from Laos and Cambodia. <sup>266</sup> Coming from Chou, the words were more than those of a disinterested messenger, as the DRV leaders well knew. Chou had been typically restrained in his remarks to Kissinger, saying that China would not press Hanoi one way or the other, even though it did not necessarily approve Hanoi's strategy of invading the South with regular forces. He offered the opinion that history was against the United States and that communism would prevail in Vietnam and Cambodia, but that Laos would continue to be ruled by its king. Whereas Sullivan had been bombing the DRV troops in Laos for four and a half years to keep them from expanding their control any further, Chou threatened to force their total evacuation from Laos with a few well-chosen words. Chou also knew, of course, that the CPK intended to evict the DRV troops from Cambodia, and Chinese support for this move was implicit. Evading these strictures on their freedom of action in Laos and Cambodia henceforth became one of the priorities of DRV diplomacy.

Loi and Vu quote Le Duc Tho as speaking about Kissinger's troop-with-drawal concession on November 14, 1988, to officials who had been involved in the Paris negotiations: "For us, the most fundamental question was that the United States had to pull out its forces but ours would remain where they were. . . . We demanded the complete withdrawal of the U.S. forces, but they no longer insisted on our withdrawal as before." <sup>267</sup>

While the Chinese sent Chou En-lai to brief the DRV leaders on the results of Kissinger's visit to Peking, the Americans sent Assistant Secretary Marshall Green, who had been excluded by Kissinger from his talks with Chou, to brief President Thieu. It was a good illustration of the essential difference between the alliance relations of Hanoi and Saigon. When Thieu later learned of Kissinger's concession on withdrawal of the DRV's troops from the South, which had always been the keystone of the South Vietnamese position on ending the war, he was understandably furious at the underhanded way in which he and his government were being treated by the Americans. This was the style of diplomacy with their ally followed repeatedly by Nixon and Kissinger, one that was to cause them trouble later: to inform Thieu in very general terms of the subject matter up for discussion ("discuss the relationship between ceasefire, POWs, and the U.S. withdrawals"), without telling him the specific proposals to be made ("a ceasefire in place throughout Indochina, to become effective at the time when U.S. withdrawals based on the final agreed timetable begin"). On the basis of the archival record, it is possible to affirm that Kissinger's statement in his memoirs that "he [Thieu] was kept fully informed of my talks with Le Duc Tho, approving every proposal,"268 is a lie, as has been pointed out by other astute analysts. This style of diplomacy—two-track, three-track, or four-track, however Nixon and Kissinger cared to characterize it—was not conducive to coordination, which was rarely if ever sought, and Thieu gradually became aware that his periodic consultation meetings with Bunker and Berger about peace proposals in Paris, on which they provided him with sanitized summaries, were about as relevant as debating how many angels would fit on the head of a pin.

Even so, the DRV negotiators judged that the United States had not yet conceded the right of the DRV to station troops in the South, as they later pointed out.<sup>269</sup> For example, when Haig conferred with Thieu in Saigon in September 1971, he was still talking about respect for the 1954 Geneva Agreement as a basic demand being made by Kissinger in Paris, which reassured and misled Thieu.<sup>270</sup> Kissinger himself gradually stopped talking about respect for the 1954 Geneva Agreement altogether in view of the contradiction between his position on the DRV troops in the South and the military provisions of the 1954 armistice; the only holdover pressed by the Americans was the status of the DMZ. The DRV negotiators noted this, and began talking about the "principle" of the DRV's right to move its troops anywhere in Vietnam, a principle which, they made clear, overrode the question of the continued validity of the 1954 Geneva Agreement. They were eager to move on in the secret talks to discuss the political issue. At their next meeting a month later, according to the DRV chronicle, Kissinger "realized at once the atmosphere of peace negotiations: not to mention the cheerful attitude of the hosts, for the first time, the working table was covered with a green tablecloth!"271 Specialists in the foreign ministry in Hanoi thought that the Americans wanted an early solution and would prove to be flexible on certain points. The DRV delegation suggested to Hanoi the announcement of a new proposal to oblige the Americans to make a political concession, the replacement of Thieu.<sup>272</sup> French Foreign Minister Maurice Schumann, an ardent advocate of the DRV position, expressed alarm at the rapid pace of events. "You know, we don't want you just to withdraw and leave the place to the Communists," he told Ambassador William Porter.273

President Thieu did not learn that the Nixon administration had agreed to allow the DRV's troops to remain in the South until he and his aides had had a chance to study the text of the comprehensive proposal Walters had delivered to the DRV, without their knowledge, on October 11, 1971. After being shown this text on January 10, 1972, by Bunker, Thieu sent Bunker a memorandum on the evening of January 14 critical of the American proposal and protesting the lack of information and consultation.<sup>274</sup>

What Kissinger had proposed was a settlement in two phases. The first phase would be initiated when agreement on a statement of principles had been reached and signed by the four parties in Paris, and would involve simultaneous withdrawal of American and allied troops from South Vietnam and release of POWs according to a fixed schedule. The second phase would be initiated when a final agreement had been negotiated and signed by the four parties in Paris, and would involve a cease-fire; withdrawal of the DRV's troops from South Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos; and modalities of elections according to a fixed schedule. Ignoring President Thieu's protest at lack of information and consultation, Kissinger told Bunker: "Thus, our forces would undoubtedly leave before the North Vietnamese. FYI: We believe Thieu has recognized this all along. In any event, this is what is happening now [under the Vietnamization program]. End FYI." Bunker presented this to Thieu as providing for "mutual withdrawal arrangements," not dwelling on the fact that under Kissinger's

scheme the American troops would mutually withdraw first, and when they had completely withdrawn then the DRV troops would mutually withdraw. The latter withdrawal would only take place once final agreement had been reached on a cease-fire and on modalities for elections.<sup>276</sup> In the end, the DRV, confident of obtaining further concessions from Kissinger, rejected even this one-sided scheme as not satisfying its war objectives.

# Ho Chi Minh's Death

Ho Chi Minh was succumbing to creeping senility by 1966 and 1967, according to Jean Rafelli, the AFP correspondent in Hanoi, and Ho's old friend Aubrac. At public gatherings, Ho had been seen to applaud at the wrong moment.<sup>277</sup> On September 2, 1969, the DRV's national day, the Vietnam News Agency reported that Ho was gravely ill and under intensive medical care. On September 3, it was announced that Ho had died that morning at 9:47 A.M. at the age of 79. It later was revealed that Ho had died the previous day, but the date was falsified because the coincidence was judged an ill omen.

At the time of his death, Ho held the largely ceremonial post of president of the party central committee as well as that of president of the DRV. The funeral committee showed the current party hierarchy. Le Duan, first secretary of the party central committee; Ton Duc Thang, member of the central committee and vice president; Truong Chinh, politburo member and chairman of the National Assembly's standing committee; Pham Van Dong, politburo member and prime minister; Pham Hung; Le Duc Tho; Vo Nguyên Giap; Nguyên Duy Trinh, foreign minister; Le Thanh Nghi; and Hoang Van Hoan, politburo members; and Tran Quoc Hoan and Colonel General Van Tien Dung, politburo alternate members; and 14 others, one of whom was not named and may have been the Vietnamese-Lao who went by the pseudonym Kaysone Phomvihan and was the party's point man in Laos.<sup>278</sup>

As Ho's body lay in state at the Ba Dinh Hall, the masses queued to pay homage, the men wearing white smocks or jackets and the women white *ao dais*, the flowing Vietnamese national dress. The line stretched to the city limits until it was finally turned away. The scene was described by a Western reporter present: "It is both very moving and very disturbing to see this. People act as if entranced. It is more than just a people's sorrow: almost a people possessed." At the funeral oration under a 107-degree sun, Pham Van Dong, surrounded by foreign dignitaries, was at times doubled over and weeping uncontrollably.<sup>279</sup> Chou En-lai paid a flying visit to pay his respects, leaving before Kosygin arrived for the funeral.

In his last testament, published after his death, Ho spoke of going to join Lenin. He had begun writing his will in May 1965 and revised it several times afterward. In his will, Ho said he did not want a lavish and costly state funeral and expressed the wish to be cremated and to have his ashes scattered over the three regions of Vietnam to become the focus of national parks. This wish was not granted by the party, however, and he was embalmed in a Soviet-style mausoleum in the center of Hanoi so that in death his saintly figure would continue

to serve the party as a national symbol to rally the masses to the cause. On the morning following his death, Le Duan sorted through Ho's papers and decided which portions should be made public and which kept secret. One of the parts kept secret was Ho's wish that all agricultural taxes be suspended for a year as his gift to the people at the time of his death. Le Duan gave Interior Minister Tran Quoc Hoan the concealed portions of Ho's will for safekeeping, and they remained locked away in his house until Hoan on his deathbed years later told Vu Ky, Ho's secretary, where they were. The war went on; in the South, American troops observed a three-day truce on the occasion of Ho's death, like those of the Viet Cong. The ARVN did not observe a truce.

The American POWs in Hanoi, according to their own testimony following their release, noticed an immediate easing of their prison conditions when Ho died: there was less torture used by their interrogators, solitary confinement was reduced, and their food improved.<sup>281</sup> This improvement continued in effect until the Son Tay raid, when the DRV prison authorities tightened up control again apparently because they suspected the POWs of passing information on the location of the Son Tay camp. The POWs were also concentrated in Hanoi after that raid, and the large numbers being in contact together for the first time had the effect of improving their morale.

#### THE POLITICAL ISSUE

The political issue, like the troop withdrawal issue, with which the DRV linked it throughout the negotiations, held important principles. While the core of the troop withdrawal issue from the DRV's perspective was the right to maintain its troops in the South, making it incompatible with any kind of mutual withdrawal of foreign troops proposed by the Americans, the core of the political issue was the legality and legitimacy of the PRG, which was to be reaffirmed by any agreement.

The initial American position on the political issue, in the terms Kissinger presented it to his DRV interlocutors, was that the South Vietnamese people should be allowed to determine their own future without outside interference. South Vietnam, with American help, had come a long way in this regard since the post-1963 chaos. Elections for the Senate had been held on August 30, 1970, in what the embassy called "one of the most honest elections ever held in Vietnam on the national level."282 The 4,388,000 voters represented only 65.7 percent of registered voters, reflecting the enlargement of the electorate with improved security in the countryside since 1967. The major surprise was the first-place victory of the Lotus slate headed by Vu Van Mau, which had the active support of the An Quang Buddhists. But since it was the Americans who were doing the negotiating on behalf of the South Vietnamese and entering into the negotiation of political commitments binding on the Saigon government for which they had received no authority from the Saigon government, Kissinger's position posed, ipso facto, a contradiction. Kissinger seems to have remained unaware of the contradiction to the end. Reflecting on the reasons for the demoralization of "the Saigon structure" that led to its collapse in 1975, he

asks in his memoirs whether it might have been due to the rapid pace of the negotiations "we imposed." At another point, he writes about the South Vietnamese people "who had stood with us," as if the Americans had a right to conduct the negotiations because they were the principal belligerent.<sup>283</sup> Where in all this was the South Vietnamese people's right to determine their own future?

The position opposing Kissinger, as explained by Xuan Thuy at their first meeting, was that "the reality" was that in South Vietnam there was the PRG and there was the Saigon administration. If the Saigon administration organized the elections, the PRG would not agree. If the PRG organized the elections, the Saigon administration would not agree. Therefore, it was only "logical and reasonable" that a provisional coalition government should be formed to organize elections.<sup>284</sup> This was, of course, the political program adopted by the PRG at its founding congress.

Thuy's equation of the government of the Republic of Vietnam and the PRG was troubling from the constitutional point of view in the Southern context; it was also false in that the PRG was not an independent claimant to power but rather an instrument of the DRV. To those to whom such considerations meant little, however, it seemed as if a mere change of faces in Saigon would open the way to ending the war and restoring peace in Indochina. These included a growing number of the administration's congressional critics, who had become a sort of third party to the negotiations; figures such as Senators Edward M. Kennedy and George McGovern met in Paris with Thuy and afterward made public their own interpretations of peace prospects. McGovern and Representatives Bella Abzug and Patsy Mink ostracized the Saigon government to a greater degree than even Kissinger by holding publicly announced meetings in Paris with Thuy and Madame Binh as well as the Americans, but not with the Saigon delegation.<sup>285</sup>

The account by the DRV negotiators makes clear how importantly the constant pressure on Nixon from his domestic critics figured in the DRV's negotiating strategy.<sup>286</sup> The continued refusal of the DRV and PRG delegations at the Avenue Kléber to acknowledge the presence of the Saigon delegation served the purpose of putting the "warlike" Saigon leaders Thieu-Ky-Huong or Thieu-Ky-Khiem in a vulnerable position with respect to their American critics; thus, Saigon had been maneuvered into the position where it had no say either with Kissinger or with Kennedy, McGovern, and company. This was the condition in which peace in Indochina was to be worked out under American aegis.

Bunker put the dilemma in words in commenting on Kissinger's report of his secret meeting of March 16, 1970:

> We are in a somewhat delicate position here since we have always said that the GVN must participate in negotiations affecting the internal problems of South Viet-Nam. On the other hand, we told the other side that we are ready to discuss anything with them and, of course, we would have to keep Thieu informed of our discussion of political matters with Michael, Yul, and Nestor. With this caveat, I see no reason why we should not discuss matters relating to a political settlement.<sup>287</sup>

The issue came into sharper focus in October with preparations for President Nixon's major diplomatic initiative. The question was whether to include a proposal for a political settlement in the speech. Thieu had sent Vice President Nguyên Cao Ky to Paris to act as special adviser to the Saigon delegation, a counterpart to Le Duc Tho, the DRV delegation's special adviser. Ky and Ambassador Pham Dang Lam had talked over ideas for offering a political settlement couched in more specific terms than President Thieu's offer of July 11, 1969, which Lam had tabled at the Avenue Kléber on January 22.288 Ky favored elections for a constituent assembly; he thought the constitution that had been drafted with Lodge's oversight was not altogether appropriate for South Vietnam.<sup>289</sup> The central issue was who would organize elections that the PRG would agree to participate in. Ky favored an electoral commission that would be composed of members from both sides. These and other ideas were discussed when Kissinger and Ambassadors Bruce and Philip Habib called on Ky, Bui Diem, and Nguyên Xuan Phong, the deputy chief of the Saigon delegation, on September 26. Ky told the Americans he wanted to announce a political initiative publicly in order to put the Communists on the defensive. <sup>290</sup> In telegrams, Bruce strongly supported Ky's plan, but Kissinger objected that a Saigon initiative that "encumbered" President Nixon's initiative would be sure to draw criticism from Nixon's domestic opponents. Bruce thought that, on the contrary, an initiative of the kind Ky had in mind, coming as part of an endorsement by Saigon of Nixon's initiative, would be an effective way of telling the Communists they would have to discuss a political settlement with the representatives of the Saigon government, thereby putting the Americans in a stronger position, publicly and privately, of insisting on discussing a political solution in the context of elaborating on the Saigon proposal.<sup>291</sup> Around the table at the Avenue Kléber, while Lam was speaking Le Duc Tho ostentatiously read a newspaper.<sup>292</sup> Thieu, of course, also had his domestic opposition, and the debate over a political settlement was considerably enlivened when Ngô Cong Duc, a member of the Lower House, issued a statement calling for de-escalation of the war, withdrawal of all foreign troops from South Vietnam, and organization of elections by a provisional government.<sup>293</sup>

Bunker, obviously hewing close to Kissinger's line on total American control of the negotiating process, and before even talking to Thieu about it, said he did not see how the American delegation's suggestion for a Saigon initiative could be implemented without causing undue delay and complicating coordination problems. While he saw some merit in Ky's ideas, he recommended he be authorized to sound out Thieu's thinking. He thought Thieu's scheduled speech before the National Assembly on October 31 might furnish an appropriate occasion for launching such an initiative. President Nixon did not mention any political initiative from Saigon in his speech. Kissinger was looking ahead to requesting his next secret meeting with the DRV and felt the optimum timing for a Saigon political initiative could best be judged after that meeting had been held. Physical Saigon government's proposed initiative on a political settlement to the scrap heap.

Thieu, as was his wont, dithered and made excuses and thereafter never made any political proposal at all, leaving the initiative completely in the hands of the Communists, who were eager to begin discussing the subject with Kissinger without dealing with the bothersome "Saigon administration" at all.

After his May 31, 1971, meeting with Xuan Thuy and three more meetings with Le Duc Tho on June 26 and July 12 and 26, Kissinger felt that the decks had been cleared of all issues "except the crucial political one." Recognizing that a settlement in the event the DRV dropped its unacceptable demand that the Americans drop the warlike Thieu-Ky-Khiem administration would be "likely nevertheless to have major political impact on South Vietnam," Kissinger called Bunker back to Washington in August for consultation on the perennial problem of how to "handle" Thieu. Kissinger had been put on the defensive in his recent meetings by the DRV negotiators, who pointed out the contradiction between American statements of neutrality in the forthcoming presidential election and undercover American support to Thieu's candidacy, about which the DRV was apparently well informed. Facing these problems, Kissinger decided to forge ahead with proposals for a political settlement that, he thought, would appeal to the DRV negotiators, and he held another meeting with Xuan Thuy on September 13. He sent General Haig to Saigon to make his proposals known to President Thieu.

The meeting between Thieu and Haig on September 23 was the first of a series of such meetings in which American envoys made demands and Thieu, ever more suspicious of his visitors' motives, resisted being pushed into a deal of which he had only scant knowledge. Haig, after some introductory laudatory comments about Thieu's leadership, explained the need to maintain American domestic support for South Vietnam. In this connection, the Americans wanted the negotiating record, when it was made public, to show that Thieu had gone the "last mile" in the interest of peace. Haig then unveiled Kissinger's proposal, which consisted of an agreement in principle (a phrase that appears in the record often in this period) that would incorporate both previously agreed-upon military aspects and a political aspect centered on Thieu's agreement to resign one month before a new election in which the PRG would participate. Haig urged prompt acceptance of this naive proposal so that preparations could be made for Kissinger's next secret meeting and conveyed a veiled threat: without this proposal and Thieu's concurrence, "it would be difficult to assure you of continued U.S. support despite our wish to do so."297 Thieu accepted all this without demurral. Bunker had described Kissinger's meeting with Xuan Thuy on September 13 as "unproductive," and Haig told him the Americans anticipated a delay of at least several weeks before another meeting, so he was surprised by Haig's demand for his "prompt agreement in principle." But he was reassured by Haig's promise that the proposal would not be put to the DRV without his full knowledge. Moreover, he felt that "any competent nationalist candidate would beat the Communists."298 Never was his dependence on the Americans more evident; but at least he felt assured they would not try to maneuver him out of office in the forthcoming presidential election or have him killed, as they had Diem. In fact, Kissinger was now describing Thieu, with his willingness to go the "last mile" in the interest of peace, as "the essential ingredient in the game plan." Kissinger was so determined that Thieu should win unopposed that he threatened any member of the country team whom Bunker considered "not to be fully supportive" of his policy with immediate removal.<sup>299</sup> In his last speech of the campaign on September 30, Thieu said on national television:

If the Communists do not want me to lead this country any longer, then let them give up their dream of invasion and negotiate seriously to end this war. They do not need to overthrow me because I have said that when I can restore a just peace for the country, then, on my own, I will ask the people to let me return to the life of a simple citizen, because my only and eager aspiration to serve the country is simply for that—peace.<sup>300</sup>

Kissinger waited until after the election to deliver the proposal secretly to the other side, having Vernon Walters hand it to Vo Van Sung, who had replaced Mai Van Bo, on October 11.

Thieu had worked diligently at his transition from a military officer to a civilian leader. Perhaps his main accomplishment was in the area of land reform. Rents were frozen and 50,000 families received government-owned land in 1968. Two years later, Thieu pushed through the Lower House a "land to the tiller" program designed to make tenants landowners. By 1972, tenancy in South Vietnam was down from about 60 percent to 34 percent, and almost 400,000 farmers received a total of 1.5 million acres of land.

But at the moment of his greatest popularity as president, when he resisted the bombing halt, Thieu revealed himself, rather surprisingly, to be a man without a plan, a man of indecisiveness. By nature a cautious man, he sank into inaction. When his ambassador to Washington, who was thoroughly familiar with the American political scene, sent him a confidential report urging him, at a time when the new administration's policy toward Vietnam had still not been defined, to undertake a complete review of the situation in order to develop a rational set of concrete proposals on military, diplomatic, political, and economic matters, he received no response. Nor did Thieu take up Bui Diem's observation that in the future South Vietnam's interests might well diverge from those of the United States.<sup>301</sup> He assumed implicitly that the Americans would go on supporting him.

Thieu's political power rested on the twin pillars of the ARVN and his alliance with the Americans. The number of American troops withdrawn from South Vietnam in 1969 had been 65,000, in 1970 50,000, and 250,000 in 1971. By the end of January 1972, there were 139,000 American troops in South Vietnam. The ARVN was meant to replace them. Yet Thieu continued to cling to the Americans, from a combination of naive trust and an inability to think of anything else to do, until the Americans found it hard to rid themselves of this "tin-horn dictator." The CIA had bugged his office and his residence; he could not even go to the toilet without the Americans knowing. <sup>302</sup> Perhaps it was because of his deeply suspicious nature that Thieu did not believe even his closest advisers when they warned him about the perfidy of his American allies.

Even when the betrayal reached its final phase in the spring of 1975 and the country was already lost, when he told his countrymen in his resignation speech about the broken promises made to him it was more in sorrow than in anger. The reasons for Thieu's misplaced trust form one of the most fascinating chapters in the history of the decline and fall of the Vietnamese nationalists yet to be fully elucidated.

In the years after 1969, Thieu's inability to separate himself from the Americans caused him to lose support among his own people in the South and confirmed every tenet of the regime in the North about his being a puppet. He completely forgot Diem's warnings to his countrymen about the colonialists. Yet he professed to live in fear of assassination at the hands of the Americans, like Diem. It was a greatly exaggerated fear: Why would the Americans wish to assassinate someone who proved to be such a willing puppet? In fact, they flew him out of Vietnam at the end to a comfortable exile, although they did not encourage him to go to the United States, as did Lon Nol.

There were three milestones along the descending spiral of Thieu's political fortunes: (1) the Lam Son 719 operation across the border into Laos in February 1971, which showed the lack of ARVN strategic reserves and ended in a retreat that was widely perceived to be a military failure; (2) the one-man presidential election of October 3, 1971; and (3) the fall of Quang Tri on May 1, 1972, and the long delay in recapturing it after appointment of a new commander, a disaster that reflected far more poorly on Thieu's leadership than Lam Son 719.

The foray to Tchepone, a risky operation "stimulated by Washington, transmitted by [Admiral John] McCain and Abrams, and sketched out by Thieu," was launched on February 8, 1971, totally without benefit of surprise.<sup>303</sup> The objective was to cut the Ho Chi Minh Trail, although it had been calculated at an earlier stage of the war that doing this would require several American divisions. The enemy forces waiting for the ARVN were 60,000 troops, consisting of five divisions, two separate infantry regiments, eight regiments of artillery, three engineer regiments, three tank battalions, six anti-aircraft regiments, and eight sapper battalions, plus rear service and transportation units.<sup>304</sup> Kissinger, discussing the operation in his memoirs, heaps more than the usual scorn on the ARVN, which he and Nixon expected to carry out the operation without benefit of American advisers or ground support. He writes that he was particularly outraged by the ARVN soldiers' living near their families, which prevented movement of large ARVN units from one part of the country to another and which interfered with the conduct of offensive operations that the dependents of ARVN soldiers might consider unnecessary.<sup>305</sup> In the end, he writes, the ARVN proved unequal to the task set out for Lam Son 719. Ten weeks later in Paris, Kissinger made the concession to the DRV that it did not have to remove its troops from the South. It was very much as if Kissinger decided to throw the Athenians into the breach against the Spartans, and when they proved unequal, he decided there was no hope for them anyway.

The party center was beginning to take the indicators of Nixon's intentions it was getting from its Soviet and other sources and to meld these into a coherent strategy. It decided on a major effort to defeat Vietnamization, which it viewed as an American attempt to hold on to South Vietnam behind the screen of the puppet government. The Politburo formalized this policy in May as one of "forcing the U.S. imperialists to negotiate an end to the war from a position of defeat." In the wake of Lam Son 719, the DRV began a major effort to upgrade the Ho Chi Minh Trail for use by large units. An entirely new road was added to the system, to be known as Road K, as distinguished from the old road, known as Road H. 307

Elections for the Lower House were scheduled to take place on August 29, 1971, to replace the house elected in 1967. Thieu's term as president was nearing an end, and an election was scheduled for October 3. There now ensued, through the summer of 1971 and keyed to the presidential election, a game between the South Vietnamese leaders and their American ally. The former were determined to retain control of the election and show that their regime still counted for something more than an American puppet. In the end, it was not the Americans who managed the election outcome, but Thieu.

President Nixon and Kissinger were still resisting the calls by Fulbright, Harriman, and others to jettison Thieu. In Saigon, a year before the election, the vibrant press was already printing stories about the American Embassy and Bunker supporting certain possible candidates, either Thieu, Vice President Ky, or Major General Duong Van Minh, who had returned to Vietnam on October 5, 1968, after four years of exile in Thailand and who had been hinting for months that he might be a candidate. The embassy arranged to have published in the official Vietnam Press bulletin an interview with a spokesman who quoted Bunker as saying that "it is U.S. policy to support the people, the institutions and the duly elected government of South Vietnam and that U.S. support is not based on personalities or personal relationships that may or may not be presumed to exist between Vietnamese citizens and officials of the U.S. Mission."308 At the end of March 1971, the embassy was going on the assumption, however, that most Vietnamese took it for granted that the Americans supported Thieu's candidacy.<sup>309</sup> On April 23, the embassy drafted instructions directing American personnel in Vietnam to "avoid implying by word, deed or acts of presence that the United States supports any individual candidate or group of candidates or political party for elective office."310

Unknown to the rest of the embassy, except possibly Bunker, the large CIA station, headed by Theodore G. Shackley, Jr., had been preparing for more than a year to fix the election by pouring millions of dollars into Thieu's private campaign treasury and helping him set up political support groups to give his candidacy the appearance of broad-based endorsement. Whether or not this all-out American support was part of a quid pro quo deal for Thieu's continued acceptance of the Americans as his negotiators in Paris, it was approved by Nixon and Kissinger, who were receiving back-channel messages from Shackley. "I hoped that a democratic election would increase support for an ally," Kissinger wrote in his memoirs in a carefully tuned phrase.<sup>311</sup>

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The support for Thieu was certainly known to Hanoi, which had its agents planted within Thieu's administration. Hanoi's interest, naturally, was to have Thieu win a visibly rigged election, which would undercut his standing among the South Vietnamese as practically nothing else, short of an old-fashioned blood bath in some incident that got out of hand. The position was "amply discussed" at Kissinger's meetings with Tho and Thuy on July 12 and 26, when the DRV negotiators kept pushing Kissinger to think of ways of replacing Thieu. "The election is an opportunity," Tho said. 312 Options included discouraging Thieu from running, excluding him through a coalition or other new-government arrangement by cutting off aid, or by withholding support for him in the campaign. In one memorable exchange on the subject between Tho and Kissinger, Tho said "You know what to do." Kissinger replied that he did not understand. Tho said, "You know. Get rid of him." Kissinger said, "I really don't understand what it is that you want. Do you mean that we should kill him?" Tho replied immediately, "Yes, but you don't have to put that in the agreement."313 Tho was too intelligent to believe the Americans would be stupid enough to commit the same mistake as in 1963. Thieu, in fact, meant little for the DRV except as the chosen figurehead of American colonial rule, and any other individual in his position would have been treated the same way. Thieu as the villain served as a focus allowing the DRV negotiators in Paris, backed by Hanoi's daily propaganda output, to play the game of suggesting to the Americans other figures in the South who might be more acceptable to them, to see if the Americans took the bait. The American negotiators saw the bait and kept repeating that they would not overthrow the elected president of their ally's regime. Beyond this mantra, however, their insight was very weak. The DRV negotiators, in fact, were playing for more than simply the removal of Thieu.

Bunker himself had little understanding of Vietnamese politics, although he had capable political officers in his embassy; he focused on programs, not on the political situation. In his years in Saigon Bunker had earned the nickname "ong dai su tu lanh" ("Mr. Ambassador, the Refrigerator") by the South Vietnamese, but Thieu respected him as an elder. Bunker habitually dismissed the opposition as divided and weak, an appreciation of South Vietnamese politics that represented little significant advance over that of the Saigon embassy in 1953. In this regard, he made a fundamental misjudgment in allowing himself to believe that General Minh could be groomed as a leader of a loyal opposition. In the end, Bunker became a sort of messenger and occasional appointments secretary for Kissinger, Haig, and company. General Abrams, who felt a compassion for the Vietnamese that Bunker lacked and who had a keen sense of what was going on in Saigon, once exclaimed: "But then I see some of the things that Ambassador Bunker—the sack of crap that he's been directed to carry over to the palace!"314 It is likely Bunker felt personally humiliated by the chores he had to perform, such as his bribe offer to General Minh; his monthly reports to the president ceased after the presidential election of 1971, except for one each in 1972 and 1973, in which he carefully refrained from any mention of Kissinger's negotiations.

In contrast to the 11 candidates who had contested in 1967, there were few willing to take on Thieu in 1971; one of the previous unsuccessful candidates, Truong Dinh Dzu, was still in jail and the others saw they had no chance against Thieu's repressive machine. Thieu, looking forward to a two-man contest against Minh, was concentrating on thwarting a possible bid by Ky. Minh's challenge was not formidable; the leader of the discredited regime of November 1963 to January 1964 had few ideas for a campaign platform except to offer peace if elected; he traveled little and spent his time organizing privately at his villa at 98 Hong Thap Tu with his staff of old cronies, young Southern oppositionists, and An Quang lay leaders. Minh's peace platform comprised eight "essential points": (1) he did not advocate the establishment of a coalition government with the Communists; (2) he did not advocate neutralization of South Vietnam; (3) he opposed the Communists but did not advocate exterminating them; (4) he favored creating conditions for NLF members to reintegrate society; (5) he argued that the Republic of Vietnam had to be energetic in war and in seeking peace; (6) he maintained that the steps to peace were negotiations between Saigon and Hanoi for a cease-fire, withdrawal of foreign troops, including North Vietnamese, and the signature of a peace agreement between Saigon and Hanoi; (7) he supported measures to preserve a lasting peace, including elimination of discrimination; and (8) he wanted to maintain links with the free world.315

Ky represented a challenge of a different sort. An insider, Ky had begun criticizing Thieu for the failures of leadership revealed by the Lam Son 719 operation and its heavy casualties, for his economic policies, and for the cases of several lower-house deputies, all administration supporters, who were caught smuggling, turning attention anew to high-level corruption, even before announcing his candidacy. Ky traveled widely around the country campaigning unofficially and projecting an image of moderation on the war. He had been encouraged by the defeat in the Senate of Article 10-7 of the election bill, a provision that had required the endorsement of presidential candidates by a total of 40 deputies and senators, or a total of 100 provincial and municipal councilors. The bill stipulated that the endorsements from the latter had to be certified by province chiefs and mayors, a blatant exercise of political favoritism as the councilors were elected by popular vote whereas the province chiefs and mayors owed their positions, which were the main fruits of the patronage system, to no one but Thieu. Despite his known lack of organized support, Ky was gaining popularity with Northern refugees, with the Hoa Hao, and in the army, which was what particularly alarmed Thieu.<sup>316</sup>

With Ky's announcement imminent, Thieu obtained a vote in the Lower House to override the Senate's version of the election bill on June 3, in effect reinstating Article 10-7. The majority on the vote was 101, well above the two-thirds, or 89 votes, required.<sup>317</sup> It reflected the ample financial means at Thieu's disposal. The cash payments Thieu's henchman, pharmacist Nguyên Cao Thang, handed out to the deputies in the palace itself were so widely known that they were reported in the domestic and foreign press.<sup>318</sup> The source of the

payoffs, the unvouchered funds of the CIA station, was not known at the time, however, and some reports, evidently based on American sources, attributed the funds to profits from illegal drug-trafficking and implicated Ky for good measure.<sup>319</sup> An outcry in Congress over these reports resulted in fresh restrictions placed on embassy contacts with Vietnamese politicians, whereas the CIA escaped notice, either from ignorance or from the cozy relations that prevailed between key members of Congress and the CIA, which later came to light. Various groups announced plans to come to Vietnam to observe the elections. An unflappable Thieu promulgated the election law on June 23,<sup>320</sup> and the Supreme Court by majority decision on July 13 ruled Article 10-7 constitutional.<sup>321</sup>

This was the situation, then, in June. Bunker called on Thieu and found him on the defensive over a series of recent incidents involving the police and measures against the press for which Thieu claimed he was being unjustly blamed. Bunker warned him that the incidents had tarnished the image of a fair election, an indication that at that point he was more concerned with image than with subversion of the institutions the embassy had pledged to uphold.<sup>322</sup> Bunker also expostulated on the subject of a fair election with Minh. On a stopover in Saigon, Kissinger held highly visible meetings with Ky and Minh in July; he thought he was demonstrating evenhandedness, but the Saigonese suspected he was masterminding the American direction of events, whatever that was.

Thieu also used his ample funds to buy the endorsements of many provincial and municipal councilmen in an effort to pre-empt their endorsement of Ky and his running mate, Truong Vinh Le. The scheme appeared on the verge of success when the standing committee of the Supreme Court on August 5 made the first posting of eligible candidates in accordance with the election law and disallowed Ky's candidacy. Thieu's candidacy was endorsed by 15 senators, 89 deputies, and 452 provincial and municipal councilors, far more than the legal requirement. Minh's candidacy was endorsed by 16 senators and 28 deputies. Ky's candidacy failed with only 61 properly certified endorsements from councilors and an additional 41 uncertified endorsements, all or most of which he had collected from councilors who had previously endorsed Thieu's candidacy.<sup>323</sup> As with all large-scale corruption schemes, the details soon come out; at a press conference, members of a private association of provincial and municipal councilors denounced pressures and other irregularities practiced by province chiefs in certifying endorsements for Thieu, including the fact that some were signed before the election bill became law and were left undated or incomplete with the blanks to be filled in by the province chiefs. They demanded that a large number of fraudulently obtained endorsements be liberated.<sup>324</sup> Ky gamely protested the Supreme Court's action in eliminating his candidacy and denounced Thieu for "using the highest judicial organ of the Second Republic for unrighteous purposes."325

Minh then weighed in by claiming he possessed documentary evidence of fraudulent practices by Thieu's subordinates, and, according to press reports, he furnished the embassy with copies of this documentation. An embassy officer persuaded Minh to hold off his planned announcement about withdraw-

ing from a rigged election until he had talked with Bunker, who was at the moment in the United States. Deputy Prime Minister Nguyên Luu Vien told Berger he hoped that Minh would not withdraw so there would at least be a contested election. The only other alternative, in Vien's view, would be to postpone the election under a constitutional provision that when the president and vice president were unable to fulfill their responsibilities the president of the Senate could take over the presidency temporarily and arrange for an election within three months. The president of the Senate was Nguyên Van Huyen, a devout Catholic whose son was a priest and whose daughter was a nun; he had a reputation of being incorruptible. It seemed as if Ky would agree to resign to allow this provision to take effect, but the palace was talking tough; Thieu's acolyte Hoang Duc Nha spread the story among foreign correspondents that Thieu was not worried about the prospect of an uncontested election. 327

With Bunker away, the embassy began receiving cables from Washington asking for assessments and suggestions about what to do. As the Americans were so heavily involved in the election already, the feeling expressed in these cables was that only the Americans could succeed in finding a way out. Berger evaluated the chances of the Supreme Court's reversing its disqualification of Ky's candidacy as remote, even if Minh withdrew. He foresaw the distinct possibility of violence in the streets of Saigon. "The police should be able to contain this," he reported, "and the immediate price would be in terms of increased U.S. Congressional, press and public exasperation with the situation here."

If they get through an uncontested election without too serious disturbance, then I visualize internal trouble gradually developing after the election. If Ky decided to wage a sustained campaign attacking Thieu's legal and moral authority to govern, then trouble would develop more quickly. There would be an unrelenting barrage of criticism in the press, in the National Assembly, and from disaffected elements, efforts to mount demonstrations, coup threats, and finally possibly assassination attempts. This is the kind of situation the VC/NVA have always forecast, and would try to exploit. The government would respond with repressive measures. At best there would be an overhanging atmosphere of political instability, and the situation could develop in much more serious directions.<sup>328</sup>

There were many pressures on Minh to withdraw, Berger reported, some of them self-generated. The one Minh cited the most frequently was the evident fraud on Thieu's behalf. Another, unspoken, was that he had doubts about winning even a fair election, and he viewed with great reservation the prospect of being beaten by a man who was his junior in age and military rank. Lastly, Minh assumed that American representations to Thieu to hold a fair election had been unavailing, and he doubted that the Americans would be willing to exert greater pressure. Berger perceived, however, that behind these pressures Minh was playing a double game with the Americans, seeing the American stake in an election that looked to be fair to exert maximum pressure on the Americans to have him maintain his candidacy.

Berger reported that in the embassy's judgment Thieu was embarked on conducting "a one-man sham election," despite the loss of legal and moral authority that such an election certainly implied both domestically and abroad. It would require "extraordinary political measures applied promptly and with wisdom" to sustain the present political system; in their absence, the outlook was for "a drastic decline in political stability." <sup>329</sup>

In Washington, these dispatches were read with alarm. President Nixon and Kissinger saw that the stakes involved the likelihood of a return to the chaos of 1964–1965, with street demonstrations and even coup attempts, a prospect that would play havoc with their efforts at orderly disengagement. Kissinger, reflecting on the prospect, wrote to Nixon that an exit with dignity in the form of an act of government was far preferable than a precipitate American withdrawal in response to pressures or the collapse of Thieu's government or an ignominious rout of Thieu's forces. Either of these results would spell the loss of credibility abroad, deepen the crisis of authority, call into question the heavy sacrifices made, and fuel impulses for recrimination.<sup>330</sup>

Time was pressing, with August 24 as the deadline for withdrawal, and on his return from Washington, Bunker went immediately on August 19 to call on Minh in an effort to persuade him to maintain his candidacy, in spite of Berger's warning that Minh was not willing to play the leader of a loyal opposition. Bunker failed to persuade Minh, for he withdrew the following morning. Money was reported to have changed hands, \$3 million according to Frank Snepp;<sup>331</sup> papers in a case that challenged the legality of the election before the Supreme Court claimed it was 300 million piasters, as did reports in the Saigon press. 332 Minh kept the money.<sup>333</sup> The United States was now in the position of bribing the opposition as well as financing the incumbent. Minh justified his decision to quit in a lengthy statement of past history in which he blamed the Americans for destroying the country by war and Thieu for organizing a "farce" of an election, thereby betraying the people's democratic hopes. After expressing these noble sentiments, Minh concluded his statement with an oblique reference to the consequences his action might have on the national cause by saying "My dear fellow countrymen, to withdraw is not to stop struggling, to withdraw is to choose a more effective means to serve the fatherland."334 The next time Minh chose to serve his country, the Communists were at Saigon's gates.

The next day, the Supreme Court reversed its decision and issued a ruling that Ky's candidacy was valid. The court accepted the petition of the councilors arguing that since President Thieu had the required number of endorsements from members of the Lower House and Senate he need not have secured the 452 additional endorsements he had obtained from provincial councilors (that Thieu had obtained in his pre-emptive move against Ky). To obtain endorsements from both groups was contrary to the intent of the legislation, the court ruled. This freed these endorsements and made them available to Ky. As Ky had filed 39 such endorsements, they served to validate Ky's candidacy, even though the 39 endorsements had not been certified by province chiefs "because of circumstances beyond their control." The court also accepted the withdrawal of

Minh. 335 The decision followed a visit by Bunker to Thieu, and money was again assumed to have greased the wheels of justice to obtain the desired result.

Events were certainly reaching the point where they seemed beyond anyone's control. Two days after the Supreme Court's decision, Ky confirmed that he would not participate in the election, saying he had been advised by all the religious and political leaders he had consulted, including the archbishop of Saigon and the venerables of the An Quang Buddhists, not to participate. Ky instead proposed that he and Thieu both resign and allow the president of the Senate to take charge of the presidency for a three-month period in which a new election could be organized in accordance with Article 56 of the constitution.<sup>336</sup> This solution was clearly the embassy's preference, expressed in yet another public statement.<sup>337</sup> In fact, it is likely that Bunker had suggested it to Ky at a meeting on the afternoon of August 22,<sup>338</sup> for in a letter to Bunker on August 23 Ky stated "I have valued very highly the advices which you so kindly gave me."<sup>339</sup> Thieu did not deign to reply to Ky's public statement directly; he instead leaked to newspapers associated with his administration his decision not to resign, as Berger had predicted.<sup>340</sup>

The election for the Lower House went off without mishap on August 29. On September 1, Acting Prime Minister Vien instructed government offices to prepare for the presidential election without any change, thereby putting an end to the schemes of the Americans.<sup>341</sup> In spite of some scattered protests in the streets of Da Nang, mainly by veterans and student activists, 342 balloting took place on October 3. Against a background of high-level instructions to cadres to urge the formation of a broad-based coalition of anti-government groups to deepen the antagonism between the government and "the people" and to facilitate the merger of the legal opposition's demand for democracy with Hanoi's call for an end to the war, the party placed considerable emphasis on the possibility of a coup occurring in Saigon, either before or shortly after the election, according to a CIA field appraisal dated October 2. The party did not intend to let an opportunity to exploit conflict among the nationalists pass by, as it had in 1963. No one in South Vietnam believed the announcement that 5,975,018 voters out of 6,331,918 had voted for Thieu and his running mate, Tran Van Huong, so suspicious had everyone become of his administration. For Huong, the vote constituted sweet retribution against Ky, whom he blamed for the constant meddling of the generals in 1964 and 1965.<sup>343</sup>

In spite of Thieu's rigging of the election from start to finish, the constitution had served South Vietnam well; citizens of the Second Republic had petitioned their Supreme Court for redress of grievances and had received satisfaction. The embassy had lived up to the tradition of the Foreign Service by doing a superb job of political reporting and analysis all through the crisis. Now, however, Kissinger entered on the scene, sending back-channel cables to Saigon, as he recalls in his memoirs, "to explore the possibility of finding other opposition candidates or fixing a new date for an election for which they could qualify."<sup>344</sup> He saw the election as an inconvenient obstacle that had to be gotten around, rather than as a separation marking the political from the military and, moreover, one that pre-

served what was left of the legality of the American intervention in Vietnam. In the coarse language which he and President Nixon used in private when discussing the problems they created in sovereign states, Kissinger called it a "screwup."345 "I cabled Bunker that Thieu should not doubt the depth of the public reaction in America to his high-handed methods," Kissinger wrote, 346 in a harbinger of things to come; soon Kissinger was using the Nixon administration's domestic opposition to beat Thieu over the head to force him to comply with his dictates. Thieu paid a heavy price for the short-term advantage of winning the one-man election. But it was typical of his lack of political astuteness that he thought he could cling to power in the short term and have the Americans bail him out in his confrontation with the Communists.

## THE OVERTHROW OF CONSTITUTIONALITY—III

Kissinger had involved the administration and honest men such as Bunker and Berger in a sordid scheme whose transparency, thanks to the Saigon press, had mitigated its worst effects. It is difficult to gauge what the consequences might have been had the American bribery not been exposed at the time. As it was, disaster had been avoided only by the dogged adherence of the South Vietnamese to constitutional procedure, which produced notably clear and reasonable decisions even in the midst of corruption. Now Kissinger was about to undermine Thieu further by destroying the constitution itself in his effort to use Thieu's government as a totally subservient entity to obtain the DRV's acquiescence to an agreement liberating the United States from Vietnam.

At his private meeting with Thuy in Paris on August 16, four days before Minh announced the withdrawal of his candidacy, Kissinger proudly showed him a photograph Minh had given him showing Minh, Kissinger, and Bunker that was taken during their talk.<sup>347</sup> But from remarks in his memoirs, it is extremely doubtful that Kissinger understood the DRV's strategy at all; in spite of its propaganda about Thieu, the DRV was not counting on Minh to win the election but wanted Thieu to win an election that was patently fraudulent. Thuy emphasized the point in his usually veiled way, barely concealing the underlying strategy:

> Thieu has nearly one million troops, a huge police force, the support of nearly 200,000 U.S. troops and U.S. aid, the guidance of the U.S. embassy in both military and political affairs, and the CIA network. In such conditions, your statement that you have no other means to influence the situation in South Vietnam than keeping the neutrality is unbelievable to any well-informed person. The neutrality of the United States in the elections is actually a support to Thieu.348

Thuy's reference to "the CIA network" suggests that the DRV's agents in Thieu's entourage had already reported the extent of the CIA station's funding of Thieu's election campaign, which is not surprising.

The most accurate and authoritative statement in English we possess of the DRV's stand on the question of the linkage between the military and political issues is a memorandum drawn up by George McT. Kahin, a professor of government at Cornell University, on August 20, 1971, following lengthy talks in Hanoi with Pham Van Dong and Ha Van Lau. The talks took place on the basis of a seven-point proposal that had been advanced in Paris by the PRG delegation on July 1, which in its first point called for the withdrawal of American troops within 1971 and the release of POWs in that same year; in its second point it called for the cessation of support to Thieu, the cessation of maneuvers including rigged elections aimed at maintaining Thieu, and the setting up of a broad-based three-part coalition government.

Kahin had gone to Hanoi to secure a clearer idea of the other side's negotiating position. Dong assigned Lau to spend as much time with him as Kahin deemed necessary, and the two men held two meetings, one lasting four hours. Kahin also had a long talk with Nguyên Phu Suoi, the deputy chief of the PRG special representation in Hanoi. Kahin was accompanied by his wife, who took verbatim notes in shorthand during the interviews and typed them up each evening. Lau then went over the notes and corrected them, giving them back the following morning, so there can be no doubt as to their accuracy. Because Kahin later claimed that his memorandum was selectively leaked to the press by the State Department and was garbled and distorted, <sup>349</sup> it is important to reproduce the relevant portions of his memorandum in their entirety.

1. Point One: Introductory Paragraph Does Not Incorporate Pre-requisite Conditions

The first paragraph of Point One, the Communists emphasize, describes a matter of principle. More specifically, they say, the stipulation that the U.S. "stop the policy of Vietnamization of the war" is not to be regarded as a "pre-requisite condition" to agreement on Parts A and B and for making them operative. Parts A and B of Point One are to be regarded as the concrete explanation of the principle—the specifics which must be agreed upon to make the principle operative.

4. Relation of Point One to Point Two—An Unavoidable Interdependency It was repeatedly stressed that Point One and Point Two are "basic points" and "of key importance in the whole Seven Points," and that "if Points One and Two are settled, we think that the other points can be easily solved."

Although the Communists are prepared to separate Point One from Point Two (as well as from the subsequent five points) as far as the level of discussion is concerned, this does not mean that implementation of Point One can be undertaken prior to and separable from agreement on Point Two. Thus, with respect to Point One they are prepared to discuss the modalities for carrying out the provisions of paragraphs A and B and for a bilateral cease fire, and to reach agreement concerning these matters prior to an agreement on Point Two. However, before the agreements reached under Point One can be actually implemented, agreement must have been reached on Point Two (though not on the remaining five points).

However, I gained the impression that the essential part of Point Two that must be agreed upon and carried out in order to make agreements

reached on Point One operative is only the first paragraph—that providing for the removal of Nguyên Van Thieu's leadership and its replacement by "a new administration" (not a new government) in Saigon. This appears to be the minimum bedrock requirement with respect to Point Two without which one cannot expect agreements reached under Point One to become operative. The Communists seem to believe that any Saigon administration replacing Thieu's would be disposed to enter into talks with them for the purpose of working out an armistice and a political settlement in the South; and they are convinced that the very fact of the U.S. permitting Thieu to be replaced, whether through elections or otherwise, would be tangible proof that U.S. policy was changing and encouraging negotiations and a political settlement.

5. Difficulty of Reaching Agreements on Provision B of Point One While Thieu is Still in Power

Here the release of *all* ("totality of") captured soldiers of "all parties" and of all "civilians captured in the war" is called for. The problem, of course, is that so long as Thieu is in power it would seem impossible for Provision B of Point One to be carried out fully, for that means releasing many thousands of civilians held in Thieu's jails as well as the captured NLF and North Vietnamese soldiers who are in Saigon's custody.

... It does not seem realistic to assume that resolution of Point One is susceptible simply to bilateral discussion and agreement between the U.S. and the Communists. Indeed, this problem underlines the requirement for solving Point Two along with Point One, for it would seem impossible to arrange for the release of any "totality" of soldiers and civilians of "all parties" unless the first requirement under Point Two has been met—namely the replacement of Thieu as head of the Saigon administration. 350

In his covering letter to Fulbright, Kahin wrote "I will rely on you to utilize the above information and that provided in the attached memorandum in whatever way you think is in the national interest" but added that he would not like any public mention made of his name in connection with the information at least until after October, as he was hoping to make a visit to South Vietnam in mid-October to assess the consequences of the election. Whereas in the early 1960s American professors of political science had written articles calling for President Diem's removal, now they preferred to work behind the scenes for the removal of President Thieu. The State Department interpreted Kahin's memorandum to mean that "there could be no release of all U.S. prisoners until Thieu has been replaced" and took this as an indication that there was "less flexibility on Hanoi's part concerning withdrawal/POW release than they have heretofore indicated." Thus the lie was given to Senator McGovern's statement at a press conference in Paris after a meeting between the senator and his party and Thuy for four hours and Dinh Ba Thi of the PRG for one and a half hours that "there is no doubt in my mind whatsoever that our prisoners will be released if we withdraw our forces."351 The presentation by part-time diplomats such as McGovern of a conditional negotiating position as an unconditional

one was little understood at the time and led to much public confusion about "progress" in Paris.

In the DRV's negotiating position on August 16, 1971, when Kissinger again met Thuy alone, the release of POWs was still as firmly tied in as ever to agreement on a total package, including a political settlement, although Thuy announced the DRV's concession in principle to the presentation of POW lists on the day an agreement was signed instead of timing this exchange of lists with other aspects of the implementation of an agreement and dropped the DRV's previous reservations about release of American POWs throughout Indochina.<sup>352</sup> At the plenary session on September 16, Thuy made the linkage between release of the POWs and Thieu's removal explicit.

The growing public awareness in the United States about the conditions of captivity and the enemy's political use of the American prisoners in its hands obliged President Nixon and the Congress to give a high priority to obtaining their release. No aspect better illustrated the "dirty" nature of the war. The first reports about the treatment of American prisoners came out with the release of prisoners held by the Pathet Lao in August 1962. A MAAG adviser, Special Forces Captain Walter Moon, was held prisoner at the former agricultural training school at Lat Huang near the Plain of Jars following his capture in April 1961. He and other Americans were subjected to daily abuse by their guards, which included terrorizing them when they went to the latrine or a nearby stream to wash by hiding in bushes and firing over their heads or throwing rocks at them. The prisoners were kept tied up in ropes, arms tied at the sides, upper arms tightly bound by a rope around their necks knotted at the shoulder blades. Sometimes they were held in wooden stocks for varying periods of time. Moon, still tied up, attempted an escape, although there was no tree cover for miles around. He was seriously wounded but received only summary medical care from his guards. On July 22, he attempted to wrest a gun from a guard and was hit in the back of the head with a machete and knocked to the floor. The guards shot him in the back several times. They dragged him outside, leaving a trail of blood on the ground, and beat his head with rifle butts. They wrapped him in a blanket and took him away in a truck for burial. These were obviously captors who knew nothing of the Geneva Conventions on treatment of prisoners of war. They fed their prisoners rice with soap in it and stole their Red Cross parcels.<sup>353</sup>

The prisoners in enemy hands grew rapidly with the bombing of the North, until several hundred men, mainly Air Force and Navy fliers, including the son of the American commander in the Pacific, were being held in the old French prison in Hanoi called the Maison Centrale. Others were being held elsewhere in the North, in the South, in Laos, and in Cambodia. These men, such as Navy Lieutenant (j.g.) Everett Alvarez, Jr., who had been captured on August 5, 1964, were held for years and considered that they had only their name and their honor. They endured East German propaganda filming and demands they sign confessions of their crimes, and, in their own personal war of endurance defeated the DRV with their tap code and their blinked messages. However, as late as the autumn of 1969, there was no discussion of the POWs in the Symington hearings on Laos.

A study of the documentary record shows that in the plenary sessions at the Avenue Kléber, Lodge raised the issue of POW release from the beginning of 1969. The DRV and PRG rebutted by demanding the release of all military and civilian prisoners in the custody of the Saigon government and held the United States responsible for their release while pointing out that prisoners on both sides could be freed only upon the resolution of "other questions" and the conclusion of an overall agreement. The issue was raised for the first time in the private talks on March 16, 1970.

The administration began to give publicity to its demand for release of the POWs, which was easily equated with patriotism and drew wide support from the American public. However, this publicity eventually backfired, for the DRV was able to exploit the American desire to get the POWs back by linking the release to other issues in the negotiations. The DRV leaders remembered the gratitude of the Americans when they rescued and returned American fliers downed in World War II. In the secrecy shrouding the private negotiations, the Nixon administration had difficulty explaining to the American public why it could not conclude an agreement freeing the POWs and settling other military issues in isolation from the political issue. In a press conference on September 16, 1971, Nixon called the release of the POWs "our primary interest" in ending the American involvement.<sup>355</sup> The POWs were, in fact, hostages in the true sense of that word.

In the cases of Special Forces Captain Humberto Roque Versace and Special Forces Sergeant Kenneth M. Roraback, this hostage status in violation of all applicable international law was directly evident. The two men had become known to their captors as "hard-core" cases for their resistance, Versace by his knowledge of Vietnamese to debate his captors about Marxist-Leninist doctrine, and they were executed on September 7, 1965, in reprisal for the execution of three men convicted by a court in Danang of terrorist activities. The Viet Cong hoped that this demonstration of heartlessness would lead the embassy to dissuade the government from further carrying out sentences in due process of the law. The strategy worked, and the embassy was instructed to coordinate closely with the government in cases involving the sentencing of Viet Cong terrorists to avoid creating situations which risked retaliatory slaying of American POWs. Viet Cong threats of retaliatory killings would result in a request from the embassy that the sentence not be carried out.<sup>356</sup>

In January 1968, true to the rumors that had circulated in Saigon for weeks, the Americans flew Nguyên Thi Chon, the wife of Tran Bach Dang, to Cu Chi, an area under control of American troops, and freed her in exchange for the release by the Viet Cong of Marine Corporal José Agosto-Santos and Army Private Luis Ortiz-Rivera in Quang Tin Province. American military intelligence was eager to question the two men about a fellow prisoner suspected of collaborating with the enemy, Marine Private Robert R. Garwood. The embassy was ordered, if asked, to say nothing about reciprocity.<sup>357</sup>

The United States, in fact, was in a poor legal position to demand of the DRV reciprocal compliance with the Geneva Conventions. In 1968, the Ameri-

can military had recruited POWs from holding areas at division level in South Vietnam, a violation of Article 12 of the Geneva Convention, which stipulates that "prisoners of war are in the hands of the enemy Power, but not of the individuals or military units who have captured them," and returned them to North Vietnam in the expectation they would be captured and interrogated, a violation of Article 23, which stipulates that "no prisoner of war may at any time be sent to, or detained in areas where he may be exposed to the fire of the combat zone." The DRV did not train its soldiers in the fine points of the Geneva Convention; it expected them to avoid capture by the enemy.

Nixon wrote that he told Chou En-lai "If I were sitting across the table from whoever is the leader of North Vietnam and we could negotiate a ceasefire and the return of our prisoners, then all Americans would be withdrawn from Vietnam six months from that day."359 As late as September 18, 1971, in spite of the evidence brought back from Hanoi by Professor Kahin, Kissinger seems still to have believed that there existed "a chance for a straight prisoners-withdrawal deal."360 He seems to have finally been disabused of this notion by his talk with Le Duc Tho, with whom he had an exchange on May 2, 1972, that he reports in his memoirs.<sup>361</sup> Kissinger told President Thieu barely three months later, on August 18, 1972, that the DRV thought it could use the POWs "to overthrow you" but the United States would use military force to foil such a plan.<sup>362</sup> By September 1972, the DRV had linked the release of American POWs to no fewer than three conditions—military (American troop withdrawal), political (release of prisoners held by the Saigon government), and financial (payment of war reparations by the United States to the DRV). "We are expected to pay triple ransom," Ambassador William Porter commented.<sup>363</sup> It was not until October 19, 1972, after it had achieved its objectives of "principle," that the DRV agreed to wording in the draft agreement that seemed to unlink the release of American POWs from all political and financial conditions.<sup>364</sup>

On the use of POWs as hostages, Kissinger was not telling President Thieu anything he did not already know. Thieu had warned Bunker in their meeting on September 20 of the Communists' use of POWs "as a bargaining gambit in a political settlement," Bunker reported. Thieu said "We should insist that the prisoner of war issue be discussed on the basis of reciprocity and on humanitarian grounds."

President Johnson had not carried on an extensive correspondence with President Thieu. President Nixon, however, wrote him a letter on the last day of 1971 that was to be the beginning of a long correspondence that must rank as unique in the relations between the heads of state of two friendly countries. It was carried on entirely in English.

On January 10, 1972, Bunker informed President Thieu that President Nixon would soon deliver another major speech on the negotiations in which he would make public the proposal Haig had discussed with him on September 23. This meant, of course, that Bunker was obliged to show Thieu the text of the comprehensive proposal that Walters had secretly handed to Vo Van Sung on October 11. Thieu was stunned. Haig had assured him "it will not be put

forth without your full knowledge."<sup>365</sup> He asked Bunker what his response should be if he were asked how the proposal had been presented to the DRV, since of course it had not been tabled at the plenary sessions at Avenue Kléber. "I think we will need to work out some form which will clear him from criticism that this was done without his prior knowledge," Bunker reported. <sup>366</sup> For Thieu, this was a breach of trust that alerted him to Kissinger's duplicity. For the Americans, the problem of coordinating with Saigon was an enormous one.

The political purpose behind Nixon's speech at this time, Bunker said, was to seize the initiative and defuse any possible congressional and public pressures which might develop when Congress reconvened in a few days' time. Nixon planned in his speech to make public the entire record of the private meetings with the DRV. The speech would serve to discredit "those critics who claim you are the remaining obstacle to peace."367 Thieu's repeated complaints about the submission of the proposal without his knowledge compelled Kissinger, who dismissed them as "simply an oversight," to notify Bunker that President Nixon had postponed his speech by a week—to January 25. But he was determined to push ahead. He held that a coordinated public line with Thieu was essential. In his warped view of American-South Vietnamese relations, Kissinger took credit for not having accepted Le Duc Tho's suggestion of the previous summer. "Thieu must understand that we could have reached agreement over the summer by agreeing to overthrow him," he told Bunker. 368 After ironing out further problems, such as that of getting a Vietnamese translation of the proposal, which had not yet been prepared by Kissinger, to Ambassador Lam (who, of course, was completely in the dark about what was afoot) for presentation at the Avenue Kléber, Thieu bravely made his own speech revealing the proposal one half hour after Nixon at 10 A.M. Saigon time on January 26.

When the South Vietnamese learned the details of the October 11 proposal, however, they asked themselves who this Harvard professor was who arrogated to himself the right to amend their constitution by simply negotiating with the self-appointed representatives of the enemy who had invaded their state without so much as passage of an amendment by their popularly elected representatives. The new Catholic combination of the Senate "Lily" group, the Greater Solidarity Force, and the Nhan Xa known as the People's Forward Together Movement issued a statement criticizing the proposal as being "beyond the limits of the Republic of Vietnam constitution." The statement said that the proposal should properly be considered just "a proposition among several others insofar as it is not yet approved by the Republic of Vietnam National Assembly." Senator Vu Van Mau, leader of the opposition People's Bloc, said he feared the constitution could not survive if Thieu's proposals were implemented. He characterized the offer of a new election with NLF participation as going much further than simply the amendment of a few articles of the constitution and added that people had concluded that "everything can be undone overnight" so far as the constitution was concerned. The impression that Thieu was once again bowing to American pressure was heightened by news of a statement by Secretary Rogers stressing both flexibility with regard to the composition of a "caretaker government" (constitutionally, such a government would be headed by the president of the Senate) and the time interval between Thieu's resignation and a new election.<sup>369</sup>

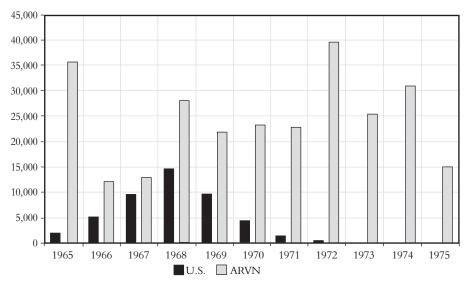
The proposal was seen as highly offensive on moral grounds as well. The Americans, who had financed a rigged election, were proposing the holding of a new election that would be "free and democratic," whereas it should rightfully have been the South Vietnamese who insisted on the holding of such a new election to make up for the one the Americans had tarnished with their money (by now the court case challenging the constitutionality of the 1971 presidential election and documentation of the bribe to Minh had become public knowledge). There were, in short, no end of ironies in the proposal of October 11. Kissinger wrote that the proposal went "to the limit of what was compatible with our obligations, our sacrifices, and our honor." Brave words, but under the circumstances increasingly empty of content.

The DRV, on the contrary, judged this latest proposal seriously deficient and concluded that it showed that the Americans still maintained their "original position of being unwilling to settle the whole problem and desiring to settle the military issues only and to take back the prisoners."<sup>371</sup> The offer of participation in a presidential election was regarded as particularly unacceptable, as practically demanding that the party center engage in Western-style politics, which of course was intolerable. The proposal did not even contain a guarantee that the "independent body" organizing the election would exclude "non-patriotic" voters, that is, voters who had supported the "puppet Saigon administration" during the war. There would be no more private meetings until May 2, 1972.

The Nguyên Hue Offensive of the spring of 1972 was, in effect, the DRV's answer to Kissinger's proposal for a settlement. It was intended to break the back of the Saigon administration once and for all and to demonstrate to the Americans what a futile policy it was to "cling to this administration," as DRV propaganda put it. It had the specific objective, as none other than Le Duan makes clear in a series of letters to COSVN that were later published, to force President Nixon to accept the DRV's version of a political solution to the problem of South Vietnam.<sup>372</sup>

Over 30,000 men from elements of the 304th and 308th Divisions, along with three separate infantry regiments of the B5 Front, two tank regiments, and five artillery regiments armed with 130-mm long-range artillery and T-54 tanks that were covered by SA-2 surface-to-air missiles in a textbook Soviet offensive, struck at noon on March 30 in a three-pronged assault across the DMZ (making a mockery of the October 1968 understandings and of Tho's protestations to Kissinger that the DRV's troops in the South consisted only of returnees and volunteers) into Quang Tri Province, eastward along Route 9 from Laos, and through the A Shau Valley further south. The next day other forces struck in the Central Highlands and threatened Kontum and the lowland province of Binh Dinh. On April 5, a division crossed the Cambodian border in the area east of Mimot and seized Loc Ninh in Binh Long Province, while two others crossed to the south and cut off the provincial capital of An Loc.

GRAPH 3
U.S. and ARVN Combat Deaths



Note: Figures cumulative to 1965

Source: Michael Clodfelter, Vietnam in Military Statistics; A History of the Indochina Wars, 1972–1991

(Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland and Company, 1995), passim.

The ARVN in Quang Tri at first fell back with heavy casualties, which were reported by their American advisers. The line of fixed positions at the DMZ was defended by the 3rd Division, one of the weakest in the ARVN; it was as if President Thieu wanted a symbol of the trust he placed in what the Americans told him about the commitments received from the enemy in Paris. On April 2, after 72 hours of intense artillery bombardment, the commanding officer of the 56th Regiment, Lieutenant Colonel Pham Van Dinh, surrendered his position at Tam Lan fire base, his 2,000 men, and all their guns to the attacking forces.<sup>373</sup> This was the "going over to the liberation forces" that Jane Fonda praised on Radio Hanoi three months later. On May 1, after commitment to battle of additional troops from the 320th and 325th Divisions, the DRV's troops entered Quang Tri city, from which the remnants of the 3rd Division, led by their officers, fled in disorder. The loss of Quang Tri exposed Thieu to public criticism in a more serious way than Lam Son 719 had done, since in addition to criticism of his military leadership it crystallized public complaints for the first time that Thieu was profiting from the appointment of corrupt and incompetent generals and was becoming isolated and unapproachable.<sup>374</sup>

Under a new corps commander, Lieutenant General Ngô Quang Truong, the ARVN stopped the enemy at the My Chanh River, the southern boundary of Quang Tri Province. The first thing General Truong did when he reached

Hue was to go on radio and television and tell the people the city would not be allowed to fall; he also called on every soldier to report back to his unit; those who failed to do so would be shot. It was a little bit like General de Lattre taking over after the Cao Bang disaster of October 1950, and the effect on morale was felt instantaneously.

Only 100 of the defenders at Loc Ninh escaped the Communist siege there; the others, together with their American advisers, were killed or captured. One adviser, Captain Mark Smith, virtually assumed command of the ARVN soldiers when the commanding officer of the 9th Regiment of the 5th Division, Colonel Nguyên Cong Vinh, surrendered. Loc Ninh was not retaken, but An Loc, the provincial capital, held despite a fierce siege. To Kontum, under siege for two months by the equivalent of three enemy divisions, also held.

American air and sea power entered the battles. President Nixon ordered a resumption of the bombing of North Vietnam. He also wrote again to Thieu, speaking of ultimately achieving "our mutual goal" and promising not to allow Hanoi's aggression to go unpunished.<sup>376</sup> The American diplomatic response to the DRV's offensive included a sharp exchange of notes. On April 6, Kissinger forwarded a message to Paris accusing the DRV of a flagrant violation of the 1954 Geneva Agreements and the understanding of 1968; he also postponed a plenary session at Kléber. The DRV delegation responded on April 15 with three points: (1) the United States had started a war of aggression against Vietnam in violation of the 1954 Geneva Agreements; (2) the United States had agreed to completely and unconditionally stop the bombardments against North Vietnam; and (3) both sides had agreed that the private meetings would take place in parallel with the plenary sessions.<sup>377</sup> The party center, knowing that it held the linchpin in the POWs, was confident that the Paris talks, both public and private, would be resumed.

The tension remained high when Kissinger and Le Duc Tho met on May 2, 1972. The previous day, Kissinger had had a long session with President Nixon in which both men read a gloomy assessment of the battlefield situation from General Abrams. Kissinger had made the point that the pattern seemed to be that the South Vietnamese could hold for about a month and then would fold up. Nixon said if the whole thing collapsed the only thing they could do would be to go to a blockade and demand the POWs back, and Kissinger agreed. Nixon and Kissinger agreed that regardless of what happened, they would be finished with the war by August. As recorded in his diary by H. R. Haldeman, "Either we will have broken them or they will have broken us, and the fighting will be over."378 Tho had arrived in Paris with a warlike airport statement praising the victories on the battlefield. A DRV account of the meeting noted that Kissinger no longer gave the appearance of a university professor making long speeches and continually joking, but of a man speaking sparingly, seemingly embarrassed and thoughtful. Gone, too, were Kissinger's usual tributes to the heroism of the Vietnamese people, since to his listeners there could only be one side that was heroic, and the reports from Quang Tri were dramatic: the onslaught of forces included 200 tanks and the shelling of refugee columns fleeing southward along Route 1, away from the "liberation army." Tho angered Kissinger by quoting from the Pentagon Papers and citing Senator Fulbright as saying the offensive was a natural response to the American policy of undermining the 1954 Geneva Agreements, in effect supporting the charges made in the DRV's note of April 15.<sup>379</sup>

The South Vietnamese and Americans had to contend once again with the DRV's use of Paris for propaganda purposes. The Quai d'Orsay had already passed to Tho Kissinger's complaint about his private meetings with American citizens.<sup>380</sup> The South Vietnamese had suggested moving the talks from Paris altogether.<sup>381</sup> Now Ambassador Arthur Watson complained to French Foreign Minister Maurice Schumann about his allowing the DRV representatives to make personal attacks on Nixon for the renewed bombing following their meetings with him. Schumann said he regretted the abusive character of the Communist statements but repeated that all delegations to the talks were free to make press statements and that it was his policy to receive chiefs of delegation whenever they asked for an appointment. Such appointments had been requested only by the Communists. Watson pointed out that Ambassador William Porter, who had taken over the American delegation, was accredited to the talks and not to France and was scrupulously limiting his role to conducting negotiations. As a guest of France, he had not attempted to exploit contacts with the French or others for propaganda purposes and would not do so in any case.<sup>382</sup>

### ACTIVITIES OF ANTI-WAR AMERICANS IN HANOI

Up to 300 Americans visited Hanoi during the war. Some were journalists, some were scholars, and others were activists who saw their visit as helping to end the war, on whatever terms were available. Jane Fonda was one of the latter. She was the propaganda ministry's dream come true, a representative of the enemy who was well known for her career as an actress, who could talk knowledgeably on a variety of subjects, and who was willing to make broadcasts over Radio Hanoi. Her opposition to American policy was so all-encompassing that she was at ease addressing practically anyone who would listen. Fonda was invited to Hanoi by the usual front group in charge of friendly relations abroad, and she stayed in Hanoi from July 8 to July 22, 1972. "I come to Vietnam as a comrade," she announced on her arrival. In the days to come, Radio Hanoi broadcast her statements on the war to its domestic audience, to South Vietnamese soldiers and students, to American servicemen in the South, to American pilots on aircraft carriers offshore, and to Europe, Africa, and the Middle East.

A group of particular interest to the propaganda ministry were the American POWs. The DRV in 1957 had signed the Geneva Convention of 1949 regarding the humane treatment of prisoners of war but had claimed a specific exemption in cases where such prisoners were guilty of war crimes. 384 Accordingly, it became vital to the DRV to establish the fact for audiences abroad that the captured Americans had committed war crimes and thus were not entitled to the benefits of humane treatment, such as proper housing and medical care, visits by representatives of the International Red Cross, and the right to send and receive mail.

On the night of July 6, 1966, the POWs were paraded through the streets of Hanoi, where they were subjected to abuse. Afterward, a friendly prison guard confided that the episode had been ordered by the party center and that the army was not to blame. The impression created abroad by such displays proved unfavorable to the DRV, but it was because of the firm advice of Sainteny, who was in Hanoi at the time, that the DRV leaders put an end to their barbarous practice of making a public spectacle of the POWs. It was not repeated. The POWs continued to be subjected to torture and other abuses in the privacy of their prison confines.

Fonda's visit followed intensive air raids on North Vietnam ordered by President Nixon in the wake of the DRV's Nguyên Hue offensive. She was shown sites of American bombing in Hanoi and in Hai Hung, Ha Tay, and Nam Ha Provinces; afterward she broadcast her descriptions of the death and destruction she saw. "American actress Jane Fonda . . . visited the bombed dikes at Nam Sach Wednesday morning, witnessing the U.S. crimes in destroying North Vietnam's dikes," Radio Hanoi reported. 385 In an English-language broadcast, Fonda said: "I implore you, I beg you, to consider what you are doing. In the areas where I went yesterday it was easy to see that there were no military targets, there is no important highway, there is no communication network, there is no heavy industry. These are peasants. They grow rice and they rear pigs." <sup>386</sup> In another Englishlanguage broadcast, Fonda said: "I visited a hospital today, the Bach Mai Hospital. I saw a huge bomb crater in the center of the hospital. It was obviously dropped there on purpose. . . . This was no accident. It destroyed wards filled with patients. . . . It is a terrible thing to see what has been done." Two days later she visited Nam Dinh, also to see bombing damage. She recorded witnessing "the systematic destruction of civilian targets—schools, hospitals, pagodas, the factories, houses, and the dike system."388 In 1971, the party center brought Ha Van Lau back from Paris to head a war crimes commission that became responsible for collecting evidence of war crimes to be forwarded to international tribunals, the most famous of which was the Bertrand Russell tribunal. The party center left no resource unexploited, not even the pain and suffering inflicted on the ordinary people of North Vietnam by the war.

In an English-language broadcast, Fonda addressed American POWs. "It is very important for us to understand that the solution to your problem has existed for one year. If Richard Nixon at the Paris peace talks last July had addressed himself to the seven-point peace proposal, which is recognized by people all over the world as being the most just and righteous proposal ever put forward by one side during a period of war, all of you would have been home within three months, and we think this is a crime."<sup>389</sup>

Radio Hanoi broadcast a letter from Fonda to high school and college students in South Vietnam, first in Vietnamese and then in English. "As an American woman, I would like to tell you that the forces you are fighting against go far beyond the bombs and the technology. In our country, people are very unhappy. People have no reason for living. They are very alienated from their work, from each other and from history and culture. . . . We have followed

closely the encroachment of the American cancer in the southern part of your country, especially around Saigon." Fonda concluded her letter by singing a song in Vietnamese. 390 Fonda also addressed ARVN troops in a recorded broadcast:

> We well understand the kind of situation that you are put in because American soldiers are in the same kind of situation, and we feel that—that you have much in common. You are being sent to fight a war that is not in your interests but is the interest of the small handful of people who have gotten rich and hope to get richer off this war and off the turning of your country into a neocolony of the United States.

> We read with interest about the growing numbers of you who are understanding the truth and joining with your fellow countrymen to fight for freedom and independence and democracy. We note with interest, for example, that as in the case of the 56th Regiment of the 3rd Division of the Saigon army, ARVN soldiers are taken into the ranks of the National Liberation Front, including officers who may retain their rank.

> We think that this is an example of the fact that the democratic, peace-loving, patriotic Vietnamese people want to embrace all Vietnamese people in forgiveness, open their arms to all people who are willing to fight against the foreign invader.391

## "THE FINEST COMPROMISE AVAILABLE"

On July 19, 1972, there began the final phase of the negotiations that led to the agreement that was signed nine months later. The private meeting at the usual address in Paris coincided with the launching of the ARVN counterattack to recover Quang Tri. Both sides were more cheerful than at their previous meeting. Reflecting the new instructions he had received from Hanoi, Le Duc Tho told Kissinger: "It is time you and we began discussions of substantial problems." Le Duc Tho's demeanor reflected the fact that he and Thuy were succeeding in bringing Kissinger step by step to recognize the legality and legitimacy of the DRV, something the DRV had been striving for since 1945. Thuy waxed eloquent at this meeting about the fine cooperation between the Viet Minh and the Americans of the Deer Team in opposing the Japanese and rescuing downed American fliers (an allusion possibly intended to remind his interlocutor of the POWs in the DRV's prisons) and the fact that the DRV's declaration of independence began with a quotation from the American Declaration of Independence.

Reflecting the sense in Congress that the United States should disengage without posing any conditions insofar as the Indochinese countries were concerned,<sup>392</sup> Kissinger also gave a lengthy speech, in which he told Tho that the United States was not attached to any particular personality or any particular political orientation in South Vietnam. "We are willing to let events in South Vietnam take their natural evolution without our presence or our predominant influence," he was quoted by the DRV note-takers as saying. "Evolution" became a sort of code word Kissinger employed in the sense of the evolutionary determinism of dialectical materialism in Marxist-Leninist dogma, and its significance in the South Vietnamese context was all too obvious.

Tho told Kissinger firmly that he would get nowhere by his repeated attempts to enmesh his dealings with Brezhnev and Chou in the Vietnam negotiations—that Vietnam would be settled at Paris, not at Moscow or Peking. He also said "Now the roadblock between us is the political issue and the conduct of negotiations." The DRV wanted to discuss this with Kissinger and to let the Vietnamese parties discuss and agree on the concrete details. When Kissinger asked who the Vietnamese parties were, Tho answered "We shall discuss this question next time." Kissinger replied: "If one of the Vietnamese parties is the existing Saigon administration, our task will be greatly facilitated." He was now using the Communists' term "Saigon administration," as Harriman had begun using the term "the Savannakhet group" to refer to the American-recognized government of Prince Boun Oum in the Laos negotiations. 393 For the DRV negotiators, the "Saigon administration" was the party in control of the Southern zone as defined by the 1954 partition. The next private meeting was scheduled for August 1. Tho reported to the party center that the Americans still wanted the DRV to talk to the Saigon administration and to stick to South Vietnam but that they had begun to negotiate a solution.<sup>394</sup>

Once again, it was as if the Athenians had been thrown into the breach and found wanting. In the meeting on July 19 lasting six and a half hours, the longest so far, Kissinger's philosophical opening statement dwelled on the factors that argued for pushing ahead the negotiations.<sup>395</sup> The spirit of the American approach was to seek a rapid and just settlement. If the Athenians were beyond redemption, that would be judged by history. The immediate need was to arrive at a settlement that allowed the United States to extricate itself from a seemingly endless war with its periodic escalations and even begin a new relationship with Vietnam; when the fighting finally ended, the comparison of Athenians and Spartans would lose its meaning.

In these circumstances, Kissinger was moved to enunciate a set of guidelines for the benefit of his interlocutors. These were repeated in the preamble to the peace proposal presented by Le Duc Tho and Xuan Thuy at the meeting on August 1. The most important of these guidelines by far was Kissinger's statement that the United States was not tied to any particular politician or any particular political orientation in South Vietnam. The aforesaid basic principles were consonant with the views expressed on these subjects by the DRV side on July 19. The DRV side wanted to believe that "the U.S. side will respect and fully implement these basic principles." For the party center, the situation in the negotiations had now reached the stage where the possibility was materializing of forcing the Americans to abandon the nationalist parties while at the same time embracing the "Saigon administration" in a colonialist bear hug, depriving it of any freedom of action.

The DRV negotiators, in concert with the party center, now adopted a strategy in the private meetings that was designed to focus on a discussion of major principles based on their maximum requirement in order to force a comprehensive settlement, once again, prior to the American presidential election.<sup>397</sup> They proposed to divide the issues according to the parties concerned. Their

division did not remotely resemble the one proposed in 1968 by the State Department.<sup>398</sup> The DRV and the United States would be competent to discuss the cessation of all military activities, including a cease-fire with the American troops only, the withdrawal of American troops, and the release of all military and civilian detainees. Additionally, they would discuss the question of American responsibility for respecting the fundamental rights of the Vietnamese people as provided for in the 1954 Geneva Agreement, for ending aid to the Saigon administration, and for paying war reparations. The Vietnamese parties would discuss among themselves the question of government, a cease-fire, and the reunification of Vietnam.<sup>399</sup> Like Kissinger's expressed wish that the DRV talk to the Saigon administration, the DRV's proposal was strictly pro forma; it reserved to the DRV and the Americans the negotiation of all issues of principle, after which the discussion among the Vietnamese parties would consist of filling the DRV's desiderata.

At the August 1 meeting, where fruit, cookies, and thick spring rolls appeared, 400 Kissinger, speaking first, agreed to solve military and political issues at the same time. He said that a presidential election in the South might be organized by an independent body in which there would be representatives of all political forces and organizations. There would be international supervision of the election. Thieu was willing to resign two months before the election, a point Haig had discussed with him in Saigon on July 3. "You demanded a new constitution for South Vietnam," he said. "We agree that after the new election the political forces in South Vietnam will meet for the review and amendment of the constitution within one year."

Le Duc Tho acknowledged Kissinger's agreement to settle both political and military issues at the same time. In accordance with the party center's new negotiating strategy, he proposed that talks take place between the PRG and the Saigon administration when the DRV and the United States reached agreement on the principles. He presented a 10-point plan and conceded that Thieu did not have to resign immediately; he could resign after the signing of a comprehensive settlement. On the conduct of the negotiations, Tho proposed four forums: (1) a forum between the DRV and the United States to discuss and settle the military issues and the principles and main contents of the political issues; (2) a forum between the PRG and the Saigon administration starting operation after the first forum had reached agreement to discuss and implement the agreements reached in the first forum and to discuss and settle specific military and political issues in the South; (3) a trilateral forum among the DRV, PRG, and the Saigon administration to settle concrete issues relating to the two zones; and (4) a four-party forum for the settlement of issues relating to the four parties. Kissinger agreed to the four forums, but divided the negotiations into two stages: (1) the United States and DRV would agree on military issues regarding the whole of Indochina and on the political principles in South Vietnam, sign a general agreement, and observe a cease-fire; (2) the South Vietnamese parties would settle political issues on the basis agreed upon in the first stage. The next private meeting was fixed for August 14.401

While in Quang Tri fierce fighting raged, Kissinger handed three documents to the DRV delegates on August 14, when wine and rice cakes appeared 402—a policy statement, a new proposal with 10 points, and a document on the way to conduct negotiations; these were in reply to documents put forward by Tho and Thuy on August 1. He said he had done his utmost to meet the reasonable concerns of the DRV and would have more to say on the political issue after his planned visit to Saigon in a few days' time. He had left Point 4 of the 10 points dealing with political issues blank for the time being. But when Tho pressed him about the political situation in the South, Kissinger answered: "I recognize that actually there are two armies, one of them mostly composed of your troops. There are two governments and two great political forces" and a lesser third force. On the conduct of negotiations, Kissinger proposed that after a problem had been solved in the first forum, it be referred immediately to another forum for detailed discussion and that the question of the Vietnamese armed forces be settled in the trilateral forum. Kissinger, who had again argued in vain for public announcement of the meeting, remarked on the fact that although the DRV tried to make believe there was complete deadlock between the two sides in the plenary meetings at Avenue Kléber, in the private meetings it expected maximum concessions from the United States, but it did not want to reveal this fact although considerable progress had been made. Tho welcomed Kissinger's recognition of the existence of two administrations and two armies in the South and took the opportunity to demand the setting up of a three-component government of national reconciliation. But he chided him for raising again the question of withdrawal of the DRV's troops from the South, which the DRV could not agree to for moral, political, and judicial reasons. 403

In their report of the three private meetings in July and August, Tho and Thuy emphasized the fact that they had taken the initiative in obliging Kissinger to give up talking about Saigon's constitution as the framework for the political process and had concentrated their demands on obtaining Kissinger's recognition of the two armies, two administrations, and three political forces in the South. They drew the conclusion that the basic intention of the Americans was to withdraw from the Vietnam war, and they had realized the impossibility of maintaining the Saigon administration as before. In its history of the war, The Vietnam Military History Institute specifically credited the diehard stand of the DRV's troops holding Quang Tri City and the Quang Tri citadel against fierce ARVN counterattack for 81 days during this period with supporting the diplomatic offensive by their "shining example of revolutionary heroism." <sup>405</sup>

Bunker had given President Thieu the usual synopsis of the July and August meetings with the DRV sent him by Kissinger. In anticipation of Kissinger's planned visit and the hope of meaningful discussions, however, Bunker was obliged to give Thieu the texts submitted by the DRV. Thieu immediately saw the enormity of the concessions Kissinger had made. Accordingly, Thieu, bolstering further the Saigon government's record on the negotiations, handed Kissinger an eight-page memorandum in English of his government's views when the two met on August 18. The DRV's proposal was "much more

binding and one-tracked than previous Communist proposals," the memorandum noted. "Hanoi wants to detain [retain] by itself the monopoly and be the sole representative for both zones of Viet Nam with regard to the US in order to have a global solution to the war for both zones, in the military as well as political fields, including the internal affairs of SVN." Moreover, the memorandum went on, "Hanoi makes the US totally responsible, militarily as well as politically, in both zones of Viet Nam, that is: the US are responsible for having waged the war and committed crimes in NVN without any reasons, and thus have to contribute to the rebuilding of NVN and stop its aggression under any form."

The memorandum asked Kissinger to explain a number of points raised by the DRV's proposal. Why was there discussion of dismantling American military bases in Vietnam and ending American military aid to South Vietnam while no mention was made of Soviet and Chinese military aid to North Vietnam? How did the United States view the tying of POW releases in the DRV proposal to not only withdrawal of American troops but also withdrawal of American technicians? Did the DRV consider that the armed forces in South Vietnam on the Communist side comprised both Northerners and Southerners? Most important, the government objected to the statement that the forum of private meetings between the DRV and the United States "can resolve the principles and general content of the political questions affecting the settlement of the Vietnamese problem" and rejected the proposed tripartite forum of Saigon, Hanoi, and the NLF on grounds of the double objection that it would involve Hanoi in negotiation of the South's internal affairs and involve the NLF in negotiation of North-South issues, in effect making two governments in the South.<sup>407</sup>

Kissinger, however, ignored these objections, focusing instead on subordinate issues, such as the existence of a Saigon veto in each forum. Clearly on the defensive, he suggested that Bunker tell Thieu that he wanted to accept as much of the DRV language as possible in order to constitute a good record in case the negotiations broke down. "We do not believe this is [the] place to raise the theological issue of separate legal status of North and South Vietnam," he wrote. As for the nagging question of the DRV's forces in the South, it was dealt with "by inference" in the proposal the Americans had tabled. It would be discussed in ensuing forums. Moreover, to raise it now, he said, would be a red flag to the other side. Anyway, it had not been mentioned in the January proposal, Kissinger wrote, ignoring Bunker's artful construction of "mutual withdrawal" in reference to the two-phase proposal of October 11, 1971. 408 Why Ambassador Bunker, who, unlike Kissinger was a professional diplomat and had been in Saigon since 1967, did not object to Kissinger's laying waste to principle, with its implications for an eventual settlement, is one of the questions future students may wish to study. For Thieu and his advisers, Kissinger's performance was further evidence that he did not care about the political provisions in toto that he was negotiating and was interested only in the POW release issue.

In talking points prepared for his meetings with President Thieu on August 17 and 18, Kissinger did not dwell on the same achievements of his negotiations with the DRV that formed the substance of his encouraging reports to Presi-

dent Nixon. 409 The pluses he presented to Thieu were the exploration of whether there was any chance of a settlement before November and the establishment of a record of good faith and seriousness of purpose. He wanted Thieu's agreement to proceed with the DRV. "At the next meeting, I would like to accept their proposal that there be no ceasefire until all is done," he said. 410 His talking points carefully mixed a maximum emphasis on the success of military pressures on the DRV with a minimalist strategy of being "as forthcoming as possible on the nonessential issues while varying our political position enough to give them a facesaving negotiating exit but without sacrificing any of the principles of an internal political settlement to which both you and we are committed." Establishing a good negotiating record, the talking points said, was "essential in our domestic political context"—in other words, Nixon's appeal to Thieu to "help us help you," backed by the usual implied threat of an aid cutoff.<sup>411</sup> In his attempt to convince Thieu, Kissinger promised tough measures against the North after the American election and even suggested that Thieu should prepare plans for an invasion of the North. The South Vietnamese did not take Kissinger's suggestion seriously; Nha dismissed it as "tossing us a lollipop."412

After receiving Kissinger's report on his meetings in Saigon, President Nixon wrote Thieu another letter full of meaning on August 31. In response to Thieu's complaints about the underhanded way in which he had been treated with respect to Kissinger's negotiations in Paris, Nixon assured him he had instructed Ambassador Bunker "to maintain the closest contact with you, to insure meticulous and thorough consultation with you at every stage." He informed Thieu that the Americans had decided on "a number of adjustments in our substantive and procedural proposals." The new proposals would convince "even the most skeptical that the obstacle to a settlement is not one leader." In other words, concessions were necessary to appease the critics, not to obtain a more viable agreement in Paris. And "they must accept your Government as a negotiating partner," a phrase that rang a bell about the debate over procedures in Paris. There was no mention of adherence to the constitution. Hung and Schecter write that Thieu was encouraged by Nixon's letter, especially by his invocation of "the sacrifice of many American lives" in the struggle. 413 But its references to as-yet-unspecified shifts on the political issue were unsettling. Meanwhile, Ambassador Lam was continuing to defend the representativity of his government in the plenary sessions at the Avenue Kléber, in spite of the humiliation of its being treated as a puppet of the Americans. 414

Thieu made a number of counterproposals to Bunker in the following days. The "our side, your side" formula had entitled the PRG to representation in the Paris talks; there was no reason now to accept this in a disguised coalition. Instead of the three-sided government of national concord proposed by the Communists, Thieu proposed a body made up of "representatives of all the political, religious forces and tendencies in South Vietnam, including the NLF." There were three dozen political parties in South Vietnam, and when it came to political forces the An Quang Buddhists, for example, who had elected members of the high secular council at their fourth annual convention in December 1971, had as

much right as the NLF to be represented, considering their struggle over the years for the democracy the NLF so loudly demanded in its propaganda, and even perhaps a greater right considering the fact that they, in contrast to the NLF, had eschewed violence. Thieu's counterproposal was similar to General Phoumi Nosavan's suggestion in 1961 that all Laotian political parties be seated at the Geneva conference on Laos if the Lao Patriotic Front was to be seated, and it received as little consideration from Kissinger as Phoumi's had from Harriman. 416

Thieu and his advisers, with no one to defend the constitutionality of their government but themselves, formalized their proposals in two memoranda which they gave Bunker on the afternoon of September 13.417 Bunker, hewing to the Kissinger line, expressed his frank disappointment in forwarding the memoranda.<sup>418</sup> But Kissinger was plunging ahead. Again without informing Thieu, as on October 11, 1971, he met with the DRV negotiators on September 15 and, ignoring Saigon's rejection, presented a proposal incorporating the tripartite body. His 10-point proposal, however, emphasized the legality and constitutionality of the Saigon regime and again raised the issue of the withdrawal of the DRV's forces from the South, and demanded the withdrawal of DRV forces from Laos and Cambodia. Tho made a new proposal to leave the two administrations in the South in place to govern their areas of control temporarily with a government of national reconciliation above them, rather than having the latter replace the two administrations. He also explained that the Vietnamese armed forces in the South on his side consisted of South Vietnamese returnees from the North and "volunteers" from the North and that therefore the issue should be discussed between the two administrations in the South. The most significant part of Tho's new proposal, however, from Kissinger's point of view, was that in its points 2 and 3 it provided for the withdrawal of American troops and the release of all prisoners, military and civilian, by all the parties within 45 days of the signing, with a cease-fire in effect. The last sentence in the proposal, however, read: "The above-mentioned ten points form a complete whole." On the conduct of negotiations, Tho presented a paper specifying that "the DRV and the U.S. should agree on the military questions as well as the principles and main contents of the political questions before the other forums are opened."419 The effects of this were to counter Kissinger's effort to have the other forums activated on an issue-by-issue basis prior to an overall agreement and to keep the negotiations effectively between the DRV and the United States until the signing of the truce agreement, which was where the DRV wanted them. Kissinger accepted this, for, with an eye on the approach of the presidential election, it is doubtful he would have wanted Saigon to take part in the negotiations at this point even had the DRV allowed it, and he proposed wrapping up the negotiations by October 15, "if sooner all the better." 420 Kissinger was also anxious to make a visit to Hanoi. The next meeting was fixed for September 25 and 26.421

In their private discussions, President Nixon and Kissinger had speculated about "Hanoi's asking price" for concluding the deal they were trying to negotiate. 422 The question of "Hanoi's asking price" formed an undercurrent to the American–South Vietnamese dialogue on the negotiations. In replying to President Nixon's letter of August 31, which had expressed the American people's admiration for the courage and performance of the South Vietnamese, 423 President Thieu warned that making further concessions to the Communists "on illogical matters," even though in the form of "only an initiative" that would, one guessed, have little chance of being accepted risked causing "internal political unrest and chaos detrimental to the whole struggle and the fate of South Viet-Nam."

I feel certain you agree with me that this is not what we have pursued throughout these years. It will not help in restoring peace for Viet-Nam and this part of the world; rather it will have wasted countless sacrifices in human lives and financial resources of both the American and Vietnamese people. 424

I have not found any reply by Nixon to this letter. Nixon's letters to Thieu, focusing on short-term, tactical matters, looking ahead no further than to the next meeting with the DRV, continued to use the mendacious formula "our common objective." The "self-determination of the South Vietnamese people" was becoming, like "Vietnamization," an ambiguous cover-all susceptible to opposite interpretations.

In his September 16 letter, President Thieu alluded to the French betrayal of 1954. A few days later, while visiting the northern front, where the ARVN had recaptured Quang Tri, Thieu spoke publicly about "the Communists, who are colluding with the colonialists and pacifists," and said the betrayal of 1954 had been caused by the collusion of Communists and colonialists "to sell Vietnam cheaply." Today, he said, the Communists were again "colluding with the colonialists and false peace advocates." He praised the troops for their gallantry and commiserated with the population for the suffering it had endured and, taking a leaf from Bernard Fall, mentioned the "Boulevard of Terror," Route 1 south of Quang Tri, where the Communists had shelled refugee columns, killing thousands. "No one has a right to negotiate, bargain or accept any solution in defiance of the people of the South," Thieu said. "Only a constitutional and legal government of the Republic of Vietnam people has the right to negotiate." <sup>425</sup> In Hai Lang district town near Quang Tri, Thieu told Véronique Decoudou of Agence France-Presse that Hanoi was in the process of negotiating a "partial agreement" with the United States which would halt the bombing of the North in exchange for the release of American POWs. 426 Kissinger, seeing himself targeted by Thieu's public remarks, cabled Bunker to shut Thieu up. 427 Other Americans, however, were concerned about South Vietnamese public opinion. "Most South Vietnamese probably want to see the war ended," a memorandum observed, "but during the negotiating process they would not be inclined to give much support to an interim government seen as set up by the Americans for the primary purpose of bringing the war to a quick end so they can get out and get their handful of prisoners back."428

The party center welcomed acceptance of the October 15 deadline, which fell in with its own plans. The study group in Hanoi, then called CP.50, considered the situation and decided that the principles to be held to were that the United States had to respect the Vietnamese people's fundamental national rights; end its involvement and intervention; completely withdraw its forces; not return to Vietnam; stop aid to the Saigon administration; not link military aid to Saigon with the military aid of socialist countries to Hanoi; recognize that there were two administrations in the South, two armies, and three political forces; and accept a form of administration or national reconciliation body above the existing administrations that would have the minimum functions of preserving peace, implementing the signed agreements, achieving national reconciliation and democratic freedoms, and organizing general elections. The DRV would not pull out its troops in the South. On the other hand, the DRV would be flexible about the time limit for withdrawal of American troops and release of American POWs, about the timing of Thieu's resignation and the general elections, and about names used. On this last, the United States was free to call the Saigon administration "the Republic of Vietnam" if it wished. 429 With both sides agreed on a timetable, it remained only to fill in the details.

The meetings on September 26 and 27 took place in a new venue, a house at 108 Avenue du Général Leclerc in Gif-sur-Yvette. The first morning was spent on procedural points. In the afternoon, Tho tabled a draft agreement and protocol, which Luu Van Loi had brought from Hanoi, 430 which notably set forth the DRV's version of the elections that were to give effect to the South Vietnamese people's right of self-determination. It was no longer a question of Thieu's simply resigning before a new election was held for president; it went much farther. The draft defined the three-segment provisional national government of concord as consisting of 12 members at the central level, but organized down to province level; it also maintained that the provisional government should work on the principle of unanimity. "We are very realistic, we recognize the temporary existence of the PRG and the Saigon administration and the control of their respective areas in the interval between the signing of the comprehensive agreement and the establishment of the official government in South Vietnam," Tho said. 431 The necessary condition for a change of the form of struggle and for bringing the revolution forward was for the three-segment provisional government to organize the elections, from provincial to central levels, and this included deciding what institutions the voters would be voting for. In this regard, the DRV would be satisfied with general wording in the final agreement, such as "election of executive and legislative organs," or "election of organs of state power." <sup>432</sup> In the final agreement, the wording was "the institutions for which the general elections are to be held will be agreed upon through consultations between the two South Vietnamese parties."

In this light, Tho did not insist on attributing other governmental functions to this body, leading Kissinger to believe, mistakenly, that it would be only an empty shell. In his memoirs, he portrays the dropping of the demand for Thieu's resignation as a concession by the Communists and says he might have

agreed to elections for a constituent assembly instead of for president. In the DRV, the president and vice president were not elected by direct vote but by a vote of the National Assembly, usually one month following an election for the Assembly. In a presidential election in South Vietnam, the Communists would obviously not stand a chance. But in elections for an assembly their proven "united front" tactics would allow them to pack the assembly with their "peaceloving, patriotic" supporters, especially under rules that they would have a say in setting.

The destruction of civil records had always held a high priority on the target list of the Viet Cong. Furthermore, the war had displaced millions of people from their homes, and records even of residence were in a state of disarray. Knowing who was entitled to vote in such circumstances would be a challenge. On the basis of interrogation reports, Frank Snepp of the CIA cites a DRV plan to move over 3 million persons into South Vietnam after a cease-fire to vote for the PRG and the Neutralists. 433 Thus legitimized, the "official government," in the DRV scheme of things, would lay the groundwork for the vote for reunification, and then the PRG and the Republic of Vietnam would both fade into history as the DRV reclaimed sovereignty over all of Vietnam. Kissinger seems to have felt that Saigon's veto in the three-segment body would provide a safeguard against domination by the Communists, which ignored the fact that the PRG, too, would have a veto and would certainly exercise it against the application of anything that resembled the legislation and constitution of the "puppet Saigon administration." 434

With the two major issues at stake in the negotiations—the continued legal presence of the DRV's troops in the South and the placement of the PRG on an equal legal footing with the Republic of Vietnam—settled to the DRV's satisfaction, the negotiations turned to wrapping up the details. The party center was still considering whether to push the Americans to go as far as formally canceling the laws and institutions of the Saigon administration, which would save it the trouble of doing so itself after its victory. However, it recognized that the Americans would accept this step only with difficulty and that it might delay the agreement beyond the election. 435

On September 27, Kissinger handed over short drafts on such questions as international guarantees, the technicalities of international supervision of a cease-fire, and the exchange of prisoners. Kissinger called the three-segment provisional government the committee of national reconciliation. The DRV was flexible about the exact name but wanted the designation of its members to follow immediately the signature of the agreement. Arguments about the connotations of the Vietnamese phrase used to describe this body were still going on when the DRV made public the text of the agreement on October 26. Likewise, the DRV could afford to be flexible on the issue of its troop presence in the South; if Saigon proved recalcitrant on this issue, threatening the signing of the agreement, the DRV could always withdraw a few units from the South for refitting and rest and recuperation and claim this was a sign of goodwill without upsetting the legal principle involved.

The negotiation continued, absorbing all the energies of both sides in marathon meetings. Laos and Cambodia were beginning to come into focus. In the discussion on the afternoon of September 26, Tho made a number of verbal statements regarding the latter.

The peaceful settlement of the Vietnam problem will create favorable conditions for the settlement of the Laos and the Cambodia problems. . . . Once the Vietnam problem is solved, there is no reason why we still want the war to continue in Laos and Cambodia.

Regarding the question of prisoners of war, we have told you that there are no U.S. prisoners in Cambodia and very few in Laos. However, if you settle the political issues and pay damages, we can have an understanding with you. We shall negotiate with our friends.

As to the other questions you have raised regarding Indochina, they cannot be solved here, but as an understanding between us, we can tell you the following:

All foreign armed forces in Laos and Cambodia shall cease their military activities and withdraw from Laos and Cambodia. They shall refrain from bringing troops and weapons back to these countries. We can make this statement but we cannot write it in a document because this involves the sovereignty of Laos and Cambodia and is beyond the scope of this conference to settle. 439

Kissinger asked Bunker to provide Thieu with the latest DRV proposal so Thieu would have time to study it and comment when Haig visited Saigon in a few days' time. He summed up his long hours of negotiation with Tho and Thuy by accentuating the negative, as was his practice, thinking this would disarm Thieu. After telling Bunker the DRV proposed that the PRG and Thieu's government administer the areas under their respective control pending the elections for a constituent assembly six months after the agreement, he added: "None of the foregoing is to be construed as meaning we consider the other side's political proposal as acceptable." The DRV negotiators were standing fast on their positions on troop withdrawal and inclusion of Laos and Cambodia, and Kissinger instructed Bunker: "In this connection, you must disabuse Thieu once and for all of any notion that we are working toward a Vietnam cease-fire or bombing halt in return for our POWs. There have been absolutely no discussions along these lines. There is no possibility of this happening."440 He saw practically no possibility of a settlement before November unless Hanoi totally reversed its position.

The other person who was talking in terms of principles, besides Le Duc Tho, was President Thieu. In a memorandum given Bunker on September 26, Thieu gave a complete exposition of his government's views, stating "On the fundamentals of a negotiated settlement of the Viet Nam conflict, especially on the political aspects of it, it is the considered view of the GVN that an honorable settlement could be achieved only if parallel to the Vietnamization of the war there is also the *Vietnamization of the peace*. In other words, the other side should be brought to accept that the protagonist in the settlement is the GVN, and that

it should negotiate directly with the GVN for a negotiated solution." The memorandum stated that by conducting the official conversations with the DRV in 1968 without participation of the Saigon government, the United States lent itself to the description of the role which Communist propaganda had portrayed for many years, namely that the United States was the aggressor in both North and South Vietnam.<sup>441</sup>

After an unsatisfactory series of meetings with Haig in which he criticized Kissinger for not deigning to consider Saigon's views in his negotiations, and at times showing tears of anger and frustration, Thieu gave Haig another memorandum summing up "the basic principles" at stake in the negotiations and citing his government's past statements which Kissinger had ignored. North Vietnam was the aggressor in this war, the Republic of Vietnam was the victim of aggression. Pending the reunification of Vietnam, there were two Vietnams, just as there were two Koreas and two Germanys. North Vietnam had no right to interfere in the internal affairs of the South, and vice versa. North Vietnam had also invaded Laos and Cambodia, making the war an Indochina war. The basic principle in negotiations was reciprocity, and Thieu wanted to know what obligations the Americans contemplated the North's assuming (apart from observing the ceasefire and releasing American POWs). 442 The difference between the allies shows through clearly in this memorandum: Kissinger was negotiating to get the POWs back, first, and to provide a decent interval, second, whereas Thieu had in mind "a peace which can endure and can safeguard the ideals and interests for which our two countries have been fighting."

In reply to his memoranda, President Thieu received a savagely worded letter dated October 6, which had no doubt been drafted by Haig and Kissinger and sent over Nixon's signature. 443 After saying the differences between the two allies were tactical in character and involved no basic differences, thereby sweeping the principles listed in Thieu's memorandum under the rug, and promising discussion of all future provisions, it said: "I would urge you to take every measure to avoid the development of an atmosphere which could lead to events similar to those which we abhorred in 1963 and which I personally opposed so vehemently in 1968." Nixon's letter then warned Thieu to "avoid taking precautionary measures against developments arising from these talks."444 Haig's report on his conversations with Thieu and Thieu's memorandum had obviously raised in Nixon the alarming thought that Thieu might make the October 20 draft agreement public, creating a situation like the public argument between President Diem and the Americans in 1963, and this just before the election. To Thieu, quite apart from his personal fate, it seemed perverse that the Americans, having crudely intervened in his election as president the previous year, were now enmeshing him in their own presidential election while ignoring questions of principle in the negotiations with the enemy.

Thieu had viewed the bodies on the floor of the armored personnel carrier at JGS headquarters on the morning of November 2, 1963, and he did not need to be reminded of what happened to a head of state who went against the Americans. 445 He was, in fact, very conscious of it. In the summer of 1971, I noticed

that a gap about 30 feet long had been torn in the west wall of the Mac Dinh Chi cemetery for no apparent reason, as there appeared to be no work going on in the cemetery or outside on Hai Ba Trung Street, either. I asked some Vietnamese friends about this, and they told me that Thieu had invited in a Cao Dai clairvoyant who claimed he could conjure up the ghosts of the dead. Thieu asked to speak to the ghost of Diem. Thieu asked Diem what he could do for him. Diem said that Thieu was responsible for his death and the least he could do was to let him have freedom from the cemetery. Thieu ordered the wall sundered. He But Thieu did not let Nixon's letter intimidate him; he resolved to have it out with Kissinger on his next visit.

Kissinger held a further round of meetings with the DRV negotiators in Paris on October 8, 9, 10, and 11. Kissinger's main purpose in these meetings was to disentangle the release of American POWs from the several other issues in which it had been enmeshed in the DRV's 10-point proposal of September 15 because of the statement that the 10 points represented a "whole." He wanted the POW release restored to an independent position in the agreement similar to the one in the two-phase proposal of October 11, 1971. He used the demands the Saigon government had made of the Americans to achieve this purpose. According to the DRV account of the meetings, Kissinger made the point that the agreement proposed by Tho in the draft brought from Hanoi would have a severe impact on the existing political structure in Saigon. Negative elements were the abandonment of Thieu immediately after the signing of the agreement, the elimination of the Saigon constitution, the setting up of a government-like organ from Saigon down to the commune level, the withdrawal of American troops while the DRV's troops remained in the South, the stopping of aid to Saigon except for arms replacement, the lack of any prohibition against military aid to the DRV, and the lack of an Indochina-wide ceasefire. Kissinger stated that in making these points he did not mean to demand that the DRV satisfy them but to make the DRV negotiators understand that these questions should be dealt with. For example, on the DRV's demand for war reparations, one of the 10 points in which the POW release was enmeshed, Kissinger proposed, in return for some other concession, removing this obligation from the text of the agreement and instead making it the subject of a unilateral American statement. Le Duc Tho agreed, saying it could be dealt with in a separate protocol. Thus, by the end of these meetings, Kissinger had managed to disentangle the POW release (to take place simultaneously with the withdrawal of American troops) from all other issues except the release of civilian detainees in South Vietnam.

The meetings proceeded with each side presenting and comparing drafts, which were then minutely reconciled, and fixing a timetable for concluding the agreement, including a visit by Kissinger to Hanoi. Tho's draft presented on October 8 deferred the establishment of the three-segment body until within three months after the cease-fire and by agreement between the South Vietnamese sides. He also said its power and mission would be agreed upon beforehand but that its name could wait. He proposed empowering it to supervise the

implementation of the agreement and settling conflicts between the two sides. It would be organized down to the commune level. Kissinger welcomed these "concessions."<sup>447</sup> When the last meeting ended at 2 A.M. on October 12, Tho and Kissinger exchanged speeches, Kissinger saying "When we and our colleagues come to Hanoi, we express our respect for the heroic people of North Vietnam and begin a new period in our relations."<sup>448</sup> Tho returned to Hanoi to brief the party center and to prepare to welcome Kissinger.

In response to Kissinger's insistence in this series of meetings, Tho had agreed to put in writing the statement he had made on Laos and Cambodia on September 26, although it was to be in the form of an understanding separate from the peace agreement because of the issue of sovereignty it raised. Even so, Tho bargained hard, receiving in return a pledge from Kissinger to contribute to postwar reconstruction. Tho's understanding read:

After a cease-fire becomes effective in Vietnam, no additional troops and war materials shall be introduced into Laos and Cambodia. Secondly, [a] cease-fire will be carried out in Laos within one month after the cease-fire in Vietnam. Thereafter, foreign troops shall be withdrawn from Laos as soon as possible.  $^{449}$ 

As in his statement on September 26, Tho set no date on the withdrawal of the DRV's troops from Laos and Cambodia. In Cambodia, the war would go on until Lon Nol was ousted, either by force of arms or by the Americans, as Sihanouk made clear in Peking. "We are not ruled by Hanoi and the North Vietnamese are not empowered to negotiate in our name," he said a week after meeting Tho on his passage through Peking. <sup>450</sup> He was more than ever under the control of the CPK since Ieng Sary, a hard-liner, had replaced Thiounn Mumm as his liaison officer with the resistance of the interior.

Although Kissinger kept Secretary Rogers totally in the dark about what was happening in the negotiations on a day-to-day basis and threatened that if he tried to interfere, "we will cut him out of everything from now on," 451 he did not hesitate to co-opt officials from the State Department. Preparatory to his October series of meetings, he relegated Under Secretary U. Alexis Johnson to producing working papers on international supervisory machinery and cease-fire implementation, tasks more suitable for a junior Foreign Service Officer than for someone who had been a member of the American delegation at Geneva in 1954. 452 Kissinger also co-opted Deputy Assistant Secretary William H. Sullivan into his team for a new meeting with Xuan Thuy on October 17. "Sullivan is ecstatic about the agreement," Kissinger reported. 453 Kissinger's habit of circumventing normal Department channels for fear of leaks and conducting business by back-channel messages with career civil servants placed the latter in a quandary with respect to their colleagues. When Ambassador Godley in Vientiane in good Foreign Service conscience asked that all the messages on the Laos negotiations in February 1973 sent by back-channel be made available to Assistant Secretary Marshall Green, "unless Dr. Kissinger perceives objections," 454 Kissinger cabled back that he would "make arrangements upon my return to Washington to keep Marshall Green informed of all your messages."455

Kissinger's reports to Nixon were of progress, but his reports to Bunker were of lack of progress; this back-channel system of diplomacy induced a certain amount of schizophrenia. "The finest compromise available," was his later description of the draft agreement he had arrived at. 456 The statement itself was a compromise intended to satisfy two different audiences, American and Vietnamese.

# The American Peace

The meeting with Xuan Thuy on October 17 lasted 12 hours. While the DRV had proved agreeable to making changes in the draft agreement, the effect of which was to separate the release of American POWs from other provisions, Tho and Thuy had held back on separating it from the release of civilian detainees by the Saigon "puppets," which they affirmed, on the basis of reports of American aid to the South Vietnamese police, was an American responsibility. Kissinger's aides warned him that this provision would involve the Americans in endless arguments with the Saigon government over release of many prisoners considered by the South Vietnamese to be common criminals that might prolong the release of American POWs indefinitely. In an attempt to prevent this, Kissinger gave Thuy a draft of what was now Article 8 that provided in (a) for the release of American POWs simultaneously with the American troop withdrawal and for its completion on the same day as the troop withdrawal, that is, within two months, in (b) for efforts to exchange information on those missing in action, and in (c) for resolution by the South Vietnamese parties of the question of civilians detained in South Vietnam within three months. On part (c), Kissinger offered a unilateral statement engaging the United States to use its maximum influence to secure the release of most such civilians within two months and the rest within three months. Thuy threatened that the PRG would refuse to release its American POWs if Saigon did not release civilian detainees. After acrimonious exchanges, the issue was temporarily shelved. 457 Kissinger, in a sharp note to the DRV on October 18, said the DRV position was totally unacceptable. "The U.S. side has stated repeatedly that the end of [U.S.] military operations in Vietnam presupposes the release of all United States prisoners held throughout Indochina," the note said. 458 Kissinger reported to President Nixon that their meeting had resolved all substantive and technical issues except replacement of military equipment (Article 7) and prisoner release (Article 8). 459

Kissinger told Thuy that "Saigon must be consulted," 460 not that Saigon had to agree to the draft. According to the timetable agreed upon with the DRV in the October 11 meeting, Kissinger was to go from Paris to Saigon, where he would explain what he had negotiated on its behalf to the government (whose reaction was, of course, of no concern to the DRV, which had never considered it a negotiating partner) and then go on to Hanoi to initial the agreement. The record provides the best guide to the concerns and actions of each party at this juncture. Kissinger's main worry appears to have been whether he would be forced to delay or cancel "the final leg" (to Hanoi) if the agreement was not

nailed down completely. President Nixon continued to insist to Kissinger that he should only go to Hanoi in the context of a completed agreement.

Haig and Kissinger had never shown themselves to be overly concerned with how their ally would interpret the texts when he eventually learned of them, only with how he might upset their carefully scheduled plans for completing the agreement. But in this instance Pham Van Dong, in an interview with the journalist Arnaud de Borchgrave on October 18 that was submitted the following day for Dong's approval and correction in the usual manner, provided the Saigon government with the necessary clarification of just how the DRV interpreted the agreement, and, accordingly, how it should consider it. Dong had just received a first-hand fill-in on the negotiations from Le Duc Tho, and the circumstances of the interview make it almost certain the clarification was offered deliberately. Answering a question about the sequence of events in South Vietnam, Dong said:

That is the present evolution, and it is a positive one. The situation then will be two armies and two administrations in the South. Given that new situation, they will have to work out their own arrangements for a three-sided coalition of transition and defuse the situation in the wake of the American withdrawal. They must work out arrangements that will promote democracy and speed national concord in the South because without this there will be no peace.

 $\dots$  Somebody has put forward a delay of about six months between the cease-fire and general elections and this seems reasonable to us.  $^{461}$ 

On October 17, President Thieu saw for himself the text of the draft peace agreement from a 10-page document captured from the Communists in Quang Tin Province. After reading the document, he said, "I knew for the first time what was being negotiated over my head. The Americans told me the negotiations were still going on and that nothing was fixed, but the other side already had all the information." The Communists' plan was simple: to lay claim to as much territory and population as possible by having small units post Viet Cong flags while main force units pinned down Saigon's troops and to keep these claims until international representatives arrived; to use the democratic liberties defined in Article 11 to foment demonstrations as soon as the cease-fire went into effect by propagandizing the agreement, especially among ARVN soldiers, inducing them to stop fighting or desert; and to dismember the Saigon government. The PRG had been preparing for a post—cease-fire situation of regrouping areas for both sides since October 1970.

Thus forewarned, Thieu received Kissinger at Independence Palace on the morning of October 19. Thieu was aloof and cold. He received another letter from President Nixon by Kissinger's hand. The letter informed Thieu that "we and Hanoi's negotiators have reached essential agreement on a text." Kissinger, the letter said, would explain to him all the details, and added "I believe we have no reasonable alternative but to accept this agreement." Thieu was not asked to comment on the proposed agreement, just to accept it. Thieu read the letter

without saying anything and then asked Kissinger to go to an adjoining conference room where his National Security Council and the ambassadors to the United States and to the Paris talks were assembled. Under Article 69 of the constitution, Thieu was to be assisted by and to preside over this body, which had the task of examining matters concerned with peace negotiations.

Kissinger writes that Nixon had suggested treating the Saigon talks like a poker game, in which Kissinger should hold back the "trump card" [sic] until the last trick. Thus, he should not show the political provisions of the draft to Thieu immediately but should instead imply that the DRV had asked for more than it actually did. 465 Unfortunately, it was "probable that at least some of the men in the room were already aware of the North Vietnamese position," and so Kissinger could not risk using the "trump card" approach; instead he "was forced to present a detailed scenario of the negotiations and where they stood." Kissinger said the draft "exceeded the best expectations of anyone in the U.S.," again suggesting in the minds of the Vietnamese that they were being asked to make concessions to appease Nixon's domestic critics. Thieu asked Kissinger whether Nixon needed this for the election. The session was tense and emotional. 466 Kissinger did not inform the South Vietnamese of the timetable he had agreed upon with the DRV. Only when he had finished did Kissinger hand a single copy of the draft, in English, to Thieu. Thieu asked for a Vietnamese text. Kissinger said he did not have one but said he would find one in the files. In announcing the meeting, the government said that Thieu's "broad discussions" with the National Assembly and political groups were continuing and that its position was "to reject formally the tri-partite principle and to reject any solution which is not approved by the people of Viet Nam through democratic procedures."467

Kissinger's aide John D. Negroponte delivered the Vietnamese text to Hoang Duc Nha, Thieu's private secretary, at the palace that evening, and the Vietnamese worked late into the night studying it. They pinpointed the details they found objectionable and at a meeting with Kissinger at the foreign ministry on the morning of October 20, barely 96 hours before his postponed scheduled arrival in Hanoi to initial the agreement, sat down to go over them. The Vietnamese text differed in significant points from the English one. In the English draft of Article 9, the three-segment body was described as an "administrative structure," nothing more. But the Vietnamese draft used the expression "co cau chinh quyen," which is translated literally as "government organs" or "administrative organs," implying a governmental body. American forces were described in a derogatory term (quan my) that meant "American pirates." Another section in the Vietnamese text called on the Americans and their "vassals" to withdraw. 468 After their examination of these and other objectionable matters, the South Vietnamese wanted 23 points clarified, changed, or deleted. They wanted to write into the agreement specific provisions regarding the withdrawal of DRV forces by name. In Article 9, the main political article, they wanted to water down paragraph 9(g) regarding the functions of the three-segment body and to drop paragraph 9(h) regarding discussions among the South Vietnamese parties about the Vietnamese armed forces in the South (prior to withdrawal of the DRV), changes that Kissinger saw "would result in the absence of any real political section at all." <sup>469</sup> This, of course, is the result that Thieu wanted as he struggled to preserve the remnants of his constitutional authority. In view of this four-hour exchange, one wonders what to make of Kissinger's claim in his memoirs that he kept Thieu fully informed of his talks with Le Duc Tho. <sup>470</sup>

On the morning of October 20, Saigon time, Kissinger received word of the DRV's acceptance, in a message handed over in Paris, of his proposed wording on Articles 7 and 8. The message said the DRV now considered "that the agreement has been completely agreed to by the two sides on all questions." The message said the schedule agreed to on October 11 should be adhered to and Kissinger should go to Hanoi as agreed for discussions on the postwar relations of the two countries. Should the Americans seek pretexts to delay the schedule, the note warned, "the negotiations would certainly be broken off." 471 The DRV was staking the entire agreement on forcing Kissinger to override Saigon's objections. With the DRV's concession separating the POW release from the release of civilian detainees in South Vietnam in hand, Kissinger, considering the agreement a triumph of his diplomacy, appears from the record to have been determined at that point to push ahead with signature, with Saigon or without Saigon. He nevertheless took the precaution of delaying his planned arrival in Hanoi by two days and demanding that the DRV put in writing a private assurance that it would take measures to release POWs outside Vietnam on the same schedule as those in Vietnam. <sup>472</sup> Twenty-four hours later, at 10 A.M. October 21, Hanoi time, the DRV received "a message on behalf of the President of the United States of America to the Prime Minister of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam" expressing appreciation for the goodwill and serious attitude of the DRV shown in its message of October 19. "With the two provisions for Articles 7 and 8 agreed to by the DRV side in its message, the text of the agreement can now be considered complete," the message said. 473

After a testy exchange between Nha and Kissinger over Thieu's postponement of a scheduled meeting that afternoon so he could study the points that needed clarification, Kissinger read a fresh message from President Nixon at a meeting on the morning of October 21. This time Nixon did not threaten Thieu with the prospect of assassination but instead warned that a negative decision by Thieu with respect to acceptance of the draft would have the most serious effects on Nixon's ability to continue to provide support to Thieu and his government.<sup>474</sup> Kissinger made a side trip to Phnom Penh, where he proceeded to inform Lon Nol that Thieu had accepted the agreement. Lon Nol, completely awed by Kissinger's show of authority, complimented him. He was soon to discover that for the government of the Khmer Republic the war would go on without interruption for two and a half more years until final defeat in 1975.

President Nixon sent Kissinger a message through Haig after receiving an initial report of the Saigon meeting telling him verbatim: "The essential requirement is that Thieu's acceptance must be wholehearted so that the charge cannot be made that we have forced him into a settlement which was not in the interest of preventing a Communist takeover of a substantial part of the terri-

tory of South Vietnam."<sup>475</sup> Haig thought the chances of getting Thieu to acquiesce in the draft agreement were very slim and that they would now have to consider what response to make to the DRV. He thought President Nixon would be comfortable with their telling the DRV that despite all efforts they had been unable to bring Thieu along and that therefore they should meet with the DRV urgently in Paris "to work out alternate arrangements which might not include the South Vietnamese."<sup>476</sup>

In another meeting with Thieu on the morning of October 22, Kissinger tried to reassure Thieu by making additional promises, including "keeping our entire Air Force in Thailand," destroying the Chup rubber plantation in Cambodia, and speeding up expenditures in Laos. 477 That afternoon, Thieu told Kissinger "We have been very faithful to the Americans and now feel that we are being sacrificed. The proposed agreement is worse than the 1954 agreements." He also said if President Nixon and Kissinger thought they could help the South Vietnamese, they welcomed it. "But if the U.S. wants to abandon the South Vietnamese people, that is their right."478 In their final meeting on the morning of October 23, Kissinger was relatively humble, observing that he thought he had achieved victory with the draft agreement, but obviously he was mistaken. Thieu said he would welcome anything Kissinger could do to persuade the Soviets and Chinese to use their influence on Hanoi. 479 Unknown to Thieu, President Nixon had just received a letter from Chairman Leonid Brezhnev rejecting the idea of inserting Soviet military aid to the DRV in the draft agreement; this was, Brezhnev wrote, "a special question that concerns our relations," and when a peaceful settlement in Vietnam became a reality there would be no further need for military aid. 480 Kissinger told Haig to call Dobrynin urgently and tell him that changes in the draft agreement were obtainable, most of them being "purely cosmetic" and "intended to save face all around." With regard to withdrawal of DRV troops, a de facto solution was possible. 481 This would all take time, and there remained no possibility of signing the agreement before the American presidential election on November 7. Kissinger had also given up the idea of trying to obtain a separate cease-fire for the Americans because the reaction of Southeast Asian leaders would be "catastrophic."482 He was still toying with the idea of a Hanoi trip, however, and in response to a Soviet message saying if he went to Hanoi the opportunities for obtaining modifications and the DRV's agreement to another round of negotiations would be greatly improved, asked Bunker to report what the likely effect in Saigon would be.483

### THE UNITED STATES ASSUMES THE POSITION OF AGGRESSOR

As the South Vietnamese now realized in full, the principal components of the secret agreement between the DRV and the Americans had been set, and all the rest was mere cosmetics. They might argue about the fine points, but it did not matter; Kissinger could not be taken seriously, except for the threats he conveyed from Nixon, because no one had given him authority to negotiate on behalf of the Republic of Vietnam. But the failure was more than one of the

incompetence of the negotiator or even of the lack of consultation, things Kissinger could paper over, as he was to attempt to do between October and January. The Americans had negotiated an agreement that provided for the safe withdrawal of American troops from South Vietnam and the release of American POWs in the enemy's hands. The American negotiators had paid scant attention to the legality and legitimacy of the existing Saigon government. Everything that concerned the South was put off until the future (elections to a Constituent Assembly, elaboration of new institutions, respect for the self-determination of the Southerners), while what concerned the United States was to happen immediately upon signature.

Another fault line had now been reached between Saigon and the Americans. Charles S. Whitehouse, who had replaced Berger as deputy ambassador, although he shared Negroponte's doubts about the agreement's workability, assembled all the embassy's junior officers, told them the essentials of the agreement, and ordered them to suspend all other activities and concentrate on lobbying their Vietnamese counterparts. One junior officer recalls that Whitehouse told them to explain the agreement as "the best they could get." Many of these Foreign Service officers were skeptical, and one called his lobbying mission "Operation Big Lie." Another described the agreement as "a formula for defeat" of the South. These officers, of course, from their contacts among the Vietnamese, were fully conscious of the fact that Thieu's regime was very much a part of the problem; as professionals, they did not allow this fact to bias their evaluation of the agreement. It is doubtful that Kissinger, operating as a one-man State Department, ever became aware of their judgments.

Article 1 of the draft stated: "The United States and all other countries respect the independence, sovereignty, unity, and territorial integrity of Vietnam as recognized by the 1954 Geneva Agreements on Vietnam." This had been the DRV's demand throughout the war, implying as it did the historic DRV position since 1945 that it was the sole legal government of Vietnam, a position that had been contested by Diem's government but had since been abandoned piecemeal by its successors, whether legal or illegal. The fact that at their second meeting on October 19 Thieu and Nha and Kissinger and Bunker engaged in a discussion of whether the draft text should refer to three Indochinese states or four illustrates better than anything else the absence of principle underlying Kissinger's negotiations, much better than the argument over shades of meaning of Vietnamese terms, because three is three and four is four whether in English or Vietnamese. The text, reflecting the DRV's viewpoint in Article 15(d), naturally read three—Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia. Faced with Thieu's insistence this be changed to four—the Republic of Vietnam, the DRV, Laos, and Cambodia—Kissinger passed it off as an inadvertent typographical error. 485 Of course, there were three countries in Indochina and two Vietnams whose geographical extent was identical but whose constitutions differed. In the final draft, the number of countries constituting Indochina was simply eliminated. 486 Kissinger sold one thing to one person and a slight variation of it to another. In meetings with Le Duc Tho he was proper, addressing him as Mr. Special Adviser. But in his back-channel messages he referred to Tho as a "customer," as he referred to President Thieu as Bunker's "client." Kissinger's diplomacy, to the Vietnamese, resembled nothing so much as a Middle East rug merchant's salesmanship.

The position that the United States was the aggressor in Vietnam was formalized in Article 2 of the final draft, which obliged the United States to "stop all its military activities against the territory of the DRV by ground, air and naval forces, wherever they may be based." The agreement made no mention of the DRV's ceasing its undeclared war against the Republic of Vietnam, nor of the United States assisting the latter to defend itself against the violations of the 1954 Geneva armistice agreement committed by the DRV, which had been a co-signatory of that agreement. One reason the issue of the release of prisoners held in Saigon's prisons gave Kissinger such a headache was that the DRV, again affirming the status of the Saigon administration as illegal and that of the United States as the aggressor against *all* of Vietnam, insisted that the United States be made responsible for the release of the prisoners held by Saigon.

As a corollary of the DRV's claim to be the sole legal government of Vietnam, it claimed on principle the right to maintain its troops in the South. Accordingly, there was no article providing for withdrawal of these troops. Instead, Article 13 left the issue to be settled by the two South Vietnamese signatories "in accordance with the postwar situation," that is to say, following the "enforcement" of the cease-fire. Again in response to Saigon's objections, Kissinger promised to try to obtain a de facto withdrawal of some of these troops, a cosmetic change of no substance.

The DRV also had its shadow representation in the South in the form of the PRG, that claimant to government entirely subservient to the party center, provisional pending reunification. The modalities for the latter were written into draft Article 10. The agreement served to legitimize the PRG, which was described as one of the two South Vietnamese parties, equal in every respect, which were required to do a number of things under draft Article 9.

One of these things was to set up the three-segment body "immediately after the ceasefire" (Article 9(f)). As this important institution had not previously been discussed in any meaningful way between the allies, Kissinger and Thieu spent quite a bit of time arguing about its implications during Kissinger's stopover on his way to initial the agreement in Hanoi. Kissinger, as he had in the past, played down the importance of the three-segment body in spite of the fact that he knew it was the body that would be charged with organizing elections to determine the institutions of South Vietnam. (Nixon's letter of October 16 said "Your Government and its institutions will continue to exist" after a cease-fire, but for how long obviously depended on the progress of the consultations.)

Draft Article 9(d) of the draft contained the following wording, which Kissinger supplied:

The United States declares that it respects the South Vietnam people's right to self-determination; it is not committed to any political tendency or to any personality in South Vietnam, and it does not seek to impose a pro-American government in Saigon.

Aside from the reference to "a pro-American government in Saigon," which was simply a red herring in the traditional American sense of that term, this article contained the nub of the bargain President Nixon and Kissinger had struck with the DRV. The first phrase was, of course, an unequivocal reaffirmation of an American policy principle that had held since the beginning of the effort to patch together a legal and legitimate South Vietnamese regime in the rubble left by the 1963 coup d'état. That effort had proved to be quite successful, and in my view the regime in Saigon could lay a credible claim to be legal and legitimate as attested to by the elections that had been held in South Vietnam at the municipal, provincial, and national levels, with the single exception of the rigged 1971 presidential election. This stood in sharp contrast to the elections held in North Vietnam since 1946, which were totally controlled by the Communist party and which consequently failed to restore to the Northern regime the legality and legitimacy that it had lacked at its origin in the coup d'état against the Tran Trong Kim government. The South Vietnamese people would, of course, be exercising their right to self-determination with the North Vietnamese troops present in their midst, a consideration to give pause to the nationalists among the NLF as well as to those on the Saigon government side. The United States, in "respecting" this right to self-determination would, here again, be ratifying the DRV's dictate in the South.

The phrase "it [the United States] is not committed to any political tendency or to any personality in South Vietnam" in a legal document to be signed by the United States, on the other hand, portended basic changes in American policy. First, the absence of any mention of legality or constitutionality in this article, which dealt specifically with the American position (or in any other article of the draft), placed the United States for the first time since July 1954 in the position of not defending the existing legal and constitutional regime in South Vietnam, a position that had been consistently upheld by Presidents Eisenhower, Kennedy, and Johnson. Second, it followed that as the United States no longer considered the election of a regime's institutions by popular vote to be a necessary condition for American support, the United States was prepared to recognize in the future any regime that emerged from an election process, no matter how contrived, in which an armed group, the PRG, participated on an equal basis with a constituted government and its institutions. In this case, the national army would stand for nothing—it would simply be relegated to the status of another armed faction, like the Viet Cong. As for the many political parties in the South who advocated nonviolent political processes, they would simply be left at the mercy of the same tactics of armed intimidation as the Tran Trong Kim government had been on August 19, 1945, in Hanoi.

The future institutions that the United States committed itself to support were subject to change from a popular consultation process organized by a three-segment body in which the constitutional government held one-third of the seats. Even though Kissinger maintained that the members of the third segment in this body would be chosen equally by the two sides, this provided for shared sovereignty. As Senator Vu Van Mau, a lawyer and leader of the opposi-

tion People's Bloc, had astutely observed, people had concluded from the American proposals as early as January that "everything can be undone overnight" as far as the constitution was concerned. In the final draft of Article 18(e), nevertheless, the words "of South Vietnam" were added to "in accordance with the principle of respect for the sovereignty" which each side could interpret as it wished. 487

Nixon's administration, in agreeing to the draft of October 20, 1972, had repudiated the sovereignty of the Republic of Vietnam, not in so many words, to be sure, but with unmistakable finality that was to have severe consequences for the people of South Vietnam and for the fabric of American society as well. These were not foreseen at the time, as "peace with honor" was still the administration's marching order for public consumption. But it is simply not possible to argue that Nixon, an experienced lawyer, was unaware of the legal implications for the United States of Kissinger's moves.

The change in policy—the decision to no longer support the Republic of Vietnam as a sovereign and legal government—was easily covered up. Although President Nixon might still address letters to Thieu as the president of the Republic of Vietnam, this was a mere form devoid of content. Thieu had become an object of vilification in the United States. Thieu's relations with the Congress, to the extent that they existed at all in spite of his advisers' Herculean efforts in this regard, were deplorable, as they were with the American press, where cartoonists such as Pat Oliphant had taken to portraying him as a bucktoothed monster in the style of World War II propaganda about the savage Japanese. The real feeling in the White House about Thieu was summed up in the phrase, cited by Kissinger, "I mean the tail can't wag the dog here." <sup>488</sup> The phrase, and no doubt the attitude it represented, found its way to the other side, for when Kissinger's messenger in Paris, Colonel Georges R. Guay, delivered one of his messages at the height of the October crisis, the recipient "said [his] only comment was that [the] tail appeared to be wagging [the] dog."489 The phrase must have provided the DRV negotiators with some sardonic satisfaction, to have the Americans comparing themselves to a dog, an animal not highly prized among the Vietnamese except as a table delicacy.

Nor was the change in policy likely to cause the same kind of shock among the friends of the United States in Southeast Asia as had President Kennedy's decision in 1961 to change policy in support of a neutral Laos. Judging from the domestic turmoil they saw, many were prepared to believe that Nixon would pull out from Vietnam if he could find a face-saving way to do so. General Haig, on just such a face-saving mission, assured the leaders of Laos and Thailand in January 1973 that the text of the agreement referred to the sovereignty of South Vietnam in no fewer than four places; he did not explain, of course, that the South Vietnam whose sovereignty was thus preserved could as well be that of the PRG. Haig also hoped they would encourage Thieu to accept the agreement in the event that he asked their advice. The last time the Thai had been urged to encourage an American ally to accept an unpalatable agreement had been in 1962 with General Phoumi; this sort of thing was becoming a regular habit.

The foreign ministry in Saigon circulated a note to friendly embassies intended to bring them up to date on the negotiations, as the DRV was doing in Hanoi. After long and delicate discussions with Kissinger in a frank and cordial atmosphere, the note said, President Thieu had had "to reject the ceasefire proposal offered by North Vietnam through the good offices of Dr. Kissinger." The note explained the government's objection to the provisions in the draft with respect to the presence of the DRV's troops in South Vietnam, to its failure to recognize the temporary partition of Vietnam and the inviolability of the DMZ, and to the suggestion of a disguised coalition government to organize the election of a constituent assembly to draft a new constitution.<sup>491</sup> Bunker immediately dispatched Whitehouse to urge the ministry to redraft certain passages of the note which it judged offensive; one of these was the description of the disguised coalition, which was changed to read "The political arrangements are still under discussion." On even the best empirical evidence available that a circle was still a circle and a square still a square, that provided by the prime minister of the DRV himself, the embassy could not accept that Kissinger's attempt to square the circle should be spoiled. 492 In the secrecy of their communications, nevertheless, Kissinger and Haig had accepted "that they [the DRV] have in fact insisted on the imposition of a coalition government through evolution if not instantaneously."493

Despite the effort to preserve secrecy, the DRV intelligence service was certainly well informed about the tenor of the talks between Thieu and Kissinger. Nevertheless, the DRV received official notification, as it were, of the hangup on October 22 when a message came through the usual channels complaining about Pham Van Dong's interview statements; it was even more clear 24 hours later when another message arrived speaking of difficulties in the form of the question of DRV forces in the South and "many technical problems." The latter note proposed the postponement of Kissinger's visit to Hanoi and another private meeting in Paris. Sissinger returned directly to Washington; he was never again welcomed to South Vietnam. His report to President Nixon on his final meeting with President Thieu, written in the third person, contains an amazing mixture of falsehoods and threats, saying he told Thieu that he had "been apprised fully of every development as it has occurred" and that he assured Thieu "that he is not an obstacle, that we have no intention of asking him to resign, but pointed out that should he become an obstacle, we cannot support him."

President Thieu, unlike President Nixon and Kissinger, was not constrained by secret dealings, and on October 24 he gave a televised address to the nation explaining the position and preparing them for a cease-fire "sooner or later." He said more was at stake than his personal survival; it was the survival of 17 million South Vietnamese. "Only the people of South Vietnam have a right to determine their own future," he said. The speech, delivered in a confident and informal manner, was well received. <sup>496</sup> The South Vietnamese sensed immediately the pressure the Americans were applying.

On October 26, in accordance with the fallback plan decided in the politburo in the event Kissinger did not keep the schedule to which he had commit-

ted himself, the DRV broadcast the main points of the October 20 draft, a summary of the negotiation process in Paris over the preceding four years, Nixon's notes to the DRV, and a statement reaffirming its position to abide by commitments given and demanding that the United States do likewise. Thus it was from their enemy rather than from their ally that the South Vietnamese people learned the details of what had been negotiated in Paris. For Kissinger, it was a relief that it was the DRV that had disclosed the draft rather than Saigon, for Saigon's disclosing of the draft would have publicized the basic differences between the allies and heightened American exasperation, with possibly unpredictable impact on the election campaign, whereas Hanoi's disclosure merely put on record what the negotiations had achieved, which would be to Nixon's credit in the election. Moreover, the prospect of "peace" now put additional pressure on Saigon to accept the agreement, which was also in accordance with Kissinger's plan.

The DRV laid the entire responsibility on the Nixon administration without mentioning Kissinger by name:

> The so-called difficulties in Saigon represent a mere pretext to delay the implementation of the U.S. commitments, because it is public knowledge that the Saigon administration has been rigged up and fostered by the United States. With a mercenary army equipped and paid by the United States, this administration is a tool for carrying out the Vietnamization policy and the neocolonialist policy of the United States in violation of the South Vietnamese people's national rights. It is an instrument for the United States to sabotage all peaceful settlement of the Vietnam problem.497

Kissinger's main concern in the coming days was accordingly to reassure Hanoi that the United States fully intended to overcome the "difficulties" of which it had notified the DRV and to resume the negotiations. In the press conference at which he made the famous "We believe peace is at hand" statement, Kissinger was asked whether the Saigon government was informed of the negotiations, and he answered yes, but no one asked him on whose authority he had negotiated on behalf of Saigon.<sup>498</sup> But the DRV documented the point; its spokesman in Paris, Nguyên Thanh Le, said repeatedly at a press conference the following day that the United States had declared itself the representative of Saigon in the bilateral negotiations and had agreed to signature of the agreement by the DRV and American foreign ministers. 499 The DRV's allies, the Soviet Union and China, had immediately declared their full support for Hanoi's stand. 500 The DRV foreign ministry briefed diplomats. In Paris, Xuan Thuy entered the text of the October 20 draft into the record at the 164th plenary session.<sup>501</sup> Sullivan received word that Ambassador to the United States Tran Kim Phuong was being sent on a tour of Southeast Asian nations to brief their governments on Saigon's position and immediately instructed the Saigon embassy to seek to dissuade the government from such activities. 502 But thoughtful officials in Washington reacted with alarm, particularly at the absence in the draft of any requirement that the DRV withdraw its troops from the South. Kissinger acknowledged their concerns, telling William E. Colby "it's the only way we can get the prisoners back." Following Harriman's precedent, Kissinger began leaking to compliant reporters in Washington, telling them on the usual non-attributable basis that he was requiring the DRV to withdraw some of its troops from the South before signing an agreement. And, like Harriman, Kissinger was soon complaining about a "press campaign emanating from Saigon," a charge that Hoang Duc Nha denied. 505

In Saigon, the Lower House, meeting in plenary session on October 27, passed a resolution supporting President Thieu's stand with an impressive 125 deputies in favor; the resolution rejected any form of coalition with the Communists and any tripartite formula and declared that a political solution must be decided by the people of South Vietnam. <sup>506</sup> Responsibility for allowing this to happen fell on Thieu's shoulders, much as he tried to put the best face on it in his consultations with his colleagues and in his speeches. In their hearts, the Saigonese were wondering how long Thieu could stand up to the pressures the Americans were putting on him.

The broadcasts from Hanoi contained details of the negotiations about which Thieu had not been informed by the Americans. These included the agreed-upon schedule for a halt to American actions against the North and the signing of the agreement in Paris. Most intriguing for Thieu was the reference to President Nixon's message to Pham Van Dong assuring him "the text of the agreement can now be considered complete," sent while Kissinger was still in Saigon "consulting" with Thieu. Thieu told Bunker that when asked about these matters he was claiming ignorance and referring questions to the Americans.<sup>507</sup> Privately, he and his advisers fully appreciated the irony that for all these months the Americans had been warning them not to divulge publicly any differences between them lest such differences be exploited by the DRV. They put their comments in the form of a memorandum requesting American confirmation of the details broadcast by Hanoi and setting the record straight with regard to some of Kissinger's more egregious press conference statements. 508 Hurt to the quick, Kissinger responded with another savagely worded letter over President Nixon's signature expressing astonishment at being asked to comment on Radio Hanoi's "claims" and dismissing Thieu's concern about the presidential message by noting that it touched on issues that, to Thieu, were peripheral; Thieu's raising of Radio Hanoi's citation of Nixon's message to the effect that the text of the agreement was now complete was simply ignored.<sup>509</sup>

From the DRV's viewpoint, if Saigon signed under American threats, the agreement provided cover to the PRG to claim equal status with a government that would have lost all legality and legitimacy, the first step toward replacing it. If Saigon refused, there was a good chance the Americans would cut off aid, which would make a rapid military victory, camouflaged as a "general uprising" in favor of the PRG, that much easier. To accomplish either purpose, it was essential that Kissinger arrange to have the United States sign the agreement. In Kissinger the DRV negotiators had found someone, like Mendès-France in 1954, with whom they could strike a bargain by negotiating secretly. Like Men-

dès-France in 1954, who told Dulles one thing and had his emissary to Hanoi give another version of French policy, thereby earning the plaudits as the man who "made peace in one month,"<sup>510</sup> Kissinger was in the habit of telling one person one thing and another something else. For instance, in the critical last days of November 1972, he spoke sympathetically about President Thieu to Thieu's associates while encouraging a negative view of him as an obstacle to peace in his backgrounders to the Washington press corps.<sup>511</sup> Moreover, he was not overly concerned about constitutional niceties.

Kissinger's position was to put the best possible interpretation on the draft agreement, setting aside what he called "the usual nitpicking about certain aspects of the settlement" and emphasizing the extent of the DRV's concessions on certain points ("their collapse will be total"). He took comfort from the praise heaped on the agreement by Lon Nol, Souvanna Phouma, and the Thai leaders, who, of course, had been presented with this most optimistic version during the whirlwind tour of Kissinger's team and had not yet had a chance to raise serious questions about its deficiencies, such as the absence of a timetable for the withdrawal of the DRV's troops. 512

In his statement prepared for the November 2 session at the Avenue Kléber, Ambassador Nguyên Xuan Phong, acting for Ambassador Lam, whom Thieu had dispatched on a diplomatic mission to friendly capitals seeking support, questioned the Communists closely about the National Council for Reconciliation and Concord provided for in the draft agreement and which the Communists were referring to as a "structure of power." His delegation, Phong wrote, could detect no difference in substance between the council and the coalition government proposed by the Communist delegations over the years. "Our delegation has repeatedly explained to you that we do not find acceptable the way you conceive and wish to divide power one way or another between this or that group. We find it contrary to the most elementary rules of democracy to set up arbitrarily and to impose on the South Vietnamese population any form or structure of power, whether it is provisional or definitive. Any form or structure of power, therefore of government, must result from democratic means."513 It was a statement that echoed in its simple eloquence President Kennedy's confrontation with Chairman Khrushchev in Vienna in June 1961 over the right of armed minorities to seize power in "national liberation wars." Kissinger was "highly disturbed" and immediately instructed Bunker to demand that Thieu change Phong's instructions.<sup>514</sup>

After the American election, Kissinger returned to the negotiations in Paris. At Nixon's direction, he now started briefing Ambassador Pham Dang Lam at the American embassy residence at 41 Faubourg Saint-Honoré after each of his sessions with the DRV.<sup>515</sup> Foreign policy adviser to Thieu Nguyên Phu Duc, who had earned a law degree from Harvard, also arrived in Paris. Also in Paris was Nguyên Tien Hung, an economist with a doctorate from the University of Virginia, who had been instrumental in studying minutely the texts of successive Communist proposals and in alerting Thieu to the way Kissinger had caved in on the mutual withdrawal issue. The DRV's strategy in this round was to maintain the principles and content of the October 20 draft. Now that all their

strong points had been exposed to view by Saigon, the DRV negotiators realized they would have to bargain hard to preserve its substance. To accomplish this, they proceeded to withdraw, one by one, concessions they had previously made in order to force Kissinger to negotiate them all over again. This time it was not they who were in a hurry to conclude; they would be satisfied with a new timetable to have the agreement signed around January 20, 1973. he accordingly, Tho opened by striking hard where he knew it would hurt: he once again linked the release of the American POWs to the release by Saigon of Viet Cong civilian prisoners. He quoted from a House of Representatives report that the United States had spent money to build prisons and had sent American advisers to help the Saigon government manage them. have been deceived by the French, the Japanese and the Americans, but the deception has never been so flagrant as now, he claimed with customary sanctimony.

At the opening session on November 20, Kissinger succeeded in gaining acceptance, by some hard bargaining with Tho, of some key points. For example, he deleted the original American wording of draft Article 9(d) implying American non-recognition of the Republic of Vietnam and its institutions. Kissinger's bearing of gifts to Tho and Thuy and his adoption of a cajoling and bantering manner, however, failed to convince them to yield on other equally important points of what for them were matters of principle, such as the non-withdrawal of DRV troops from the South and American recognition of the existence of the PRG. "Kissinger proved to have no comprehension of his interlocutors," was their judgment. Kissinger describes the day's work as a "process of retreat" and writes that he presented the changes demanded by Saigon in order "to ease the task of obtaining Thieu's approval. Thieu had sent Nixon a memorandum on November 18 seeking more changes.

Tho energetically rejected the demand for withdrawal of DRV troops from the South. The Vietnamese people had a right to oppose aggression; the withdrawal of so-called North Vietnamese troops and the withdrawal of American troops could not be put on the same footing; the American approach was illegitimate and morally, politically, and legally wrong, as Kissinger himself had previously admitted. 522 Three days later, Tho added: "We will never accept any statement in the agreement which implies that we admit the presence of North Vietnamese forces." 523 And the next day he repeated this. 524 Again, one is led to remark how much less painful the whole process would have been had there been private consultation between the allies on a defensible position prior to the negotiations instead of waiting for sessions with the opposing side to piece together a patchwork of arguments and counterarguments, as Kissinger was doing, only to see it unraveled at the next session and having to sew it up once more. And so it went, disheartening session after disheartening session, until November 25, when a recess was called. 525

## THREATS AND PROMISES

Thieu had succeeded in delaying the signing of the agreement until after the American presidential election. Now he allowed himself to be misled by

Nixon's promises.<sup>526</sup> What he failed to foresee was that once the election was out of the way, Nixon and Kissinger would be brutal in going ahead with the agreement in order to free the American POWs and that the promises of American support after a cease-fire were only that—promises. Meanwhile, the Americans would be free to blame Thieu for any delay or failure of the negotiations, which in fact went up to the very last minute.

For the moment, at any rate, threats were more the order of the day than promises. As Kissinger had foreseen, publication of the draft agreement had undermined whatever was left of congressional support for the administration's conduct of the war, which by now boiled down to aiding Saigon militarily and economically.<sup>527</sup> No reasonable legislator, hawk or dove, was willing to go on appropriating funds for what was increasingly looking like supporting one faction in an African bush war, particularly in economically hard times in the United States and the West. Kissinger used the threat of a congressional cutoff of funding for the war as yet another weapon with which to compel President Thieu to sign the agreement. He made this clear in a message he sent Bunker on November 26 containing a memorandum to himself from President Nixon. If leading Senators concluded that Saigon was the only roadblock to an agreement they would lead the fight when Congress reconvened on January 3 to cut off all military and economic assistance effective February 1, Nixon said. Also, Nixon said that under such circumstances he would have no choice but "to go it alone and to make a separate deal with North Vietnam for the return of our POWs and for our withdrawal."528 Kissinger had reversed his earlier rejection of the option of a bilateral deal and had persuaded Nixon to underwrite it, either to use as a bargaining lever with Thieu or as a possible reality to conclude with the DRV. Kissinger had been discussing such a course with Haig, who pronounced himself "strongly opposed." 529 He had had his aide Negroponte draft an agreement providing for a separate cease-fire between American and other allied foreign forces and the Communists (Article 1), the withdrawal of American and allied forces (Article 3), the return of American POWs to be completed on the same day as the troop withdrawal (Article 6), and payment of war reparations to the DRV.530 The message was delivered as usual to the palace by Bunker; it served to confirm in Thieu's mind what he had long suspected about an American "deal" for the POWs.

President Thieu, who did not want to deal with Kissinger again, sought a face-to-face meeting with President Nixon, but Nixon refused, agreeing only to see Duc. Thieu thereupon sent Hoang Duc Nha to Paris bearing a letter to Nixon handwritten in Vietnamese. Duc translated Thieu's letter into English and typed it on blank presidential note paper Thieu had also sent with the last page bearing his signature.<sup>531</sup> It read in part:

I have been informed that in the event we cannot accept the absurd demands of the Communists, the United States would seek a separate arrangement with North Vietnam for the withdrawal of U.S. forces and the return of American prisoners of war. If indeed the question of the prisoners of war is an important question for you, I believe there still

are ways to obtain their release other than jeopardizing the fate of the seventeen million and [a] half South Vietnamese.

As regards the Republic of Vietnam, in order to express our deep gratitude towards the people and the Government of the United States, we are prepared to do all we can for the liberation of U.S. prisoners of war. To that effect, we are ready to release all the 10,000 North Vietnamese prisoners of war if this may hasten the day for the U.S. prisoners of war to be reunited with their families. For this, we do not even demand that North Vietnam reciprocates in releasing in return the large number of South Vietnamese prisoners of war now in Communist hands. 532

Duc and Ambassador Tran Kim Phuong met with President Nixon and Kissinger in the Oval Office on the afternoon of November 29, with Kissinger in Kissinger's office on the morning of November 30, and then with Nixon and Kissinger in the Oval Office, and finally in two long working sessions with Kissinger on December 1. In these meetings, Nixon and Kissinger for the first time outlined for Duc a contingency plan that would allow retaliatory air strikes by tactical aircraft and B-52s to be mounted in the event the DRV's forces in the South violated the agreement. Targeting information on DRV military dispositions in the South would be updated weekly after the cease-fire by means of a communications network linking the four military region headquarters with the Seventh Air Force headquarters at Nakhon Phanom in Thailand. The commander of the Seventh Air Force, General John W. Vogt, flew the South Vietnamese corps commanders to see the base facilities. According to his oral history, General Vogt felt it was part of his mission to update the targets and resume bombing if a situation arose that required it. 533

After reading Thieu's letter, Nixon told Duc and Phuong that Thieu seemed to think that if the United States continued the Vietnamization program, backed up by bombing and mining, the war could be won. Thieu might be right, but he, Nixon, could not do it and had no intention of doing it because Congressional leaders had told him that if the Paris agreement was not signed by January 13, 1973, Congress would cut off military and economic aid to South Vietnam. Duc said Thieu continued to be very firm on the principles of DRV withdrawal from the South and on the refusal of a coalition. It seemed to Duc that Nixon saw the logic of these arguments when Nixon turned to Kissinger and asked if the draft agreement could be further improved. Duc, with Thieu's prior authorization, asked Nixon whether a solution might be found in signing two separate agreements, one between the United States and the DRV covering military matters and exchange of POWs, and another between South and North Vietnam on political matters. To this proposal, Nixon, reversing his previous threat, answered that it was too late to change the draft agreement. Duc concluded that the United States needed to have South Vietnam sign the agreement. Easing the tension, Nixon observed that the agreement was only a piece of paper, and what really mattered was what the United States did to support South Vietnam. He then gave Duc four commitments: (1) continued military and economic aid after signature of the agreement; (2) continued support for

President Thieu; (3) air retaliation from bases in Thailand should the Communists violate the agreement; and (4) American arrangements with Moscow and Peking to limit aid to the DRV after the ceasefire. Duc and Phuong left the White House with a final warning from Nixon about the reconvening of Congress January 3 and Congress's control of purse strings.

Duc's second meeting was taken up with discussion of changes the South Vietnamese wanted Kissinger to propose in the draft agreement during the next round of negotiations. When the discussion got back to Duc's two-agreement suggestion, Kissinger told him the DRV refused to consider a purely military agreement. Furthermore, Kissinger said, the Soviets linked their agreement to limit aid to the DRV to conclusion of a comprehensive peace settlement. Kissinger left to consult Nixon, and then the meeting continued in the Oval Office. Nixon hoped Thieu could join the Americans in signing, and repeated the barely veiled threat to which the South Vietnamese had become accustomed. The following morning, in Kissinger's office, Duc was surprised to hear from Kissinger and Major General Haig that the modalities for the ceasefire had not yet been worked out between the Americans and the DRV. "With regard to the talks, even at this late stage I would greatly appreciate the opportunity to talk face to face with the North Vietnamese," he told Kissinger. Kissinger replied: "Now at this stage it is impossible to change the course of events. The deadline is fixed. . . . In any event you will have plenty of opportunity to talk with them after [the signing of the agreement]."534

Here was the best evidence available that sovereignty in South Vietnam had passed to the Americans. First the French had invited the NLF to Paris to open an information bureau, then to sit at the four-party conference once the bombing halt had been agreed to between the Americans and the DRV. Then the Republic of Vietnam had accepted this arrangement under the false pretense that the DRV delegation would engage in "serious talks" with its delegation, and ever since the delegates of the Republic of Vietnam had sat there like wooden statues while the other side talked to the Americans. Then the PRG was invited by the Americans to share power in South Vietnam on an equal basis with the Republic of Vietnam. Now, the Americans had informed the Republic of Vietnam, on the record, that it could not even participate in their talks with the DRV; the Republic of Vietnam could talk to the DRV only after the signing of the agreement.

This would have been an insult to any sovereign government, much less an ally in wartime. But instead of a sovereign government the Americans now had a completely compliant regime to deal with, like the generals' junta Lodge's embassy had had after November 1, 1963, and they could overlook the constitution, the presidency, the supreme court, the National Assembly, and the other trappings of legality and legitimacy in South Vietnam. They reserved for themselves, in the event the puppet government still balked at going along, the right to sign a separate agreement with the Communists extricating their POWs and ending American involvement on any terms offered.

Duc reported the negative result of his conversations with Nixon and Kissinger on his return to Saigon on December 4, and two days later key government leaders were invited to hear Duc give a briefing. We possess a report on this meeting thanks to the CIA's bug in the palace. After Duc had spoken, Thieu said there was no reason for the aggressive forces of North Vietnam to stay in South Vietnam while the liberation forces of the United States were withdrawn. To accept this in the agreement would be to accept the basic view of the North Vietnamese that the Americans have been the aggressors. The terms of the agreement sacrificed the justness of the cause of South Vietnam by inverting realities; Hanoi would claim it had ousted the aggressors and had a right to oust the puppet regime, as Hanoi was the sole legitimate government in Vietnam. By using the term PRG, the agreement certified the existence in South Vietnam of two governments rather than an established government and a revolutionary movement. It thereby established in the eyes of the world that the Republic of Vietnam was not clearly sovereign.

Duc thereupon reported in more detail on his talks with Nixon. In Duc's recollection, he warned Thieu that if the government signed the agreement in its present form, it would mean the end of South Vietnam. Such Thieu to the withdrawal from South Vietnam of North Vietnamese forces, Nixon said that this could not be written into the agreement but that the terms of understanding could be revised so as to have the North Vietnamese withdrawn after a cease-fire. President Nixon repeated his promise to guarantee military aid in case of serious violation of the cease-fire. When Duc concluded his detailed report, Thieu said that because of the American position he had no choice but to sign the agreement. Such Carlos of the American position he had no choice but

Thieu decided he was in danger of a "campaign" against him by the Americans in which Nixon would say that it was because of Thieu that the POWs had not been gotten back and that Thieu was opposed to a cease-fire. Further secret correspondence would not suffice to head off such a campaign, and Nixon was still urging him to say nothing in public that might jeopardize the negotiations. <sup>537</sup> Thieu told Senate president Huyen that he was planning to deflate this campaign preemptively by making public a new initiative. <sup>538</sup> In fact, by then Kissinger and Haig were dismissing Thieu's objections as "emotional hangups" rather than the matters of principle that they were. <sup>539</sup> Thieu addressed both houses of the National Assembly on December 12, having also invited the diplomatic corps. Whatever damage the Americans were doing to the constitutional fabric of the republic, he wanted to preserve the forms, and Article 39 gave the Assembly specific authority to determine the holding of peace negotiations.

The Communists saw things in their own way, he said:

1. The United States has been the aggressor in the South as well as in the North. It must therefore bear the full responsibility and all the consequences as an aggressor. As for Communist North Vietnam, it has been a liberator, which automatically gives it the right to send North Vietnamese troops to the South and to decide on any political settlement in the South under the principle that Vietnam must be one and belongs to Communist North Vietnam.

2. Everything in the South—from the ARVN, the Vietnamization policy, the military aid to even the present regime—has been produced by the United States. Therefore, the United States must remove all that upon leaving here and relinquish to Communist North Vietnam the power to settle and reorganize everything in its own way.

Thieu said he had proposed that all DRV troops be withdrawn to the North at the same time other foreign troops were withdrawn. Afterward, the Republic of Vietnam would accept an equal reduction of numerical strength in the ARVN to show its goodwill for peace. However, the Communists had rejected this proposal.

Concerning the political issue, Thieu said he had proposed a referendum supervised by the United Nations, the results of which would decide the composition of the national reconciliation and concord committee to organize the election of the new president and vice president. After the election, the new president would form a so-called national coalition government, the members of which would be determined by the number of votes gained by the candidates in the presidential election. The winner of the largest number of votes would be president, and political parties and popular organizations would be allowed to participate in the government in accordance with the number of votes obtained by their presidential candidates. After that, with the NLF participating, there would be discussion of the constitution, and amendments would be submitted to the National Assembly. This was Thieu's version of the "one man, one vote" formula. The Communists had rejected this formula.

Thieu said he had then proposed that the national reconciliation and concord committee be chosen instead by equal nomination by the Republic of Vietnam and the NLF. This proposal overlooked the small percentage of support among voters and was intended to show "utmost goodwill and national reconciliation spirit." The Communists had also rejected this proposal.

After forcing us to sign this agreement and after achieving the so-called expulsion of Americans from Vietnam in all forms, the annexation of South Vietnam through military and political means will be only a question of time for the Communists with their 300,000 northern troops remaining in the South, with the so-called three-segment national concord government, a camouflaged coalition government, and with a North Vietnam living in safety and accepting freely the Communist imperialists' military aid.

Thieu was too polite to tell his listeners that it was his American ally who was "forcing us to sign this agreement." They sensed it well enough already, as reflected in the commentaries being published in the Saigon press.

Thieu then went on:

As I have pointed out, the Communists intend to use the lives of several hundred U.S. POWs to bargain for an unimaginable price. As for the United States, it must stop bombing and mining the North; the

United States and our allies must withdraw their forces unconditionally; and the United States must contribute to reconstructing North Vietnam. The price we must pay is: we must accept the disguised coalition three-segment government formula, put an end to the current regime in the South through new general elections, discard the Vietnamization plan and stop receiving military aid.

Thieu then proposed a truce of substantial duration during which both sides would halt all offensive operations and prisoners of war would be exchanged in time for their return home by Christmas. Also during the truce, the various Vietnamese parties would make contact to discuss all issues of mutual interest and lay the basis for promoting serious and productive negotiations for ending the war and restoring peace. These discussions could be held openly or secretly, anywhere, and with every problem open to discussion. Thieu also made public his proposal "to make its modest contribution to solving the U.S. POW problem this Christmas by returning to North Vietnam all Communist North Vietnamese POWs now in the Republic of Vietnam's custody."<sup>540</sup>

Meanwhile, in Paris the negotiations were moving toward their climax. Tho and Thuy were relaxed and pleasant, consistent with their strategy of preventing a break-off of the negotiations, and even invited Kissinger to stay for dinner. Kissinger was still counting on making his trip to Hanoi provided the agreement was wrapped up before Christmas. But he became increasingly tense and frustrated by his interlocutors' withdrawal and replacement of concessions they had made on various points of the October draft in counterpart to the demands he had advanced on behalf of Thieu's "emotional hangups." Finally he told the DRV negotiators that in light of their tactics he would never again come to Paris for more than two days and reminded them that this would be the last time he would try to negotiate a comprehensive agreement. On Monday, December 11, the DRV returned to the pre-October demand for linkage between releases of POWs and South Vietnamese civilian prisoners. At the beginning of their meeting on Tuesday, December 12, Tho indicated he planned to return to Hanoi; he was prepared to come back to Paris, but it might be quicker to settle the few remaining issues through messages. On that day, the DRV submitted counter-drafts of protocols; the protocol on prisoner releases effectively tied the POWs to the South Vietnamese civilian prisoners. Kissinger had planned to return to Washington but decided to stay for a third meeting on Wednesday, December 13, which proved to be inconclusive, and he taxed his interlocutors with wasting hours of his time. They, in turn, remained pleasant but made it clear that the agreement could not be considered completed unless all the understandings and protocols were also agreed upon.<sup>541</sup> It was the DRV's way of saying: We can hold your POWs forever unless you give us what we want in South Vietnam.

In a final effort to get President Thieu "on board," Nixon and Kissinger had decided to send Vice President Spiro Agnew to Saigon. He was to carry the most categorical assurance to date of massive retaliation in the event of DRV violations of the agreement:

The President desires that you reaffirm to Thieu his unequivocal commitment that, if Thieu joins us in the agreement, we will continue to provide the full measure of economic and military assistance that South Vietnam needs and that we will immediately and massively retaliate against the North if it violates the agreement.<sup>542</sup>

The DRV's new fiddling with the POW release, the most sensitive issue for the Americans in the negotiations, threatened to make both options unviable. The DRV negotiators were being inventive in tying the POW release to other provisions. Nixon had set inauguration day, January 20, 1973, as the deadline for the agreement,<sup>543</sup> and there was still lots of paperwork to be done even after the negotiations ended in a mutually acceptable draft. Nixon and Kissinger, thoroughly alarmed, realized they had painted themselves into a corner and had to do something dramatic to wrest back the initiative if they were to obtain agreement on a text that made the release of the POWs unconditional. In discussing what to do after President Thieu's refusal to sign the agreement in October, Haig had argued the United States was still in a position to bring its military strength to bear against Hanoi. "Any course of action which you consider," he had cabled Kissinger, "will have to give appropriate weight to this remaining bluechip which is the only viable pressure-point we have to obtain the release of our prisoners and the honorable extraction of our remaining forces." <sup>544</sup>

Nixon had sent a message to Kissinger on the night of December 12, telling him before he returned to Washington to put the DRV on notice that while Nixon was still willing to achieve a negotiated settlement, the understandings that had governed the conduct of both sides in the talks would no longer apply and the United States intended to act in accordance with its own interests until a settlement was achieved in a spirit of goodwill and reciprocity. On December 14, Nixon issued the order for the fiercest bombing raids over Hanoi of the war, which were to last from December 18, the day Tho reached Hanoi, until December 31. Kissinger in his memoirs explains the decision as basically one of acting tough. Indeed it was.

Defending his negotiating record before an audience of Washington reporters who had only a vague knowledge of the multi-point proposals made in Paris and who accepted implicitly the assumption that the United States had the right to dictate to its ally the terms of the peace agreement, Kissinger said on December 16: "None of these proposals had asked for a withdrawal of North Vietnamese forces. And therefore, we could not agree with our allies in South Vietnam when they added conditions to the established position after an agreement had been reached that reflected these established positions." It was an attempt by Kissinger to signal to Hanoi that the Americans had been reasonable and were prepared to sign; there was no insurmountable obstacle to peace. As usual, he was talking out of both sides of his mouth. Hung was so outraged by Kissinger's distortions of the record that he compiled a rebuttal that was subsequently entered into the *Congressional Record*. States in the South Vietnamese for "adding conditions to the established position" when the record showed that the "established position" Kissinger was referring to resulted from

the concession he had made to the DRV on May 31, 1971, unilaterally and without so much as informing Saigon, in complete disregard of Thieu's memoranda and letters on the issue, which he had delivered in secret because Kissinger had sworn him to secrecy on the grounds of not upsetting the negotiations by commenting publicly, and barely a month after Nixon had publicly repeated the true agreed-upon position on mutual withdrawal. The upshot was that Kissinger was now denying the Saigon government any input whatsoever into the negotiations.

After consideration, Nixon decided to send Haig instead of Agnew to Saigon. The Foreign Service officers in the embassy had re-read Thieu's speech to the National Assembly and consulted their Vietnamese contacts and concluded the speech was not the blunt refusal it had originally appeared to be (or the "dramatic" upping of the ante that Haig had, hastily and unwisely, reported to Nixon), but rather an effort to enlist others in sharing responsibility for accepting the inevitable. In true Vietnamese fashion, bending with the wind like bamboo, Thieu intended to "accept" the agreement as a "reality" without signing it.549 Bunker reported that Thieu realized he faced a dilemma: not to sign the agreement and risk a cutoff of aid by the Congress or sign and risk adverse political reaction and deterioration of the situation in South Vietnam. The worst he had hoped for was American disengagement, withdrawal of all American troops, cessation of all American military action, and exchange of prisoners, but provision of aid which would allow his government to fight on alone and try to work out political arrangements with the DRV and the NLF. This would be difficult for the government but would provide a chance for survival. 550 Thieu had had experience of what a cutoff of American aid meant; in 1963, as commander of the ARVN Fifth Division, he had seen the Americans cut off deliveries of fuel and ammunition.

Thieu's words before the National Assembly about the American negotiators' accepting a settlement which would place the United States in the position of being the aggressor in the war apparently had some effect. James Reston, that most astute of American reporters, quoted "responsible officials" in Paris, but obviously Kissinger himself, to the effect that the Americans would have preferred that the issue of South Vietnamese sovereignty had not arisen, but they were prepared to recognize "the merits of the argument on both sides." This was an issue, however, that would be settled later among the Vietnamese "and is not a matter that, if unresolved, would justify the United States in carrying on the war." <sup>551</sup>

Haig's mission was to be a final effort to point out to Thieu the need for joint action and to convey Nixon's irrevocable decision to proceed, if necessary alone, and Haig carried a letter to this effect. Thieu read the letter very carefully, obviously somewhat shaken by its contents, and told Haig it was obvious he was being asked to sign an agreement for continued support, not an agreement for peace, a deduction with which Haig had to agree.<sup>552</sup> Haig took away the impression that Thieu would go along in the pragmatic realization this was the only way to obtain American assistance. However, after consultation with his cabinet and other key figures, Thieu gave Haig a new letter to Nixon the next

day. He did not directly reject Nixon's ultimatum but asked for another effort on the DRV troop withdrawal and political issues.

My interpretation of the so-called Christmas bombing differs from that offered by Tad Szulc and others who argue, on the basis of Kissinger's promises to Thieu in August about what would happen after the American election, that the bombing was "designed to induce Thieu to sign the Paris Agreement." There are at least three factors that cast doubt on the bombing to "induce" Thieu to sign. First, we know thanks to the CIA's "bug" in the palace that the Americans knew that Thieu had told his intimates as early as December 6 that he had no choice but to sign the agreement. Second, the bombing seems never to have been put to Thieu, either before or after, as a quid pro quo for signing; when Bunker informed him that President Nixon was considering some forceful action in retaliation for the DRV's stalling tactics in Paris, Thieu expressed his satisfaction. Third, the record shows that Nixon had decided to go ahead and conclude with the DRV with or without Saigon.

In Congress, a move was building to cut off funding for the war, contingent only on extraction of the remaining troops and release of the POWs. On January 4, Senator Edward M. Kennedy led the Democratic Senate Caucus to vote a resolution making it policy to get the troops and POWs out and to prohibit any further military operations in Indochina. Bunker warned Kissinger that the Commercial Import Program would virtually dry up as of January 20 and that this would rapidly become public knowledge. Nixon had told Nguyên Phu Duc in November about contingency plans for air strikes from bases in Thailand in the event the DRV violated the agreement. Now he upped the ante, by writing to Thieu on January 5 promising him to "respond with full force" in the event of violations by the DRV. He must have realized he could not keep this promise.

Kissinger, anxious to avoid having the draft agreement unravel and with no viable fallback plan except the bilateral deal, of which acceptance by the other side was uncertain, proposed, in the midst of the bombing, another round of meetings with Tho. He found Tho eager to press ahead when they met again at Gif-sur-Yvette on January 8. The DRV was portraying the bombing as a victory, calling it a Dien Bien Phu of the air on the basis of the number of American planes shot down and the number of crews captured; it was obviously a ploy to prevent the Americans from capitalizing on their show of force in the negotiations. The bombing also increased congressional pressure on Nixon; there was no reason for the DRV to delay the signing. Tho was "brisk and businesslike." Kissinger had met with Bui Diem and Tran Van Do in Washington,<sup>558</sup> and no doubt as a sop to their devotion to principle he brought up again the withdrawal of DRV troops from the South. Tho quickly and firmly brushed aside his attempt, and Kissinger did not persist; he does not mention this in his account of this meeting in his memoirs, and undoubtedly it was of little importance to him. There was to be no more talk of this issue. In a day devoted to the basis for discussions, the agenda was agreed upon in the afternoon: the two relatively minor substantive issues of defining the DMZ and organizing the actual signing by the parties; discussions of the understandings and the principles of the protocols; and the timetable.<sup>559</sup>

At the meeting on January 9, Tho dropped the DRV's insistence of November and December that the wording of Article 8(c) revert to a two-month period for release of detained civilians in South Vietnam and agreed again to a threemonth period as Pham Van Dong had accepted in his message to President Nixon on October 19.560 This effectively made it impossible for the DRV to hold the American POWs, who were to be released within two months, hostage to implementation of the agreement. During discussion of Article 8 on November 23, Tho had offered an understanding that the DRV would discuss with the PRG the "symbolic readjustment of certain forces in the northern part of South Vietnam." 561 On January 10, Kissinger proposed to include in the American understanding on Article 8(c) a reference to the effect that American influence would depend on "the level of redisposition of forces under the PRG control." Tho objected that this question had already been settled in the exchanges the previous October, and Kissinger withdrew the proposal.<sup>562</sup> Thus the last vestige of any obligation on the DRV's troops in South Vietnam to withdraw faded into the night. Kissinger reported to Nixon that essential agreement had been reached on all the understandings, including the one on release of civilian detainees. 563 The Christmas bombing had achieved Kissinger's objective of freeing the POWs from the hands of their captors.

In his reports to Bunker on these last-round meetings, Kissinger was careful to control the information he judged could safely be passed on to Thieu; when the Associated Press reported that the DRV negotiators had agreed to delete from the draft the reference to the phrase "administrative structure" which Thieu's American-educated aides had alerted the president to in August, Kissinger, afraid that Tho would start stalling again, "read the riot act" to Ambassador Tran Kim Phuong in Washington and threatened to stop briefing the Saigon government completely if there were any more leaks. Kissinger assigned Sullivan the task of briefing the South Vietnamese "in general fashion"; to them, he was still portraying the talks as making slow, gradual progress. To Bunker, he used terms such as "continuing momentum," and warned against giving Thieu specific information. <sup>564</sup>

It is not possible to deduce from the documentary record whether the heavy bombing could have been exploited by the Americans to push the option of Vietnamizing the peace. Tho had informed Kissinger at the end of the December round that he intended to return in 12 to 15 days, <sup>565</sup> or after 18 days, <sup>566</sup> so his return to the negotiating table, often portrayed as an effect of the bombing, was a rather modest achievement. Some on Kissinger's staff believed more concessions could have been won; Negroponte urged him not to rush the negotiations and to take advantage of the new military and strategic reality created by the bombing. Negroponte found himself accused by Kissinger of wanting to prolong the war. <sup>567</sup> This was an unfair accusation by a man who, barely six months later, was to blame the congressional cutoff of American bombing in Cambodia for aborting his scheme to have the Chinese broker with the Khmer Rouge a hypothetical negotiated peace in that country, to which he devotes 34 pages of his memoirs. <sup>568</sup>

## "THOSE WHO DENY THIS FACT CAN ONLY BE CONSIDERED BLIND"

After he received the full English text of the agreement on January 13,<sup>569</sup> with a message from Kissinger relayed by Bunker that "no further changes are possible, and any attempt at procrastination will risk the American relations," Thieu still hesitated, bringing Haig once more to Saigon with another Nixon letter.<sup>570</sup> It contained even more comforting assurances about relations between the two governments and acknowledged that the agreement was not an ideal one. "As I have told you on many occasions," Nixon wrote, "the key issue is no longer particular nuances in the Agreement but rather the postwar cooperation of our two countries and the need for continued U.S. support."571 This poohpoohing of the agreement recalled Guy La Chambre's statement to Dillon in July 1954, with respect to the fate of the treaty of independence, that France considered it more important to turn over French-run services to the State of Vietnam than "to make a great show over the signature of general treaties." 572 As this incident makes clear, Nixon's and Kissinger's deceptiveness contrasts with the realism of the Vietnamese, both in Saigon and Hanoi. Nixon could tell Thieu anything he liked, but the Vietnamese knew that it was what was written in the agreement that counted.

Thieu hesitated again. On January 19, Bunker pressed him for a private meeting, although Thieu was presiding over the wedding of his daughter at the Independence Palace; after the two met that evening, Thieu told Nha "They are pressuring me again but he has given me some more assurances."<sup>573</sup> Haig again visited Saigon with another letter from Nixon on January 20.<sup>574</sup> It had now become a matter of trust between the two presidents. At a meeting of the National Security Council that day, the atmosphere was extremely tense. Thieu asked the members whether he should sign the agreement. No one dared express an opinion. Vice President Huong spoke up as a way of providing Thieu with an honorable escape from the dilemma. Huong said that Thieu would be blamed by public opinion if he signed, but he recommended signing. Thieu fully supported the vice president and said South Vietnam had no choice but to sign.<sup>575</sup> Thereupon, Foreign Minister Tran Van Lam was dispatched to Paris.

The Americans showed no shame for having bludgeoned their puppets into submission, and continued to maintain an arrogant attitude. Commenting on a last-minute change of wording in Article 6, Sullivan told Kissinger that although it had no practical significance "it can be read with a slightly different emphasis to our darlings to persuade them that significance is somehow lurking in its syntax, and at least they will have the satisfaction of knowing they made [DRV Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs Nguyên Co] Thach and me sweat blood for 6 hours on their amour-propre."<sup>576</sup> At Thieu's request, President Nixon added a brief reference in his televised speech effectively announcing the end of the war saying the agreement met the Saigon government's goals as well as U.S. goals, "so it doesn't look like an American war," Kissinger noted. <sup>577</sup>

On a cold, gray, rainy January 23, Le Duc Tho and Kissinger initialed the agreement and protocols at the Avenue Kléber. Tho had had to give up his pet project of having Kissinger initial the agreement in Hanoi, which to the Viet-

namese would have looked like a formal American surrender. None of Saigon's other allies subscribed to a similar truce document and instead withdrew their troops with honor; the first contingent of South Korean troops withdrawn after the cease-fire were given a heroes' welcome at Suwon Air Force Base by thousands of citizens, students, and military officials.<sup>578</sup> The New Zealand advisory group left South Vietnam at about the same time. The Australian troops had departed in 1971. The Thai and Philippine contingents withdrew in February 1973.

The text of the agreement was distributed to the press in Paris by the DRV delegation, and Radio Hanoi immediately began broadcasting it.<sup>579</sup> Its terms remained essentially the same as those contained in the NLF's 10-point overall solution proposed on May 8, 1969. At a press conference on January 24, Le Duc Tho reviewed the contents of the agreement, the protocols, and the understandings, emphasizing their similarity to the October 20 draft. Asked to explain the status of the DRV troops in the South, Tho replied in English that the DRV had completely rejected the allegation "because politically speaking as well as legally speaking this allegation has no point, is pointless. Finally the U.S. side dropped completely this proposal of theirs. Therefore, in the agreement, you can find not a single word implying the presence of the so-called North Vietnamese troops." On the political issue, Tho said: "The present situation in [South] Vietnam may be described as follows: There exist two administrations, two armies, two zones of control, and three political forces. No one can deny this fact. Those who deny this fact can only be considered blind. Moreover, this fact is clearly reflected in the clauses of the agreement." Asked about the possibility of normal diplomatic relations between the DRV and the United States, Tho referred to Article 22 and said that the end of the war and the restoration of peace would create favorable conditions for establishing "a relationship of equality, which will be mutually advantageous, and based on mutual respect for the independence, the sovereignty, and reciprocal non-interference in the internal affairs of each country." Yet it would be another 22 years before the United States extended de jure recognition to the DRV. Tho concluded by wishing everyone a happy Tet.<sup>580</sup> It was a brilliant performance in selectively writing history, something for which he had no need of accepting Kissinger's invitation to attend a seminar at Harvard.

Kissinger finally showed Secretary Rogers the text he was to sign on behalf of the United States. The arrangement worked out by Kissinger and Tho to get around the problem of the Saigon government's refusal to acknowledge the authority of the PRG required two signing ceremonies. A four-party signing took place on the morning of January 27 at the Avenue Kléber of documents whose preamble read simply "The parties participating in the Paris Conference on Vietnam." In the afternoon, at another ceremony in the same room a two-party signing took place of documents that were identical except for their preamble which read "The Government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, with the concurrence of the Provisional Revolutionary Government of the Republic of South Vietnam, and the Government of the United States of America, with the concurrence of the Government of the Republic of Vietnam."

Following the four-party signing around the green baize table, the delegations moved to the fover, where, out of sight of the press, they toasted "peace and friendship" in champagne offered by the French,<sup>581</sup> unlike at Geneva in 1954 when the military armistice had been signed and champagne refused. Foreign Minister Lam, Madame Nguyên Thi Binh, and Nguyên Duy Trinh, the man who had started the ball rolling in December 1967, shook hands and exchanged champagne toasts. Lam and Madame Binh had a ten-minute private conversation; Lam did not want any of the sort of photographs of Kissinger and Tho beaming smiles that Kissinger so treasured. The two had found the kind of personal rapport reserved for those who know exactly where the other stands and who have no illusions whatsoever that they are free agents. They were both from Saigon. Lam was from a prominent Catholic family and had been elected a deputy to and served as president of the Constituent Assembly of 1956. He had served as a judge of the Supreme Court and in 1967 had been elected to the Senate. Since becoming foreign minister in September 1969, Lam had been kept informed by Thieu of Kissinger's negotiations. Madame Binh was a grandniece of the patriot Phan Chu Trinh.

The occasion was marred by the raucous manifestation of solidarity by Viet Cong supporters with which the Americans and South Vietnamese in the French capital had become familiar. The unseemly yelling and chanting outside the windows as the signing was taking place, and further disturbances as the Americans were entering and leaving, annoyed Rogers sufficiently that he went immediately to the Quai d'Orsay and protested to Schumann. The French foreign minister in his usual flippant manner told the American he was "taking it too seriously" and tried to brush the complaint aside. But when Rogers informed him he was thinking of withdrawing American agreement to Paris as the site for the follow-up international conference foreseen in Article 19 of the agreement, "he finally got the point" and apologized profusely to Rogers and Lam. Thus, the Paris conference ended as it had begun, in a heady atmosphere of French partisanship for the DRV and PRG that compared unfavorably with the decorum of Geneva.<sup>582</sup> A few weeks later, France announced it was raising its relations with the DRV to ambassadorial level.<sup>583</sup>

The nature of the documents confronted the Saigon delegates with a peculiar problem. The Americans had rejected the Saigon government's suggestion that there be only a single document with the preamble "the parties to the Paris Conference on Vietnam" that did not list their names. They had arranged to have both two-party and four-party documents to be signed. Thieu had no problem in having his delegate sign the four-party document, as this merely acknowledged the fact of participation in the plenary sessions since 1969. But in the two-party documents signed by the Americans and the DRV the specification "with the concurrence of the Government of the Republic of Vietnam" implied a subordination that the South Vietnamese had not accepted when they agreed to the "our side, your side" formula. Without telling the Americans, Thieu and Lam found a way around the problem by deciding that Lam would not accept signed copies of the two-party agreement. Accordingly, Lam did not

return the two copies the Americans gave him for inspection prior to their signature, and the signed copies were distributed only to the other three parties. It was a small but significant, and very Vietnamese, gesture of protest at the manner in which the Americans had stretched the word "concurrence" since the beginning of the negotiations. President Thieu announced the signing in a 40-minute radio address, doing his best to present the agreement as a victory and calling for discipline, endurance, and a spirit of positive struggle on the part of all elements of the population. He appealed to people to fly the national flag. The nationalists now had their backs to the wall, and they knew it. In a letter to President Nixon, Thieu wrote that the blood shed on Vietnamese soil by the brave young men of the United States armed forces for the common cause had sealed forever the very close bonds of friendship between the two nations. He wrote that he profoundly rejoiced that as the hostilities were ending the ordeals of the prisoners of both nations and the long vigil of their loved ones would soon be over. The signature of the two ones would soon be over.

Hours before the signing, Lyndon Baines Johnson died peacefully at his ranch in Texas, spared from seeing the final agony of the Indochinese nationalists whose cause he had inherited and loyally defended, although some of those who served him in high office were inadequate to the task. In the waning days of his presidency, Johnson had written to Thieu a moving tribute to their common search for the right thing, and said he had no regrets for the course followed. From the protest to the grotesque Soviet-style mausoleum in the center of Hanoi built to house the embalmed body of Ho Chi Minh.

The fact that the Republic of Vietnam had been relegated to the status of a second-class nation was borne in on Thieu during a conversation with Vice President Agnew on January 30. He told Agnew that his government needed aid to rebuild cities, reconstruct villages and hamlets, and take care of the refugees, whose numbers now reached 1 million and might increase as people left the Communist-controlled areas to come over to GVN control. All he received in reply was a lecture about the poor prospects for aid in the Congress. The next day, Agnew informed Thieu about Kissinger's planned visit to Hanoi "to discuss economic assistance." Thieu exhibited no concern about this. 589

As part of his final effort to convince Thieu to agree to the signing, Kissinger had sent him a compilation of statements that had been made to him during the negotiations by Le Duc Tho regarding the question of the DRV's troops in the South. They included claims that the troops in the South comprised regroupees and their children and volunteers, who were all under the command of the PRG. In Kissinger's view, these claims had the consequences that all Communist forces in South Vietnam were subject to the obligations of the agreement and that the DRV claimed no right to maintain its armed forces in the South. Thieu dismissed the note with the comment that it might represent the American view, but it did not represent the view of the South Vietnamese.<sup>590</sup>

## THE NEGOTIATIONS IN LAOS AND KISSINGER'S VISIT TO HANOI

After the Tet offensive in South Vietnam, which shocked the Lao,<sup>591</sup> King Savang Vatthana became more outspoken in his criticism of "liberation wars."

In a speech in Pakse on May 7, for example, he warned his subjects against becoming involved in the Vietnamese war, and then spoke of the war in Laos. "We Lao do not think of 'liberating' our country, we think of caring for our country and carrying out our duty to protect our blood and tradition from disappearing. This war is not a war to liberate our country. We do not need to liberate our country. We need to protect our country. Our territory has been well defined by agreements which many countries have signed."<sup>592</sup> Ambassador Sullivan sought to reassure the king that American policy was steady and that no "fake peace" would be accepted in the Paris negotiations.<sup>593</sup> Prince Souvanna Phouma expressed his concern for the sacrifices that the common people, and especially the soldiers, had made for so long in Laos's struggle for its independence and neutrality. He was also fearful that after the war ended the Communists would have an advantage over the nationalists because they were better organized.<sup>594</sup>

With the arrival of Ambassador Godley in Vientiane in July 1969, political reporting was again given a high priority at the embassy, and as a result we have excellent accounts of political developments as the Lao headed for the next round of negotiations in an attempt to end the war. Godley had started in the Foreign Service in 1941 as vice consul in Marseille and had got his fill of the Vichy bureaucracy before being posted to Bern. In May 1954 he was first secretary in the Paris embassy and was following the French tractations with Bao Dai. Later he served in Cambodia. As a result, he was thoroughly familiar with Indochinese affairs.

Spurred to action by the announcement of the Lao Patriotic Front's five-point program on March 6, 1970, political leaders in Vientiane met and discussed with one another what they could do to prepare. The prime minister sought to reinvigorate the Neutralist Party, but the other parties, too, felt called upon to play a role. As a result, by general agreement among party leaders a consultative council on political affairs was established in the prime minister's office.<sup>595</sup>

Elections to the National Assembly on January 2, 1972, went well. Some 222 candidates ran for the 60 seats. 596 The mood was for change. Only 19 incumbents retained their seats. The 41 new deputies rode in on a wave of popular discontent with rising prices and the long, debilitating war and dislike for the old "do-nothing" Assembly. A total of 864,114 registered voters voted. 597 The Lao Patriotic Front had ignored a resolution passed by voice vote in the outgoing Assembly requesting the royal government to send a formal letter to Prince Souphanouvong asking him to participate in the elections. <sup>598</sup> Souvanna Phouma had offered the Front a chance to run in the election. The resolution was the Lao nationalists' way of reaffirming their dedication to non-violence in politics and the hope that the Front would do the same. The prime minister's attempt to reshuffle his cabinet had met with royal disapproval and had to be withdrawn. The strain on the Lao of living within the tripartism imposed by the 1962 agreements periodically raised issues of conflict with the Assembly's prerogative of approving the cabinet; the king took a particularly strict view of his role as the defender of the constitution and in this instance let his stand be

widely known.<sup>599</sup> In the negotiations with the Lao Patriotic Front that began in October 1972, the king gave Souvanna Phouma carte blanche to do whatever he deemed appropriate provided it did not conflict with the constitution.<sup>600</sup>

Lao of all persuasions also continued to defend their prerogatives against foreign interference from whatever direction. Asked for his reaction to a reported statement by Abram Chayes, an adviser to Senator George McGovern, that if North Vietnam demanded it a Democratic administration would permit Prince Souvanna Phouma to fall, the prime minister politely replied in the form of a press interview that it was under the Democratic administration of President Kennedy that the United States helped Laos to acquire the status of neutrality and that this implied a certain moral responsibility. "We are a very small country, certainly, but we have our national dignity. The manipulation of small states by great powers has not provided particularly good results. The history of recent decades, both for the East and for the West, has proved this."601 The king mentioned Chayes's statement to Godley at the annual boat races at Luang Prabang and observed that if by misfortune McGovern were elected he was certain that the good sense of the American people and the Congress would force McGovern to retreat dramatically from the positions he had taken during the campaign. <sup>602</sup> Finally, Soth Phetrasy, the resident Front representative in Vientiane, told the French chargé d'affaires that he hoped that the Americans would not interfere in the negotiations between the Lao factions that were about to begin. 603

After several exchanges of messages between Vientiane and Sam Neua, formal negotiations opened in the conference room of the Présidence du Conseil in Vientiane on October 17, 1972, and plenary sessions were held once every week thereafter, each delegation reading a prepared statement and then taking part in a discussion afterward. 604 The royal government having refused to accept a delegation of the pseudo-Neutralists, the Lao Patriotic Front included their representatives in its own delegation, which it called the delegation of the Lao Patriotic Forces (LPF); one of these pseudo-Neutralists was Lieutenant Colonel Cheng Sayavong, who had deserted from Kong Le in 1963. 605 The two delegations were led by Interior Minister Pheng Phongsavan and by Phoune Sipraseuth, both veterans of their separate causes. Pheng had headed Souvanna Phouma's delegation to the tripartite truce talks at Ban Namone in 1961. The principal military expert on the delegation, General Bounthieng Venevongsos, was also an old hand, having been on the opposing side to Pheng at Ban Namone. The delegation also included four deputies to the National Assembly, one of whom, Nouphat Chounramany of Khammouane, acted as spokesman. Soon after the negotiations started, Phoumi Vongvichit was appointed special adviser to the LPF delegation, 606 and it was he, together with Pheng, who signed the final agreement.

In the discussion period at the sixteenth meeting on January 30, 1973, Phoune proposed holding secret meetings outside the plenary sessions, and the first such session was held the following day at Pheng's house. 607 These secret negotiations were later expanded to include meetings between Souvanna Phouma and Phoumi Vongvichit and between Pheng (who became the prime minister's special emissary in dealing with the LPF and was replaced as delegation chief by

Public Works and Transportation Minister Ngon Sananikone) and Phoumi Vongvichit. These meetings were instrumental in leading to an agreement.

The negotiators on both sides were well aware of the progress of the negotiations in Paris. Probably the LPF negotiators, through their frequent visits to Sam Neua and Hanoi, were kept better informed than the royal government, as the American Embassy in Vientiane, the main source of information, was mostly in the dark about the secret talks and could convey little information in response to Souvanna Phouma's requests. However, General Haig visited Vientiane on January 18, 1973, to bring Souvanna Phouma up to date on this vital subject. The prime minister was especially interested in the question of withdrawal of the DRV's troops from Laos, which up to then had not been discussed in his negotiations with the LPF. In the Paris draft, Haig noted, there was a provision for withdrawal from Laos but no timetable. "Why can't you reach agreement with Hanoi on the withdrawal?" Souvanna Phouma asked. "We were unable to do this in Paris because they claim the matter concerns the sovereignty of the Pathet Lao but they say they will influence matters," Haig replied. "It has nothing to do with the Pathet Lao," Souvanna Phouam replied "because it concerns the North Vietnamese forces which invaded Laos and under the terms of the 1962 agreement you have the right to demand their withdrawal." Haig affirmed: "They are committed to withdraw and to respect the 1962 accords under the terms of this Agreement." Souvanna Phouma then concluded: "This has to be made clear because otherwise they will remain and dictate the position of the Pathet Lao." He had instructed his ambassador in Paris to talk to Sullivan about the timing of the DRV withdrawal.608

On the publication of the text of the Paris agreement, Souvanna Phouma said that in his capacity as prime minister he welcomed the cease-fire in Vietnam and in his capacity as leader of the Neutralist Party he hoped that the peace in Vietnam would allow him after 20 years to complete the task of bringing neutrality to Laos. "I hope the United States will make sure these peace accords are observed," he said. 609

Throughout the negotiations in Vientiane, the Lao parties were in charge. Prince Souvanna Phouma and Pheng shared some information on their positions and insights into the opposing side's positions with Ambassador Godley and his deputy, John Gunther Dean, particularly in the final days. Pheng read portions of the draft agreement to Dean on February 13, translating from written Lao into verbal French. Following Kissinger's visit to Vientiane, the embassy was in daily consultation with the royal government negotiators on various issues in the talks. The degree to which the embassy was in a position to control the latter's positions was, at key times, "extremely limited." The result for the royal government was a compromise that reflected, first and foremost, the prime minister's priorities.

Kissinger exerted pressure indirectly for rapid conclusion of an agreement on a cease-fire in Laos, as he did not want to have the United States bombing in Laos when the international conference to guarantee the Paris agreement opened 30 days after the Paris signature, as provided in Article 19. Laos was not invited to participate in this conference, which caused some grumbling among

the Lao. Souvanna Phouma, despite the fact that he was anxious to arrive at a cease-fire as soon as possible, resisted American pressure to have his delegation separate military and political aspects in order to expedite the negotiations, as some rightist Lao figures also wanted him to do. Mindful of the bad experience of 1961 and 1962, when a cease-fire had been declared prior to arriving at a political settlement, the prime minister feared the hardening of the partition of the country that such a situation encouraged. He did not want an agreement that gave the Front exclusive jurisdiction over its zone and also might have hermetically sealed the rightists into a Thai-dominated Mekong valley zone. Instead, being a good nationalist, he strove throughout for a "global settlement" that would allow reconciliation and eventual "re-nationalization" of the LPF to wean it away from the DRV and the party center.

On February 10 Kissinger and Sullivan, after an overnight stop in Vientiane, flew to Hanoi, fulfilling Kissinger's long-standing pledge to Tho, who greeted him warmly at the Noi Bai airfield north of Hanoi. The visit afforded the leaders of the DRV an opportunity to demonstrate the diplomatic dexterity with which they had treated foreigners since 1945. Both sides were skeptical of the other's intentions. The first meeting with Prime Minister Pham Van Dong, Tho, Trinh, Thach, and Phan Hien was tough, Kissinger reported. Dong said the DRV wanted to establish a new long-term relationship with the United States and declared that the DRV was resolved to implement all the provisions of the agreement. These leaders obviously expected the United States to do the same, but it was not clear to Kissinger whether they had decided to use the agreement to bring about a period of relaxation or as an instrument of political warfare. Kissinger warned Dong strongly against a resort to force.<sup>611</sup>

Kissinger raised the POW issue at this first meeting with Dong, saying the release was a matter of extreme concern and that the American people would not tolerate any ambiguity. The list of POWs to be released by the DRV was reasonably consistent with American records. But the lists from the PRG and the Pathet Lao raised serious questions. The latter's list of 10 names could not be considered complete, as there were approximately 350 military and civilians listed as captured or missing in Laos, of which 215 were lost under circumstances in which the Americans believed that some information should be available. The Americans were making a major effort in Saigon to begin the release of civilian personnel. The next day, in an attempt to smooth Kissinger's ruffled feathers, Tho informed Kissinger in private that on account of his visit the DRV would release 20 additional American POWs in addition to the first batch scheduled for release the following day.

With regard to the political settlement in the South, it was too early to make a judgment. Kissinger noted that the two parties had begun to talk. "I hope the Special Adviser has noticed that Ambassador Lam is in the hospital," Kissinger said, which made Tho laugh. 612 (Lam had had to be admitted to hospital for major surgery. 613) This was a summit meeting of the puppet-masters, after all, and in the session the following morning Dong emphasized the responsibility of the United States for ensuring compliance with the agreement by the Saigon

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administration. As the DRV leaders had done after 1954 with the DRV's signature on the armistice agreement with the French, they intended to force the Americans to respect the commitments made, always interpreting the agreement in their fashion, of course. Kissinger brought up a number of military violations; the DRV's bill of complaints of violations was transmitted at about the same time through Paris and again emphasized the "entire" responsibility of the Americans. 614

In the morning session on February 11, he reported to President Nixon, Kissinger told Dong that the leaders of the DRV had two basic choices. They could use the agreement as a political and psychological weapon, pressuring the Republic of Vietnam and keeping the United States on the defensive. In that case, renewed confrontation with the Americans was likely. Their other choice was to implement the agreement seriously and to "pursue their objectives by historical evolution." In this case, a new positive relationship with the United States was possible. Here, again, was Kissinger's theme of a "decent interval." His phrase "historical evolution" meant the imposition of a coalition government on the South, as he had told Haig, and the reunification on Communist terms that would follow. It was a plea for time for the United States to exit honorably.

Laos and Cambodia took up a major portion of Kissinger's discussions in Hanoi. The afternoon of the second day was entirely devoted to Laos and was "very difficult," Kissinger reported. Dong had said in the first meeting that the DRV would help the Americans obtain a cease-fire in Laos. After laborious exchanges, the two sides pinned down the need for a definite cease-fire in Laos within a very short time and agreed to send separate instructions to the Laotian parties in the Vientiane negotiations to leave political questions for discussion later. On the issue of withdrawal of DRV troops after the cease-fire, also the subject of very difficult exchanges, Dong reaffirmed the intention to withdraw but wanted to key it to a political settlement rather than to the cease-fire. <sup>616</sup> This statement should have set off alarm bells for Kissinger in view of the fact that Article 20(b) of the Paris agreement provided no timetable for the withdrawal of the DRV's troops from Laos. "We have just received word that the Laos agreement is sewed up," he reported to Nixon before leaving Hanoi, "and includes a timetable for troop withdrawals within the period that Le Duc Tho and I discussed."617 But the Vientiane negotiations were not yet finished at the time Kissinger left Hanoi. In view of the promises Kissinger and Sullivan had made to the leaders of South Vietnam, Cambodia, and Thailand regarding the obligation of the DRV to withdraw its troops from Laos, it was incumbent on them to ensure that the timetable for withdrawal of the DRV's troops from Laos would be fixed in time in the final wording of the Vientiane agreement. Ignoring the words they had heard from Dong himself, they failed to alert Godley to alert Pheng to be on the lookout for a last-minute switch. This is an example of the sloppy negotiating style of those who had taken upon themselves the responsibility of restoring peace to Indochina.

When Dong talked about implementing all the provisions of the agreement, he included American war reparations. Kissinger carefully put off any

discussion of economic aid until his last day. This, too, proved difficult, as he had foreseen. The United States had assumed the obligation in Article 21 to "contribute to healing the wounds of war and to postwar reconstruction of the DRV." But it had avoided committing itself to specific figures or, like the DRV in the case of Article 20(b), to a timetable. And President Nixon's letter of February 1 to Dong had contained the condition of congressional approval. The Stalinists of the Vietnam Workers' Party protested. They professed themselves unable to believe that the Congress, which had generously funded the war to the tune of \$200 billion, could refuse to spare a few billion for aid to the DRV. "When the war was going on then the appropriation was so easy," Dong said with a laugh, "and when we have now to solve a problem that is very legitimate ... then you find it difficult." Dong thought, as Stalin had, that the Americans were using consultations with the Congress as an excuse to avoid making good on their commitments. Kissinger's reaction to this extraordinary statement was to plead congressional prerogatives, one feels with some relief. 618 One is left to wonder if President Kennedy's words about the defense of freedom, about bearing any burden, went through his mind; but since he had already accepted the position of aggressor for the United States, his response must have seemed very lame to Dong. Clearly, Kissinger was no match for the wily Marxist-Leninist revolutionary.

In the situation of mutual skepticism about intentions, both sides watched each other's implementation of the agreement to determine their own course of action. Kissinger's failure to obtain a firm date in Article 20(b) for troop withdrawal from those countries, or even a date pegged to the eventual conclusion of cease-fires in Laos and Cambodia, might be said to have been an oversight on an equal scale with Harriman's acceptance of wording at Geneva allowing the North Vietnamese to use Laos for transit to South Vietnam. But then the DRV had blundered, too, by not pinning Kissinger down on the specific figure and timetable for aid. Kissinger made clear to Dong that the DRV could not expect the Americans to implement the agreement, give economic aid, and improve relations while its forces remained not only in South Vietnam but in Laos and Cambodia as well.<sup>619</sup> In the final communiqué, the two sides welcomed the negotiations between the parties in Laos but did not mention the DRV's troops. The two sides announced the establishment of a Joint Economic Commission to discuss the question but did not mention a specific figure or timetable for aid.<sup>620</sup>

After a final private two-hour meeting with Tho, also mostly concerned with Laos and Cambodia and the link between the DRV's performance there and American aid, 621 Kissinger left Hanoi shortly after noon on February 13.622 In a message to Tho sent through Paris as Kissinger returned to Washington, he re-emphasized the point that a new relationship depended on scrupulous implementation of all provisions of the agreement by the signatories and his conviction that the agreement must be considered an instrument for conciliation rather than an opportunity for political warfare. He reminded Tho of American efforts to deal with the complaints about treatment of the delegations in Saigon, to furnish air transportation to expedite return of North Vietnamese

prisoners, and to pressure the Saigon government to release civilian detainees. He noted, however, Saigon's suspicions about Communist intentions, and stressed the unconditional nature of the withdrawal of foreign forces from Laos as prescribed by Article 20(b) and the absence so far of an agreed-upon cease-fire. "Your side is therefore in clear violation of both the agreement and its associated understanding." 623

The Agreement to Restore Peace and Reconciliation in Laos was signed at 11 A.M. on February 21 by Pheng and Phoumi Vongvichit in Prince Souvanna Phouma's combination dining room and cabinet room in the presence of negotiating teams who had negotiated it and all the foreign chiefs of mission in Vientiane. 624

The preamble, with its reference to the "Vientiane Government side" and the Lao Patriotic Forces side, established an atmosphere replete with LPF propaganda and ideological jargon that extended through the whole document. This was due mainly to the fact that after Prince Souvanna Phouma indicated on July 24, 1972, that he was willing to accept the Front's five-point proposal of March 6, 1970, as a basis for talks, the royal government delegation limited itself to demanding changes in a new and more detailed formulation of the five points presented by the LPF delegation at the opening plenary session on October 17.

Under general principles in Part I, the agreement stated that it was the intention of the Lao people to firmly preserve and resolutely apply basic and inviolable national rights such as the independence, sovereignty, unity, and territorial integrity of Laos. Those terms were, of course, understood to be subject to the different interpretations given them by each side. 625 The next clause was controversial by its phrasing, however, stating that the Declaration on the Neutrality of Laos and the Protocol of 1962 constituted the correct basis for the peaceful, independent, and neutral foreign policy of the kingdom, and "the Lao parties concerned, the United States, Thailand and other foreign countries must scrupulously respect and apply them." Throughout the negotiations, the royal government pressed firmly to keep the names of any foreign states out of the agreement by demanding that the DRV be cited if reference was made to the United States and Thailand. The LPF originally wanted to refer to the United States as the cause of the war in Laos and, accordingly, to condemn the United States for aggression in Laos. "The fundamental demand of our nation and of the present patriotic struggle of our people is to force the American imperialists to put a definitive end to their war of aggression," Phoune said. 626 The royal government delegation consistently opposed such one-sided wording and defended the American actions in Laos on the grounds that they were taken in support of the royal government against aggression from the DRV. Faced with the LPF's insistence on some specific reference to the United States in the document, Souvanna Phouma finally agreed to having the United States and Thailand named in connection with the 1962 agreements, which both countries had signed.

The next clause referred to "the present situation in Laos" as consisting of two zones and two separate administrations. This wording was a clear victory for Souvanna Phouma, who forced the LPF delegation to withdraw its draft formulation of "two zones, two separate administrations, three political and armed forces," by which was meant the pseudo-Neutralists. Souvanna Phouma had never wavered in refusing to grant the slightest legitimacy to the pseudo-Neutralists since the offensive of the DRV and Pathet Lao on the Plain of Jars in 1964. Prior to the signing he said that the pseudo-Neutralists could integrate themselves with the Lao Patriotic Front, they could forget their past sins and rejoin the Neutralist Party of which he was the head, or the text of the agreement could simply omit any reference to Neutralists of any persuasion. The LPF chose the first alternative, and at a press conference on February 21, Phoumi Vongvichit announced that the "Patriotic Neutralists" had rallied to the Front, which brought reality into harmony with the agreement.

Part II dealt with military matters. The cease-fire was effective at noon on February 22 and covered all actions on the ground and in the air originating both within Laos and from foreign countries. Article 3 provided that the opposing armed forces stand still within their areas of control. The standstill ceasefire meant that the royal government would not be able to reclaim control over the provincial capitals of Attopeu and Saravane, as would have been the case if the agreement had mandated a return to the cease-fire line of 1962, a demand that originally was part of its position but was later dropped. Adherence to this position would have reopened the old arguments over claims by the Patriotic Neutralists that they were only reoccupying territory that had been controlled by the Neutralists in 1962 and that the Pathet Lao and DRV were not involved. 627 In fact, the total area of control by each side had not changed greatly during the decade of war since 1962. 628 A major corollary to the lines of control issue was the royal government's resupply to pockets of its troops and civilian refugees cut off from ground communication; its inability to do so would leave them to the mercy of the Pathet Lao.

Another important military provision, that for withdrawal of foreign forces from Laos, was addressed in Article 4, which said that such withdrawal had to be completed within 60 days of the date of establishment of the provisional government of national union and the joint national political council. This article had gone through a long history of changes during the negotiations. Both sides had pegged the completion of the withdrawal to the signature of the agreement in their drafts presented in December. However, in the flap over separating the cease-fire from the political settlement during February, Pheng and Phoumi Vongvichit focused anew on finding compromise on outstanding political issues and settled them on February 20. In this process, according to a reconstruction of events by the embassy, the timetable for withdrawal got disconnected from the military issue of the cease-fire, which is where it belonged, and connected to the political settlement. Pheng and Phoumi Vongvichit initialed the agreement at 4 P.M. on February 20. The upshot was that the timetable for withdrawal of the DRV's troops from Laos that was missing from Article 20(b) of the Paris agreement had now been supplied—the clock would start ticking when the government in Laos had been established, whenever that might be. The moral was that an agreement is sewed up when it is sewed up, and not a minute before.

The final clause of Article 4 called for the disbanding of "special forces"—a reference to Vang Pao's Meo irregulars, a demand that had figured in LPF drafts from the start. The embassy raised no objection to this clause because it believed it and the royal government had already taken steps to live within this provision by integrating the irregulars into the royal army.

Article 5 obligated the parties to exchange within 60 days of the establishment of the provisional government of national union. Both government and LPF drafts of December timed the prisoner exchange to signature of the agreement, simultaneously with the withdrawal of foreign troops. Kissinger announced on January 24, however, that American POWs held in Laos would be returned to the U.S. government in Hanoi. Article 3 of the POW protocol of the Paris agreement provided that a list of POWs would be handed over on January 27. The DRV was said to have accepted responsibility for POWs and missing in action (MIAs) throughout Indochina, and the names of nine prisoners captured in Laos were included on a list handed over in Paris. Thus, the POW issue appeared less pressing in the Vientiane negotiations during February. The embassy supplied wording on exchange of information about MIAs to Pheng on February 6 taken from Article 8(b) of the Paris agreement, but the draft of February 13 that Pheng showed to Dean did not use it. The information on MIAs was to be exchanged after the prisoner release. The question of American POWs and MIAs in Laos was further confused by contradictory statements made after the signing of the Vientiane agreement by Soth Phetrasy, and it continued to be a live issue for years.

Part III contained the political provisions. The two paragraphs of Article 6 dealt in summary fashion with general elections, whose principle was affirmed but whose modalities were left to be worked out. During the negotiations, Souvanna Phouma had expressed hopes for holding elections within a few months; the LPF had talked in terms of two years. Article 7 dealt with the composition and powers of the provisional coalition government to be formed by the two sides. It would operate by unanimity, as the 1962 one had. Pheng told the National Assembly that the present government would not resign until after formation of a new provisional government. Article 8 dealt with the joint national political council, and it appeared that its status and powers had been considerably whittled down by the royal government negotiators since this body was first proposed by the LPF on October 17. In the final negotiations, it was decided that the provisional government would be formed before the council, whose main role would be to advise the government on holding of elections. Both Pheng and Phoumi Vongvichit indicated publicly that the council would not replace the National Assembly. Thus, the LPF implicitly committed itself to recognize the constitution in the interim before the setting up of new institutions. Souvanna Phouma's influence here was also decisive, as with the matter of respect for the king. Laos's sovereignty had not been impaired by the negotiations and agreement.

Article 9 called for neutralizing Vientiane and Luang Prabang, but without a timetable. Article 10 reaffirmed the Zurich communiqué's sanctioning of

separate administrations pending formation of the new coalition government. At Souvanna Phouma's insistence, a clause that committed both sides to promoting normal relations between the two zones was inserted. Finally, a clause taking cognizance of the pledge Kissinger had made in Paris to contribute to healing the wounds of war and reconstructing Indochina was inserted at the last moment by the LPF, without notification to representatives of the embassy.

Part IV contained the articles setting up the bodies that would implement the agreement, namely the Joint Commission to Implement the Agreement (JCIA), modeled on the Two-Party Joint Commission in South Vietnam, and the International Commission for Supervision and Control, which was to continue its functions. As with all other bodies prescribed by the agreement, both sides were to be represented in equal numbers on the JCIA and each would have a veto. The embassy pointed out the usual caveats in this regard. Tasks such as the demarcation of lines of control were left to be negotiated in a future protocol of the JCIA. With respect to the ICC, the embassy, with support from the Canadians, was holding to the position that the Lao parties were not competent to revise the provisions of the 1962 Protocol with respect to the operations of the ICC.

The problem of the nomenclature of the signatories of the agreement was a thorny one that went right down to the wire. The royal government signed as the "Vientiane Government" and the LPF signed as the "Party of the Patriotic Forces." In Lao (the only official language text), the words Vientiane and government appeared side by side (as distinct from the French Gouvernment de Vientiane, which could also be read "Government of Vientiane") so its representatives could read their signature as meaning the Government of His Majesty the King. But the royal government negotiators had had to swallow their pride in order to gain concessions from the LPF on more important points. 629

Announcing the agreement, Souvanna Phouma hoped the cease-fire would end "after more than two decades the most useless, the saddest, the most absurd war of our national history in which the Lao quarrel and kill each other without rhyme or reason." Each side had made concessions, he said, but in any case the war could not go on in the changed context of relations among superpowers. He looked to the future but also warned that difficult negotiations on political matters lay ahead. The king, in a two-sentence message to the cabinet, welcomed the accord and said all the Lao had to serve a single nation. 631

National Assembly President Phoui Sananikone sent a letter to the prime minister at the request of the Assembly's standing committee seeking clarification of a number of points in the agreement: (1) the implications of the signatory title used by the government for the legality of the agreement; (2) whether the agreement would be submitted to the Assembly for ratification, in accordance with Article 28 of the constitution, as the 1962 Plain of Jars agreement had been; (3) the exact process by which the new provisional government would be appointed by the king; (4) the exact executive and legislative functions of the joint national political council; (5) and whether the government to be formed after elections would also be a coalition in the sense that defeated parties would be granted seats therein. 632

The embassy saw that it was in the best long-term interests of the United States to project an image of positive initial American compliance with the Vientiane agreement as the only way to preserve the moral and psychological basis for attempting to preserve the nationalists from being swallowed up by the Communists. Above all, it saw in Prince Souvanna Phouma's ability to command the pace and substance of the negotiations with the Front and his faith in the electoral process the guarantee that the Communists would not gain their ends by political means alone. For the moment, the opposition on the right was the most troubling aspect of the post–cease-fire situation. Some politicians and military figures, especially southerners once associated with General Phoumi Nosavan, loudly expressed their bitter criticism of the Vientiane agreement and of Souvanna Phouma and Pheng for negotiating it.

Furthermore, the United States backed the royal government in enforcing the Vientiane agreement; when the cease-fire was massively violated in 29 locations within the first 24 hours, 634 at Souvanna Phouma's request, American aircraft again bombed DRV and Pathet Lao forces at Paksong. This had an immediate effect of calming the battlefield situation, and cease-fire violations dropped off sharply. Local cease-fires in place began to take hold the next day, with royal army troops and Pathet Lao reported to be fraternizing in some areas, and even Thai volunteers and DRV troops north of Long Cheng making friendly contacts. 635 However, all the details of implementing the Vientiane agreement remained to be negotiated.

## PROMISING SIGNS

The most urgent question in South Vietnam was the cease-fire. Aside from stipulating in Article 2 that the cease-fire would go into effect at 3 A.M. Saigon time on January 28, 1973, the Paris agreement and protocols were singularly unspecific with regard to this question. Article 3 left all details to be worked out by two commissions, the Four-Party Joint Military Commission (FPJMC) and the Two-Party Joint Military Commission (TPJMC). From discussions they had had with Kissinger in Paris in November, the American delegates-designate to the former, led by Major General Gilbert H. Woodward, became aware that they would be required to resolve fundamental issues such as control of territory, which related in turn to the status of forces in the area. Both sides had incentive to lay claim to as wide an area as possible in order to position themselves for the expected elections, and these efforts did not entirely cease with the advent of the cease-fire. Yet the agreement and protocols did not even provide for a commitment by all the parties to divulge, much less to have inspected, the areas or forces on each side.<sup>636</sup>

Article 16 of the protocol on the cease-fire contained a contradiction between its "full protection" and "privileges and immunities" clauses, which were quickly exploited by the South Vietnamese parties. The Saigon government used the former to restrict the Communist delegates to their billets within Tan Son Nhut at Camp Davis, named by the American command for Specialist 4 James Thomas Davis, of Livingston, Tennessee, who had been killed in action

on December 22, 1961. The PRG, anxious to acquire the trappings of legitimacy, claimed it was being denied freedom to fly its flag and to have access to the press. An incident at Ban Me Thuot in which a crowd of onlookers (assembled for the purpose, some said) attacked the members of the Communist delegations provided justification for the Saigon government's restrictions. More important, the PRG delegation used allegations of inadequate facilities to delay deployment of their delegates to the field as required by the protocol. At the end of March, General Woodward complained that the PRG had not deployed to any of the joint team sites and two of the regional headquarters. This made stabilization of the cease-fire difficult, if not impossible.

The terms of the agreement in its Article 18(f) and of the protocols governing the operations of the FPJMC (Article 13) and the International Commission of Control and Supervision (ICCS) (Article 3) that Sullivan had negotiated with the DRV required unanimity of decision in both these bodies. Either four and a half years in Laos had taught Sullivan nothing about the problems of troika bodies in supervising peace agreements or Kissinger simply decided to overlook this matter in his haste to press on. The results were completely predictable. As the historian of the United States delegation to the FPJMC observes, "No single ceasefire investigation completed was ever approved by all four parties in either commission. Although separate views could be presented formally and several two-party (American and South Vietnamese) investigations were concluded, these had no force."

In spite of the handicaps that had been imposed on them, General Woodward and his team, which included two Rhodes scholars, were models of patience and firmness in the short 60 days' existence of the FPJMC; thanks to their efforts, with some help from the spirit of the forthcoming Tet holiday, the relations between the Saigon government and the Communist delegations moved by necessity from open hostility to correctness. The first test came when members of the Communist delegations coming from Paris arrived at Tan Son Nhut on Sunday afternoon, January 28. Sullivan, without bothering to check with the South Vietnamese, had given them assurances that they would not have to comply with immigration formalities. When the delegates arrived, they were presented with debarkation cards by South Vietnamese officials and asked to fill in portions of them. They refused, and began a sit-in on the aircraft that lasted through the night. After negotiations involving Ambassador Bunker and President Thieu, the delegates were allowed to leave the aircraft without complying with the procedure. The South Vietnamese were willing to concede that the DRV and PRG had been misinformed about landing cards, provided that the Americans inform all delegates arriving later that they would have to complete debarkation cards. Thus, face was saved all around. 639 Lieutenant General Tran Van Tra, the PRG's chief delegate to the FPJMC, arrived by American helicopter from Loc Ninh. The meetings of heads of delegations of the FPJMC took place in an atmosphere of courtesy and civility. <sup>640</sup> Loc Ninh, only 14 kilometers from the Cambodian border, had become the PRG's capital since its capture in the 1972 offensive.

On the evening of January 31, the ARVN liaison officers took all the DRV and PRG delegates to a Vietnamese meal at the ARVN mess and as of February 1 provisions were being delivered to them on time. <sup>641</sup> The first bilateral meeting between the South Vietnamese signatories took place a few days later, following on the heels of a meeting of the delegation chiefs at their conference room at Tan Son Nhut on February 4, when the Saigon and PRG delegates agreed to move to a separate room. Discussions on establishing the TPJMC followed in the forum of a subcommission of the FPJMC established for the purpose; the TPJMC was a going concern by the time the FPJMC disbanded at the end of March. The subjects under discussion gradually broadened. <sup>642</sup>

The withdrawal of American and other allied troops was handled smoothly. The 23,516 American and 30,449 other allied troops, mainly South Korean, that remained in South Vietnam at the time of the cease-fire were withdrawn within the prescribed 60 days. President Thieu sent them off with a message thanking them for "great sacrifices, not for selfish gains, but for a noble cause. When the emotions caused by this long war have calmed down, the world will acknowledge by consensus that you have played a great role in the elaboration of peace in freedom, and that you have shaped history for the better. Thank you very much. God bless you."<sup>643</sup>

On the issue of release of POWs, the South Vietnamese signatories initially showed ill will, but gradually these difficulties were worked out and the exchanges proceeded. The American delegates to the FPIMC had to constantly ward off attempts by the Communists to link the release of American POWs to issues other than the troop withdrawal, such as that of privileges and immunities. 644 A final snafu concerning the release of American POWs was resolved when Luu Van Loi, who was now the deputy chief of the DRV delegation to the FPIMC, overruled his comrades, citing the understanding between Kissinger and Tho about release of prisoners in Laos, and there followed mutual assurances of trust between Major General Le Quang Hoa of the DRV and General Woodward. The release of the 10 prisoners on the DRV's list of February 1 occurred at the end of March within the 60-day timetable in a small ceremony at Gia Lam airport presided over by Pathet Lao representatives. In all, 591 American POWs were released. The Saigon government released 26,511 Communist prisoners, and the Communists released 4,956 ARVN soldiers. "The entire experience indicated that only when the primary interests of the United States were at stake could the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong be prodded to comply with the agreement," the official historian wrote of the American troop withdrawal and POW releases. "Where the interests of the United States were relatively less threatened, as in the remaining provisions of the agreement, the Communists made at best token gestures of cooperation; they realized that the Americans would not react decisively."645

As with the initial bilateral meetings between the South Vietnamese signatories, steps to initiate the political discussions provided for under Article 12 of the Paris agreement began quickly. President Thieu said that after the Tet celebrations were over Ambassador Pham Dang Lam would contact the Viet Cong

in Paris. "We should force the Communists to negotiate in order to have a political solution as soon as possible," Thieu said. In Paris, Madame Binh suggested to Foreign Minister Lam that such talks should open by February 2.646 At his first meeting on February 5 with the PRG's Dinh Ba Thi, deputy Saigon delegation chief Nguyên Phuong Thiep expressed "the sincere desire of our government to open consultations with the other side as soon as possible to form the Council of Reconciliation and National Concord." Relations between the two foreign ministers seemed to warm up, at least in private where they could hope to escape the very narrow limits on their freedom of action set by their respective patrons, the Americans on the one hand and the party center on the other. At least they were now in a position to report progress to the international guarantee conference, which opened on schedule in Paris on February 26, the Saigon government having graciously accepted the venue in spite of its bad experiences. 648

Despite Kissinger's attempt to focus on longer-term issues during his visit to Hanoi, he and the DRV showed they could act swiftly when their vital interests were affected by implementation of the Paris agreement. In response to "violent complaints" Kissinger received from his hosts about the treatment of the DRV's delegation to the FPJMC and inadequate accommodation and food, he dispatched Sullivan to Saigon to look into the matter. <sup>649</sup> From the American point of view, the commission's responsibility for implementing the POW release provision made its smooth functioning essential. From the DRV point of view, the American response was a highly visible way of demonstrating the principle that the DRV held the Americans responsible for the correct implementation of the agreement by the "puppets" in Saigon. Even before he had met with President Thieu to apprise him of the results of Kissinger's visit to Hanoi, Sullivan paid a visit to the DRV and PRG delegations at Tan Son Nhut (where the ARVN guards refused to let his car pass and forced him to go on foot, conveying greetings from Le Duc Tho to the delegation heads in the process) and listened to their complaints. He found the accommodations to be "quite adequate," and the only genuine grounds for complaint the isolation of the delegations. 650

President Thieu received Sullivan, accompanied by Bunker, for one hour and fifteen minutes on February 14. Sullivan gave Thieu "a general rundown" of the conversations in Hanoi. He also had some specific points to make with regard to Thieu's government. He said that many opponents in the United States were against aid to South Vietnam, people who had a vested interest in the agreement failing and who would be anxious to leap on Thieu's government at any opportunity. He said it was highly important for the government to assume such a position that none of these critics had an opportunity to blame him. He should continue in the vein of pushing for early contact with the NLF on reconciliation and the setting up of the national council. He was consolidating peace and he could show that the obstacles were on the Communist side, which would help him with Congress when he visited the United States. With respect to the DRV delegation to the FPJMC, Thieu would be wise to facilitate their movement around Saigon during their 60 days in country.

Thieu made no comment on all this. He saw that once again the Americans were asking him to help President Nixon in facing his domestic critics. He had been asked to make concessions on this account during the negotiations, and now that the agreement was being implemented, he was being asked to "facilitate" things, which in the circumstances of an unverified, unpoliced cease-fire certainly implied making new concessions. A case in point was the idea of a fresh appeal by the FPJMC for adherence to the cease-fire, which Sullivan raised at several points in the conversation as if it were a simple matter that raised no problems for Thieu, noting that Thieu's delegation chief remained without instructions. Thieu's overtures to the PRG in Paris had been reported in the American press, and Sullivan must have known of them, as Kissinger received daily press summaries in his travels. On neither the political nor the military aspects of the implementation did Thieu feel he was open to criticism for dragging his feet.

On the most important matter, the Americans' commitment to respond with force in the event of serious violation of the agreement by the DRV, Sullivan deflected Thieu's anxious inquiries by changing the subject twice. Sullivan imparted to Thieu his view that the DRV needed a period of rest and that the DRV leaders were disappointed with the Soviets and the Chinese and wanted some ties with the United States which they could use to balance against them. These observations did nothing to ease Thieu's worries.

Sullivan had a 90-minute meeting with Lon Nol and his prime minister, Hang Thun Hak, in Phnom Penh on the same day and lunched with them and Foreign Minister Long Boret at Chamcar Mon afterward. Sullivan reported that the DRV leaders, while committed to withdraw their troops from Cambodia under Article 20(b), indicated they did not intend to withdraw them until a political settlement had been reached. As they were still firmly supporting Sihanouk and regarded him as constitutional head of state and showed no willingness to negotiate with Lon Nol's regime, the conclusion to be drawn was that Lon Nol would have to go on fighting against the DRV's troops as long as the war lasted, regardless of what happened in South Vietnam. Lon Nol took this news without visible reaction. He said that the Khmer would have no trouble working things out among themselves if left alone. (This statement certainly showed a lack of realism.) Sullivan said it was the American hope that the question of bringing peace to all of Indochina would figure prominently on the agenda of the coming international conference, despite the DRV's opposition to this item. Cambodia had not been invited, but Lon Nol said his government would circulate an appeal to the participants with whom it had relations for reactivating the ICC in Cambodia, which it had formally requested of the British and Soviet co-chairmen on November 3, 1972. Sullivan commented positively on this initiative.

At the start of their conversation, Sullivan handed Lon Nol a personal letter in which Kissinger presented his respects, regretted he could not visit him personally, and sent best wishes for the marshal's health and the Khmer nation's prosperity. In the letter, Kissinger also reaffirmed his intent not to meet with Sihanouk or his representatives either in Hanoi or Peking.<sup>652</sup> It was a promise Kissinger would keep until May 27, when, as part of an attempt to negotiate peace in Cambodia behind Lon Nol's back he would inform the Chinese of his willingness to have direct discussions with Sihanouk through the American liaison office in Peking.<sup>653</sup> Sullivan continued on to Bangkok where he assured the Thai leaders of American intention to enforce the Paris agreement.<sup>654</sup>

In the event, the international conference that met in Paris on February 26 did nothing for either Laos or Cambodia. The Khmer observer in Paris, General Sak Sutsakhan, gave copies of a memorandum stressing the need to reactivate the ICC in Cambodia to ensure implementation of Article 20(b) to heads of delegations of friendly governments nevertheless, 655 and this was as far as the Americans' concern for peace in all of Indochina went. The atmosphere of concord among the 12 foreign ministers, which was only slightly clouded by the inescapable warnings about sticking to the ongoing timetable for the release of the American POWs, was jarred by the release of lengthy and detailed notes by the DRV and the United States, each of whom charged the other with massive violations of the agreement. 656 In other words, the foreign ministers could see for themselves that there was serious trouble afoot barely a month after the signature of the agreement. They must have wondered, also, why President Nixon did not submit the agreement for formal ratification by the Congress. Kissinger writes that Nixon feared a divisive debate in the Congress.<sup>657</sup> No doubt after his bruising secret battle to get Thieu to sign (which still remained carefully hidden from view), he did not wish to have a repeat with the Congress in full public view. An innocuous declaration, replete with the usual Hanoidrafted statements of respect for the right of the South Vietnamese people to self-determination, was signed by the foreign ministers.<sup>658</sup>

General Tra arranged with General Woodward for an American plane to transport him to Hanoi at the end of March, at which time the DRV members of the FPJMC also departed from South Vietnam, leaving the TPJMC to sort out the problems of the cease-fire, which was as yet unverified. General Tra, like Huynh Tan Phat and Tran Buu Kiem, was a veteran party functionary. He was born in Quang Ngai and joined the Viet Minh from its earliest days, becoming a senior officer in the South. In 1954, he became deputy chief of staff to Giap, spending nine years in the North and studying in the Soviet Union and China. He became an alternate member of the party central committee. In 1964, he became chairman of the military affairs committee of COSVN and held this position until 1976, thus working directly under politburo member Pham Hung. Under the pseudonym Tran Nam Trung he served as defense minister of the PRG in the elaborate parallel structure the party set up for its Southern front. He traveled back down the Ho Chi Minh Trail to the "liberated area" and did not reappear in Saigon until the party's final victory.

# **Looking Back**

For the DRV, the negotiation of the Paris agreement was an extraordinary achievement. Its negotiators had completely outmaneuvered the Saigon gov-

ernment by negotiating all issues at stake-most important, the troop withdrawal issue and the political issue—with the Americans behind the Saigon government's back. This required the DRV negotiators to exploit the two issues of most concern to the Americans: getting American troops out and freeing the hostage POWs. They proceeded, by an adroit series of linkages, to bring President Nixon and Kissinger to concede one point of principle after another in the draft agreement, to exclude Saigon from the negotiations, and to force Saigon to sign the final agreement. DRV propaganda rightly touted the draft agreement as a victory.

The main principle won by the DRV, which had been its bargaining objective since Kissinger's first meeting with Xuan Thuy on August 4, 1969, when the latter had lectured Kissinger on the question of governance in South Vietnam and the "reality" of the PRG, was to bring the United States to give up its position of supporting a legal and constitutional government in South Vietnam. The principle of self-determination of the South Vietnamese people, which Kissinger enunciated, was ipso facto in contradiction with the reality that it was the Americans who were doing the negotiating on behalf of their government. Kissinger seems to have remained unaware of the contradiction to the end. Reflecting on the reasons for the demoralization of "the Saigon structure" that led to its collapse in 1975, he asks in his memoirs whether it might have been due to the rapid pace of the negotiations "we imposed." At another point, he writes about the South Vietnamese people "who had stood with us," as if the Americans had a right to conduct the negotiations because they were the principal belligerent. <sup>659</sup> In the hard bargaining in November and December 1972, by threatening to attach conditions to the release of the American POWs, Tho had forced Kissinger to give up all the changes that the Saigon government, in defense of the principle of its sovereignty, had insisted be incorporated in the draft agreement revealed on October 26 and that Kissinger had reluctantly advanced subsequent to his brief visit to Saigon. The concessions made by Kissinger concerned the illegality of the presence of the DRV's troops in the South, which was in violation of the terms of the armistice of 1954 which the DRV had signed, and the status of the PRG, an organization that had been endowed with the exercise of a limited sovereignty by the DRV but had no claim to represent the South Vietnamese people other than its reliance on "revolutionary violence." Even after the heavy American bombing of December 1972 and January 1973, Kissinger made these concessions in return for the DRV's agreement to restore the wording on the return of the POWs to what it had been in the October 20 draft.

The Americans having accepted the relativity of the principle of legality and constitutionality, the question President Kennedy had asked became moot: Do the South Vietnamese people want to live under communism? If they no longer had a legal government that the United States could support, it did not matter what they wished. For, let us be clear, it was not the sentiment of the South Vietnamese, or Cambodians, or Laotians that changed; they were as attached to their liberty as the American people, and to the very end they gave no indication that they chose of their own free will to live under communism. In

Cambodia, sovereignty passed legally in March 1970 into the hands of the new leaders by vote of the parliament as provided for in the 1947 constitution, as amended at Sihanouk's initiative in June 1960. However, the succeeding Khmer Republic never achieved legality because of its rigged elections and Lon Nol's decision to suspend the Assembly. The Khmer Rouge, like the PRG, sought legality by revolutionary violence. In Laos, the nationalists managed to hang on to their constitutionality a little longer before the revolutionary violence of the Pathet Lao finally prevailed.

Unlike at Geneva in 1954 and 1962, the DRV had not had to rely on the Soviets and Chinese, who were absent from the negotiations in Paris. The DRV depended on its allies for economic aid and military supplies, but not for advice on how to conduct the war or to negotiate the truce. Most important, the DRV was able to prevent any maneuver by Kissinger to have Chou En-lai twist the arm of the DRV, as Mendès-France had done at Geneva in 1954; Chou, while being friendly with Kissinger and encouraging the latter's geostrategic designs, kept a strict neutrality in relations between the DRV and the United States. Brezhnev seems to have been able, through his ambassador in Washington Dobrynin, with whom Kissinger was in constant touch, to soften up Kissinger with dreams of détente. 660

Half of Vietnam had been surrendered to the Communists in 1954, but at least politically the terms of the 1954 armistice gave the DRV no legal pretext for interfering in the South. A restoration of the 1954 agreement would have also covered political matters, unequivocally and simply, by prohibiting interference by one administration in the zone of the other. This is why the DRV was against a solution based on 1954, even though its propaganda repeatedly said it stood for a settlement on this basis. The DRV maintained its troops in Laos for an indefinite period after January 1973, whereas it had had to withdraw in specified time periods under the 1954 agreements.

In the final analysis, from the time the official conversations on a bombing halt opened in May 1968 until the signing of the Paris agreement on January 27, 1973, the DRV disproved the adage about the impossibility of winning at the conference table what had not been won on the battlefield. Never in the long war between Hanoi and Saigon, not even in the darkest days of 1964, had the forces of Hanoi seemed to be in a position to win a victory on the battlefield that would have decided the outcome of the war. The ARVN had held. It was only after 1973 that force of arms was to prove decisive against an ARVN demoralized by the concessions made at the conference table by the Americans and agreed to by Thieu. What the DRV had won at the conference table would shortly permit it to carry out its final offensive to take over the South, appropriately named the Ho Chi Minh Campaign, and to exert its will over the nationalists in Laos and Cambodia.

In terms of negotiating strategy, the withdrawal of American troops from the South was conceded to the DRV in 1973 by Nixon and Kissinger without any reciprocal withdrawal of the DRV's troops. Thieu wanted to use the American troop withdrawal as a bargaining chip under the mutual withdrawal for-

mula. And even opposition politicians such as Ngô Cong Duc, a lower-house deputy, proposed a peace plan in September 1970 involving withdrawal of foreign troops, establishment of a provisional government, cease-fire, and free elections. But the position of dependence on the Americans Thieu had got himself into prevented his using the American troop withdrawal in negotiations. Kissinger squelched Thieu's peace plan, and Thieu squelched Duc's peace plan (although Duc was not arrested; Thieu had not yet reached the stage in 1970 of arresting his political opponents). By their failure to obtain the withdrawal of the DRV's troops from Laos and Cambodia in a meaningful time frame, Kissinger, Sullivan, and Bunker had left the entire flank of South Vietnam vulnerable to crossing by the DRV's main forces. It would be hard in the history of diplomacy to imagine a worse outcome, unless the American purpose was simply to get the POWs out and leave all the rest to "evolution," which is what this book has argued on the basis of the documentary evidence.

President Thieu's failings, even after he had bought the "our side, your side" formula from Harriman and Bunker, were many. Two in particular stand out. First, he allowed Bunker to talk him into muzzling Vice President Nguyên Cao Ky in Paris in October 1970 and then procrastinated instead of seizing the initiative with a plan for holding elections at a moment when such an initiative would have won widespread support as a complement to Nixon's speech proposing an Indochina-wide cease-fire. While there was little he could do to prevent the Americans from unilaterally withdrawing their troops, Thieu proved singularly lacking in leadership when he could have forced the Americans to accept him as the principal spokesman on negotiation of internal political matters. The solid legal foundation of his government would then have prevailed over the facade of the PRG, which in the end was accepted as substantial only by gullible foreigners. Moreover, Thieu's government would have acquired a legitimacy in the eyes of its people that it lost by letting the Americans make all the decisions. Then, in January 1972, when he learned of Kissinger's secret concession allowing the DRV to keep its troops in South Vietnam, Thieu failed to insist on full partner status with the Americans in the private meetings, instead of which Kissinger proceeded to negotiate everything ad referendum. Had he been more unscrupulous, Thieu could have turned Kissinger's fear of a leak in the private talks into a weapon against the Americans to gain partner status.

Even so, in the last days, when the content of the draft agreement had been fully revealed and Nixon and Kissinger tried to corner Thieu into signing it, presenting him with the congressional ultimatum which was barely one month off, a man of greater principle would have refused to sign, would have defied Nixon and Kissinger, knowing that as long as the DRV kept the American POWs hostage, the Congress would not have dared to cut off aid. On the contrary, once American troops were completely withdrawn and the POWs had been released, the Congress had no further incentive to go on providing aid. Thieu, on the strength of Nixon's worthless promises, and long before the Watergate affair burst into the open, accepted this Faustian bargain over a "decent interval" that shortly eventuated in the ruin of South Vietnam.

Ironically perhaps, the men who explained to President Thieu the significance of the concessions the Americans were making to the Communists were graduates of American universities, such as Hoang Duc Nha (University of Oklahoma, University of Pittsburgh), Nguyên Tien Hung (University of Virginia), Nguyên Phu Duc (Harvard University), and Vuong Van Bac (Michigan State University, Vanderbilt University). All four had a hand in parsing Nixon's letters and spotting Kissinger's foibles. Duc earned degrees of Master of Laws and Master of Juridical Science at Harvard, and his thesis was entitled "International Law in the French and American Systems."661 Only Pham Dang Lam, who had warned Thieu in October 1968 of Harriman's failure to obtain the DRV's commitment to negotiate "seriously" with the Saigon delegation, had no first-hand knowledge of the United States; he had been born in the Mekong Delta town of Vinh Long and had been sent to Hanoi to study law at Hanoi University, joining the foreign service in 1949. On a level playing field, these professionals would have run circles around Le Duc Tho and Xuan Thuy, refusing to accept the contradictions in the DRV's position on the 1954 agreement and the status of its forces in the South that Kissinger viewed as "cosmetic" matters. The achievement of a durable armistice, however, would have required continued American support of the kind the Eisenhower administration gave the South Koreans after the armistice of 1953. The Nixon administration did not even bother to submit the 1973 "peace agreement" to Congress.

For most Americans, by January 1973 the war had long since ceased to hold any purpose. It was no longer being fought to enforce the American pledge at Geneva in 1954 to ensure respect for the armistice agreement, no longer to uphold the principle of "one man one vote," no longer to allow politics by nonviolent methods to prevail over violence, no longer to defeat an enemy on the battlefield. The war was no longer being fought even to defend a sovereign government, for Nixon and Kissinger had succeeded in turning President Thieu into their puppet and steadfastly held him in power in Saigon until they had extricated the POWs. The leaders of the DRV calculated, correctly as it turned out, that the Americans would not have enough at stake to make good on their threats of brute force to enforce the agreement once it was signed. As they had foreseen, the puppet-master was to slink away. In this, too, they proved brilliant. This is the subject matter of the next chapter.

# 10. The Party Center Triumphant

1973-2000

"War in Peace"

## THE PARTY TAKES STOCK

In October 1972, when the party center had expected rapid signature of the draft agreement and an imminent cease-fire in South Vietnam, a COSVN directive had evaluated the situation that would follow:

During this period we will have new advantages, new conditions, and new capabilities which never prevailed before, while the enemy contradictions and basic vulnerabilities will become more serious than ever before. This period will be a great opportunity for revolutionary violence, for gaining power in South Viet-Nam, for troop and enemy proselytizing, and for making great leaps in the balance of forces.<sup>1</sup>

In late 1972, COSVN moved back into South Vietnam from its sanctuary in Cambodia. On October 17, the NLF Central Committee moved out of Kratie, retracing the path of its retreat two years before, and, having forded the Vam Co Dong, was once again on South Vietnamese soil.<sup>2</sup> The party center met again to review the new situation in January 1973. It had not quite managed to get the Americans to dismantle the Republic of Vietnam, but they had left it gravely weakened. One more push would be needed to topple it. The PRG's action in the coming period was focused on two objectives: progressively demoralizing the ARVN and provoking a new domestic crisis for the Saigon government. The party center continued to emphasize revolutionary violence, however. Directive 2/73 from COSVN, dated January 19, 1973, ordered military forces to assist political efforts through accelerated attacks on Saigon government outposts, increased assassinations and abductions of government officials, and intensified interdiction of lines of communication. Directive 3/73, issued at the end of March, was less upbeat and called for building and refitting and less fighting.<sup>3</sup>

At its twenty-first plenum in March, the party ended this vacillation and reaffirmed that the path to victory was the path of revolutionary violence. In mid-October, the party central committee recognized that "the revolution in the South can only triumph by means of continuous revolutionary violence" and approved COSVN's plans to extend operations into areas controlled by Saigon.<sup>4</sup>

Kaysone Phomvihan's speech on the occasion of the anniversary of the Lao People's Revolutionary Party was an orthodox Marxist-Leninist exhortation to the party faithful, claiming brilliant victories and a heavy but glorious task. "We live in an era of revolution," he said, using the word revolution at least two dozen times in the lengthy speech. "We must contribute to the world revolution by attentively attacking imperialism in general and U.S. imperialism, which is the last resort of imperialism, in particular, further enabling the revolutionary forces throughout the world to grow stronger and bigger with fruitful lessons," Kaysone said. 5 Kaysone also revealed that a "special relationship" existed between the Laotian party and the Vietnam Workers' Party.

The party center's "special relationship" with its creation in South Vietnam also received bolstering. On July 1, 1973, diplomats of seven Communist countries and Mauritania traveled from Hanoi and crossed the DMZ to present their credentials to Chairman Huynh Tan Phat beneath a portrait of Ho and then returned to Hanoi.

It was a strategy of political advance backed by the threat of military force. The Marxist-Leninists of the party center intended purely and simply to fall back on the plan of action they had used in Cochinchina in 1946 to prepare for the referendum foreseen in the March 6 preliminary convention. Although the PRG had taken the place of the Viet Minh, some of the same people were still around to resume their former roles in this charade. Tran Buu Kiem, for one, had been a member of the Committee for the Application in Cooperation with France of the Preliminary Convention of March 6 and of the *Modus Vivendi*.

In his seminal history, Philippe Devillers gives a description of how the plan of action worked in 1946 against a background of terror spread by the armed bands of Nguyên Binh: "disorganization and dismantling of the Franco-Cochinchinese administrative structures, flight of the notables, desertions among the civil guards, civil servants and partisans with their arms and baggage, generalization of uncertainty." All this occurred after a cease-fire had been proclaimed, "restoring peace," as it was said, but while the soldiers on both sides retained their arms and their areas of control.

The terms of the Paris agreement of 1973 left the party center plenty of scope for manipulation, for example disputing who controlled what and protesting the resupply of ARVN troops. President Thieu's government would be subject to the same pressures from the National Assembly as had been that of Dr. Thinh from the Council of Cochinchina, seeking to accommodate the Viet Minh; the government would fall back, likewise, on repression of the opposition, especially those who spoke out in favor of "peace and reconciliation." Thieu's "puppet" government, deprived by the agreement of a clear mandate of sovereignty, would be like Dr. Thinh's, which had labored to create confidence under the burden of its hybrid character as the government of an autonomous republic that was also a French colony. A thoroughly demoralized Thieu might even be led to commit suicide, as Dr. Thinh had done, sparing the DRV the cost of a military campaign. And this before any elections were held in South Vietnam!

#### AN UNWORKABLE AGREEMENT—II

The protocols had made implementation of the Paris agreement the responsibility of the signatories. The main body charged with carrying out this responsibility was the three-segment National Council of National Reconciliation and Concord (Article 12). Until the council had been constituted, however, enforcement of the cease-fire was left to the two South Vietnamese sides, who were both to issue appropriate orders to their units and send local commanders to contact each other. After the only two such meetings to take place in the initial cease-fire period, involving the Airborne Division on the Thach Han River and the Marine Division on the Cua Viet River in Quang Tri, heavy attacks by fire followed.7

The prohibitions in Article 7 against introduction of troops, military advisers, armaments, munitions and war matériel into South Vietnam were to take effect only as of "the enforcement of the cease-fire." This was a gaping loophole, perhaps the largest, in an agreement that already did not provide for troop withdrawals (except for the Americans) or regrouping areas. In Laos after 1962 the Communists had been able to link political provisions of agreements among the three factions regarding decision-making in the coalition government to military provisions of the Geneva Agreement so as to immobilize progress on verification and enforcement. Now they linked political and military provisions within the Paris agreement to thwart effective peace-making. Claiming that Article 16 of the protocol on the Two-Party Joint Military Commission (TPJMC) providing "privileges and immunities" for the delegations had not been respected by the Saigon government, the PRG delegation acted slowly to deploy its personnel to the field; by March 21, it had deployed only 208 of a required 825 personnel.8 This impeded the supervision of the cease-fire provided for in the agreement, allowing the DRV to move men and matériel into the South at will under the unenforced cease-fire. The practical result of a small political obligation was thus immense; the South Vietnamese parties could argue about what constituted "privileges and immunities" endlessly.

The ICCS was patterned on the ICC in Laos after 1962. Sullivan, in negotiating the protocols, had made concessions on the strength of the ICCS contingent down to nearly the small number demanded by the DRV delegation, which cited as usual the imperative need to avoid infringing on the sovereignty of South Vietnam. This number of personnel was woefully inadequate for a territory the size of South Vietnam. Thus, the ICCS was reduced to impotence from the beginning.

The three-segment body, assuming the two South Vietnamese signatories could agree on establishing it, was itself bound to be unworkable in organizing elections or anything else it was charged with, for it was to operate on the principle of unanimity (Article 12(a)). There had been ample proof of this in the experience of the three-party coalition in Laos since 1962. And unlike in Laos where there was a well defined and respected neutralist faction with its own army, in South Vietnam the only existing neutralist center consisted of the names of some ambitious politicians and "third force" advocates. During the

negotiations Kissinger had favored the unanimity provision because it weakened Thieu's objections to a coalition in disguise.

Kissinger and Sullivan had negotiated a reporting machinery for implementing the agreement even more unwieldy than the machinery of the two Geneva co-chairmen in Laos. The United States and the DRV were obliged in the event of violations to send notes to all eight outside participants of the Paris guaranteeing conference. There was no machinery for the receipt and processing of such complaints, and no links existed between the guaranteeing powers and the ICCS. This was a major reason Canada decided to withdraw from the ICCS by July 31, 1973.

An item of business left over from 1954 was the dissolution of the old ICC in Vietnam, which was requested by the DRV government following the signature of the Paris agreement. In response to this request, the ICC moved to Vientiane and there held its 770th and final formal meeting. It agreed on a unanimous resolution to adjourn sine die and to request the co-chairmen to assist it in meeting its outstanding financial liabilities.<sup>9</sup>

As had happened in Laos in 1961 and 1962, an unverified cease-fire in South Vietnam led to repeated accusations of violations on both sides and efforts by diplomats thousands of miles away to shore up the cease-fire by declaring a new effective date. Not unexpectedly, it proved as hopeless an exercise in South Vietnam as it had proved in Laos.

What made the unverified nature of the cease-fire a serious matter was the fact that the two sides facing each other were numerically stronger and better armed than at any point in the long war. The DRV made no pretense at withdrawing some of its troops back into North Vietnam as a gesture of serious intent and goodwill, as it had done in October 1968 when it was reaching agreement on a bombing halt. On the contrary, with the cease-fire looming, both sides had an incentive to deploy their forces to the maximum in order to claim as much territory as possible if and when the cease-fire was enforced. In the case of the DRV, main force units went on the attack with the objective of fixing ARVN troops in their garrisons, while local forces operated in villages and hamlets to propagandize. In the last days of January, fighting reached a new pitch in several regions ranging from the DMZ to the Point of Camau. DRV forces resisted attempts by the ARVN to drive them from the districts of Quang Tri just south of the DMZ that they had occupied since their 1972 offensive. Antiaircraft and tank units were added to the DRV's order of battle there during January. Good intelligence and prompt preventive moves allowed the ARVN to foil most of these land-grabbing operations, including a plan to capture Tay Ninh city. However, fighting continued well after the cease-fire along the Cua Viet River in Quang Tri and at the port of Sa Huynh on the Quang Ngai-Binh Dinh border.

Under Article 7, the two South Vietnamese sides were to be allowed to replace destroyed, damaged, or worn-out equipment on a one-for-one basis. The United States funneled about \$750 million worth of military equipment into South Vietnam in the latter part of 1972 and January 1973. Much of this

equipment was badly worn or lacking in tools and spare parts, so that its maintenance became an added burden for the ARVN.

The cease-fire was also beginning to affect people's attitudes. Officials of the Saigon government did their best to cope with the new situation, but it was not always easy. Corps commanders were under instructions to react strongly to violations by the Viet Cong but not to engage in offensive operations, at the insistence of the Americans so long as the POW release had not been completed. They were also under instructions to restrict their expenditure of artillery ammunition and to expect less air support. A report on attitudes by Consul General R. L. Walkinshaw found great skepticism among ARVN officers in Bien Hoa, with some noting that the only enforceable features of the Paris agreement were the provisions that dealt with the release of American POWs and the corresponding withdrawal of American troops. Highly-placed civilians were beginning to talk in the same way, the report added. We can only speculate that a segment of the military community in this region is frustrated at being powerless to combat the Communists and that they are discrediting the cease-fire agreement and its attendant machinery," the report concluded.

Implementation of the agreement also revealed the human costs of the war. ARVN prisoners released by the PRG reported mistreatment in enemy hands. Prisoners were fed only 550 calories a day consisting of 150 grams of rice plus salt water. Reports indicated that prisoners were used for slave labor. PRG prisoners released by the Saigon government to the PRG (Protocol 1 forbade release to families) were assigned immediately to combat positions in units such as the 7th and 9th DRV Divisions, according to firm intelligence. The PRG and DRV obstructed the designation of Red Cross societies to visit detention sites. The Saigon government, on the other hand, permitted Red Cross visitation of detention centers in order to inspect for adequacy of humane treatment. In addition, the government communicated the protocol on captured persons by loudspeaker, briefings, and postings on bulletin boards in detention camps. The government also permitted inspections by the FPJMC in accordance with the agreement. The PRG refused such gestures, a serious violation of the protocol on captured military personnel.<sup>13</sup> When an ICCS team arrived at Gia Lam to witness the hand-over of the first contingent of POWs only forceful action by the Canadian delegate compelled the DRV to allow the team to visit the Hoa Lo prison in central Hanoi in accordance with the protocol.<sup>14</sup> The true conditions of their detention emerged with the accounts of released American POWs.

The Polish and Hungarian delegations to the ICCS devoted themselves to establishing their own in-country communications system between Saigon and ICCS regional and team sites. The system was to be tied into the DRV and PRG network, providing instant and secret communication capability in furtherance of proletarian internationalism.<sup>15</sup> The Canadian and Indonesian contingents to the ICCS became convinced that intelligence collection on the ARVN was a primary preoccupation of the Poles and Hungarians. They based their conclusion on suspicious movements of the latter at the Kontum team site and on having witnessed them handing packets of photographs to PRG liaison officers at contact points.<sup>16</sup>

In March, the Saigon government and the PRG resumed their meetings at the property at La Celle–St.-Cloud owned by the Quai d'Orsay where the Laotian factions had met in 1964. Saigon, ever hopeful of being able to achieve progress with the PRG toward the political settlement called for under Article 12(a), sent a strong delegation led by Deputy Prime Minister Nguyên Luu Vien. It included Nguyên Xuan Phong of the delegation to the Paris conference as deputy chief; Nguyên Phuong Thiep, also of the Paris delegation; Professor Nguyên Ngoc Huy, secretary-general of the Progressive Nationalist Movement; Professor Nguyên Ngoc An, former minister of open arms and information and a former schoolteacher who was close to Vice President Huong; and Nguyên Trieu Dan, delegation spokesman. The veterans Tran Van Do, Professor Nguyên Quoc Dinh, and lawyer Nguyên Dac Khe were advisers. 17

Vien was born in Vinh Binh Province in the Mekong Delta. He was active in the Viet Minh from 1945 to late 1951, dividing his time with medical studies. He was reported to have been chief surgeon in the 320th Division. <sup>18</sup> Vien said the Paris agreement set forth only three problems for the two South Vietnamese signatories to resolve and proposed an agenda for general elections, formation of a national council of reconciliation and national concord, and reduction and demobilization of armed forces. In the first few meetings, the Saigon delegation stuck to this line. In contrast, the PRG's Minister of State Nguyên Van Hieu raised issues extraneous to the competence of the two-party talks, saying for example that the United States had "entirely invented the so-called infiltration" of the South by North Vietnamese troops. <sup>19</sup> The Saigon delegates soon formed the impression that the PRG was stalling for time. Do and Khe, past masters at this sort of introspection, concluded that Hanoi had not yet decided to commit itself to a political contest. <sup>20</sup>

Also in March in Paris, the Joint Economic Commission foreseen in the Hanoi communiqué began meeting in Paris. In the first meeting, DRV Finance Minister Nguyên Viet Chau appeared anxious to set down within 30 days an agenda that would result in reaching an agreed-upon program by sectors and years. Article 21 of the Paris agreement described the war reparations that Kissinger had discussed with Tho, mentioning specific figures (on which Tho had pressed him in the final negotiations on January 11 and 13<sup>22</sup>) as funds for "healing the wounds of war and postwar reconstruction." The exact amount had been left to later negotiation, although President Nixon pledged a contribution in the range of \$3.25 billion of grant aid over five years. The meetings of the commission continued through March.

The difference between the two sides became clearer at the fifth meeting between the Saigon and PRG delegations on April 3. Vien regretted the PRG's tactics of employing pretexts to evade substantive discussions, such as the temporary suspension of American troop withdrawals in response to Communist attempts to link the POW release with political conditions and with accusations that American military men were in civilian disguise in the South. He urged the PRG to adopt a more forthcoming attitude and to get down to business on the subject of the agenda. He said the agenda proposed by Saigon was fully in con-

formity with Articles 12 and 13 of the Paris agreement. During the discussion period, Vien also expressed a willingness to enter into private talks in order to speed up the talks. In his prepared reply, Hieu said that the impasse stemmed from the Saigon administration's faulty approach to the problem, to wit, the failure to recognize the importance of restoring democratic freedoms and the failure to accept the reality of two administrations, two armies and zones of control, and three political forces. These should come before discussion of formation of the three-segment council and the holding of elections.<sup>24</sup>

Reflecting the PRG's stalling tactics, Hieu opened the next meeting on April 12 with a harsh and vituperative indictment of the communiqué issued by Presidents Thieu and Nixon at San Clemente, Vietnamization, and American neo-colonialism in Indochina. Vien, on the other hand, turned to the question of the agenda and how the opposing points of view could be reconciled. He noted the versions originally proposed contained two points in common (elections and formation of the council) and two points toward which the opposing sides had different approaches (democratic freedoms and reduction/demobilization of forces). He therefore proposed a compromise agenda:

- I. General Elections
  - A. Institutions to be elected.
  - B. Conditions necessary for free and honest elections.
    - 1. Guarantee of democratic freedoms.
    - 2. Solution to question of Vietnamese armed forces in South
- II. National Council of National Reconciliation and Concord
  - A. Organization and Function.
  - B. Composition.<sup>25</sup>

Professor Huy concluded from all this that by emphasizing the priority of establishing democratic freedoms the PRG was seeking to delay the holding of elections for at least two years and perhaps for four years, at which time there would be another presidential election in the United States that Hanoi would try to exploit. Huy said that he had observed that although Hieu was chief of the PRG delegation, he had little real influence and was not trusted to accept telephone calls; callers who asked for him were invariably referred to someone else. The real power in the delegation was Madame Nguyên Thi Chon, the wife of NLF official Tran Bach Dang.<sup>26</sup> The foreign ministry in Saigon was convinced that if it were to agree to placing democratic freedoms at the top of the agenda no progress would be possible and that the Communists would simply use the forum for a publicity campaign on civilian detainees; the question of civilian detainees was already under discussion in the TPJMC, where the PRG was only making propaganda.27

At the eighth meeting on April 25, Vien presented a draft preliminary accord on principles and asked the PRG to sign it by April 27, the deadline set in Article 12(a) of the Paris agreement. Vien pointed out that the Saigon delegation had come to the talks "with all our good will to implement the Paris agreement of January 27, 1973, seriously, and in many meetings, even at the inaugural session, we submitted numerous proposals on the agenda and methods of work." Foreign Minister Tran Van Lam called the draft accord a demonstration of "maximum good will." The seven points in the draft were as follows:

- (1) A final comprehensive agreement on internal questions in South Vietnam would be signed within 30 days of reaching the preliminary agreement.
- (2) Internationally supervised elections would be held 120 days after reaching the preliminary agreement, for a representative "organism."
- (3) The representative "organism" would determine the "state institutions" to exist at central and regional levels.
- (4) The National Council of National Reconciliation and Concord would be convened no later than 30 days after the signature of the final agreement; the council's third component would be chosen by joint Saigon-PRG agreement.
- (5) The council would complete a law on procedures and modalities for holding general elections no later than 30 days after convening, that is, not later than 60 days after signature of the final agreement.
- (6) Non-South Vietnamese armed forces would be withdrawn in parallel with demobilization of the Saigon government's armed forces, in two phases to end with the convening of the council and the completion by the latter of the election law, respectively.
- (7) Wartime restrictions on civil liberties would be eliminated by both sides after signature of the final agreement, and in parallel with observance of the cease-fire and withdrawal of non-South Vietnamese forces.<sup>28</sup>

The draft presented by Vien thus set a firm date for elections. It also made two important concessions. First, the elections would be for "an organism representing the people of Vietnam to decide the political future of South Vietnam," the delegation spokesman, Nguyên Trieu Dan, said. "This organ will decide on state institutions at both the national and regional levels." It would be "sovereign." The second concession was to offer for the first time in the bilateral forum President Thieu's proposal of December 12 for a demobilization within the ARVN of an equivalent number of "non-South Vietnamese" troops demobilized in the South.<sup>29</sup> In return, the draft provided for the reduction of the armed threat in the South that would make genuinely free elections possible, free of subversion, free of intimidation; Thieu had confidence that the South Vietnamese people would once again, as they had done for the past 17 years, demonstrate their bravery and their attachment to the rule of law by going to the polls and voting.

Hieu presented a six-point plan that he said went "to fundamentals." It called for an immediate end of hostilities and strict observance of the cease-fire, with ARVN units withdrawing to their positions as of the date of the cease-fire and the TPJMC delineating respective zones of control, corridors, and routes; immediate release of civilian prisoners; full freedom of political action, of press,

and of travel throughout the country; and formation of the council with fairly broad powers. Only after these measures had been agreed upon, the text of the plan said, would the two sides move on to discuss elections and reduction and demobilization.<sup>30</sup>

While both sides reported "absolutely no progress," the interesting thing about the meetings was that they served to point up the visible differences in the two sides that lay behind their programs. Vien had proved in the negotiations to be neither colorful nor particularly impressive. But his obvious decency and geniality had some impact. Well-drafted Saigon presentations had made an effort to adopt a persuasive, even conciliatory tone. The delegation's spokesman, Nguyên Trieu Dan, had demonstrated a solid grasp of well documented, up-to-date information that he presented with skill and considerable tact. The Saigon delegation had benefited from the raising of their relations with France to ambassadorial status once again. In contrast, the performance of the PRG delegation had been poor. Hieu's cheerless, dogmatic approach in the talks, despite being somewhat impressive for his machine-gun delivery, had failed to enhance the legitimacy, authority, and international prestige of the PRG. With American forces departed from South Vietnam, his diatribes against the United States and its puppet government had assumed an abstract, stale nature. His handling of the post-meeting press conference on April 25 had even given rise to hilarity.31 Manac'h's friend from Phnom Penh was in danger of becoming an object of ridicule.

Kissinger, in a burst of euphoria following the release of the first contingent of POWs, had invited Le Duc Tho to visit Washington. President Thieu, for his part, rated only a visit to President Nixon at the so-called Western White House at San Clemente, California. Bunker wanted it to be an official visit, but Thieu insisted it be a state visit. He considered it his reward as a loyal ally for having signed the agreement; Nixon had promised him the visit three or four weeks after the cease-fire to publicly reaffirm their joint cooperation and his promises of support. In the event, the visit was postponed until April 3. The welcome and all the rest took place within the walled compound of the Spanish-style home with its white stucco walls and tiled roof, hidden from view and accessible only by a guarded access road. The state dinner took place in the small dining room with seating for 12. A number of tasteless incidents by Nixon's aides marred the occasion.

Thieu was disappointed that Nixon was as unspecific on promised military and economic aid to his government as Kissinger had been with Pham Van Dong on aid to the DRV. There was no public reaffirmation of the "full force" response Nixon had promised in his letters. Instead, Nixon told Thieu privately: "The United States will meet all the contingencies in case the agreement is grossly violated. You can count on us." White House aides described to newsmen as "purposely vague" the language in the communiqué stating the principal points. Hidding goodbye to his guest, Nixon seemed distracted and immediately turned his back and rushed to his office. Three months later, going behind Thieu's back, he would agree to a congressional vote foreclosing any further American military action in Indochina with the comment over the telephone to House Minority Leader Gerald R. Ford "That's fine."

When he reached Washington, Thieu, in the company of Tran Van Lam and Ambassador Tran Kim Phuong, had a meeting at Blair House with Deputy Secretary of State Kenneth Rush, who stressed the importance of South Vietnam's observing the cease-fire scrupulously. Rush recalled President Nixon's determination to see that the peace agreement actually worked and recounted his own recent representations to the Hungarians and Poles on their obstructionism of the ICCS.<sup>36</sup> Thieu's visit to the United States was a shameful episode in the long history of relations between Americans and Vietnamese, although Thieu handled himself with dignity throughout. He did not comprehend the impact of the Watergate affair because he believed the issues facing Nixon were essentially trivial and he did not perceive that they could drive Nixon from office. So he continued to hope for the best.<sup>37</sup>

Thieu's poor public relations in the United States were symptomatic of a deeper weakness, however. Thieu was given to procrastination, and the greater the uncertainty the greater the procrastination. It was a habit encouraged by the sycophants with whom he had surrounded himself. Meetings of the cabinet often lasted an entire day while the ministers argued among themselves without reaching a single decision; Prime Minister Tran Thien Khiem sat silently, to all appearances oblivious to what was going on.<sup>38</sup> Thieu had no Friends of Vietnam, as Diem had had, to help him win the neutrality, if not support, of key American figures. Yet when Hung proposed opening an information office in Washington, Thieu, characteristically, did not respond. The National Commission for Information, established in February 1973, headed by Hoang Duc Nha,<sup>39</sup> was totally ineffective in the United States. Thus, faced with an effective propaganda campaign orchestrated by Hanoi on issues to which Americans were sensitive, such as the numbers and conditions of incarceration of political prisoners, Saigon seemed to be passive. Thieu did not even keep Phuong informed of military developments in South Vietnam, forcing the latter to rely on the CIA for information. But this, too, looked like just another consequence of American custody of the sovereignty of South Vietnam; the mercenary generals in 1963, too, had depended on the Americans for information about the war.<sup>40</sup>

The option of the "full force" retaliation for DRV violations of the cease-fire depended on the air strike contingency plan Nixon had described to Nguyên Phu Duc in December. Hotlines were established between the JGS, South Vietnamese air force headquarters, the four corps headquarters in South Vietnam, and the air base at Nakhon Phanom in Thailand. New targeting information was transmitted to the DAO and thence to Nakhon Phanom. Targeting information was also updated by periodic visits of senior South Vietnamese officers to Nakhon Phanom. When General Vogt, Seventh Air Force commander in Nakhon Phanom, was prohibited from making his monthly visits to confer with corps commanders to update targeting lists, <sup>41</sup> it became evident to Thieu and his ARVN commanders that the contingency plan lacked substance, and combined with Nixon's secretiveness about retaliation it showed Thieu finally that he had signed the agreement under false pretenses. Ironically, while General Vogt was prohibited from visiting South Vietnam by the embassy for

fear it give rise to an accusation of a violation, General Van Tien Dung, chief of staff of the DRV army and a politburo member, toured South Vietnam within a month of the cease-fire to take stock of the situation, quite legally.<sup>42</sup>

Nor was Nixon's pledge of military and economic aid to his government any more substantive. Despite the fact that Kissinger touted the agreement to Vuong Van Bac, Thieu's legal expert in Paris, as "a legal document to ask Congress for continued assistance" (Kissinger was very inventive when it came to arguments in favor of the agreement and Bac thought Kissinger "could be a very brilliant lawyer"), 43 the Congress was not sufficiently impressed with this newfound legal basis to continue funding aid to South Vietnam. In fact, Kissinger did not press the argument about a legal obligation when the Congress balked. Instead, he talked about a moral obligation. 44 But, in light of everything that had happened, who had a right to invoke a moral imperative, aside from the South Vietnamese, whose word no longer counted for much? Perhaps the Nixon administration's critics, who focused on Thieu's dictatorial tendencies, had as much claim to morality as the administration itself. Thieu had heretofore disregarded warnings about the mood in Congress and assumed that Nixon would somehow find a way to get aid to the Republic of Vietnam. This assumption now evaporated, and he began to wonder whether he might not have been better off to take his chances by refusing to sign.

As a result, Thieu was caught in a descending spiral, to borrow an apt phrase Pham Van Dong had used about Diem in 1962. The more he tried to slow down the implementation of an agreement that he now saw had been a strategic mistake, the more he gave the DRV opportunity to charge him with violating the agreement and the more cover he gave the DRV to retaliate against the ARVN militarily, while the ARVN continued to be held back by the strictures of the cease-fire. As the ARVN weakened because of aid cutbacks it became more threatened by military action. This in turn weakened Thieu's political position, and made him more than ever determined to avoid the political steps stipulated by the agreement.

Thieu used the emergency powers he received from the National Assembly in July 1972 to issue 60 decrees, many of which were designed to streamline the government's administrative apparatus, which had grown to unwieldy proportions. Others, however, were of a political nature, and some raised troubling questions of dictatorial tendencies and human rights violations. Decree 7 on the press established stiff financial penalties for newspapers who violated the press code. Decrees 17, 18, and 19 provided for the declaration of various states of emergency and were seen as aimed at dealing with economic, political, and military disorders that might arise during the cease-fire period, of the kind presaged by the Communists' cease-fire plans outlined in the captured document of October 17. Decree 20 modified the procedures for preventive detention, allowing the government to continue detaining Communist suspects in peacetime as well as in war. Decree 60 on political parties significantly stiffened the requirements for political party registration and made it necessary for candidates for public office to be sponsored by a political party.<sup>45</sup>

Thieu's response to American pressure to broaden his political base was to launch his own political party, drawing its members (with varying degrees of coercion) from the civil service and the military, and to squeeze out all other parties. Thieu hoped his Democracy Party (Dang Dan Chu) would provide him with an effective means of competing with the PRG politically. But to many Vietnamese the new party, which had the trappings of Diem's National Revolutionary Movement, seemed to be Thieu's way of tightening control. Colonel Nguyên Be, who had been the director of the National Training Center at Vung Tau for seven years and was regarded as an expert on pacification, was replaced when the mission of the center was changed to train cadres for the Democracy Party. He refused to become a party member himself. "I just don't have my heart in it any more," Be told an American friend. "Here it is 1973, and I'm still telling Americans what I told you ten years ago. And what effect has it had?"46 In another move to counter the PRG, Thieu had Prime Minister Khiem issue Circular Directive No. 193 on January 24, 1973, organizing Political Struggle Committees at all levels. <sup>47</sup> Other groups were also organizing and seeking unity. A meeting of six major Hoa Hao factions signed a proclamation in Hoa Hao village, Chau Doc Province, after several months of negotiations calling for an end to all separate activities harmful to unity.<sup>48</sup> Leaders of the Cao Dai, under strong pressure from their followers, sent a letter to Thieu and Khiem calling attention to the post-cease-fire fighting in Tay Ninh Province and requesting them to assist in caring for victims and repairing homes and to intercede with the ICCS to send a team to supervise the cease-fire.<sup>49</sup>

Thieu's efforts to restructure and reform political life in South Vietnam threatened the traditional political parties, of which there were 29 in South Vietnam when Thieu promulgated Decree Law 60 on December 27, 1972. 50 Frederick Z. Brown, the American consul in Danang, estimated that literal application of Decree Law 60 would result in the dissolution or driving underground of all the traditional nationalist parties in the northern part of Central Vietnam except for one, leaving the field to the Democracy Party. As he had done in the 1971 presidential election, Thieu had mandated requirements for eligibility that were nationwide in scope. This threatened the VNQDD in particular, whose strength was regional, meaning that its members faced the choice of affiliating with the Democracy Party temporarily or going underground as many of them had done in the past. The exception Brown noted was the Self-Determination Bloc, made up of the Revolutionary Dai Viet, the Worker-Farmer Party, and the Progressive Nationalist Movement. In Thua Thien Province and Hue the Revolutionary Dai Viet was virtually synonymous with the administration, and it seemed possible that the Democracy Party would merge with it rather than seek to destroy it; in this event, the outlook for the Self-Determination Bloc would be dim.<sup>51</sup> Vietnam Press reported on May 17 that the ministry of interior had promulgated an order dissolving all political parties that had failed to meet the requirements of Decree Law 60. The parties dissolved that were listed by name numbered 26, including 24 that had received full recognition under the old 1969 parties statute.<sup>52</sup> Ambassador Bunker departed from Saigon that month also, taking his illusions about forming a loyal opposition with him.

#### FURTHER CONCESSIONS IN VIETNAM

While both sides in South Vietnam accused the other of cease-fire violations and skepticism grew, major newspapers in the United States within five months were questioning the worth of the agreement and protocols Kissinger and Sullivan had negotiated. In the face of well-publicized DRV violations that could not be denied, President Nixon had to order a stop to de-mining operations in North Vietnam, thereby violating Article 2 of the agreement, to resume reconnaissance flights over North Vietnam, thereby violating one of the eight understandings that accompanied the agreement,<sup>53</sup> and to suspend the talks on economic aid to DRV, thereby violating Kissinger's undertakings in Hanoi. Questions were also being raised in the Congress about the reasons for the unexpectedly small number of POWs released, especially in Laos, where some 300, including the prisoners of Phou Pha Thi, remained unaccounted for.

Continuing military action in the South impelled the secretary-general of the House of Representatives in Saigon to write to Rogers in his capacity as a participant in the guaranteeing conference forwarding a petition signed by members protesting the siege since the end of March of the Ranger base at Tong Le Chan, which sat astride one of the Communists' lines of communication in the sensitive area between Tay Ninh and An Loc.<sup>54</sup> These were not matters that could be handled by forcing President Thieu to make more concessions to appears Nixon's domestic critics. Kissinger sensed the Paris agreement was in jeopardy and suggested to Le Duc Tho that they meet again to "improve" the agreement, an imaginative euphemism for trying to plug some of its loopholes.

The DRV had, in fact, been testing American intentions with respect to enforcement of the military provisions of the agreement since the first day. On January 28, the DRV began improving the airfield at Khe Sanh and during February the 263rd SAM Regiment moved into the area with launching sites for SA-2 missiles, a highly provocative act. Kissinger instructed Bunker to see to it that the Americans and Saigon made a strong joint protest over the action, but, worried about the effect it might have on POW release, said Saigon should refrain from taking military action pending the outcome of the protest.<sup>55</sup> General Woodward protested in the FPJMC in February, and some of the missiles were temporarily removed. The ICCS failed to investigate.<sup>56</sup> In late March, a new site was discovered, and all remained operational. The DRV's forces in the South, far from withering away as Kissinger had expected, reinforced and improved their lines of supply following the cease-fire. Using the last months of the dry season and working under the unverified conditions of the cease-fire and territorial control and taking advantage of the constraints imposed by the Paris agreement on the ARVN, the DRV engaged in a massive engineering effort in the western parts of northern South Vietnam, Consul General Brown reported from Danang. Every flight over the area spotted bulldozers and construction crews cutting new roads, rehabilitating airfields, and building settlements, storage points, and even irrigation projects. The main effort was a north-south route paralleling the Ho Chi Minh Trail across the border in Laos, tied to it by lateral roads.<sup>57</sup> Construction of this north-south route, together

with a fuel pipeline, eventually reached as far south as Loc Ninh. As a result of its construction program, the DRV could now move men and supplies from its home bases to the Saigon area in less than 25 days, one-third the previous travel time. <sup>58</sup> Intelligence reports spoke of movement southward of large amounts of supplies and war matériel, including 314 tanks and 36 long-range 130-mm. artillery pieces, some as far south as Binh Long Province. <sup>59</sup>

More than men, tanks, and artillery, however, it was the acquisition of an anti-aircraft capability that produced the most far-reaching change in the balance of forces in the South. In addition to heavier missiles requiring motorized transport and fixed emplacements that were therefore vulnerable to air attack, the DRV began arming its units with hand-held anti-aircraft missiles that effectively challenged all low-flying aircraft, including helicopters. The DRV thus managed a superiority over the enemy as great as that managed by the Syracusans allied with the Spartans when they confined the Athenian expeditionary fleet in the great harbor of Syracuse where the Athenian prowess of maneuver and attack on the open sea was put to nought. In the heat of battle when positions were constantly shifting, South Vietnamese pilots dropped their bombs from great heights on their own troops as well as on the enemy, spreading confusion and demoralization as assuredly as when the Athenian triremes backed and filled in the confines of the harbor.

After the war, the Military History Institute recorded:

From January until September 1973, the amount of supplies sent from North Vietnam into the South rose to 140,000 tons, four times as much as in 1972. Included in these supplies were 80,000 tons of military supplies (including 27,000 tons of weapons, 6,000 tons of fuel and petroleum products, and 40,000 tons of rice) and 45,000 tons of supplies to be distributed to civilians in the newly liberated zones. In addition there were 10,000 tons of weapons stored in the warehouses along the Annamite Mountain roads. More than 100,000 cadres and soldiers, including two infantry divisions, two artillery regiments, one anti-aircraft artillery division, one armored regiment, one engineer regiment, and units of reinforcement troops marched from North Vietnam to the battlefields in South Vietnam during 1973.<sup>60</sup>

These were the facts on the ground; whether they belied the DRV's contention, reiterated in a foreign ministry note delivered to the American Embassy in Paris on April 16, that the DRV and PRG had "strictly respected and scrupulously implemented the agreement and the protocols" depended rather on a constructionist reading of these documents, as full of holes as they were. The note accused the United States and the Republic of Vietnam of violating Articles 2, 3, 5, 7, and 8. It made no mention of the talks between the PRG and Saigon, however. Showing sudden concern for Laos and Cambodia, when it had refused to discuss these countries at the guaranteeing conference, the DRV also condemned the American bombing after the cease-fire in Laos, which was at Souvanna Phouma's request, and "carpet-bombings" in Cambodia. On April 17, Nixon and Kissinger responded with a sharp note rejecting the DRV's

accusations but accepting meetings with Tho to be preceded by preparatory meetings between Sullivan and Thach. Prince Souvanna Phouma approved the references to Laos and to himself in the rebuttal.<sup>62</sup>

Already by mid-March, however, a month after his discussions with Pham Van Dong and Le Duc Tho in Hanoi, Kissinger had the answer to the question he had asked then: Did the leaders of the DRV intend to settle for a compromise peace or forge ahead with their plan to take over the South, behind the facade of the PRG but using a preponderance of military force if necessary? The fact that Kissinger was planning more bombing to coincide with his projected talks with Tho to induce the DRV to reexamine its course, the purpose of the bombing Nixon had ordered in May and December 1972, was proof that he had his answer. 63 But once again it was Nixon's domestic critics that were uppermost in his mind. In a cable sent from Mexico, where he was vacationing, Kissinger wrote that a DRV offensive was to be expected if there was no reaction to the violations of the agreement. "If an offensive succeeds, all those who have fought every move the President has made will be vindicated and the whole basis of the President's policy undermined. I consider one of the key objectives of our foreign policy to be to get as much time as possible before the resumption of hostilities by the North," he wrote. Here again was his theme of a decent interval. He did not question the assumption of the workability of the Paris agreement, particularly its aspects of enforcing the cease-fire and replacing military equipment, beyond taking steps to "improve" it.64

Sullivan met Thach at Gif-sur-Yvette on April 27. The meeting centered mainly on American citation of the Communists for having violated the agreement. The DRV requested a one-day delay to study the American complaints before holding another meeting. 65 The second meeting was held at Le Vésinet on April 29. It was mainly devoted to the DRV's presentation of violations by the United States and the Saigon government. The DRV stated that these violations concerned Articles 2 (suspension of mine-sweeping and resumption of aerial reconnaissance), 3 (cease-fire), 5 (weapons and military advisers removal), 6 (dismantling bases), 7 (military aid to Saigon), 8 (release of detainees by Saigon), 9-14 (democratic liberties), 16-17 (privileges and immunities of commission members), 20 (U.S. air operations in Cambodia, Thai troops in Laos, and the Vientiane government's "intransigence" in negotiations), and 21 (suspension of joint economic talks). In all instances where the Saigon, Vientiane, or Bangkok governments were blamed for a primary violation, Sullivan reported, the Americans were charged with having "incited," "encouraged," or otherwise influenced the situation negatively. The Americans were charged with violating the general spirit of the agreement by failing to disengage from Vietnam and pursuing a general policy of neocolonialism in Indochina. A third meeting was scheduled for April 30.66 Saigon diplomats in Paris having gotten wind of these meetings, Bui Diem and Phong flew to Saigon on April 29 to warn Thieu. Before they left, they received a detailed briefing on the April 29 meeting from Sullivan.<sup>67</sup> Sullivan held his third meeting with Thach at Gif-sur-Yvette, and the two sides agreed that the agenda for forthcoming talks between Kissinger and Tho would be framed in two

general points: to review implementation of the Paris agreement and to find appropriate measures to assure strict implementation. The Americans briefed Vien on the meeting. <sup>68</sup> Sullivan gained the impression the DRV was still angling on receiving the economic aid President Nixon had promised Pham Van Dong. It was clear that both sides had many opportunities to charge the other side with violations. Some of these related to the wording of the agreement itself: for example, while Article 20 specified no deadline for withdrawal of the DRV's troops from Cambodia, neither did it specify a deadline for the end of American military action in that country.

Kissinger held meetings with Tho beginning on May 17 and lasting intermittently, with a recess, until June 13, 1973. Tho knew he held a winning hand, for Radio Hanoi in a broadcast on May 16 noted that Watergate might undermine Kissinger, as indeed it did. Thieu was also aware of the domestic dynamics that drove Kissinger to make concessions to the DRV, and which in turn made the DRV eager to negotiate with him instead of with Saigon. Bui Diem and Phong had warned him that in the situation where Nixon was paralyzed by Watergate the concessions could only come faster.

Tho's idea of "improving" the agreement was to force the Americans to put an end to American reconnaissance flights, to restart the de-mining of the DRV's harbors, to resume the sessions of the Joint Economic Commission, and to gain marginal advantages on political questions in South Vietnam, if possible in light of the PRG's unimpressive performance in the bilateral talks at La Celle–St.–Cloud. "He talks realistically about steps which both sides need to take in order [to] implement the agreement," Kissinger cabled Nixon after the first meeting, implicitly accepting the DRV's placing of responsibility for taking such steps on the Americans.<sup>69</sup>

As usual, all the consultation with Saigon that Kissinger allowed was put off until his negotiations with the adversary had already started, on the assumption that whatever he and Tho agreed upon would have the rapid concurrence of their puppets (or "clients," as Kissinger called them). As a result, there were the usual misunderstandings and bouts of emotion that accompany uncoordinated diplomacy. "We are having significant problems with Saigon, which is behaving very much as it did last fall," Kissinger cabled on May 18, the day after his negotiations started.<sup>70</sup> If the draft memorandum of understanding was to be a bilateral affair between the United States and the DRV, as proposed by Tho, naturally the Saigon government would oppose the inclusion of any new conditions with respect to the South. Foreign Minister Tran Van Lam gave Chargé d'Affaires Charles S. Whitehouse a memorandum proposing that "all political questions regarding South Vietnam should be left out completely from the draft memorandum of understanding between the United States and the DRV, because otherwise this inevitably will be considered as a clear interference in the internal affairs of South Vietnam contrary to Articles 4 and 9 of the Paris agreement on the self-determination of the South Vietnamese people."71

Kissinger had sent Whitehouse a list of items he proposed to discuss with Tho, based on the Sullivan-Thach conversations. He would attempt to obtain from the DRV a cease-fire in Cambodia, early specific dates for withdrawal of all DRV troops from Laos and Cambodia, cessation of Communist-initiated military actions in South Vietnam, return of all ARVN prisoners, an accounting for Saigon civilians held by the PRG and arrangements for their prompt return, respect for the DMZ, and other matters. In return for these actions by the DRV, Kissinger wanted to be able to assure Tho that the Saigon government would agree to take the following steps: cease military attacks in areas under PRG control, carry out prisoner and civilian detainee obligations under Article 8, agree to immediate and unconditional formation of the National Council of National Reconciliation and Concord, institute democratic liberties especially in regard to freedom of movement, and revise proposals made at La Celle–St.-Cloud demanding withdrawal of DRV troops from South Vietnam. Kissinger would need to know the manner in which the Saigon government was prepared to carry out these proposed steps so they could be incorporated in a "satisfactory package."<sup>72</sup>

In reply to this memorandum, the Saigon government made a number of observations. It stated that the DRV had no right to interfere in the internal affairs of South Vietnam, the more so since it had pledged in Article 9 of the Paris agreement to respect the South Vietnamese people's right to self-determination. It asked that, as the United States had stated it continued to recognize the Government of the Republic of Vietnam as the sole legitimate government in South Vietnam (in President Nixon's speech of January 23), the PRG be referred to as the NLF and not as the PRG. On the actions to be taken by the DRV, important matters such as the cessation of infiltration, respect for the DMZ, and continued use of the Ho Chi Minh Trail in Laos were not mentioned. As for actions to be taken by the Saigon government, the cessation of military attacks against the NLF-controlled areas presupposed the existence of some delimitation of the areas controlled by each side, something on which the NLF continued to refuse its cooperation. (This, indeed, had been one of the problems with the implementation of the 1962 agreement in Laos.) On immediate and unconditional formation of the Council, the Saigon government's 10point proposal of April 25 had been very forthcoming in this regard, and it was the NLF that was setting conditions and stalling (as indeed the record showed). On revision of proposals with respect to the DRV's troops in the South, it reminded the Americans that the Paris agreement did not recognize their right to be there, and Article 13 specifically provided that the question of the Vietnamese armed forces in South Vietnam would be settled by the two South Vietnamese parties, suggesting it was not properly a subject for negotiations between Kissinger and Tho. Finally, the question of "democratic liberties," especially in relation to freedom of movement, aside from being dealt with in the 10-point proposal of April 25, again presupposed some sort of agreement on who controlled what.73

The memorandum from Saigon was more than Kissinger's pride could take. "When we undertake a serious and important effort to resolve a common problem, we do not expect an answer from our ally which is insolent and patronizing," he cabled Whitehouse, in language that had seldom been used since

Harriman's fulminations and threats against President Diem. In an attempt to shift blame for the confrontation, he wrote:

We cannot repeat not accept instruction or interpretation of the meaning of various articles in the agreement or its protocols from the GVN, which consistently refused to cooperate with us in their negotiation and which therefore has no repeat no knowledge or experience of their negotiating history. Consequently, we must insist that we are in a better position than the GVN to interpret these articles.<sup>74</sup>

Foreign Minister Tran Van Lam was particularly outraged by the fact that Kissinger's failure to consult before entering a new round of talks with Tho had given Hanoi the impression that it could arrange things with Kissinger instead of with Saigon. Lam told Whitehouse that he had been trying to get talks started with Hanoi, in addition to the secret talks with the NLF that the Saigon delegation in Paris had proposed on April 3. "Now my project is a mess (*une pagaille*)," he told Whitehouse.<sup>75</sup>

President Nixon wrote once again to President Thieu on May 21, without doubt the most extraordinary of his many extraordinary letters to Thieu. The letter was delivered by Sullivan. Focusing narrowly on Kissinger's current negotiations with Tho, Nixon wrote "As you know, I have publicly pressed for the strict implementation of the agreement and have both American prestige and American willingness to engage itself behind me. It would never be understood in America if the negotiation failed as a result of avoidable obstacles." If these statements, with their uncertain syntax, mean what I take them to mean, not only did they convey a promise whose emptiness must have been realized by all concerned at that point, they also implied that the only object was to make the negotiations succeed come what may. Furthermore, the likening of Thieu to an "avoidable obstacle" was arrogant and false, to say the least.

The letter went on to make another false and misleading statement in the next paragraph when it defended the two-party format on the grounds that a four-party signing would imply recognition of the PRG. This overlooked, in what seems to have been a transparent attempt to pander to Thieu's known feeling about the PRG, the experience of the four-party negotiations in 1969–1973, and the signing of the Paris agreement itself, and therefore seems incomprehensible. The letter concluded with the usual threat of a cut-off of aid and the injunction against giving "the appearance of disagreement between us." <sup>76</sup>

On reading this letter, Thieu must have had the impression that the United States was in the hands of a leader who had become incoherent, not to say removed from reality. Nevertheless, he answered politely, after a slight delay due to a meeting at the palace on economic affairs. In the meantime, Whitehouse showed the letter to Prime Minister Khiem, who read it with great interest and, ever anxious to be of service to the Americans, assured Whitehouse that he would arrange a meeting with Thieu at once and would try to persuade Thieu to reverse the government's position on the offending points. Khiem, the mandarin, was always telling his cabinet ministers "Check with the Americans."

"I have just received today your message and would like to assure you that I share your concern as well as your determination to see the Paris agreement and its protocols strictly enforced by all the parties concerned, towards an improved implementation of the cease-fire," Thieu replied. He assured Nixon that he had carefully weighed all the memoranda he had received from Kissinger and had replied promptly to all of them, "although these important matters normally would have required longer consideration." He added: "In any case, as early as May 11 we have pointed out in our memorandum, at Point C, that 'The DRV has no right to interfere in the internal affairs of South Vietnam, the more so that it had pledged, in Article 9 of the Paris agreement, to respect the South Vietnamese people's right to self-determination." He concluded by assuring Nixon, once again, that he took close to heart the close cooperation between their two governments, but as the matters under consideration involved the future of South Vietnam they had to be most careful about them."

Kissinger and Tho recessed their talks to reconsider the situation. Meanwhile, the correspondence between Nixon and Thieu continued apace. There were eight more letters from Nixon to Thieu between May 30 and June 13, and five from Thieu to Nixon. Whitehouse was kept busy shuttling to the Foreign Ministry or looking for Lam at his house or wherever he happened to be; he conveyed Nixon's letters and Thieu's replies for transmission from the embassy.<sup>79</sup> Nixon was using his usual mix of threats and promises. Thieu tried his best to remain polite in his replies, focusing on the substantive issues of the draft document to be concluded with the other side rather than on appearances. In an attempt to overcome Thieu's resistance in his letter of June 9, Nixon wrote "in total confidence" that the Americans had an arrangement that would involve the withdrawal of DRV's forces from Laos over a period of 60 days beginning on July 1, and that they were engaged "in a complex three-cornered negotiation on Cambodia," time for which would be bought by the communiqué. The next day he informed Thieu that the Americans hoped to impose restraints on Chinese and Soviet supplies of equipment to the DRV. No promise was too far-fetched, it seemed. To Thieu, these were like the bones a master at table throws to his dog.

Thieu was still attempting to make the text of the draft less unfavorable to the nationalist side. On June 9 he informed Nixon he was willing to have his representative in Paris sign the communiqué if three paragraphs affecting South Vietnamese questions were left out of the June 5 draft he had seen. <sup>80</sup> If deleting these paragraphs was impossible, Thieu wanted the complete text of Chapter IV of the Paris agreement dealing with the exercise of the South Vietnamese people's right to self-determination restated. Thieu went even further: he was willing to accept a new clause indicating that free and democratic general elections in South Vietnam should be held no later than six months following the new date for the cease-fire. "I think that, in this way, there can be a communiqué and at the same time you can avoid for us the disastrous consequences of the disruptions of our society, and of two territories under two governments in South Vietnam," he wrote.<sup>81</sup> When the negotiations resumed in Paris, in a final

attempt to restore the preeminence given the holding of elections in the Paris agreement, Thieu wrote Nixon on June 13, the day Lam told Whitehouse that instructions had been sent to Vien to sign the communiqué, that "the Communists still attempt to separate the issue of general elections from the question of democratic liberties, in order to exploit them to subvert and undermine our society, concurrently with the persistent and mounting threat of the NVA [North Vietnamese Army] in South Viet-Nam." Thieu was correct: at the June 28 session of the talks at La Celle–St.-Cloud, the PRG proposed, once again, that elections be organized by the Council "when an effective cease-fire has been applied and democratic liberties [have been] fully guaranteed." S

In fact, Kissinger attached little importance to implementation of the political aspects of the agreement now that the POWs were safely out of the DRV's hands. He told Whitehouse he understood Saigon's dissatisfaction with many of the events that had taken place since the cease-fire went into effect but that Saigon's signature would buy a few weeks' additional time on the Congressional front. "We would see failure to sign the communiqué as a catastrophy [sic]—a catastrophy for which we will assume no responsibility." In a note added for Whitehouse's information, Kissinger wrote "While I personally agree with many of the criticisms levied against Hanoi's failure to carry out the January agreement, I cannot go into an explanation by cable." It was only when he was asked a question at a press conference on the day of the signing that he paid lip service to the political portions, saying he thought Saigon's proposal to hold early elections was a reasonable one and he hoped it would be accepted. He does not mention these aspects in his memoirs.

Kissinger finally bowed to Saigon's insistence on format, and the signing of the communiqué took place at two different times on June 13: a bilateral signing (Kissinger and Tho) and a signing by all four parties (Kissinger, Tho, Vien, and Hieu), with the preamble in each case referring only to "the parties signatory to the Paris agreement." As in January, the Saigon government took no official notice of the bilateral communiqué. Copies were sent to the other signatories of the Paris guaranteeing conference and to the governments of Thailand, Cambodia, and Laos. 87 The new cease-fire was to take effect at noon Saigon time on June 15. The TPJMC was enjoined to determine the areas controlled by the two South Vietnamese signatories "as soon as possible." The TPJMC was also to "immediately discuss the movements necessary to accomplish a return of the armed forces of the two South Vietnamese parties to the positions they occupied at the time of the cease-fire entered into force on January 28, 1973." Typical of Kissinger and Sullivan's sloppy negotiating, this paragraph would be satisfied, in the strict constructionist sense favored by the DRV, by a few officials sitting around a table at Camp Davis talking indefinitely. A "leopard spot" cease-fire had been judged by the French in 1954 to be "entirely impracticable and unenforceable."88

The section on South Vietnamese political questions used wording that was closer to the PRG's position in the bilateral negotiations than to Saigon's. This was another gain for the DRV, as the Saigon government's forthright stand on early elections clearly enjoyed greater public favor than the PRG's position

and would have benefited by some token of support in the communiqué. Instead, the DRV negotiators had rearranged the paragraphs of Chapter IV of the Paris agreement so as to bury the scheduling of elections under fulsome mention of the "democratic freedoms" the Communists wanted highlighted. Kissinger thus accepted the DRV's draft of June 5 on this issue, in spite of Saigon's protests. Although the bilateral political talks continued for a few more weeks, Thieu ordered his delegation home when it became clear no progress would result. Thus ended any hope of reconciliation between the Southern signatories.

The one operational provision of the 1954 armistice agreement that had been carried over to the 1973 Paris agreement was the clause in Article 15 defining the DMZ, which both North and South Vietnam were enjoined to respect. Now Kissinger and Sullivan proceeded to empty even this provision of any meaning. Buried in the discussion of Article 7 of the Paris agreement restricting introduction of war matériel was the following paragraph:

In conformity with Article 15(b) of the Agreement regarding the respect of the Demilitarized Zone, military equipment may transit the Demilitarized Zone only if introduced into South Viet-Nam as replacements pursuant to Article 7 of the Agreement and through a designated point of entry.

Tho must have derived particular satisfaction from this American concession in view of the fuss Saigon had made in November and December about the status of the DMZ. As the DRV's forces firmly controlled both sides of the DMZ from one end to the other, the DRV was in a position to ignore any request for inspection of the introduction of war matériel across the DMZ, "designated entry point" or no. The last vestige of the Geneva armistice agreement had been thrown by the wayside by Kissinger and Sullivan. Coupled with their repudiation of the sovereignty of the Republic of Vietnam in Article 9(d) of the October 20, 1972, draft, this reduction to meaninglessness of the DMZ implied, in short, that the United States recognized the DRV, free of all the fetters imposed by the French in 1954, as the sovereign power in all of Vietnam.

The communiqué obliged the United States to resume mine clearing within five days and to complete this operation within 30 days; to "cease immediately, completely, and indefinitely aerial reconnaissance over the territory of the DRV"; and to resume meetings of the Joint Economic Commission within four days and to complete the first phase of work within 15 days.

There was still no firm timetable for the withdrawal of the DRV's troops from Laos and Cambodia. In addition to the public communiqué, however, a number of secret written understandings were reached between Kissinger and Tho, one of which concerned Laos. In a draft memorandum of understanding given Tho on May 18, Kissinger had proposed wording that would have closed the loophole in Article 20 by setting a firm date, to be negotiated, for the withdrawal of foreign troops from Laos. <sup>89</sup> Tho insisted on following the timetable in the Vientiane agreement, which was tied to the formation of the coalition government. In the final version, the two countries expressed their desire for the

success of the ongoing negotiations in Laos. They had been informed by the Lao parties that the Provisional Government of National Union would be achieved by July 1. Within 60 days of the formation of this government, all foreign military personnel were to be withdrawn and all foreign military organizations were to be disbanded. Kissinger had to settle for half a loaf. But Tho also demanded something more. The foreign military organizations were said to include the "special forces organized, equipped, trained and commanded by foreign countries," a reference to Vang Pao's Meo. Although not strictly correct in that the Meo were not commanded by the Americans and came under the authority of the General Staff of the royal army, the fact that the Meo were singled out in this way had ominous implications, and in view of commitments entered into with them it behooved the Americans to consider them carefully.

Another written understanding concerned Cambodia. The two countries affirmed that the settlement of the Cambodian problem fell under the sovereignty of the Cambodians, reaffirmed the obligations of Article 20 of the Paris agreement, although again without specifying a timetable for foreign troop withdrawal, and declared they would exert their best efforts to bring about a peaceful settlement of the Cambodian problem. Thus, Kissinger had failed to obtain actions by the DRV on two of the most important items on the list that had been submitted to Saigon before he began his talks with Tho: a cease-fire in Cambodia and early specific dates for withdrawal of all DRV troops from both Laos and Cambodia. Privately, he made known his intentions with regard to Lon Nol's government in Phnom Penh: "If a collapse of the regime is inevitable, we wish to protract it for as long a time as is possible."

Other understandings concerned the return of captured and detained civilian personnel in South Vietnam, an issue on which the DRV felt the United States had not lived up to its obligations under the original understanding reached on January 22 in Paris, and the quarters, means of operation, and privileges and immunities of the TPJMC.<sup>91</sup> The chiefs of delegation in the TPJMC were meeting, mainly during coffee breaks, in October to discuss resumption of suspended prisoner releases.<sup>92</sup> Kissinger had been wise to demand the separation of the issue from that of the release of the American POWs in the Paris agreement. The main import of this last was to obligate the United States to endeavor to ensure that the TPJMC moved from Camp Davis to downtown Saigon, over the objections of Thieu's government.<sup>93</sup>

During a break in the negotiations with Tho, Kissinger returned to Washington and met with Ambassador Phuong. "This is the last time I am going to get involved in negotiations on Vietnam," Kissinger said. "It might be necessary to do this again—to negotiate again in the future," Phuong observed. "No, I am washing my hands of this," Kissinger said. "But will people let you?" Phuong asked. "I don't think it is a good idea for us to negotiate any more with North Vietnam. This is something you should do. We might have to just long enough to get the Cambodia matter settled," Kissinger said. Later in the conversation, he said "I will never negotiate on this issue again. Let's let Nha and Duc do the negotiating." This must have come as welcome news to Thieu. (I have not seen a report of Thieu's reaction.)

On June 12, as Kissinger was having his final meeting with Tho, General Brent Scowcroft had a conversation with President Nixon in Washington. They discussed the progress of the negotiations. Nixon said he had difficulty understanding the philosophy on which Thieu's government was operating and was concerned about reaction in the Congress. In contrast to congressional reaction, Nixon said, he did not think that the country at large was much concerned any more about Indochina one way or another—that since American troops had been withdrawn and the POWs returned the bulk of Americans no longer wanted to think about the area. Nixon said that if anybody could figure a way out of the dilemma it would be Kissinger. However, in the event Thieu's government was adamant, Scowcroft reported, "we had far too much invested to repudiate them, we would have to do what we could to minimize the impact and to carry on as best we could."

The June 13 communiqué convinced Thieu the only viable strategy for the Southern republic was that of maintaining an armed truce; there was no hope of a settlement short of more of Kissinger's "compromises" which would lead inevitably to turning the country over to the Communists. In these circumstances, the ARVN would maintain its guard and seek to limit the DRV's efforts to push forward the PRG to claim territory and population, but would not provoke the DRV by offensive action. Thieu knew it might only be a short-term strategy, because his American support was fading, while the DRV's support from the Soviet Union and China was continuing. But there was no other way out, for his attempts to enter into negotiations with both the PRG and the DRV were rebuffed. The arguments over the June 13 communiqué had demonstrated the degree to which Thieu had become dependent on the Americans; now he resolved to lessen this dependence. He swallowed his pride and resumed diplomatic relations with France; Paris sent an ambassador, Jean-Marie Mérillon, the first ambassador to Saigon in seven years. Thieu launched an austerity program, reducing air conditioning in government offices and cutting back on oil imports. He declared ties and coats a symbol of Western formality and aloofness from the people; they were to be replaced by bush jackets. He also signed an executive order launching an administrative revolution designed to make civil servants conscious of the struggle against the Communists.

Meanwhile, at the grassroots no one needed reminding that the struggle went on. In the foothills of Quang Tin Province, the VNQDD and the Communists carried on their vendettas against each other, as they had done for decades. As described by Foreign Service Officer John D. Folger, VNQDD domination of local elections provided the territorial forces in the province with the leadership to root out the Communists from the villages and to expand the government's area of control. Quang Tin was divided geographically into three zones: a narrow coastal plain with only 15 percent of the territory but 90 percent of the population, almost all under government control; to the west foothills and fertile valleys making up one-third of the territory but largely depopulated and under Communist control; and further west and southwest rugged mountains and dense jungle uninhabited by ethnic Vietnamese even before the war. The last Communist base

area on the beach astride the Quang Nam border on Barrier Island had been reoccupied by the government after much fighting in December 1972, and the province had been left with practically no ARVN or North Vietnamese presence. The fight was between armed cadres of the Viet Cong and the Regional and Popular Forces who knew each other and their families, often split in their loyalties; the action consisted less of frontal assaults than of enveloping positions and lasting out the other side, and on the government side of keeping roads open to district towns such as Tien Phuoc and villages such as Ky Tra. Political forces on the anti-Communist side consisted of the Thong Nhat and Vu Hong Khanh factions of the traditional VNQDD; the An Quang Buddhists; the Cong Nong party, an offshoot of the Vietnam Confederation of Labor (CVT) labor union; smaller Catholic and Cao Dai groups; and, very important, the family of Mrs. Doi and her sons, with their ten platoons loyal mainly to the family. It required all his political skill for the province chief, Colonel Dao Mong Xuan, to balance these disparate groups and carry out, more or less, the orders of the distant corps commander in Danang and the even more distant presidential palace in Saigon with its newly formed Dan Chu party.96

The situation was far worse than Thieu may have realized at the time. During the summer of 1973, the Nixon administration was obliged to accept a series of congressional votes reflecting clear unwillingness to continue funding of American military involvement in Indochina. Introducing an amendment to the foreign aid bill reducing the administration's budget request by \$240 million, Senator Edward M. Kennedy declared on June 22 that the Paris and Vientiane agreements offered new opportunities. "We can finally disengage from our direct and manipulative involvement in the remaining political and military confrontations of the area. . . . That is what the return of our servicemen and prisoners of war means to most Americans. And this is the promise of a peace with honor—and the hope of ceasefire agreements which extricate our country from the Indochina war." The focus was primarily on Cambodia, where American bombing had not stopped. But the congressional moves culminated in a vote on June 29 to ban all military action in all of Indochina after August 15. The effect was to render null and void the secret promises of retaliation Nixon had made to Thieu in order to get him to sign the agreement. An editorial in The Washington Post that day questioned the value of the Paris agreement and, unwittingly, put its finger on the nub of the matter. "The President professes to fear installation of a 'Hanoi-controlled government in Phnom Penh'—while ignoring whatever Hanoi may feel about a Washington-controlled government."97 Nixon and Kissinger had succeeded in reducing the governments in both Phnom Penh and Saigon to puppet status in which these governments enjoyed little or no standing or autonomy, so the logic of propping them up dictated, it seemed, an endless American military commitment. Although few suspected it at the time, the paradox was only temporary, and depended on the expiry of the "decent interval" the Americans had allowed. On September 14, Prime Minister Thanom Kittikachorn of Thailand wrote to President Nixon reminding him of the "truly great responsibility" the United States had assumed and asking him what had happened to the assurances he had been given by Sullivan in February about enforcement of the Paris agreement.<sup>98</sup>

In October, Kissinger and Le Duc Tho were awarded the 1973 Nobel Peace Prize for their efforts to end the Vietnam war. It was certainly the most egregious award ever made by the Nobel Committee of the Norwegian Parliament, and it is not surprising that two members of the committee resigned in protest. To the Vietnamese nationalists, the award was the supreme irony. Tho, a high-ranking leader of a totalitarian party whose definition of peace was a situation in which the party exercised uncontested control, someone who had suggested that the Americans assassinate President Thieu, seemed a bizarre choice for such an honor. The credit given to the American Kissinger confirmed in their eyes their second-class status in contributing to peace in their war-ravaged country.

Tho declined the prize, writing to the committee that "peace has not yet really been established in South Vietnam," that is to say, the nationalists continued to struggle in their death throes, or, as his party propaganda put it, the fascist warlike Thieu clique still oppressed the people. He would reconsider once "a real peace is established in South Vietnam." His letter repeated the party's line that "during the last 18 years, the United States undertook a war of aggression against Vietnam. American imperialism has been defeated."99 Kissinger accepted the prize for having negotiated a semblance of peace that did not last 27 months, the only grounds conceivable for the honor, and then sought to return it. He donated the entire proceeds to the children of American servicemen killed or missing in action in Indochina. For those who had sacrificed themselves defending the royal government and people of Laos, Kissinger's tribute was honorable. But for the many more who had made the same sacrifice on behalf of the Vietnamese, the gesture was more one of atonement, for their lives had been wasted, not because they had been defeated on the battlefield, which never happened, but because their government had repudiated the sovereignty of their ally, and without an ally the only possible reason for the presence of American armed forces in that country was aggression, as the DRV said.

On December 20, Kissinger and Tho met in Paris for the last time. The Americans had finally broken off the meetings of the Joint Economic Commission in July. Besides congressional refusal to consider providing aid to Hanoi under conditions of "war in peace" in South Vietnam, another issue had quickly appeared in the form of the DRV's stonewalling on its obligation in Article 8(b) of the Paris agreement, reaffirmed in paragraph 8(e) of the June 13 communiqué to help get information about the missing in action (MIA) and determine the location and take care of the graves of the dead so as to facilitate the exhumation and repatriation of the remains. <sup>100</sup> A Joint Military Team had been set up in Saigon to deal with the MIA question. <sup>101</sup> This was another obligation that the DRV was to turn into political capital. The structure that Kissinger had labored on for four years was rapidly falling apart.

This time there were to be no lengthy communiqués or understandings on Laos and Cambodia. With respect to South Vietnam, Kissinger's aide Winston Lord observed in a message preparatory to Kissinger's meeting, using the code word for the takeover of the South by the Vietnamese Workers' Party, "Our best hope continues to be to buy time and string out the evolution in Vietnam as long as possible, in part for the psychology of our friends abroad and the American people."102 South Vietnamese sources told Flora Lewis of The New York Times that they expected continued talks on the cease-fire situation between the Americans and the DRV through deputies, but American sources told her that Kissinger took the position that the United States had withdrawn politically as well as militarily from Vietnam and was not going to get "into that mess" between Saigon and the Viet Cong. 103 Having bludgeoned the puppet into obedience, the puppet master was now fading into the shadows. Kissinger was deeply involved in his effort to bring peace to the Middle East and had no further time for Indochina. Graham A. Martin, who while ambassador in Bangkok had negotiated with the Thai for use of their air bases for conducting the air war, 104 had taken Bunker's place in Saigon. By a cruel twist of fate, Martin's stepson had been killed in Vietnam. Martin quickly fell in with Kissinger's scheming to keep the upper hand in dealing with President Thieu, boasting to Kissinger that he had lied about who initiated the December 20 meeting, which anywhere other than in the Byzantine web spun by Kissinger would have been considered a straightforward matter.105

The bilateral talks at La Celle-St.-Cloud continued until April 1, 1974, at which time the Saigon government used the fall of the besieged Ranger outpost at Tong Le Chon, which had been the subject of the Saigon legislators' letter to Rogers a year earlier seeking implementation of the Paris agreement, to justify its refusal to hold further meetings. On May 13 the PRG delegation announced it was suspending the talks sine die. 106 At the same time, the Saigon government cut off the telephone lines to the PRG delegation to the TPJMC, ended the delegation's weekly press conferences, and halted weekly liaison flights between Saigon and Loc Ninh. After the PRG protested, the privileges were restored at the beginning of June. 107 But a few days later, the PRG announced suspension of its participation in the TPJMC. 108 Kissinger and Habib continued to encourage Vuong Van Bac, who had replaced Tran Van Lam as foreign minister in November 1973, to reopen the talks at La Celle-St.-Cloud and in the TPJMC, and President Thieu appealed to Kissinger to inform the Soviets and Chinese that when Hanoi decided to have the PRG return to the negotiating table it would find the Saigon government ready to begin discussing the delimitation of areas of control and the formation of the National Council of National Reconciliation and Concord without preconditions. 109

### FURTHER CONCESSIONS IN LAOS

In Laos, all the details of implementing the Vientiane agreement of February 21, 1973, remained to be worked out. The DRV's interests in these negotiations were twofold. Strategically, the DRV sought to avoid for as long as possible the imposition of an obligation to withdraw its troops. These troops served as the shield for the Lao Patriotic Front and for the PRG so long as the DRV had not yet completed construction of a secure base area and lines of communication

across the border in South Vietnam itself. Politically, the DRV sought to manipulate the negotiations so that the Front would emerge in as strong a position as possible in the coalition government, which was scheduled to be formed by March 23. Under these conditions, Prime Minister Souvanna Phouma plunged into the new round of negotiations, hoping once again for the best.

The top two leaders of the Front delegation, Phoumi Vongvichit and Phoune Sipraseuth, left for Hanoi and Sam Neua hours after the signing of the Vientiane agreement to obtain their instructions for the next phase of the negotiations. Phoumi told Souvanna Phouma prior to his departure that the new government should be formed as soon as possible, even within 15 days. 110 Reports from Sam Neua indicated the leadership of the Front was holding important meetings in the final days of February and first days of March. 111 Article 11 of the Vientiane agreement provided for the immediate establishment of a Joint Commission for Implementation of the Accords. At first, things went smoothly. With signs of goodwill all around, the negotiators split into two groups, political and military, which met at the education ministry and foreign ministry and presented agendas for dealing with the issues, namely the formation of the joint national political council and implementation of the cease-fire, foreign troop withdrawals, return of prisoners of war, and introduction of war matériel. 112

While these initial discussions were taking place, Chargé d'Affaires Dean had entered into a dialogue with Soth Phetrasy on the matter of release of American POWs captured in Laos; Dean's dialogue was parallel to the one Kissinger was conducting with the DRV. Between the texts of the Vientiane agreement and the Paris agreement with its associated understandings on release of POWs outside Vietnam, their conflicting timetables and assignments of responsibility to the parties concerned, the possibility of obfuscation on the matter of releasing American POWs captured in Laos was virtually limitless. Phetrasy's affirmations to Dean that the Pathet Lao were holding Americans prisoner<sup>113</sup> suggested something more than the list of nine Americans and one Canadian, all of whom were known to have been held by the DRV for some time, that the DRV gave the American delegation in Paris on February 1 in return for President Nixon's note to Pham Van Dong on aid. 114 Kissinger attempted to obtain clarification from Le Duc Tho. 115 That the nine American prisoners released on March 28 at Gia Lam were only a small number of the approximately 350 American military and civilian personnel listed as missing or captured in Laos seemed obvious. The Air Force colonel who signed the release document refused the inclusion of the words "all POWs in Laos."116 A statement by Nouhak Phoumsavan that "we have released all American military and civilian personnel taken prisoner on Laotian territory" appeared to ring down the curtain on the matter of POW releases.<sup>117</sup>

The issue of exchange of information about MIAs, however, had become an important issue in the Congress, and Senator Charles Brooke came to Vientiane for discussions with Soth Phetrasy, who forwarded to Sam Neua his proposal to separate the issue from the rest of the Laos negotiations by establishing a separate body. 118 Phoumi Vongvichit refused unequivocally to consider the proposal, however, and told Dean that if the United States wanted early

activity on casualty resolutions it should use its influence to get the government to come to terms with the Front on the outstanding political and military questions holding up the conclusion of an overall protocol. Phoumi stated that the Front had acted humanely in releasing the living POWs and that all parties should now be concerned with the problems of the Lao people who were still alive. <sup>119</sup> Dean then stopped seeing the Front about the MIA issue and concentrated instead on persuading the government negotiators to include appropriate provisions in their protocol drafts; he wished to avoid the impression of conducting secret dealings with the Front, whose exploitation of his meetings by broadcasting distorted accounts of them he found embarrassing. <sup>120</sup> The fate of the 350 remained a mystery. On April 24, 1992, Vice Foreign Minister Soubanh Srithirath of the Lao People's Democratic Republic told members of the Senate Select Committee on POW/MIAs that some may have been killed by enraged villagers. <sup>121</sup> The LPDR has never, however, provided any information about the location of graves of such servicemen.

Phoune returned from Sam Neua and Hanoi on March 8 with new instructions. Instead of merely agreeing as before to consider the government's proposals, the Front delegation now advanced obstacles and redefined the substance of the negotiations. At a meeting of the military group on March 9, the Front took the position that its role was to discuss and study the procedures for implementing the cease-fire, withdrawing foreign troops, releasing prisoners, and other aspects of the agreement, not to implement them. Furthermore, the central Joint Commission provided in Article 11 could not be formed now because the military group first had to have information on the number of foreign troops in Laos and their nationalities and other such subjects. 122 Lastly, the work of the two groups would have to be put in the form of protocols on the model of the Paris agreement, and only when these had been signed by the two parties could implementation of the agreement begin.<sup>123</sup> Pheng proposed to Phoune that the Front agree to immediate designation of the Joint Commission and simultaneously experts would draft the protocols, but Phoune refused even this compromise.124

Souvanna Phouma sent a sharp letter to Souphanouvong drawing his attention to the evasion by the Front delegates of a very clear point of the agreement and requesting a prompt response. "I would like to believe that it will be a positive answer, which would make the best impression both outside and within the kingdom," he wrote. 125 At the same time, Souvanna Phouma had to reassure the National Assembly that he would follow constitutional procedures. The main sticking point, as in 1962, was how to invest a coalition government when one of the parties did not recognize the National Assembly and the king insisted that constitutional procedure be strictly followed. Souvanna Phouma believed he had found a way to satisfy everyone. 126 The Front's foot-dragging, which was in contrast to the urgency the Front delegation had displayed in February to arrive at an agreement, was noted in Washington, but all Sullivan could suggest was that Godley register a protest with the Soviet ambassador. 127 More usefully, the embassy drafted its own version of a military protocol and handed it to Pheng at his

request. <sup>128</sup> This draft included precise provisions for the exchange of POW lists, POW releases, information on POWs deceased in captivity, and a long section on MIAs. <sup>129</sup> Ngon Sananikone presented the government's draft protocols at the plenary session on March 20. <sup>130</sup> Phoune left for Hanoi on March 22. The March 23 deadline came and went; Godley reminded the Department that in 1961 and 1962 it had taken 14 months from the date of the cease-fire before the Lao parties could agree on the composition of a provisional coalition government. <sup>131</sup>

Phoune returned to Vientiane on March 28 bearing a letter from Souphanouvong to Souvanna Phouma couched in friendly terms and a 26-page draft embodying the Front's proposals on items to be covered by the political and military protocols. The prime minister had now been advised by Dean that Article 20 of the Paris agreement would not become "fully operative" until the timetable in the Vientiane agreement went into effect; his remonstrations to Haig on January 18 had remained without effect; the DRV was now dictating to the Front, as he feared. 132 Making the best of a bad situation, he instructed Pheng to hold daily meetings with the Front negotiators in order to form the government and sign the protocols by the Lao new year, April 15, in order to present the government to the king in Luang Prabang in the presence of the Front negotiators; perhaps this prospect would give them some incentive to speed things up. Pheng and Ngon met with Phoune and Tiao Souk Vongsak immediately thereafter for a lengthy discussion of the LPF's political proposals. The Front was demanding the vice prime ministership for Souphanouvong, reopening an issue that supposedly had been settled in the Vientiane agreement, and top positions in the interior, foreign affairs, public works, economics, and plans ministries. Souvanna Phouma was insistent that the interior ministry remain with his government, in the person of Pheng. The four negotiators agreed that if one side held the top position, the number two position would go to the other side. This kind of discussion could string out the talks indefinitely. However, the meeting ended on an optimistic note, Godley reported.<sup>133</sup>

The newfound optimism did not last any longer than it took the government negotiators to study the 26 pages of the Front's draft in detail. What the draft did, Pheng told Dean on April 2, was to link the formation of the government to agreement on outstanding military issues, none of which had as yet been discussed in substance. The Front's draft specified among the military issues to be agreed were the complete neutralization of Vientiane and Luang Prabang, with the removal of all government troops from them; the establishment of a clear line of demarcation of territory held by each side by emplacing boundary stakes; and the refusal to endow the ICC and the JCIA with any supervisory or control powers. Resolution of these questions could take weeks, months, or longer, the embassy reported. Souvanna Phouma concluded from Pheng's account of the negotiations that the Front was attempting to establish two impermeable zones and was considering an appeal to Souphanouvong, holding a press conference to call attention to the government's record of goodwill, and asking the Americans to put pressure on Hanoi to have the Front comply with the provisions of the Vientiane agreement concerning formation of the

government.<sup>134</sup> The prime minister told Godley that the Front's linking military and political discussions was totally inadmissable.<sup>135</sup> But the demarcation of zones of control, meaning de facto partition, would prove to be more acceptable to the rightists than to Souvanna Phouma, as the embassy remarked.

While the Front draft contained demands on military matters that would clearly favor the Front, it omitted others that were of equal importance to the government or to the Americans. The draft did not address itself to verification of troop withdrawal or to inspection of troop-reintroduction violations or to exchange of information on MIAs or to the question of military assistance to Laos, and it treated the question of resupply of enclaves in the Front-controlled zone in such a way as to place a time limit on such operations. It repeated the demand made in the Vientiane agreement that "foreign-supported special forces be disbanded," referring to Vang Pao's Meo irregulars, and prohibited their integration into the royal army.<sup>136</sup>

The only progress in the negotiations before the Lao new year shut everything down for a week was the government's proposal, countering the Front's demand for the vice-prime ministership, to give the Front chairmanship of the joint national political council. 137 In his broadcast message for Lao new year, the prime minister noted that the Indochina war, which had lasted for more than a quarter century, could not stop at a single stroke as if by magic. "The death of a monster does not resemble that of an insect," he said. Addressing the rightists, he said no one could think of resuming the path of war in Laos. Addressing the Front, he appealed to it to cease its sterile obstructionism and free itself from its foreign bondage. He warned that Laos must not fall under the control of the Communist movement in Indochina since such a course would truly endanger national independence. He urged his countrymen to turn their attention to the next elections, emphasizing that elections were vital because they involved a fundamental choice between totalitarian and liberal political systems. 138 When Ambassador Godley paid a farewell call on him, King Savang Vatthana spoke at length about the honorable position always taken by the United States in helping its friends and in living up to its commitments. 139

Phoumi Vongvichit returned to Vientiane on April 26 after an absence of two months and resumed his daily meetings with Pheng. There were few obstacles on the political side, but on the military side the Front's demands were considered exorbitant. The Front wanted to station a sizeable force of its troops on the outskirts of Vientiane and Luang Prabang to provide security for its ministers. This was a sensitive issue in view of past experience and was one guaranteed to mobilize opposition on the part of the rightists. A general sense of unfairness attached to this issue on the nationalist side, as the Front appeared determined to prevent any outsiders from entering its zone of control, as it had done in 1962, much less outsiders in battalion strength. The Front's demand for demarcation of territory according to locations specified by the Front was likewise opposed by the army generals. The role of the ICC was another point in dispute. Meanwhile, the unverified cease-fire continued to hold for the fifteenth week.

Souvanna Phouma insisted on solving all political problems first before tackling military problems. <sup>142</sup> He still counted on compelling the DRV to respect its international obligations and thought progress in the Laos negotiations depended on this. He gave Dean his assessment for transmittal to Washington prior to the meeting in Paris between Kissinger and Le Duc Tho. He hoped Kissinger would stress that the Laos problem could be resolved rapidly and satisfactorily if the DRV would respect Article 20 of the Paris agreement and the provisions of the 1962 Geneva Agreement. He said the Front was clearly stalling. <sup>143</sup> On June 14, the prime minister convoked Pheng and Phoumi to his residence and told them "to complete negotiations on a protocol detailing implementation of the Vientiane agreement by July 1." This was the date that figured in the understanding on Laos between Kissinger and Tho. He instructed the two negotiators to try to resolve all problems by themselves but said if they reached an impasse on a specific point they should come to him for help. <sup>144</sup>

At their meeting on June 18, Pheng thought he had obtained Phoumi's agreement to include a sentence in the protocol about "holding legislative elections before 1976," when the National Assembly's mandate expired. However, Phoumi asked for time to consult Sam Neua on this point. The Front agreed. Souvanna Phouma was anxious to conclude, and Dean began to fear he would be disposed to accede to some key Front demands at the last minute in order to get an agreement on paper. It was mainly Sisouk na Champassak who, reflecting the views of the rightist generals, resisted the progress of the negotiations.

As the embassy reported, delay in reaching final agreement heightened the danger that military leaders on the right might take matters in their hands by some violent action. This is in fact what happened. General Thaoma slipped across the Mekong with some 20 supporters intent on overthrowing the government and on August 20 commandeered a T-28 at Wattay and proceeded to buzz the capital. Once again, however, support for his action failed to materialize. When Thaoma crash-landed his plane, which had been hit by ground fire, at the end of the runway after bombing General Kouprasith's house and killing his cousin, Kouprasith was waiting for him. While Thaoma's companions abandoned him and flew off as troops closed in, Kouprasith began to kick and punch Thaoma in the head while the soldiers held him. Thaoma said that since Kouprasith was obviously going to kill him, why didn't he do it instead of torturing him, whereupon one of Kouprasith's bodyguards fired but botched the job. The soldiers then be bayoneted him to death. They then opened his abdomen and removed the liver, which they ate.<sup>148</sup> Among four men who escaped was Colonel Bounleuth Saycocie. The government executed 11 rebels who were captured, including an air force colonel. Ironically, Thaoma's action hastened the conclusion of the negotiations, for it demonstrated that the only recourse the nationalists had left to avoid concluding an agreement with the LPF was to self-destructive violence, and they did not want that; their resistance collapsed. There may also have been pressure from the Americans on the royal government to conclude rapidly.<sup>149</sup>

Thus on September 14 the protocol was duly signed by Pheng, Ngon, Phoumi Vongvichit, and Phoune Sipraseuth. It provided for the structure, composition, and functions of a Provisional Government of National Union (PGNU) and a National Political Consultative Council (NPCC), in which the Vientiane government side and the Front shared equally, which were to be established with no set timetable; the immediate neutralization of Vientiane and Luang Prabang; and the establishment of a joint commission (JCIA) to implement the protocol, including demarcating the cease-fire line. All foreign troops were to be withdrawn within 60 days of the formation of the PGNU and the NPCC. "The 'special forces' organized, armed, trained and commanded by foreign countries," meaning mainly the Meo irregulars, were to be disbanded within a time frame to be established by the JCIA, which held its first plenary meeting on November 23. <sup>150</sup>

The way in which the timetable and geographic disposition of these provisions worked to the advantage of the Communists was immediately evident. While the establishment of the PGNU and the NPCC, and thus the deadline for withdrawing the DRV's troops, was put off indefinitely, the Front was to have an immediate legal armed presence in Vientiane and Luang Prabang through the shared security provisions for neutralization. Geographically, while the Front gained a substantial presence in the Vientiane government's zone, there was no provision for a Vientiane presence in the Front-controlled zone. The protocol contained no reaffirmation of the Vientiane agreement's "promoting normal relations" between the two zones. In fact, it was clear from Article 9 titled "Observance of the People's Democratic Freedoms" that unification of the country under a single administration was put off until after general elections had been organized by the PGNU and the NPCC and a "definitive National Assembly" had been elected. The protocol contained no mention of the existing National Assembly. Meanwhile, the expression of all "democratic freedoms" guaranteed under this article was clearly subject to verification and approval by the Front's police and other representatives who would be posted immediately to Vientiane and Luang Prabang under neutralization, while the expression of similar "democratic freedoms" in the Front's zone would not be subject to any verification at all, making moot, ab initio, any protests over violations of these "democratic freedoms" by the Vientiane side.

While workmen built new barracks for the Front contingents in the two capitals and the Vientiane government withdrew its "excess" police and military presence beyond a 15-kilometer perimeter in accordance with the terms of the protocol, the Front leaders bided their time. Finally, when neutralization had been implemented and security assured, Prince Souphanouvong arrived in Vientiane on April 3, 1974, to scenes of wild enthusiasm reminiscent of his electoral success in 1958. The PGNU and the NPCC were constituted two days later. The third coalition in Laos's modern history was launched. Souphanouvong made an impressive start as head of the NPCC, taking a conciliatory line toward the Vientiane side members but directing the body with a very firm hand. When Phoui Sananikone sent his usual letter to the cabinet for transmittal to the king requesting the traditional royal presence at the opening session of the National Assembly, however, the Front prevented action under the unanimity rule. In July, when seven deputies initiated a petition against the

continued presence in the country of the DRV's troops, to be signed in the National Assembly building, Souvanna Phouma ordered the building cordoned off. Faced with this confrontation, Souvanna Phouma announced that the "two sides" in the PGNU had unanimously agreed to ask for dissolution of the Assembly, even though Finance Minister Ngon Sanikone opposed the dissolution. Thus Souvanna Phouma, who had been severely weakened by Parsons in the days when there were no DRV troops in Laos and who had counted on the assurances he had received from Kissinger and Haig regarding the DRV's obligation to withdraw its troops from Laos, had to cede the nationalist position on a point of constitutional prerogative when he faced the DRV threat alone. The next day, following this bitter pill, Prince Souvanna Phouma suffered a heart attack. When Charles S. Whitehouse, who had succeeded Godley as ambassador, met the prince for the first time after his recovery, which had been aided by an international team of doctors, he found him feeling very tired; he had lost weight and spoke clearly but in a very low voice. "Although we had been anticipating that Souvanna's ability to operate would be greatly reduced by his heart attack," Whitehouse reported, "our conversation today has convinced me that his activity will be greatly restricted in the future." <sup>153</sup> The Front effectively blocked new elections as provided under the constitution. Thus, the last freely elected legislature in the history of Laos passed into history.

It was noted that when the ministry of information changed hands in April 1974, right away it took several days to get approval for release of a news bulletin that had taken barely minutes under the former Vientiane government. Each word had to be scrutinized and debated by the new Front minister, Souk Vongsak. 154 Despite the lack of official sanction for movement of persons and goods, it was not long before trade in salt, rice, clothing, and other goods was being carried on across the zonal boundaries, often due to local accommodations between royal army and Front forces. This was especially evident in northern Luang Prabang Province. With the upland rice harvest completed in January 1974, refugees were starting to trickle back to their homes also, encouraged by the Front's cadres. 155

### **C**AMBODIA

Conditions in the Khmer Rouge-controlled areas changed in June 1973, when the Communist Party of Kampuchea instituted a new cooperative agricultural system. This decision marked a clear break with the CPK's previous policy of dealing with the mass of the people who were of working-class or peasant origin with relative leniency. From this date on, the policy of Angkar Loeu was based on force and carried "revolutionary violence" to levels heretofore unprecedented in Indochina. The rural population and that of towns was relocated into new agricultural sites where wholly new communal societies were constructed virtually overnight. To ensure that all links with the past were broken, peasants were allowed to take with them only a few cooking utensils, some simple farm implements, and the clothes they were wearing. Their old homes were burned to prevent their moving back. The gang labor on huge new irrigation projects is now famous from well-known photos and films smuggled out. Long work hours, nighttime indoctrination sessions, centralized child care, and eating in communal mess halls came to characterize these collectives. Traditional schooling was abandoned. Movement was strictly controlled, and the penalty for attempting to flee was usually death. In these new conditions, showing Sihanouk's picture, or even mentioning his name, was sufficient grounds for execution. <sup>156</sup>

The first eyewitness reports of the harsh punishments meted out under the revolutionary policy of Angkar Loeu published in the West came from refugees who crossed into southern Laos in the spring of 1974 and from internal refugees who reached Phnom Penh. These reports spoke of such atrocious practices of the guerrillas in the Khmer Rouge zone as sawing off heads with palm leaves and clubbing victims to death. In one incident on July 1, 1974, the Khmer Rouge executed approximately 700 civilians and surrendered soldiers at Ta Hen in Battambang Province because they tried to flee.

Reports of the atrocities perpetrated by the Khmer Rouge were discounted in the West up until almost the Khmer Rouge takeover of Phnom Penh. The movement was ultra-secretive, and even the backgrounds of many of its leaders were not well known. Reports from the Khmer Rouge zones were "less than totally reliable," Sydney H. Schanberg of The New York Times reported a month before the fall of Phnom Penh. He quoted "some diplomats and other longtime observers" as saying once the Khmer Rouge had won there would be "no need for random acts of terror." "Most Cambodians do not talk about a possible massacre and do not expect one," Schanberg wrote. 158 Tom Hayden, an "activist," provided information to a congressional committee based on his meeting with RGNU representative Ok Sakun in Paris. The Khmer Rouge, Hayden testified, "envisions an amnesty and reconciliation with all other elements (other than the Lon Nol inner circle) which have served the Lon Nol regime in the past." The seven members of the Lon Nol inner circle were referred to by the Khmer Rouge as the arch-traitors, and Hayden concluded that after they had been dealt with, the bloodletting in Cambodia would cease. 159 But Ambassador John Gunther Dean was not one of the diplomats quoted by Schanberg; as early as September 1974 he sent a memorandum to Kissinger stating "a bloodbath cannot be ruled out." 160 And some long-time observers recalled that Frenchmen living in Cambodia had written of a streak of cruelty behind the smiling faces of the Khmer. Leftist Europeans who sympathized with the revolution in Cambodia who managed to have contact with them saw the emphasis the insurgents placed on writing and re-writing by cadres of autobiographies as simply a more intense form of the method of maintaining discipline that dated back to Stalin's day. They did not suspect that such writings were being used by Angkar Loeu to conduct a permanent purge intended to purify the party, to make it exclusively Khmer.

Meanwhile, on the nationalist side the unity that had marked March 1970 had dissipated in incompetence and infighting. Lon Nol had unilaterally disbanded the Constituent Assembly in March 1973, proclaimed his own consti-

tution and obtained its adoption in a referendum in May, and had himself elected president in June. All these "popular consultations" were thoroughly rigged. His younger brother, Lon Non, who had risen from the rank of major of the police in 1970 to that of an army general in 1973, had become the éminence grise of his brother's regime, operating behind the scenes through a network of committees. Figures of integrity such as Prince Sirik Matak and In Tam had been excluded, largely at Lon Non's doing. The former lived under guard that amounted to house arrest. His sympathy for Lon Nol had disappeared completely. If a free and honest election were held with Sihanouk and Lon Nol as candidates, he told an interviewer in March 1973, Sihanouk would win easily.<sup>161</sup>

In 10 days of conversations with leaders of government and political life, civil servants, teachers, businessmen, and ordinary soldiers, Henry Kamm of *The New York Times* found the mood to be one of despair for the future of the country, with many blaming the Americans for supporting a corrupt, ineffective, and dictatorial regime but not wanting to speak on the record as in Sihanouk's day because of their fear of the police. Phnom Penh had doubled in size because of the influx of refugees, many of whom lived in slum districts around the center, working as coolies and earning the equivalent of 50 cents a day. Meanwhile, the avenue in front of the Lycée Descartes, an elite school, was clogged every morning and noon with the cars of the war-rich delivering and picking up their children. 162

Kissinger made an attempt to bring peace to Cambodia through Chinese mediation in 1973. Ignoring his promise to Lon Nol in his personal letter delivered by Sullivan on February 14, he asked the Chinese to arrange for direct discussions between Sihanouk and the American liaison office in Peking aimed at bringing Sihanouk back to Phnom Penh to head a new government. Kissinger assumed that relations between the Chinese and Sihanouk were the same as those between himself and Lon Nol. Whether Chou could have persuaded Sihanouk to enter into such discussions is not known. Sihanouk would not have been able to make any commitments without the approval of the CPK. The Khmer Rouge by this time were waging a classical guerrilla war in which they acquired arms and ammunition from Lon Nol's army and consolidated their progressively larger areas of control, and were probably not susceptible to outside pressure on this account. Kissinger's initiative was made moot by the action in the Congress forcing an end to American bombing in Cambodia as of August 15, 1973.

On May 27, 1974, the Royal Government of National Union of Kampuchea and China signed a new agreement for military aid. <sup>164</sup> By the beginning of 1974, the Khmer Rouge forces had started to close in on Phnom Penh. They began artillery barrages on the city, and civilian casualties among the crowded population were heavy—84 people killed in three nights in January 1974. People packed their belongings onto their shoulders or on motorbikes or oxcarts and sought safety in temple grounds, makeshift refugee centers, or with relatives in the center of the city. When Kamm appealed personally to Prime Minis-

ter Olof Palme of Sweden to use his influence to stop the shelling, Palme ignored the request. <sup>165</sup> The final Khmer Rouge offensive against the capital was launched on January 1, 1975. In the first nine weeks of the year, over 1,000 rockets and artillery rounds plummeted in on Phnom Penh, killing 150 and wounding 900, surely some sort of record for the wanton targeting of civilians in wartime. <sup>166</sup> It was during this final offensive, the day before Phnom Penh fell to the attackers, that a Khmer Rouge battalion commander named Hun Sen lost his left eye to an exploding mortar shell (according to the official version, at any rate).

By now, all but the most diehard of military men realized the Khmer Republic's days were numbered. In March, a delegation of officials visited Lon Nol and presented him with a formal resolution asking him to leave the country on a temporary basis while the terms of a cease-fire were worked out. One million dollars in installments were promised to ease his stay abroad. After a simple farewell ceremony on April 1, Lon Nol, wearing a dark gray suit with a black tie, leaning on his cane and accompanied by his wife, limped to one of three waiting helicopters at Chamcar Mon. At Pochentong, after further farewells from the diplomatic corps, the 29-person presidential party boarded an Air Cambodge plane to fly to Thailand. Lon Nol settled in Hawaii, ostensibly to resume treatment for his 1971 stroke. A letter order covering the promised million dollars was dispatched from the National Bank of Cambodia to the Irving Trust Company.

# The Expulsion of the Americans

At the end of January 1973 the ARVN had an assigned strength of about 450,000 men. Of this strength, about 152,000 were in 13 infantry divisions and another 10,000 in the Ranger groups. A small number were assigned to separate non-divisional artillery, cavalry, and tank units. The remainder were in training, logistical, and other service and support organizations. The air force counted 54,000 men and the navy 42,000. In addition, there were about 325,000 in the Regional Forces and about 200,000 in the Popular Forces. Despite its impressive muster of more than 1 million personnel, the ARVN was mainly tied down to defense of fixed points and, aside from the Marine and Airborne divisions, which themselves were increasingly tied down to defensive positions as the threat grew in the northern part of South Vietnam, had no strategic reserve to speak of, a serious weakness.

The DRV's army in South Vietnam at the time of the cease-fire consisted of about 148,000 combat troops, including 15 infantry divisions and slightly over 16,000 men assigned to 15 anti-aircraft artillery regiments. This force was supported by about 71,000 administrative and logistical troops. The big difference, of course, was the DRV's army in North Vietnam, which could be deployed in an offensive in the South. All told, the regular DRV army counted between 500,000 and 570,000, of which 290,000 were in North Vietnam, 65,000 to 70,000 in Laos, 25,000 in Cambodia, and the rest in South Vietnam. The Vietnam Military Institute, summing up the gains achieved through the Paris

agreement, pointed to the fact of its troops' remaining in the South twice in the same paragraph and made no mention of the cease-fire. 168

The continued American bombing in Cambodia until the cutoff mandated by the Congress on August 15, 1973 and the implicit threat of bombing in Laos as long as the DRV's troops had not been withdrawn spurred the DRV to create and fortify a base area all along the western border of South Vietnam where its troops would be relatively secure. There were two occasions when B-52 raids were carried out after the cease-fire in Laos at the prime minister's request, the first in February at Paksong and the second in April at Tha Teng south of the Plain of Jars. In Cambodia, the bombing forced the DRV to withdraw into South Vietnam. An example was a B-52 strike on March 23 that caused heavy damage to elements of the DRV's 1st Division in Cambodia's Kampot Province. Afterward, four oxcarts carrying more than 30 dead or seriously wounded soldiers were seen moving in the direction of Tinh Bien District, Chau Doc Province. A few days later, some 350 survivors of the bombing also moved into Tinh Bien. 169 Another B-52 strike on April 23 caught a large number of DRV troops by surprise in their base in Prey Veng Province and pushed them toward the Mekong River town of Hong Ngu in Kien Phong Province. Survivors reported seeing impressed civilians carrying away the bodies of more than 100 DRV soldiers, and many bunkers in the base area were destroyed. In the subsequent fighting at Hong Ngu, the DRV lost 422 dead counted and the ARVN lost 94 killed, 743 wounded, and 36 missing. Civilian casualties were over 300, by far the highest number since the cease-fire. 170 In late 1973, the ARVN succeeded in breaking up DRV forces in the Seven Mountains area of the Mekong Delta.

With the return of the dry season in October 1973, the DRV's 470th Transportation Group, which occupied the old DRV base at Chu Prong mountain, overlooking the Ia Drang Valley, resumed work on its back-country road system from the North, extending it further south to Phuoc Long, Binh Long, and Tay Ninh Provinces. The key province for these operations was Quang Duc, where the DRV sought to transfer its main north-south road, known as Corridor 613, from a salient formed by Mondolkiri Province in Cambodia. On the South Vietnam side of the border the country was rough and sparsely populated and defended by lightly manned ARVN outposts. Clashes continued here until the end of the year.<sup>171</sup> Once the road system was complete, the flow of men and supplies was massive. As described by the Vietnam Military Institute, "the quantity of supplies transported along the strategic transportation corridor from the beginning of 1974 until the end of April 1975 was 823,146 tons, 1.6 times as much as the total transported during the entire previous thirteen years." Also, "during the years 1973–1974, more than 150,000 youths entered the army. Many combat units at full strength, 68,000 replacement troops, 8,000 cadre and technical personnel, and scores of thousands of assault youth members marched off to the battlefield." These forces were well provided for. "Compared with 1972, the quantity of supplies was nine times as high, including six times as high in weapons and ammunition, three times the quantity of rice, and twenty-seven times the quantity of fuel and petroleum products."172

The ARVN, on the other hand, was beginning to be hurt by the pinch on its supplies. "It went without saying that the lack of supplies and adequate fire support resulted in a dramatic increase in the rate of casualties," one general from the northern region later said.

Military hospitals were overcrowded . . . they were critically short in medicines, especially dextrose, antibiotics, and also plasma. . . . As a result the combat units saw their ranks rapidly depleted and were hard put to replace their losses. . . . In Saigon, the ambulance units were so short in gasoline that in order to evacuate the wounded, they had to tow four ambulances in a row with a 2–1/2-ton truck. . . . Even worse, a wounded soldier sometimes had to wait for the company of two or three more of his comrades to be worth an evacuation by ambulance, and many unnecessarily died this way.  $^{173}$ 

In the 19 months following the cease-fire, the ARVN suffered more than 26,000 killed in action.  $^{174}$ 

In the summer of 1973, and continuing on through the year, a series of congressional actions sharply restricted further American military involvement in Indochina. The most important of these was a vote in the House on June 29 on an appropriations bill. Minority Leader Gerald R. Ford, in order to assure passage, accepted a rider banning American military activities in Cambodia, Laos, and South Vietnam as of August 15. Ford talked to President Nixon by telephone at San Clemente, and after Nixon had heard what was in the rider, he told Ford "that's fine." 175 Like the French National Assembly in 1954, the Congress was experiencing war weariness; moreover, in 1973, as in the case of Elgey's observation about the Bidault team in 1954, it seemed the same old faces were trying to balance the forces of war against the forces of peace. <sup>176</sup> The June 29 vote introduced the additional complication that fulfillment of this commitment would have required congressional approval. President Nixon and Kissinger protested these votes but did not reveal Nixon's written promises to President Thieu of retaliatory action should the DRV violate the Paris agreement. Kissinger became secretary of state in September.

## FINAL STRUGGLES

The elections for the Senate in August 1973 had passed off peacefully; the contests had been nominal, in fact, and the result was to give Thieu control over that body. In January 1974 a majority of pro-government legislators from the two houses of the National Assembly submitted a draft amendment doing away with the two-term limit in the American-model constitution of 1967 and extending the president's term from four to five years. "It is a Tet gift to President Thieu," commented lawyer Tran Van Tuyen before the vote. "There is no more democracy." The amendment passed by 153 votes out of 219. Opposition lawmakers demonstrated peacefully against the measure in downtown Saigon.

Thieu was getting himself in position to dominate the scene politically whatever happened with regard to the political clauses of the Paris agreement.

The CIA station chief in Saigon, Thomas Polgar, fearing a repetition in October 1975 of the one-man election of 1971, recommended that the mission begin cultivating a token opposition candidate. Tran Quoc Buu, the leader of the Vietnam Confederation of Labor, was put forward as the applicant for this job. Nothing was done to implement this idea. 178 But Thieu knew he would not have an easy job being re-elected in 1975 in a free election, even with American money behind him. South Vietnamese public opinion realized now that Thieu had signed an agreement in Paris that was more favorable to the Communists than some of the peace plans that had been proposed prior to 1973 by opposition lawmakers in the National Assembly such as Ngô Cong Duc, whom Thieu had threatened with arrest for violating the provisions in the constitution outlawing the Communists. It was an ironic twist of fate. The discovery that South Vietnam had exploitable offshore oil reserves served to buoy up the government's hopes, feeding all kinds of illusions of economic self-sufficiency.<sup>179</sup>

The political forces which, in 1968 and 1972 had been able to surmount partisanship and unite behind Thieu, abandoned him in 1974 and 1975. In the autumn of 1974, there were confrontations between the government and dissident elements voicing grievances in full public view. Thieu lost the support of the Catholics, who up to then had been his staunchest supporters. Nguyên Ba Can attributed this loss of support to a shift in the policy of the Vatican toward "accommodation," which the Pope recommended to Thieu at their meeting in 1973 on Thieu's return from San Clemente, and to an obedient Catholic hierarchy in South Vietnam. Others, such as the jurist Nguyên Van Huyen, who resigned as president of the Senate, blamed Thieu's assumption of dictatorial powers. However, some Catholics went much farther than withdrawing their support from Thieu. Father Chan Tin, the head of a self-proclaimed Committee Campaigning for the Improvement of Prison Conditions in South Vietnam, published a two-volume study titled "Political Prisoners in South Vietnam After the Signing of the Paris Agreement" containing a table showing that there were 202,000 political prisoners as of June 1, 1973. In his tiny office alongside a religious book printer within the enclosure of the Redemptorist church at 38 Ky Dong Street, the elfish Father Tin kept a card file of every arrest and release he could obtain information on through his wide network of personal contacts. Although Father Tin was considered somewhat of a maverick, Martin took him seriously enough—because of the echoes his study found in Washington—to have the embassy conduct an exhaustive survey of its own that found the number of civilian prisoners of all types was around 35,000.<sup>180</sup>

Then there was the "anti-corruption movement" of Father Tran Huu Thanh, a staunch anti-Communist who came to see that Thieu was leading the country to surrender to the Communists. Father Thanh's movement grew out of a series of seminars of Catholic lay and religious leaders during the spring of 1974, in which one of the topics was an earlier pastoral letter on corruption. After being urged by some of the participants to do something concrete, Father Thanh drafted a manifesto for circulation among the clergy. It denounced not just corruption but the political system that shielded it, declaring that "the constitution and the law have . . . become useless adornments" and that anti-Communism was made "a spell to bind the people to silence" in the face of official abuses. The manifesto was signed by 301 priests and was released on June 8. Father Thanh joined with several liberal Catholic political figures to issue on September 8 in Hue a document titled "Indictment No. 1." It listed specific charges of corruption against Thieu and his family, calling the "present rotten, dictatorial family regime" worse that that of the Ngôs; it represented "a national disaster and a national shame, a betrayal of all those who have been sacrificing themselves for the hard, protracted struggle of our people and army for more than a quarter of a century." Three Saigon newspapers printed the full text; though the papers were immediately confiscated, other copies of the document were reproduced and widely distributed. [181]

At the same time, the Hoa Hao in the Mekong Delta, who had supported the government, changed their stance. Their new opposition was expressed not only by their giving refuge and protection to hundreds of thousands of draft dodgers and deserters from the ARVN, but also by organizing them into a force of their own and arming them with American weapons purchased from corrupt ARVN officers. Having formed what they called a "Civil Guard Force," the Hoa Hao became a formidable adversary for Thieu, who was faced with the dilemma of either letting them be or openly fighting them. Thieu chose the latter course, and on January 30, 1975, he issued a decree dissolving the Hoa Hao militia. In armed clashes in Long Xuyen, Kien Phong and Sadec Thieu's police captured the leaders of the militia; but the campaign did incalculable damage to nationalist unity in the face of the Communists. The An Quang Buddhists also increased their resistance by creating a variety of movements and fomenting street disorders. <sup>182</sup>

Corruption had always been a problem in the governing class, but now it became a major cause of political upheaval. The reason was that all this money that was going to pay for official appointments and other favors was no longer coming from the rich Americans but from the pockets of ordinary people. As recounted by Professor Nguyên Ngoc Huy:

Except for a few special cases, in which officers look after their troops and help them surmount financial difficulties, the soldiers are unable to feed their families and no longer have the will to fight. They are demoralized because of shameless exploitation by their superiors. . . . Generally speaking, the army has become a vast enterprise for corruption; even artillery support must be paid for. . . .

As long as security was good and living standards decent the people tolerated corruption and inefficiency in government. These defects are becoming less and less tolerable as security and living standards decline and numerous large-scale scandals bring into the open the rotten character of the leaders of the regime. If Thieu continues to govern with the support of corrupt and incompetent men while rejecting any true dialogue with other non-Communists, it will be difficult for South Vietnam to win the struggle against the Communists, whether it is fought militarily or politically. <sup>183</sup>

Thieu's relationship with his generals was one of mutual dependence. They rarely gave him the benefit of impartial advice, which would have risked them their jobs and the lucrative patronage that went with them. In any case, Thieu consulted with them only infrequently, and never in a systematic, organized manner. He brooded and worried and never issued direct orders, instead suggesting or intimating what should be done. 184 Naturally, they accepted dependence on the Americans. JGS Chairman General Cao Van Vien owed his position to the fact that he had opposed the 1960 coup attempt against President Diem and had not taken part in the 1963 coup, having been held prisoner at JGS headquarters. Thieu trusted Vien implicitly. When Information Minister Hoang Duc Nha submitted a memorandum to Thieu in early May suggesting that the Americans were behind Father Thanh's "anti-corruption movement," the agitation for political and military concessions from the government by the Hoa Hao, and the Montagnard autonomy movement FULRO and recommended strong action against these dissidents, Lieutenant General Dang Van Quang, Brigadier General Nguyên Khac Binh, and Brigadier General Vu Duc Nhuan told Thieu that Nha's reporting was inaccurate, misleading, and irresponsible. 185 Since he had stood up to Kissinger at the palace, Nha had been a thorn in the Americans' side. Martin admitted that Nha's charges had gained wide public acceptance and insisted that Thieu remove him. 186 Nha had undoubtedly gone too far in his anti-Americanism. He might better have used his energies to dissuade Thieu from participating in Kissinger's charade in Paris when it would have counted for something for the nationalists. Now, Thieu, reluctantly, sacrificed him. One of the last independent thinkers, perhaps the last, in Thieu's entourage had been removed. Those that remained slavishly tried to please the Americans. Thus, Thieu's popularity declined further. A rumor went around Saigon saying that Thieu was actually Cham, not Vietnamese, and that being saddled with such a leader was the revenge of the Chams for the Vietnamese conquest of their country. One of Thieu's best generals, Do Cao Tri, had been killed on February 23, 1971, while commanding operations in Cambodia, a grievous loss. Killed with him in the same helicopter was François Sully, one of the most knowledgeable foreign correspondents in Vietnam.

Television had contributed little or nothing to the American public's understanding of the war, but now it became a potent propaganda weapon in the hands of Thieu's enemies. Camera crews from the American networks filmed the Saigon police breaking up demonstrations in the street outside their hotels; the demonstrations were organized with television coverage in mind, showing a sophistication that the monks of the Xa Loi pagoda with their mimeograph machines had lacked in 1963. Hanoi was winning the battle for the hearts and minds of the Americans. Mindful of the impact on congressional opinion of such sensational images, the top people in the American mission did not mind biasing the reporting of their analysts in the regime's favor. Martin unashamedly doctored the embassy's political reporting, and this unprofessional practice also affected the CIA and, to a lesser extent, the DAO. 187

Martin spent so much time in Washington arguing for more aid and on his extended vacations that he had little time for Thieu, whom he saw no more

than once or twice a month even when he was in Saigon.<sup>188</sup> While French journalist Olivier Todd, who had once suggested to Manac'h in jest that the PRG delegation in Paris should be allowed to fly its flag like the Pantin football team, shared a meal in private with Thieu at the palace, Martin apparently never did.<sup>189</sup> "I never really had any great attachment to the Vietnamese, North or South," Martin confessed to a later interviewer. "I don't particularly like any of them." <sup>190</sup> For the Vietnamese, the pretense of solidarity with their American ally was wearing thin. Thieu told the Italian journalist Oriana Fallaci, with whom he breakfasted at the palace in January 1973 and afterward gave an interview lasting more than four hours, that he would have liked to offer breakfast to Kissinger. "My manners are as good as Le Duc Tho's. And you can always try to discuss things while eating, as long as it doesn't ruin your digestion." <sup>191</sup> It never happened, for the simple reason that for the puppet-master to have shared the puppet's breakfast table would have been unseemly.

The news of President Nixon's resignation threw Thieu into a mood of deep depression. He was in a state of high tension when his adviser Hung saw him sitting alone in his office. He was closing his eyes, biting his lips, and grinding his right fist into the palm of his left hand. Thieu suggested to Hung to put the best face on the event for the sake of maintaining morale and political stability, which was eroding rapidly due to high inflation. He would allow none of his pessimism about the future of American support to leak to the public. 192

Then, unexpectedly the next day, he received a letter from President Gerald R. Ford, delivered by Chargé d'Affaires Wolfgang Lehmann (Martin being away in the United States on one of his frequent trips). The letter contained two significant sentences in the lead paragraph: "I do not think I really need to inform you that American foreign policy has always been marked by its essential continuity and its essential bipartisan nature. This is even more true today and the existing commitments this nation has made in the past are still valid and will be fully honored in my administration." Thieu was delighted and showed the letter around. His advisers had not seen such a broad smile on his face for a long while. There was an abrupt change in his mood for the better. He immediately issued a statement expressing confidence in a continuation of American policy and in the achievement of a just peace based on the Paris agreement. But Thieu should have recognized the drafter's hand in the final paragraph: "In these important endeavors I shall look to Dr. Kissinger, whom I have asked to remain as Secretary of State, for guidance and support. He has my fullest confidence, as does Ambassador Martin."193

Thieu did not then suspect that Kissinger had not shown Ford Nixon's letters. He did not find this out until the following April, by which time it was too late to save South Vietnam. Unlike Vice President Johnson, who had participated in policy-making on Vietnam before he became president, Ford came from outside the executive branch when he replaced Agnew, who departed under a cloud of scandal, and he had no idea of the extent of Nixon's written promise to Thieu of "full force" retaliation in the event of the DRV's flagrant violation of the Paris agreement. Ford signed the letter of August 10 under the

impression he was reaffirming a general commitment of support, not a specific commitment of action to be undertaken in the event of a general offensive against the Saigon government. Asked later if he had read the letters from Nixon to Thieu, Ford said: "I didn't personally review all of the correspondence. I knew that there had been many exchanges of letters, but I did not personally go over each and every document."<sup>194</sup>

In two sentences Ford had drafted himself to reassure Thieu about the continued provision of economic and military aid, the letter of August 9 said: "Our legislative process is a complicated one and it is not yet completed. Although it may take a little time I do want to reassure you of my confidence that in the end our support will be adequate on both counts."195 The South Vietnamese were confused by such subtleties as the difference between congressional authorizations and appropriations and by the bewildering array of congressional committees that had a say in passing aid funds to their country. Even the Americans were confused; budget analysts in the Pentagon were trying to reconcile military aid for the ARVN with Saigon's accounting. On top of this, everyone seemed to have a different estimate of how much military aid the ARVN actually needed. In this situation, Major General John E. Murray, head of the Defense Attaché Office (DAO), the last vestige of MACV, warned the JGS to conserve supplies. The South Vietnamese, thinking that by showing themselves agreeable to the Americans they could retain their support, cut to the bone. Strict new quotas were imposed on supplies issued to the field. Armored vehicles were taken out of commission to conserve fuel, artillery, and air support missions were cut back. 196 Thieu told Admiral Noel Gayler that some in the United States said assistance to his government should be reduced in order to force him to negotiate a settlement, but his view was that reduction of assistance to Saigon only encouraged Hanoi to try for a military solution.<sup>197</sup>

The ARVN was holding fixed positions all over South Vietnam, as it had for the past 20 years. This placed it at a disadvantage facing the DRV's army, even with the slight edge it held in overall numbers of combat troops. The DRV commanders could move their forces around the ARVN's fixed positions and concentrate an overwhelming force anywhere so as to seize an objective of their choosing. The improvement of the DRV's communications and logistics network in the "back country" greatly enlarged this capability to move forces into attack position and supply them. The DRV forces operated with much greater economy of ammunition than the ARVN; it was calculated that the ARVN expended 56 tons of ammunition for every one ton expended by the DRV.

Once an attack had begun, the ARVN was hard pressed to reinforce, first of all because the freedom of movement the enemy possessed on the territory of the South made for the factor of surprise, and second because the ARVN had few units in reserve that could be spared as reinforcements or could be committed to breaking lengthy sieges without weakening the defenses elsewhere. The ARVN depended on accurate and timely intelligence on enemy troop dispositions to reinforce. But after the departure of the Americans the quality of intelligence deteriorated. The only thing the ARVN could possibly do was to extract from the enemy in every engagement as high a price as possible.

A major DRV offensive would push this "strategy" of exacting a high price to the limit, because the soldiers' concerns for the safety of their families would be added to the concern for their own. Caught in this box, Thieu continued to rely on the same strategy of not surrendering territory after the cease-fire as he had prior to the departure of the Americans, confident as he was of Nixon's promise of "full-force" retaliation in the event of a renewed offensive. The ARVN's mission in the event of a DRV general offensive was to hold on as best it could everywhere for a week or two until American air and sea power could be committed to the battle and turn the tide. This strategy had been tested during the Nguyên Hue offensive, when most American ground troops had already departed. With the vast improvement in the DRV forces' air defenses in the South, making them better able to cope with the South Vietnamese air force's low-flying fighter bombers and helicopters, "full-force" retaliation was crucial.

This strategy, obviously, made no sense if there was no "full-force" retaliation to be expected. There was an alternative strategy, the only one that made any sense in the circumstances. Thieu had already thought of it. The enemy's attacks against fixed positions would be broken not by massive retaliation by high-flying B-52s and by naval guns, but by reserve ground forces that could be committed swiftly to outflank the attackers and beat them back. Thieu had ordered studies of such a strategy that summer. It meant sacrificing some territory in order to lessen the number of fixed positions to be defended and to free sufficient forces to constitute a mobile reserve.

On the basis of aid projections given them by General Murray, the IGS drew up a study of retrenchment and gave it to Thieu. During a trip to the northern provinces, Prime Minister Khiem warned the regional military commander it might be necessary at some point to surrender real estate there to buy time. The northern region was where the Airborne Division and the Marine Division were tied down. Freeing them from holding static positions would provide the ARVN with a much-needed reserve and would shorten the defense line and make possible greater economy of ammunition. Parallel to this, Hung prepared an economic analysis of the impact of the truncation of most of the northern and Central Highlands provinces, with the exception of the large coastal cities. He concluded that the total population under government control would shrink by 6 million people, or less than 30 percent; of these, 1 to 2 million could be displaced to the Delta to escape Communist control. Gross national product would be reduced by less than 20 percent. A truncated South Vietnam would be able to survive economically. The major imponderable was the political consequence of surrendering such considerable areas and population to the Communists. And what would be the political effect on Thieu? Hung gained the impression that Thieu was approaching a major strategic decision. When Thieu received President Ford's letter, he put the plan aside. 198

## ON THE BRINK

In September 1974, Thieu sent Bac to Washington with a letter dated September 19 requesting a meeting with President Ford and a clarification of American

aid policy.<sup>199</sup> The meeting in the Oval Office on October 5 was inconclusive. Kissinger, who drafted the talking points for Ford, allowed Bac 15 minutes and this time did not refer to past assurances of military retaliation in the event of a DRV offensive, of which, of course, Ford was unaware.<sup>200</sup> On October 24, Ford wrote to Thieu deflecting Thieu's request for a meeting;<sup>201</sup> Kissinger apparently did not wish to have Thieu showing up in the White House with his file of correspondence from Nixon. Meanwhile, Kissinger and Senator Henry Jackson had gotten into a power struggle over congressional pressure on the Soviet Union. The matter would in normal circumstances have had no impact on Vietnam, but the Soviets felt sufficiently aggrieved that they decided to put an end to the relative restraint they had shown since the cease-fire in providing military aid to the DRV. They sent General Viktor Kulikov, chief of the Soviet general staff, to Hanoi to take part in a meeting of the Politburo that lasted from December 18 to January 8. The last time such a high-ranking Soviet military officer had visited Hanoi was in the autumn of 1971. In the weeks following the general's visit, sea-borne shipments of Soviet war matériel to the DRV increased fourfold in volume.<sup>202</sup>

Coinciding with the Politburo conference, the DRV's forces carried out a successful campaign to capture Phuoc Binh, the capital of Phuoc Long Province, which fell on January 6, 1975, after most of the outposts in the province had been overrun. ARVN reinforcements to the isolated and heavily bombarded garrison were too few and too late, and when T-54 tanks rolled into town, followed by squads of sappers, the remaining able-bodied defenders melted into the surrounding forest. Of the 5,400 men and officers committed, fewer than 850 survived. About 3,000 civilians, Montagnards and Vietnamese, escaped Communist control. The few province, village, and hamlet officials who were captured were summarily executed. It was a psychological blow to the ARVN. The State Department circulated a mildly worded note of protest to the signatories of the Paris guaranteeing conference.<sup>203</sup>

To the decision-makers at the party center, Phuoc Long offered the proof they had been waiting for that the Americans would not react militarily to a provocation of even this magnitude. Le Duan, who by virtue of his position as chairman of the party military commission held ultimate authority, put forward a strategic plan; the military were to carry out a campaign, initially called the 275 Campaign, to achieve victory in 1975–1976. As the first step, General Van Tien Dung of the Army General Staff left on February 5 for the South; appropriate steps were taken to conceal his absence.

On the threshold of victory, the Democratic Republic of Vietnam resembled nothing so much as Sparta. The planning for the 275 Campaign reveals, in retrospect, all the advantages of a society in which public opinion counts for little or nothing and the tiny brotherhood of power-holders for everything. As in Sparta, citizen-soldiers were prepared from an early age in school to fight in defense of the fatherland. Discipline was instilled by the party's monopoly on Marxist-Leninist truth, just as in Sparta the arts of music and dancing were marshaled for the religious festivals devoted to Apollo. Expelling the aggressor was the prime mo-

tivating force. Sacrifice in the name of revolutionary violence was expected. The DRV high command acted in accordance with, and lived up to, the expectations engendered by these noble ideals. The organizational structure that ensured absolute loyalty of every military officer and unit to the party was the secret Bao Ve, the security organization whose name meant "protection." The Bao Ve had organic links to the ministry of interior under Tran Quoc Hoan and the party organizational committee under Le Duc Tho. Even at the height of the American bombing, the brother leaders were well cared for by the state. A special shop on Ngô Quyen Street in Hanoi provided top-quality fragrant rice for the members of the Politburo and their families even as the population at large found food under the severe rationing hard to come by, and other shops on Hang Trong and Ton Dau Streets provided clothing and international goods. These shops were managed by Le Duc Tho's younger sister as part of the party's organizational network.<sup>204</sup>

Le Duan marked the party's anniversary on February 3 with a speech that suggested to Western analysts a strategy of negotiations rather than of military offensive, another deception. 205 In late January, Senate President Tran Van Lam and House Speaker Nguyên Ba Can sent letters to their counterparts in the United States describing the plight of their country in moving terms. "It is not in the American tradition to let down an ally in need to defend itself," Lam's letter said. "Having been allies through the thick of the war, it is only natural that we should stand also as allies on the road leading to peace," Can wrote. <sup>206</sup> In February there was a lull on the battlefield. During this time, the South Vietnamese hosted a large congressional delegation that was officially looking into the administration's aid request. The delegation departed on March 1, leaving behind a feeling of pessimism. Some of its members appeared little interested in fact-finding and made it clear to their audience that in the United States the Saigon government was widely considered to be incorrigibly corrupt, despotic, and repressive. But the ARVN, alert for military moves, was wondering where the next blow would fall. With the dry season prevailing over the southern twothirds of South Vietnam, the feeling at the IGS was that it would come around Tay Ninh, which was threatened by one of the divisions that had attacked in Phuoc Long, rather than in the north, where several DRV divisions positioned west of the cities posed no less of a threat. The Cao Dai leaders, fearing the worst, declared their neutrality and urged the government to withdraw its forces, including the territorials, from the Holy See.

The political situation in the Central Highlands had remained unsatisfactory for the Saigon government. The tenuous truce that had prevailed for several years with the Montagnard autonomy movement known as FULRO, which had been held together by repeated rounds of inconclusive negotiations, threatened to come unraveled. The government had finally enacted two decrees, 33 and 34, providing for safeguarding the Montagnards' lands, the main cause of friction between Montagnards and Vietnamese, but these measures had not put a stop to encroachment. Beginning in the autumn of 1973, the Communists had stepped up proselytizing activities among the Rhadé of Darlac

Province, using the outpost of Duc Co, which they had been granted under the terms of the Paris agreement as a resupply entry point, to hold meetings with the Montagnards without fear of interference by the Saigon government. Using their usual divide-and-rule tactics, they had encouraged the defection of the province's deputy labor chief, Kpa Koi, and supported his efforts to recruit followers with promises of greater autonomy than that offered by the government. Nay Luett, who had replaced Paul Nur in June 1971 as head of the ministry for development of ethnic minorities, had to tread carefully in his attempt to patch up differences; he offered an amnesty to Koi's followers, despite evidence of their collusion with the Communists. An outbreak of banditry and assassinations in the autumn of 1974 placed the province chief, Colonel Nguyên Trong Luat, in a dilemma; in view of the overextended state of the ARVN, the security of Darlac depended heavily on the Regional Forces, some four-fifths of them Montagnards, and armed action against Koi risked setting off a full-scale rebellion. 207

An effective deception operation by the DRV involving tactical radio communications and the maps produced by an agent in the enemy order of battle section of the Central Intelligence Organization in Saigon<sup>208</sup> helped to keep the attention of the JGS focused on the Pleiku and Kontum areas as the campaign season approached in the spring of 1975. Clues at variance with this focus were discounted by the high command. A diary found on the body of a DRV soldier contained explicit references to a planned campaign against Ban Me Thuot, the Darlac capital. A sergeant who defected near Buon Ho district town on February 4 from the 48th Regiment of the 320th Division confirmed the presence of the division, which was normally farther north in Pleiku Province, in Darlac, and Colonel Luat said he was extremely concerned about the security of his province.<sup>209</sup> Informants in Quang Duc Province just to the south reported heavy troop concentrations across the border in Cambodia. 210 In fact, the 316th and 10th divisions had joined the 320th for the attack on Ban Me Thuot, the 316th making a wide circle through lower Laos from the North, maintaining strict radio silence, while the 968th from Laos, filling in for the 10th, created diversions around Pleiku and Kontum. These forces were augmented by four separate infantry regiments, five field artillery and anti-aircraft artillery regiments, one tank-armor regiment, one sapper regiment, two engineer regiments, one signal regiment and numerous rear service and transport units.<sup>211</sup> When the DRV attack began on March 10, the forces matched were unequal. Some 25,000 DRV soldiers surprised the 1,200 defenders in Ban Me Thuot. There was hard fighting in some sectors, but the outcome was never in doubt. The attackers were highly maneuverable and the defenders found tank hatches battened down so they could not toss grenades inside. General Dung had taken the precaution of cutting all the roads into the town, making reinforcement impossible except by air. There were no reinforcements available, in any case; Thieu was still hitched to the strategy of depending on American air power to turn back any serious attack.

On March 11, President Thieu convened a working breakfast of his prime minister and his senior military advisers, Generals Vien and Quang, in a part of the Independence Palace free of bugs. When coffee and food had been served and the attendants had left, he took out a small-scale map of South Vietnam and started the session by going over the military situation. Then he said matter-of-factly, "Given our present strength and capabilities, we certainly cannot hold and defend all the territory we want." He outlined on the map those areas he considered most important. The map showed a solid area south of a horizontal line drawn across the waist of South Vietnam just north of Ban Me Thuot. As for those heavily populated areas along the coast north of the line, Thieu suggested they should try to hold as much as they had resources to. General Vien offered the opinion that the idea made military sense, that he had thought the same thing for a long time, but had said nothing because it contradicted national policy. He also believed, but did not say so, that it was too late to embrace this new policy.<sup>212</sup>

This was the retrenchment idea Thieu had studied earlier after the Paris agreement had been signed. It was the idea he had dropped after receiving President Ford's first letter, which had misled him into believing he could still count on the guarantees President Nixon had made to him before signing the Paris agreement. To successfully carry out such a strategy of retrenchment required at least six months. Not only would major units of the ARVN have to be moved about the country and new defense lines constituted, but civilians in large numbers also would have to be relocated. Among the latter were the families of soldiers who lived alongside the military camps and were the support and comfort of the combat troops, turning the ARVN into a genuine people's army; they could not conceivably be separated from their soldiers. But the trickiest part of the whole scheme would be to cede territory gradually in the north proportionate to the forces available, pulling the ARVN back to defend the retrenched area to the south. To embark on such a strategy shift at the outset of a DRV offensive was pure folly, risking the sacrifice of the very forces that would have been needed to constitute a strategic reserve and triggering a general disintegration whose spread could not be stopped. That is exactly what happened.

Accompanied by the same advisers, Thieu flew to Cam Ranh Bay on March 14 to confer with the Central Highlands corps commander, Major General Pham Van Phu. He and Phu were old comrades in arms from the French days. Phu began with the customary briefing on the situation. When Phu had finished, Thieu asked if he could retake Ban Me Thuout. Phu did not commit himself and asked for reinforcements. Thieu turned to Vien and asked what forces were available. There were none readily at hand. Before the fall of Ban Me Thuot, Thieu had ordered the Airborne Division to be redeployed from the north to Saigon. A brigade of this division was aboard ship at the moment and was subsequently ordered to offload at Nha Trang. As if receiving confirmation, Thieu stood beside a map and launched into his explanation of the new strategy to be adopted.<sup>213</sup>

From interviews with senior ARVN commanders involved, the basic decisions reached at Cam Ranh were: (1) the regular forces (the remaining elements of the 23rd Division, the Rangers and the Armor Brigade) were to be withdrawn from Pleiku and Kontum and moved to the coast, with the aim of

eventually retaking Ban Me Thuot; (2) the Regional and Popular Forces, along with dependents, civilians, and elements of the civil administration, were not to be withdrawn; (3) the redeployment was to be implemented secretly and conducted within a few days in order to "surprise the enemy"; and (4) the route of the redeployment would be Route 7B, also in order to "gain surprise."<sup>214</sup> These decisions later became controversial, especially the last.

The main roads that would normally have been used for a troop movement on the scale envisaged, Routes 19, 14, and 21, had all been blocked by the Communists. Route 7B branched off from Route 14 south of Pleiku and wound through forested mountains before emerging on the coastal plain at Tuy Hoa. For much of its length, Route 7B was little better than a narrow logging track, whose actual state was not known with certainty; what was known was that a major bridge near its lower end was irreparably out of commission and stretches nearby had been mined by South Korean troops. According to General Vien, Thieu asked General Phu how he proposed to redeploy, and Phu said he would have to use Route 7B. In Snepp's version, it was Vien who interrupted after Thieu had asked his question, saying that the main roads could not be secured with the forces Phu had available and asking Phu what he thought of the option of Route 7B. Phu merely nodded.<sup>215</sup> What seems clear is that no one at the Cam Ranh meeting protested the choice of Route 7B. It was as if these five Frenchtrained officers had never heard of the disastrous withdrawal in October 1950 after the French high command decided to abandon Cao Bang. Route 7B was every bit as ill suited to rapidity of movement and maneuverability as had been Colonial Route 4. To attempt a withdrawal over such a route in the presence of highly mobile enemy main forces was to set up an ambush 160 miles long.

General Phu later claimed that he told Thieu at Cam Ranh "We can hold out and we can defend Pleiku." However, the president rejected this course of action, responding, "Now the American aid is cut off and now we have lost Ban Me Thuot we have to retreat to reduce the front. And we have to get out of Pleiku. So try to bring all your forces down to the coast."216 When Phu convened his key staff officers on returning to Pleiku and informed them of the decision to withdraw, they were incredulous. But Phu would hear of no further discussion, saying it was the president's doing. Phu directed them to go ahead and prepare to start moving the following morning. As to command arrangements for the withdrawal, Phu gave overall command to Brigadier General Pham Duy Tat, the Ranger commander, but he confused things by giving Brigadier General Tran Van Cam, his assistant for operations, verbal orders to "surpervise" the withdrawal. Phu then revealed the news that only the regular units were to be withdrawn. Colonel Le Khac Ly, Phu's chief of staff, asked him about the province and district personnel, the Regional and Popular Forces, the troops' dependents, and the people. Phu replied: "Forget about them. You have no responsibility to take care of them! . . . If you tell them about it, you can't control it and you cannot get down to Tuy Hoa because there would be panic." The next morning, Phu flew to Nha Trang, taking with him a number of key staff officers. General Cam also decided to depart and flew to Tuy Hoa, telling

Colonel Ly to take care of everything. So, with General Tat concerning himself with his Rangers, it was left to Colonel Ly to inform the unit commanders, as well as the Americans of the consulate, the DAO, and the CIA, who were equally incredulous. Phu had told Ly not to tell the Americans anything, but Ly disobeyed and told them. "Go, don't ask," Ly told them. When the Americans in Saigon tried to find out what was happening, they discovered that no one was answering the telephones at the palace or JGS headquarters, March 15 being a Saturday.<sup>217</sup> However, Lehmann had a meeting that morning with President Thieu, who described to him his plans for recapturing Banmethuot. Although Thieu told Lehmann that the defenses in the northern part of the highlands, especially around Kontum, would have to be "substantially thinned out," he did not mention his order to General Phu on the previous day to evacuate Pleiku.<sup>218</sup>

Once Colonel Ly informed the unit commanders, panic broke out in Pleiku. Realizing that they were about to be abandoned, the Montagnard Regional and Popular Forces began to riot. Discipline broke down in the troops' ranks as well as they realized there was no plan to evacuate their families. Ly had to go to the airfield, where crowds were roaming the runways, to attempt to restore order. Enemy shelling of the airfield began, putting an end to flight operations. Among the aircraft left at Pleiku were 21 A-1 Skyraiders. <sup>219</sup> After first dispatching engineer units down Route 7B, Colonel Ly began the withdrawal from Pleiku and Kontum on March 16. As the mass of soldiers with their families and civilian residents made their way down Route 7B they were bracketed by the enemy's artillery. There was a reporter for the newspaper Chinh Luan among the fleeing column, and the Saigonese could read the daily dispatches of Nguyên Tu, which he filed by helicopter courier, and tens of thousands in the rest of the country shed tears.<sup>220</sup> By Colonel Ly's estimate, only about 20,000 of the 60,000 troops that had started out from Pleiku and Kontum finally got down to Tuy Hoa, and they were no longer fit for combat. Whereas General Phu had calculated that the withdrawal could be accomplished within a period of "three days," military stragglers were still trickling down Route 7B when the Communists captured Tuy Hoa on April 1. Of the some 400,000 civilians who had attempted to flee Kontum, Pleiku, and Phu Bon Provinces, only an estimated 100,000 got through.<sup>221</sup> Hickey describes the fate of the Route 7B column as very probably the worst bloodbath of the war.<sup>222</sup>

Following the rout in the Central Highlands, the DRV's high command moved quickly to seize the advantage offered by the demoralization of the ARVN. Division-sized units poised in the mountains opposite the major cities of the north pummeled the defenders, resulting in the rapid disintegration of several ARVN divisions. Quang Tri and Hue were lost, in part due to the corps commander's confusion over what his orders from Saigon were, and Danang was soon crowded with almost 1 million refugees and stragglers from ARVN units seeking safety from the surrounding provinces. Danang fell on Easter Sunday, March 30. Of the 3 million people who had lived in the government area, fewer than 70,000 escaped, the majority by sea. Interviewing of a sample of refugees in camps near Vung Tau in early April revealed that fear of the NLF

and DRV forces and their Communist ideology and practices was the most important factor behind their having fled their homes, with fear of bombing, shelling, or being caught in the middle of the fighting ranking as the second motive. 223 Some 16,000 ARVN soldiers, including General Truong, were among the evacuees, but four divisions, including the Marine Division, had been obliterated as fighting units.

The Politburo held another session on March 31 and formalized its commitment to total victory and tightened the schedule for achieving this. Further divisions were moved into the South. Reflecting the improved battlefield situation, the party center changed its policy toward the United States. From holding the Americans responsible for implementing the Paris agreement, the party now adopted the line that the United States must cease its intervention in Vietnam. As he would no longer be needed on the diplomatic front, Le Duc Tho was dispatched to the South to join Pham Hung of COSVN and General Dung with the mission of ensuring victory; otherwise, do not return, he was warned by President Ton Duc Thang. General Hoang Van Thai's book contains a photograph of the Nobel Peace laureate-designate seated between them, all smiling, with the battle maps spread out on the table before them.<sup>224</sup> The name of the Communists' campaign was changed to the Ho Chi Minh Campaign. On April 1, the CIA station in Saigon was informed by a reliable source in COSVN that Hanoi was on a "blood scent." The party center also had adopted the propaganda line of having Liberation Radio, in addition to its usual exhortations for a "general uprising," announce that the PRG was ready to open talks with a government in Saigon that excluded Thieu.

Within days of the battle of Banmethuot, the American Embassy was receiving reports that thinking at the top levels of the Saigon government was crystallizing around the notion that the Americans could not be counted upon and that this was a factor in the military disarray, along with the strong North Vietnamese position.<sup>226</sup> The American inaction continued. An appeal for some sort of reaction by Nguyên Phu Duc, now ambassador in Brussels, to General Haig, now NATO commander, was turned down when Haig met President Ford alone. Haig, who knew first-hand about Nixon's promises, told Ford he should take the same kind of principled stand Harry Truman had taken in 1950 in facing the North Korean aggression.<sup>227</sup> Kissinger kept quiet, hoping it would all be over quickly. "Why don't these people die fast?" he asked Ford's press secretary, Ron Nessen. "The worst thing that could happen would be for them to linger on."228

# LAST-MINUTE INTRIGUES

Thieu was not planning to relinquish his post voluntarily. But the party's propaganda line about replacing Thieu was not without its effect on both the South Vietnamese and the Americans. On April 3, having gotten wind of some loose coup talk by Ky, Thieu accepted the resignation of Prime Minister Khiem and his cabinet and replaced Khiem with Nguyên Ba Can, the man he had supported in a bitter contest for speaker of the lower house in 1974; again it was loyalty that counted. Martin had been absent for much of March, and the embassy's uncoordinated reporting at this stage reflected the sort of disarray that characterized the ARVN. The CIA station chief, Thomas Polgar, drafted a cable on April 2 at his own initiative saying "While moderate politicians, including some of the opposition, would like him to stay on as a titular president for the sake of constitutional continuity, there is nearly unanimous demand that Thieu surrender the substance of his powers." The message reflected Polgar's belief that if administration officials could be persuaded that negotiations were possible, they might be prepared to authorize Thieu's removal, a peculiar form of logic. Polgar's message, based on unsubstantiated speculation, elicited an immediate reply from CIA Director Colby instructing the CIA station to do nothing to promote Thieu's downfall and pointing out that the CIA's involvement in a coup would be "an institutional and national disaster." Then, remembering the events of 1963, Colby added: "If things get complicated at all, advise, and I will recommend the strongest effort to facilitate Thieu and family safe passage and haven." 229

The smell of a carcass was beginning to attract the usual hyenas. The French felt themselves to be under no compunction to preserve Thieu. During March they had opened exchanges with the DRV and PRG representatives in Paris seeking what they described as a peaceful transfer of power in Saigon. French plans, so far as they can be pieced together from available evidence, hinged on resurrecting a form of the three regions of Vietnam as they existed before Bao Dai: Tonkin was Communist, in Annam a form of coalition could be worked out, and in Cochinchina the Thieu regime would by agreement give way to a non-Communist government acceptable to Hanoi. Tran Van Don had received word from French Prime Minister Jacques Chirac that South Vietnam was done for, and the non-Communists had only eight days to reach an agreement to avoid a military offensive against Saigon. Mérillon had been instructed by the Quai d'Orsay to force Thieu out and to install General Duong Van Minh as president. Todd calls this cable "astonishing." Mérillon had a first meeting with Minh on April 17 and promised him full support. 230

Mérillon also sought to interest Martin in this sordid scheme. Direct communications were even set up between the two, which was easy since Mérillon's office adjoined the embassy grounds. A hole was cut through a wall and a special telephone line was strung linking Martin's office with Mérillon's bathroom, where, according to the servants, the ambassador began to spend much of his time. Mérillon was as ready to ignore the intelligence information provided by the professionals of his government as were Martin and Polgar, for the French Embassy in Hanoi, accurately, discounted any possibility of negotiations. Martin was also dubious about Mérillon's claim that Minh would be acceptable to the Communists. As it turned out, eight days were just the amount of time it took Le Duc Tho to reach COSVN bearing the Politburo's directives and for the appropriate orders for implementing the final phase of the DRV's offensive to be issued to all field commands.<sup>231</sup>

The plotting accelerated after the purported deadline had passed, spurred by the fear of the imminent Communist offensive. Mérillon's intelligence chief,

Jean Brochand, plied Polgar with persuasive arguments about negotiations, naming, as the French always did, a number of Vietnamese candidates for interlocutor. Polgar accordingly tailored his reports to Washington to reflect these possibilities. At the same time, General Don claimed to be in touch with unnamed PRG personalities and lobbied Martin, who appeared to place more stock in the PRG's receptivity to negotiations than to Hanoi's. 232

Meanwhile, the inexorable Communist push continued. ARVN soldiers who were ordered to give up their defensive positions around Phan Rang and withdraw southward bulldozed the ancestral graves of President Thieu before complying.<sup>233</sup> In Confucian culture, this was a most serious act, meaning that Thieu's ancestors would have no more home on earth and would be fated to err forever; the most diligent sacrifices would be required to prevent their turning into evil spirits bent on tormenting their earthbound descendants. General Dung's advance was suddenly stopped at the town of Xuan Loc, however. Xuan Loc was defended by Regional Forces and the 18th Division, which had been one of the worst in the ARVN in 1973 when it was taken over by a new commander, Brigadier General Le Minh Dao. Repulsed in its first attack, the DRV's 341st Division began a second assault on the town on April 9 with an artillery barrage of 4,000 rounds. The attackers were repeatedly driven off in street fighting in the ruined town. By April 13, the DRV had committed seven regiments to the battle. Before this overwhelming force, the 18th gave ground, fighting its way in good order toward Bien Hoa. General Dao stayed with his surviving 600 men, and when he was offered evacuation by the Americans he told them he was not going; the men remained silent, but he said later that he could feel their warmth for him.<sup>234</sup> Further west, Dung had no difficulty dealing with the 25th and 5th Divisions, which for years had been under strength, riddled by corruption, and ineffective for combat, and now were left leaderless.

At this late hour, the government of the Republic of Vietnam finally got its opportunity to hold a face-to-face meeting with the DRV as Kissinger had promised Nguyên Phu Duc when persuading him to convince Thieu to sign the agreement in December 1972. The meeting took place in Hanoi on April 11, and in circumstances that were free from the propaganda statements for the record that had characterized all previous meetings between the two protagonists in the war. The unrehearsed exchange was recorded by a Vietnamesespeaking American and was unique in the war. As usual, delegates of the Joint Military Team had flown to Hanoi from Saigon on April 11 on the weekly liaison flight, in spite of the offensive going on. The exchange began when interpreter Doa Trong Ngô found himself being browbeaten by an escort officer who identified himself only as Mr. Quang of the DRV foreign ministry. Mr. Quang ridiculed the ARVN: "We scared the hell out of your soldiers so that all they did was run, run, and run."

Ngô responded immediately, "That they ran fast proves how they feared your 'liberation.' They ran away because they thought the rug was being pulled from under their feet because of rumors of a secret agreement to let you have the land above Nha Trang and Dalat. So, fear gave them wings, not the fear of being killed in combat, but the fear of not being quick enough and having to live under your regime."

Ngô's impudence drew an immediate response from the principal escort officer, Major Huyen. "Mr. Ngô, I don't think you know what the words 'communism' or 'socialism' mean."

Ngô replied: "I admit that many of us who are anti-Communist don't understand what communism is, but I can see clearly that you who are against us don't understand one bit what freedom is either. Posterity may judge that we were both foolish."

"History will be on our side," Major Huyen replied. "Hasn't history shown you that more and more people representing the progressive majority of mankind are embracing socialism as the best political system? You cannot go against the force of history."

"You claim the force of history is on your side," Ngô replied, "and I claim that it is on our side. Since that can only be settled in the future, let's wait for a few hundred more years to see who is right, and let no one assert now that he is completely right if he really wants national reconciliation and concord." <sup>235</sup>

In mid-April, Bui Diem, returning to Saigon from one last mission to Washington for Thieu, found himself called to the American Embassy urgently to meet with Martin. "Have you seen Thieu yet?" Martin asked. Martin had not met with Thieu lately; he had been kept busy planning the evacuation of Americans. "The situation is precarious, grave," Martin went on. "No one in Saigon, including the military, thinks that Thieu can stay on as president. . . . You have to tell Thieu the truth." If necessary, Martin would go himself to the palace. But Martin wanted Bui Diem to carry the message to Thieu and then get back to him. Bui Diem recalls that he was dumfounded. 236 It was, indeed, a throwback to earlier days. Here again was the unquestioned acceptance of broad and unfounded generalizations about the president and his capacities. Here again was the eagerness to jump to ill-considered actions with little thought to the consequences. Here again was the same biased reporting to Washington. Martin's cable made it seem that Bui Diem was anxious to have Thieu resign so that negotiations with the Communists might begin, that he proposed to tell Thieu the same thing, that he would warn Thieu that if he did not resign his generals would force him to.<sup>237</sup> Kissinger replied there was no objection to Martin's telling Thieu he should resign.<sup>238</sup> He writes that he thought the move might purchase a few extra days for evacuation.<sup>239</sup>

Martin mustered his courage and called on Thieu on the morning of April 20. The two men had a conversation lasting an hour and a half. Thieu asked him: "If I step down, will military aid come?" For aid, \$300 million was the last figure being debated in Washington. Martin replied: "I cannot promise you, but there may be a chance."<sup>240</sup> Even when they were telling Thieu to get out, the Americans continued to feed his illusions about forthcoming American aid. Martin, "speaking purely personally," told Thieu that if he did not move soon, his generals would ask him to go. Thieu concluded the meeting by saying he would do what he thought was best for the country. "I went home," Martin reported, "read the daily

news digests from Washington, took a shower, scrubbed very hard with the strongest soap I could find. It didn't help very much."<sup>241</sup>

Mérillon saw Thieu that same afternoon. "I have come to see you, Mr. President, because the situation is extraordinarily grave," Mérillon said sanctimoniously. "There is no military solution." Thieu remained calm and said nothing. "I see only a political solution," Mérillon said. "A political process must be permitted to develop." It was like Kissinger's talk of a "political structure." These Westerners talked about matters of life and death as if they were abstractions.

The monologue continued for some time on a diversity of topics, even touching on the friendship of the two men's wives. Mérillon also politely protested certain anti-French activities, citing the Paris agreement. Thieu was amused; after all the months in which Paris had maintained a studious silence on the DRV's violations of the Paris agreement, here was the French ambassador citing the agreement as a defense against the feelings of the South Vietnamese. Mérillon left convinced Thieu would resign. The Quai d'Orsay was relieved to receive Mérillon's report. There had been fear that Thieu might declare Mérillon persona non grata or even have him assassinated.<sup>242</sup>

There was a grain of truth about the generals' telling Thieu to resign. Don did not let the fact that Thieu had appointed him defense minister in the new cabinet get in the way of his plotting against his commander in chief, any more than in 1963 he had let his advancement by President Diem impede his mercenary activities. He formed an informal cabal against Thieu on the morning of April 21. Don enlisted General Vien by persuading him that a government, preferably headed by Minh, should be formed to sue for peace. Don also enlisted Prime Minister Can and Economics Minister Nguyên Van Hao.

Before these plotters could act, however, Thieu summoned Vice President Tran Van Huong to his office on April 21 and told him he proposed to resign that same evening. He had only one wish: to ensure a constitutional transition. The embassy learned of this decision immediately through the CIA's bug in Thieu's office, and would-be plotters there also leaped into action. Polgar informed both Mérillon and the chief of the Hungarian delegation to the ICCS, with whom he had had contacts for some time, of Thieu's impending resignation. Polgar then sent General Charles Timmes to see Minh with a blunt message. Would Minh be willing to take over and negotiate a peace agreement as soon as a way could be found to move Huong aside? Minh nodded, expressed confidence he could placate the other side, and said he wanted to send a representative to Paris to open discussions at once. Timmes reached into his briefcase and pulled out a handful of crisp green dollar bills: 1,000 dollars to cover travel expenses. The Americans were now offering dollars instead of piasters. Minh, of course, took the money. However, he declined a suggestion that he join the Huong government as a first step in carrying out his plan. 243

In Washington, there was to be one last act between the puppet-master and the puppet. Even after the withdrawal of the last American troops and the release of American POWs, there were still American lives at risk. On April 19, Kissinger gave Ambassador Anatoly Dobrynin a "highly urgent message" to Leonid Brezh-

nev appealing to the Soviet government to help obtain a temporary cease-fire to save lives through the continued evacuation of American citizens and "those South Vietnamese to whom we have a direct and special obligation." Kissinger's main concern was to bring the situation to its conclusion in a manner that did not jeopardize Soviet-American relations.<sup>244</sup> When he heard from Martin that he was going to try to persuade Thieu to resign, however, Kissinger asked Martin to try to delay the resignation as his approach to the Soviets "could easily involve Thieu as one of the bargaining points."245 Following Martin's meeting with Thieu, Kissinger again pressed him, saying "Thieu's resignation may provide us our only real leverage."246 The puppet master still found some use for the discarded puppet. Martin replied: "Given Thieu's mood at the moment I would have to be able to convince him that the postponement was truly in the interests of South Vietnam. I do not think I can do this if I were not able to indicate at least the broad outlines of what it is we are trying to get Hanoi to agree to."247 On April 24, Brezhnev replied that the Vietnamese had informed him they would not impede the speedy evacuation of the Americans from Saigon and had no intention of damaging the prestige of the United States. They would proceed from the Paris agreement, meaning they still expected the United States to live up to Article 21.

It would be hard to make the case that the DRV had abided by the terms of the Paris agreement. However, the agreement was so full of loopholes that an imaginative mind could construct logical arguments for either side's abiding by at least some of its provisions. Since its inception, the cease-fire had remained unverified. Moreover, it had not yet been "enforced," meaning that one could argue that the restrictions on the movement of men and replacement of war matériel had not yet gone into effect, although the entry of entire divisions and tank regiments into South Vietnam was stretching things a bit. The Americans, for their part, had definitely violated the understanding concerning the withdrawal of civilian technicians within one year. Now it was a little late to send out the ICCS to demarcate the positions of each side, as one side held almost everything and within days would hold everything there was to be held, obviating the need for demarcation altogether and making the peace "process" that much simpler. Dobrynin writes that President Ford received the reply from Brezhnev with relief.<sup>248</sup>

President Thieu now gave his resignation speech. All these weeks he had been silent, while one province after another fell to the enemy. He had abandoned plans to make an earlier speech, for which Martin had helpfully provided "talking points" exhorting the ARVN to fight "with renewed valor and courage" and appealing to the Communists to enter into negotiations. <sup>249</sup> His speech was not an exhortation to courage and valor, like the speech of Nicias to the disheartened soldiers of the Athenians and their allies as they prepared for the desperate attempt to break out of the blockaded harbor of Syracuse. The time for that sort of speech had long since passed. Nor was it yet another in the long series since 1968 of shameful appeals to the goodwill of the other side; that would have been inappropriate and not what the South Vietnamese wanted to hear. Ignoring Martin's advice, Thieu at last placed the blame where it belonged—on the Americans. In its own way, Thieu's speech to the members of

the Supreme Court, the National Assembly, the cabinet, his advisers, and the military high command assembled at the palace, which was broadcast to the civil servants, the ARVN officers and soldiers, and the ordinary citizens of South Vietnam on the evening of April 21, was intense and heartfelt, and it deeply impressed those who heard it.

He began by talking about the Paris agreement, the source of all the misfortunes that had befallen the country. "At the time, there was collusion between the Communists and the United States with a view to reaching the agreement of 26 October 1972," he said.

I had enough courage to tell Secretary of State Kissinger at that time the following: If you accept this agreement, this means you accept selling South Vietnam to the North Vietnamese Communists. As for me, if I accept this agreement, I will be a traitor and seller of the South Vietnamese people and territory to the Communists. If you accept it, it is for U.S. interests or some private reason which I do not know about. It is a sharing of interests among you powers that I do not know about. You make some concessions or exchanges among you. You want to sell the interests and lives of the South Vietnamese. As for me, a Vietnamese, I cannot do so.

I refused to accept this agreement. I opposed it for three months. During these months I struggled vigorously for three main points.

His struggle was testified to by the fact that he invited to each of his meetings the legislative leaders of both houses, the military and government leaders, and sometimes a few politicians. The three points he struggled against were the three-segment body ("In my opinion, this was a coalition government"), the failure to distinguish North from South ("If you accept this agreement, this means that you accept the Vietnam of Hanoi"), and the failure to obtain the withdrawal of the DRV's troops (he traced the American retreat on the troop withdrawal issue since the Manila communiqué of 1966 through Kissinger's acceptance of the wording of Article 13). But he had not become afraid, even when "those who wanted to overthrow my regime also had ample means and the experience to do so," referring to Diem's fate. "There was untold menace and pressure." Thieu said he had finally accepted President Nixon's argument that the Paris agreement was only a sheet of paper and what mattered was enforcement.

Actually, if the Communists violated the agreement using the abundant aid they received from the Soviet Union and Red China and if we showed them the beautifully worded agreement, they would not be afraid of it. But if we received adequate U.S. military aid, if the Vietnamization plan and the plan to modernize the Republic of Vietnam armed forces were carried out, and if the Americans resumed their assistance to us with their Air Force facilities to punish the aggressors, this would be more practical for us, I thought.

When he talked about his betrayal by the Americans, he grew emotional and had tears in his eyes.

The United States is proud of being an invincible defender of the just cause and the ideal of freedom in this world and will celebrate its 200th anniversary next year. I asked them: Are U.S. statements trustworthy? Are U.S. commitments still valid? Some \$300 million is not a big sum to you. Compared with the amount of money you spent here in ten years, this sum is sufficient for only ten days of fighting. And with this sum, you ask me to score a victory or to check the Communist aggression—a task which you failed to fulfill in six years with all U.S. forces and with such an amount of money. This is absurd!

The least the United States could do was to grant the South Vietnamese the means to carry on their fight against the aggressor. "This amounts to a breach of promise, injustice, lack of responsibility and inhumanity toward an ally who has suffered continuously—the shirking of responsibility on the part of a great power." Thieu compared the still-not-ended debate over the amount of aid to South Vietnam with bargaining over the price of a fish in the market. (Soviet aid in the form of T-54 tanks flying the flag of the PRG was to arrive in a matter of days on the lawn of the Independence Palace.) He had made no claim to intellectual achievement, alluding to Nixon's book *Six Crises*.

The presidents of some big countries are proud of the fact that they have undergone six, seven or ten crises. They have written books in which they proudly offer themselves as heroes and outstanding politicians. As for me, over the past ten years, all years, months, days and all hours in my life have been bad, as my horoscope forecast. As for my fate, I can enjoy no happiness; I have enjoyed no happiness; yet, I have not sought ways to enjoy life. A ruler of a country can enjoy either honor or disgrace. He must accept this so he can lead the people. If I have some good points, the compatriots will praise me even if I do not want it. But if I have some bad points and errors, I am ready to accept judgments and accusations from the compatriots. Today, as I leave my office, I ask the compatriots, combatants and cadres, together with all popular organizations and religions, to forgive those errors I have committed against the nation during my presidential term.

Even at this late hour, however, Thieu could not bring himself to cut himself off from the Americans. He portrayed his resignation as a sacrifice to be made to pacify the gods of the Congress of the United States. He was still being called an obstacle to peace. If the Congress changed its attitude, his resignation would be a small sacrifice to make. It would be more than a sacrifice, however; it would also be a test.

Some South Vietnamese religious groups, some politicians, some mass organizations, and some well-known persons were saying Thieu should step down so that negotiations could begin with the Communists. "South Vietnam will certainly have freedom and democracy and the Communists will have to agree to that. There will be no coalition. The Communists are afraid of us and respect us." Others were saying that everything had already been agreed upon and that Thieu's resignation was only a pretext for abandoning South Vietnam.

Thieu apologized for resigning in such an informal setting not in keeping with Article 55 of the constitution. He wanted to avoid discontinuity and politi-

cal instability. Therefore, he requested Vice President Huong to take the oath as president at the palace that same evening. Nowhere in his speech, however, did Thieu assume responsibility for having given the order that produced the rout in the Central Highlands. Huong did take the oath, an old schoolteacher answering the call to public service one last time. "I solemnly declare before the nation and the people that I will defend the fatherland, respect the constitution, serve the interests of the nation and people and try my best to fulfill the duties of president of the Republic of Vietnam," Huong said. Kissinger scrawled a note to Martin on a legal pad telling him to offer Thieu every assistance should he wish to leave the country. "He should know that whatever he may have said about me, I have the greatest respect for him."

Thieu drove to Tan Son Nhut on the evening of April 25 in an American car and boarded an American plane together with former Prime Minister Khiem. They dared not use the normal VIP plane because of reports that it was being watched by elements in the military who had said they would not get out of the country alive. Huong said he was concerned about Thieu's safety and asked Martin's assistance in getting him out. 252 As they passed the Vietnamese monument to the allied war dead with the simple words "The Noble Sacrifice of Allied Soldiers Will Never Be Forgotten," Thieu sighed audibly and looked away. Martin saw him off at the boarding ramp. 253 Thieu flew to Taiwan, his first chosen place of exile, in all comfort. He had sent his wife and family out beforehand. The puppet had served the purpose of the puppet-master, which had been to allow the Americans to extricate themselves from Vietnam. Later, the Communists painted out the words on the monument and replaced them with Ho Chi Minh's trite slogan: "Nothing Is More Precious than Independence and Freedom."

Secretary Kissinger was still going through the motions of seeking aid for South Vietnam, not out of any conviction that it would do any good but because it was politic to do so in order to avoid having the ARVN turn against the Americans, the possibility at the back of everyone's mind, even at this late hour. Kissinger appeared before a subcommittee of the House Committee on Appropriations on April 21, which was focusing at this stage on trying to determine what commitments, if any, had been made to South Vietnam at the time the Paris agreement was signed. In answer to a direct question by Representative Bill Chappell of Florida, who had been a member of the congressional delegation to Saigon, Kissinger replied: "The commitments that were made to South Vietnam are all on the public record." Inasmuch as the presidential letters to Thieu had not been made public at that point, this amounted to a lie. Chappell went on to ask:

Mr. Chappell: Was the presence of the Air Force in Thailand in any way to be a deterrent to the North Vietnamese not to violate the agreement?

Secretary Kissinger: It was one of the factors, yes.

Mr. Chappell: Was it in any way part of the understanding?

Secretary Kissinger: No, no there was no understanding to that effect.<sup>254</sup>

Representative Clarence D. Long of Maryland submitted a list of questions to be answered by Kissinger. It was a little late in the day, but it showed that Kissinger's veil of secrecy was already being shredded. Kissinger delayed providing answers. Long's questions included:

4. Will you supply this Committee with all pertinent documents—such as letters exchanged between Presidents Nixon and Thieu, unilateral declarations of intent to observe the Vietnam ceasefire, and a summary of oral exchanges—relating to any commitments undertaken with the 1973 Paris accords?

6. When Congress halted all U.S. military activities in Indochina as of August, 1973, did the United States undertake any diplomacy with the South Vietnamese and Cambodians in regards to the possible U.S. response should the communists launch a new military offensive? Please describe how you communicated this new provision in the law forbidding U.S. combat actions to our allies, and what course they were encouraged to pursue, if any, towards a negotiated settlement.<sup>255</sup>

This was like the way the Senate Foreign Relations Committee had been misled by administration officials about the involvement of the United States in the overthrow of the legal governments of the Kingdom of Laos in 1960 and the Republic of Vietnam in 1963. There was a pattern here: all three instances had occurred when the administration exercised sovereignty on behalf of its nationalist allies of the moment (General Phoumi Nosavan, the mercenary generals in Saigon). In the third instance, Kissinger conveniently forgot his talk with Nguyên Phu Duc in Nixon's office at the beginning of December 1972 when the Americans had outlined the contingency plan for retaliatory bombing that had persuaded Thieu to go along with Nixon and sign the agreement. There were many such details Kissinger conveniently forgot, and when he could not claim poor memory he unblinkingly transformed legal commitments into moral commitments, any commitments at all into statements of intent, and engaged in similar verbal contortions. He wanted to keep a low profile. The Senate had in any case taken the highly visible lead in pushing to get out. The sentiments of the members of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee were well reported in the press. When its members met in the Cabinet Room of the White House on April 14 for a discussion of President Ford's request for further aid to South Vietnam, there was no mistaking the fact that they were dead set against it, while they were willing to grant authority and funding for the administration to evacuate the remaining Americans. The situation with respect to evacuation of Vietnamese was less clear. Senator Jacob K. Javits of New York said "I will give you large sums for evacuation, but not one nickel for military aid to Thieu." Senator Claiborne Pell of Rhode Island suggested with respect to the South Vietnamese, "We could put these people in Borneo. It has the same latitude, the same climate, and would welcome some anti-Communists."256 The reason felt by many members was that the level of distrust had become so great that they feared that should they provide money to the Republic of Vietnam Kissinger or Martin would find a way to say: "Well, there are American civilians under attack, and we must send troops to protect them." Thus, in the final crunch, the administration and the Congress became allies to implement Nixon's plan to disengage from Vietnam.

Still there was talk of negotiations. Kissinger objected to Martin's attempts to involve PRG representatives in Saigon in negotiations. "You have misunderstood my comments about negotiations with the PRG. I was not, repeat not, speaking of GVN-PRG talks, but U.S.-PRG talks. I want any U.S. political discussions with the PRG to take place in Paris." If some of the more nationalist-minded elements of the PRG, who were alarmed by the fact that all of South Vietnam was being liberated by the DRV's army of Northerners, were allowed to make decisions, this might upset Hanoi sufficiently so that it might decide to interfere with the smooth American evacuation. An unannounced American air strike had been aimed at a convoy of SA-2 missiles in northeastern Military Region III. In Paris, the puppet-masters would exercise complete control over their respective puppets.<sup>259</sup>

### "LIBERATION"

The DRV reacted to the departure of Thieu exactly as the Nixon administration had insisted for four years it would, by upping the ante. An editorial in Nhan Dan stated "Thieu and Huong differ in nothing. The former is a fascist militarist and the latter is a reactionary civilian traitor. Both are anti-Communist and have been opposing the homeland and the people by stubbornly continuing the war." The editorial demanded the appointment of a new president with no recent ties to the Saigon administration.<sup>260</sup> In plain words, the DRV wanted not only the departure of the elected president, but also the trampling in the mud of the constitution for all to see. Huong was, of course, against this, having struggled for years against military rulers in Saigon; he was now defiantly comparing himself to Pétain facing the Wehrmacht. Minh's supporters, on the other hand, on the basis of what they were being told by the French, insisted Minh was the only interlocutor acceptable to the Communists. In a message sent to the commander in the South following a Politburo meeting on April 22, Le Duan was still counting on the confusion to foment a popular uprising. "Take care to combine the military offensive with a popular uprising," Le Duan ordered.261

Martin called on President Huong on the afternoon of April 22, which coincided with a lull in the fighting, and found him in a firm mood. Huong did not consider himself as an interim president. He was fully aware of the peril, but he was prepared to make concessions which few other politicians would be able to make in order to preserve Saigon from a bloodbath and hopefully to maintain for as long as possible an independent South Vietnam. He wanted the Americans to act as an interlocutor with Hanoi, but Martin warned him that this expectation was unrealistic in the face of the present mood in Washington. Kissinger cabled him back a list of questions about Huong's intentions with regard to his remaining or resigning, his intentions for dealing with Hanoi

and the PRG, and who he might have in mind for a successor acceptable to the other side. <sup>263</sup> It was very possibly the first time during his more than six years in office that Kissinger had deigned to inquire what the Vietnamese intended to do instead of telling them what they should do.

With the lull in the fighting that had been instituted on April 22 threatening to come to an end, the sordid maneuvering among the politicians in Saigon reached a frantic point. It was finally Don, to whom Huong had offered the post of prime minister only to have him decline at Mérillon's insistence, who convinced Huong that resigning was the only thing to do. Huong accordingly told a joint meeting of the lower and upper houses of the National Assembly on April 26 that if they no longer wanted him as president it was up to them to vote him out of office. The Assembly debated the question for 10 hours and finally decided it was up to Huong to resign. On April 27, Huong convened a meeting of notables and announced his decision to step down in a letter to Tran Van Lam, who was now the president of the Senate. "Once the Assembly meeting in joint session has chosen a personality to whom to entrust the sacred task, I am ready to hand over to him all presidential powers of the Republic of Vietnam. The sooner this is done the better," he wrote. Lam reconvened the Assembly at 6:45 that evening. The session first heard a report on the military situation. At 8:45 P.M., Lam read from a sheet of paper: "Who agrees that President Huong should hand over presidential powers to General Duong Van Minh so that the latter may seek a way to restore peace in Vietnam?" He asked for a show of hands. All except two of the 138 of the 219 members present raised their hands; those two non-voting members were the president of the Senate and the speaker of the Lower House.<sup>264</sup> They were overriding the constitution, which prescribed that in the event of the resignations of the president and vice president, the succession went to the chairman of the Senate. Brochand was observed in the corridors helping Ly Qui Chung, one of Minh's advisers, with some wording. But Martin, in an enlightened move, refused when Polgar asked his permission to bribe Assembly members to hasten Minh's elevation; the South Vietnamese, he insisted, must work out their own destiny in their own way, without American interference.<sup>265</sup>

After the vote, Huong told Don to tell Minh that he could take power whenever he was ready. Don first notified his patrons Mérillon and Martin and then passed Huong's message to Minh. <sup>266</sup> Thus Don became the instrument for the downfall of the second republic just as he had been of the first; this time also the transfer was accompanied by the same clandestine meetings in "safe" houses and exchanges of secret conditions and mutual assurances by the plotters. This time, however, Martin had avoided American involvement. <sup>267</sup>

Kissinger had finally received a reply to his "urgent message" to Brezhnev of April 19. The Vietnamese side, the reply stated, did not intend to put any obstacles to the evacuation of Americans. In the struggle for achieving a political settlement, the Vietnamese side would proceed from the Paris agreement. Brezhnev expressed the hope that President Ford "will duly appreciate such a position of the Vietnamese side and will not allow any actions on the United

States part which would be fraught with a new exacerbation of the situation in Indochina."<sup>268</sup>

There was still some fierce fighting, however, in the final days. The Military History Institute records two such engagements. At the Nuoc Trong armor training school, the cadets, joined by cadets of the Thu Duc officer school, the 468th Marine Brigade, and the 318th Armored Regiment (actually a battalion), supported by air strikes, held out under a scorching sun against the 304th Division from 5 A.M. April 26 until the evening of April 28. At Ho Nai, a Catholic settlement north of Bien Hoa, the 3rd Armored Brigade and the 4th Airborne Brigade had constructed strong defensive positions, including anti-tank traps, and held up the 341st Division until the evening of April 28.<sup>269</sup>

Minh started to form a cabinet the following day and then went to Independence Palace. There, the notables were waiting in the large open hall on the ground floor. A thunderstorm added drama to the occasion, as lightning flashed and heavy rain fell on the garden below. Huong, looking old and trembling, wearing dark glasses and carrying a cane, was assisted by an aide to the podium where he introduced Minh and then departed, the last constitutional president of the Republic of Vietnam. Minh spoke slowly, reading from a paper. "I accept the responsibility now for myself: I feel a responsibility to seek a cease-fire, and to reopen negotiations and bring peace on the basis of the Paris agreement," he said. Thus, Minh clung to the Paris agreement; as if enough concessions had not already been made to the Communists, he saw only a reopening of negotiations on that basis. He introduced Nguyên Van Huyen as his vice president and Vu Van Mau, leader of the Buddhist opposition in the Senate (it was like a reunion of the discredited figures of 1963), as his prime minister. He ordered the ARVN to remain in its positions and defend the remaining territory. "When the cease-fire order is given, your mission will be rigorously to execute that order in accordance with the clauses of the Paris agreement and maintain order and security in your areas." Then he made an appeal to the PRG for reconciliation. Finally, putting away his paper, he said there was one thing he begged of his fellow citizens and patriots to do—to be courageous, not to abandon the country, not to run away. His audience applauded.<sup>270</sup>

Minh was thinking of resuming the negotiations in Paris, but the immediate way to peace apparently lay through the PRG delegation at Camp Davis. Minh sent emissaries to inquire what the PRG's conditions were. Back came the party-line answer that the Americans must cease their intervention in Vietnam's affairs. The PRG made no attempt to enter into a dialogue. Mérillon himself made a trip to Camp Davis, and there he learned that his hopes of getting negotiations started with Minh were just so much dust.<sup>271</sup> Malcolm W. Browne of *The New York Times* independently relayed to the embassy a message from the PRG saying "The United States must annul the Saigon administration, which is an administration of war and repression. The declarations of General Minh do not meet these demands." The PRG demanded that the United States observe the provisions of Article 1 (respect the independence and sovereignty of Vietnam), 4 (not continue its military involvement or interven-

tion in the internal affairs of South Vietnam), and 9 (respect the South Vietnamese people's right to self-determination) of the Paris agreement.<sup>272</sup> Minh sent a letter to the embassy asking all employees of the DAO to leave within 24 hours "in order that the question of peace for Viet-Nam can be settled early."<sup>273</sup> Martin's reply containing a formal guarantee to this effect was delivered to Minh by General Timmes.<sup>274</sup> It was the last official communication between the Republic of Vietnam and the United States, and, like President Diem's request to the French in 1956 that they withdraw the French Expeditionary Corps, it concerned the infringement of sovereignty.

The evacuation by aircraft from Tan Son Nhut arranged by the DAO had been brought to an abrupt halt by Communist shelling, which was accurate because of forward observers who had infiltrated onto the air base, and which killed two Marines and panicked the Vietnamese awaiting evacuation. The American delegation to the Joint Military Team received orders on April 29 to prepare to remain behind and moved to the embassy. This switch followed a statement by Major Huyen during the Joint Military Team's final visit to Hanoi on April 25 to the effect that the American delegation should remain in Vietnam to carry out its humanitarian tasks, which was once again linked to the payment of war reparations under Article 21.<sup>275</sup> However, the order for the Americans to remain was countermanded, and President Ford ordered the start of a helicopter evacuation of all Americans and as many Vietnamese as could be loaded.<sup>276</sup> Kissinger was determined not to hand the DRV any more hostages.<sup>277</sup>

The diplomats abandoned the embassy overnight, with Martin among the last to go. He took with him many of the embassy files concerning relations between the Republic of Vietnam and the United States, saving them for posterity. Unlike the American troops in their crisp uniforms who had departed at the end of March 1973, holding their heads high as they boarded their plane, the members of the embassy departed with their heads hung low in shame, unable to look the Vietnamese in the eyes. At 7:30 on the morning of April 30, the Marines guarding the outer wall retired, in battle formation, their bayonets pointing at a desperate crowd of Vietnamese who were now climbing over the gate, invading the lawn, and bursting with shouts into the building. The retreating Marines ran along the roof, firing tear gas into the stairwells. Others went to the safe, sprinkled gasoline on piles of hundred-dollar bills and set them on fire. The crowd had reached the third floor. Furniture, filing cabinets, and desks were overturned, and documents were strewn everywhere. Policemen from the nearby station pushed through the crowd and went to the safe; they put out the fire and carried away armfuls of bills. Others ran out carrying presidential photographs, typewriters, curtains, armchairs, and air conditioners. The bronze plaque bearing the names of five American servicemen who died defending the embassy in 1968 was retrieved from a pile of debris on the back lawn by journalists; it remained in Vietnam. Peter Arnett also retrieved a partially burned American flag and took it back to the Associated Press bureau; when he returned to the United States a fortnight later, he carried it with him and tried to arrange for its return to the State Department, which refused to 918

accept it on grounds that Martin had carried out the embassy flag.<sup>278</sup> At 7:53, a helicopter lifted off from the roof bearing the last Americans. Due to a failure in communications from the embassy, 420 persons who had been promised evacuation and were still waiting on the ground inside the embassy enclosure for more helicopters to arrive had to be abandoned. The evacuees were bound for an armada of ships assembled offshore. For some of the Vietnamese who found themselves aboard Navy ships, it was for the second time in their lives.<sup>279</sup> During April, American military aircraft evacuated 6,763 Americans and 45,125 Vietnamese and other foreigners from Saigon.<sup>280</sup>

At last there was no more reason for puppetry; no more would the car carrying the American ambassador turn onto Thong Nhut Avenue bound for the palace for consultations. America's experiment in colonialism in Vietnam had come to a dramatic end. President Ford summed up for many by saying "This action [the evacuation] closes a chapter in the American experience." True to their pledge in the form of an editorial in *Nhan Dan* following Thieu's resignation, the Communists did not fire a single shot at any of the evacuation helicopters. <sup>282</sup> With the helicopters gone, silence fell over Saigon.

At that moment, the Americans passed sovereignty back to the Republic of Vietnam, or the empty shell that remained of it. The nationalists smelled defeat, and in a few hours they would in turn transfer sovereignty to the party center. At 10:24, Minh went on the air to ask all soldiers of the republic to cease hostilities in calm and to stay where they were. He announced that the JGS was ready to make contact with the army command of the PRG to achieve a cease-fire. He asked only that the PRG cease hostilities on its side. "We wait here to meet the PRG to discuss together a ceremony of orderly transfer of power so as to avoid any unnecessary bloodshed in the population," he said. <sup>283</sup>

Tanks flying the red, yellow, and blue flag of the PRG appeared a few minutes after noon rumbling along Thong Nhut Avenue past the abandoned embassy toward the Independence Palace. The lead tank knocked down a large iron gate in one piece and rolled onto the lawn, followed by the others. The soldiers ran inside and up to the roof, where they raised their flag. Colonel Bui Tin and Lieutenant Colonels Nguyên Van Han, Nguyên Tran Thiet, and Bui Van Tung of the DRV's army, the last being the political commissar of the 203rd Tank Regiment, entered the second-floor room where Minh and his cabinet were waiting. There was no need for interpreters. They nervously asked those present to lay down any weapons and surrender. "You have nothing to fear," Bui Tin said to reduce the tension. Minh replied: "I have been waiting since early this morning to transfer power to you." This sensible exchange, with its appeal to nationalism, was rudely interrupted by Tung. "You have nothing left to turn over," he said. "You can only surrender unconditionally. I invite you to come to the radio station to announce an unconditional surrender." It was the voice of the party. Minh was given a statement to broadcast.<sup>284</sup> It was a transaction between two illegal and illegitimate governments having nothing to do with self-determination or democracy, but it spared the people of Saigon a last-ditch stand.

Minh and the 15 men who had joined him in the final hours of the republic were housed in the guest quarters of the palace and then, a few days later, after

a formal ceremony, released to go to their homes. At the formal ceremony, General Tran Van Tra, the head of the Saigon-Gia Dinh Military Management Committee, made a speech in which he said: "At the end of this very long struggle there are neither victors nor vanguished. It is the Vietnamese people, all the people, who have defeated American imperialism." Minh replied: "I am happy to be here. I think that by my actions I have helped to avoid a final and useless shedding of blood in Saigon. That has been my positive part in this struggle. I am sixty years old, and today I am proud to be once more a free citizen in an independent country." General Tra's was the first statement of the myth that the party would propagandize and use to pressure the Americans, when the time came, into recognizing the illegal and illegitimate government they had not recognized in 1945. But there was a definite feeling among those who witnessed this extraordinary passage of power that Vietnam had recovered its independence. It was stated by former Vice President Huyen: "It's shameful to have to admit it but Thieu was a puppet of the Americans." Huyen was allowed to retire peacefully in his house at 181 Hong Thap Tu, where he had a large portrait of the Pope and a cupboard full of plaster statuettes of saints in his living room.<sup>285</sup>

Saigon witnessed a spontaneous uprising that had nothing to do with Marxist-Leninist class warfare. Hardly had the Americans departed when people ventured into the streets to find and take what they could. There was nothing anti-American about it; they were simply satisfying the pent-up feelings of years of deprivation they had suffered while the war enriched a small minority among them. The members of this minority had fled with the Americans or were in the process of fleeing on their own. First it was just a few pieces of furniture from abandoned villas, apartments, and offices. Then it became an orgy of looting, of opening drawers, ripping down curtains, emptying refrigerators, taking sheets, blankets, dishes, pictures, rugs, air conditioners, radios, television sets, sewing machines, clocks, typewriters, stereo equipment, fans, and chandeliers. From the PX came merchandise still packed in shipping cartons; cases of whiskey, soap, batteries, and crackers were liberated. From the slums of Khanh Hoi bands of barefoot, ragged people ran into the city center to take their share of the loot. 286 When the Saigon radio station was taken over by the Communists and put back in working order, orders to stop the looting were broadcast, and the looting stopped.

Policemen took part in the general excitement. So did soldiers, abandoned by their officers and disobeying Minh's order to stand fast. Government and the ARVN dissolved in a flash. The soldiers emerged from their blockhouses and trenches, abandoned their heavy weapons, and turned back into Saigon. Those in city barracks opened the doors and discarded their uniforms, boots, and helmets and went in search of civilian clothes. In the general mélée there were still instances of human kindness, however. Soldiers were seen caring for young children and elders who had somehow been wounded in the final artillery bombardments or in random shootings by one side or the other. People threw old pants and shirts from windows to the soldiers in the streets. The soldiers were no longer fleeing. There was nowhere left to flee to, except the Mekong Delta, which was expected to fall in short order. So there were few

ugly incidents of fleeing ARVN soldiers turning their weapons on civilians, as had happened in Danang.

At Van Hanh University, the students, well organized beforehand, recorded the names and units of soldiers who surrendered and distributed little mimeographed yellow slips that read: "Brother . . . of the . . . division has handed over these weapons. . . . He has promised to obey the revolutionary authorities and is authorized to return to his family. Signed: Students' Revolutionary Committee." Soon, the students had accumulated an impressive arsenal. In many government offices, civil servants and police officials who tried to destroy files before surrendering were prevented from doing so by PRG cadres who suddenly revealed their identity and took charge. At the headquarters of the Central Intelligence Organization at 5 Bach Dan Street on the riverfront, four employees (three men and a woman) took out pistols, herded all the others out, and barricaded themselves inside the building, thereby saving the massive files accumulated during the war that identified prisoners, defectors, collaborators. The chief of the National Police, General Nguyên Khac Binh, had himself evacuated, leaving behind intact all his agency's files. At Chi Hoa prison, 7,000 prisoners were freed. The enforcement of law and order, and the tools with which to do so, were rapidly changing hands from one sovereignty to another.<sup>287</sup>

When Communist troops entered the city, initial fear and tension gave way to relief and curiosity. No one was shooting. The streets were crowded with onlookers, as if there were safety in numbers. People wanted to get a close-up look at the invading army; almost all were Northerners, many from Hanoi itself. Behind the tanks and trucks came the infantry. They were in groups of 15 or 20, in single file, marching in their damp, muddy uniforms, carrying their AK-47s slung across their backs, some with mortars suspended from poles shouldered by two. Some carried baskets of water beets, a vegetable Saigon would soon come to know, as Terzani observes. Together with rice, it was the basic diet of these soldiers, supplemented by the chickens carried in cages suspended from the backs of trucks and even tanks. There were family reunions. The citizenry learned a new name: bo doi, meaning literally soldiers, but in the context of revolution, new order, new authorities. <sup>288</sup> Very soon, people were mingling without fear among these bo doi in their encampments in the wooded park near the palace or wherever they could light campfires and hang out laundry to dry, in the sidewalk markets where the bo doi gawked at the variety of consumer goods, and in the cathedral where some of them attended mass on Sundays. The radio announced that henceforth the city would be called Ho Chi Minh City. Another public notice that caught everyone's attention was a wall poster announcing the closing of bars, brothels, dance halls, opium dens, massage parlors, and all places "for American-type activities." It was dated May 1, and was signed by General Tran Van Tra, the chairman of the Saigon-Gia Dinh Military Management Committee.<sup>289</sup>

### "On Us the Night Is Descending"

In the United States, the contrast between the reaction of the Vietnamese to the fall of Saigon and the reaction of the Americans was sharp. Ambassador Tran

Kim Phuong, in a statement reported by General Walters, said "On us the night is descending beyond which there is no dawn."<sup>290</sup> In an interview on the *CBS Morning News*, he reflected on the meaning of the distinction between promises made and promises that could not be kept for legal or other reasons:

Therefore the experiences of the Vietnamese show very well what happened and I would think that the people around the world could draw only one possible conclusion. That is it is safer to be allies of the Communists and it looks like it is fatal to be allies of the U.S. I say that very coolly and not with any passion. But I think that it is a conclusion that people in the world would draw.<sup>291</sup>

A small group of Vietnamese marched in front of the White House, braving the rain and carrying South Vietnamese flags. <sup>292</sup> But the fall of Saigon was greeted with utter indifference by Americans; Indochina had been completely sanitized. President Ford went off to California for a golfing vacation. The plight of the Vietnamese evoked little sympathy in the press. Oliphant produced a particularly vicious cartoon showing the Statue of Liberty: "Send me your tired and huddled masses, your generals, your wealthy and privileged classes, your crooks and pimps, and bar girls yearning to breathe free . . . "<sup>293</sup>

In a news conference on April 29, Kissinger sought to put the best light on the events of the previous fortnight. "And finally," he said, using the familiar language whose meaning only he and his close associates understood, "we sought, through various intermediaries, to bring about as humane a political evolution as we could." He claimed to have been surprised by the DRV's "sudden shift to a military option," and here he may have been reflecting genuine confusion caused by Polgar's doctored intelligence analyses; as Frank Snepp notes, there had never been any hint of reciprocity in Hanoi's pronouncements. <sup>294</sup> A question about the breakdown of the attempt to achieve a measure of self-determination of the South Vietnamese people prompted Kissinger to review the negotiating history in his customary format of blaming all others for the outcome and skipping over the gigantic loopholes in the agreement. <sup>295</sup>

The photograph by UPI's Hugh van Es of a line of Vietnamese struggling up a long ladder toward an Air America helicopter perched atop an apartment house at 22 Gia Long Street became another of those images with differing symbolic significance for Vietnamese and Americans. The Vietnamese could focus on the people on the ladder fleeing their own country in shame. For Americans, who saw the image again and again on book dust jackets and on stage, the helicopter was a symbol of defeat in "the Vietnam war," although it had nothing to do with the American military.

There were those for whom the shame was so unbearable they decided at some point in the tragedy that engulfed them to kill themselves. Some did this out of despair, not of having honorably failed to grasp victory, but of having dishonorably embraced defeat. Thus there was Colonel Nguyên Huu Thong, commander of the 42nd Regiment of the 22nd Division, which had blocked the enemy at Binh Khe in the foothills on Route 19 until March 30 when it was

ordered to withdraw to Qui Nhon. Colonel Thong pleaded with the division commander not to withdraw. The division's 47th Regiment also fought a retreat from Tam Quan on the coast south to Phu Cat. The enemy had reached Phu Cat only hours earlier, and the body of the Regional Force commander still lay in the yard of the district office; rather than surrender, he had preferred suicide. A fierce battle ensued, in the course of which the 47th commander, Colonel Le Cau, committed suicide. When the remains of the division reached Qui Nhon they were engaged by the enemy already entrenched in the deserted city; they were evacuated by ships from a beach south of the city. Colonel Thong refused evacuation and committed suicide.<sup>296</sup>

Others did it because they knew that their lives would be worthless as soon as the Communists got their hands on them, such as the head of the Special Police Branch in Saigon, who shot himself.<sup>297</sup> General Phu, who had been captured once before, at Dien Bien Phu in 1954, took a dose of poison in the Cong Hoa hospital in Saigon, but not before he had signed and submitted a thick report (which has not yet resurfaced) blaming the debacle in the highlands on Thieu. Phu had not hesitated to leave the Americans in Pleiku to fend for themselves. Other ARVN general officers maintained polite, if not close, relations with their American counterparts up to the time they ended their lives. The ARVN's two senior officers in the Mekong Delta were among the latter; they shot themselves in the privacy of their offices or quarters after taking leave of their wives and children and commending themselves to their God. Others committed suicide in full public view, such as the police officer who shot himself in the head in Lam Son Square in front of the National Assembly in the center of Saigon.

The suicides of Major General Nguyên Khoa Nam and his deputy, General Le Van Hung, in Can Tho on the evening of April 30 and morning of May 1 were particularly dignified, as they had thrice been offered evacuation by their American adviser before he departed and each time refused, deciding not to abandon their men like so many others had done. These two were among those for whom honor counted heavily. Nam had been promoted to command of IV Corps from his command of the 7th Division, which he had built into one of the most effective in the ARVN. The general he replaced was the notoriously corrupt Lieutenant General Nguyên Vinh Nghi, who bought his position from Thieu and sold appointments to the highest bidder, and who had mastered the art of pleasing the Americans from Saigon who were mainly concerned with holding things in place, such as Wolfgang Lehmann, the deputy chief of mission.<sup>298</sup> Hung had a good reputation from having taken part in breaking the siege of An Loc in 1972.

Reading the portents from the rest of the country, and having little or no confidence in the capability of the military headquarters in Saigon, Nam and Hung made secret plans to take their fighting troops, along with weapons, ammunition, and food, and retreat into secure base areas in the delta that could be held against a superior enemy force, especially in the rainy season that was just beginning. As of April 29, the Communists had not yet occupied any of the

delta's 16 provincial capitals, main roads were still open, and the region was in a state of relative calm compared with the rest of the country, its people confident in their military leadership. Nam refused President Minh's pleas that he order his soldiers to lay down their arms.

The plan for organizing resistance bases fell through, however, because on April 30 President Minh's broadcast order to lay down arms conflicted with General Nam's order to soldiers to retain their arms and defend their positions, causing confusion. At the Can Tho radio station, infiltrators had already shown up. Law and order were starting to break down, and looting of the premises vacated by the Americans had begun. The plan had been kept secret from all but a few men, and so when the time came to implement it few knew what was expected of them.

That afternoon, after radioing orders to units around the delta, Hung called a meeting of his officers. Before it began, he received a delegation of townspeople who told him they knew he would never surrender but requested him not to order a counterattack against the Communists for fear the town would be heavily shelled in retaliation. Hung listened expressionless, and then he forced a smile and replied: "Please be at ease. I will try my very best to minimize the loss and damage for our people." When the group left, he turned to his wife and said: "I would rather die than to have my hands tied and watch the invasion of the Viet Cong." After that, he embraced his wife, weeping, and asked to see their children. They talked about the example of the mandarin Phan Thanh Gian, who had committed suicide out of shame for handing over the Cochinchinese provinces to France. He then addressed his assembled officers: "A commander who cannot protect his country, his position, then should die at his position for his country. He cannot abandon the people and the country and seek safety for himself. When I die, go back to your families, your wives and your children." He then saluted and shook hands with his men one by one and ordered all to leave. They stood still, and he had to push them out of his office one by one. He locked the door, and at 8:45 P.M. there was a shot. General Nam, a bachelor, shot himself early the next morning, after telephoning Hung's wife to offer his condolences.<sup>299</sup> For Catholics, to take their own lives was a sin, the only exception being that "if you are absolutely sure that the alternative would be a more painful death, then God will understand such an action."300 These men, like Phan Thanh Gian, decided to take their lives out of shame at handing over the forces under their command to the enemy; their shame was at betraying not their emperor, but a sovereign state that had ceased to exist long before, whose ideal they, as military officers, still respected.

Others in those last days let the Americans know the bitterness they felt. One of those was General Tran Van Hai, the commander of the 7th Division. For days, Hai told his CIA contact at his field headquarters, he had had reports of a growing concentration of the DRV's forces along the Cambodian side of the border. Air observers reported heavy equipment arriving round the clock. Many South Vietnamese felt that the CIA, because of its past activities, owed a special debt to them. "Where are your bombers?" Hai asked in his perfect English. "We have them in the open. Now is the time to get them. They are mar-

shaling in front of my men. I need help. Help me, CIA man." A few days later, the DRV task force crossed the border and began its drive on Saigon through the northern delta. The American found General Hai's field headquarters deserted, its building torn down and its tents vanished. All he could see on the ground were scars from the old structures; deserted bunkers ringed the area. Off in the distance, near the enemy's line of advance, he saw dust columns rising in the sky.<sup>301</sup> General Hai committed suicide and his officers faded into the landscape, like many others. Another suicide was General Le Nguyên Vy, commander of the 5th Division. Former Foreign Minister Tran Chanh Thanh, who had been an observer at Geneva in 1954 and had attended President Kennedy's funeral in 1963, fearing to fall into the hands of the Communists whose ranks he had deserted years earlier, took poison. Nor were suicides or simple disappearances that exceptional in the collapse of the South. Many ordinary Vietnamese could not bear the thought of leaving their country forever, and as they sailed down the Saigon River to its mouth and past Vung Tau, they threw themselves into the sea in despair.

The American reporters who remained in Saigon after the evacuation filed their reports by commercial cable, for the PTT cable office on Kennedy Square (renamed Hoa Binh ["Peace"] Square) continued to function with only brief interruption, whereas the direct communication links overseas from their offices were cut. At first there was some uncertainty about accreditation procedures. Peter Arnett and George Esper of the Associated Press sought out General Tra at the Independence Palace, but a guard told them the general was not there and they could wait for another general coming out. The general came out, but they were asked to stand back 10 feet and let their interpreter talk to him. The general looked tough. He never looked at them. "I'm sorry," he said to the interpreter, "I do not speak their language," and walked to a waiting jeep. 302 A few days later the newsmen were invited to attend a cocktail party at the palace celebrating the victory. They found Le Duc Tho there, and he burst into laughter when a newsman told him the only person missing seemed to be Henry Kissinger.<sup>303</sup>

On May 28, Dobrynin gave Brent Scowcroft an oral confidential message from Hanoi saying that "the leadership of Vietnam favors the establishment of good relations with the United States." The message said: "There is no animosity toward the United States in Vietnam and they seek the same from the American side." On June 3, Pham Van Dong said the DRV would normalize relations if the United States recognized the "national rights" of the DRV and the PRG and seriously implemented the spirit of Article 21 of the Paris agreement. A State Department spokesman characterized Dong's statement as "ironic." The question of whether to establish diplomatic relations with Hanoi was under study.<sup>304</sup> A few weeks later, Scowcroft gave Dobrynin the reply to his oral message from Hanoi, saying that Washington also favored good relations, that there was no hostility in principle toward Vietnam, and that the United States proposed to proceed on this basis in all relations between the two nations.<sup>305</sup>

Kissinger continued to hide the commitments President Nixon had made to President Thieu prior to the signing of the Paris agreement from the knowledge of the Congress. The White House spokesman, Ron Nessen, had referred on April 9 to "confidential exchanges" between Nixon and Thieu. The next day, Senator John Sparkman of Alabama, chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, wrote to President Ford pointing out that such exchanges appeared to contradict previous statements by top administration officials before the committee and requesting that Ford furnish the committee "the text of all understandings, undertakings or similar statements made by President Nixon, Dr. Kissinger, or other U.S. officials relative to the cease-fire agreement or subsequent conferences concerning that agreement. Ton April 16, Senator John C. Stennis, chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, wrote to Ford requesting that "all documentation which has not formally been presented to the Congress and bears on the nature and extent of the U.S. commitment to South Vietnam" be provided to the committee.

The curtain was briefly lifted when Nguyên Tien Hung, who had rescued the letters from the palace as Saigon was collapsing, made two of them public for the first time in a press conference in Washington on April 30. On May 2, Senator James Abourezk, chairman of a subcommittee of the Senate Judiciary Committee, wrote to Ford citing the two Nixon letters and requesting that "any other material or information related to this correspondence and its substance which is in your possession be transmitted to the subcommittee."309 Senator Clifford P. Case of New Jersey, one of the co-authors of the legislation that banned all military action in Indochina as of August 15, 1973, expressed surprise that the administration had not informed the Congress that the legislation would nullify the commitments in the Nixon-Thieu letters. 310 Kissinger drafted a reply to Sparkman that stated "I can assure you that there are no secret assurances, agreements or commitments binding the United States to act in any way to enforce observance of the Agreement by all parties."311 Ford's letter rejected Sparkman's request on grounds that diplomatic exchanges between the United States and the Republic of Vietnam should remain confidential within the Executive Branch, but it did not contain the flat denial of the facts Kissinger had drafted, an obvious lie.312 Sparkman urged Ford to reconsider.313 Senator Mike Mansfield of Montana wrote to Ford in his capacity of acting chairman of the committee on June 2, saying the committee, after discussion, had "decided to make a complete study of all aspects of the commitments question" and reiterating the request for all pertinent documents.<sup>314</sup> In replying to Senator Stennis, Ford wrote that it was considered in the national interest to maintain the conditions necessary to the viability of the Paris agreement and "our policy and our actions in Indochina were determined by this view of our interests, and not by commitments or assurances given only in private documents."315

The matter was apparently closed when the White House Counsel's Office determined that "the issue which the committee has raised in seeking this correspondence of the Nixon Administration is one of the central issues of the ongoing litigation." The office was barred from releasing the documents without Nixon's consent, who was reported to be opposed and likely to challenge any plan to do so in court.<sup>316</sup>

## PHNOM PENH FALLS TO THE KHMER ROUGE

In Phnom Penh, mail was still delivered on April 14. The employee at the PTT who sent foreign correspondents' dispatches by cable excused himself to go and take care of his family, some members of which had been wounded by shellfire. With the forces of the National United Front of Kampuchea closing in on the capital, at 7:30 A.M. on April 17 the military command in Phnom Penh ordered all its troops to surrender at 9 A.M. The acting president of the Khmer Republic, General Sak Sutsakhan, called the ministry of information with instructions for the surrender to be broadcast. However, he was told by the only person at the ministry, expatriate technician Henri Becker, that all the Cambodian employees had left. Becker raised a white flag over the ministry and dismissed the building's sentries. Because of its central location, the building served as a sort of meeting point that day between the victors and the vanquished, and Becker witnessed the surrender of several high-ranking generals and officials before he joined other foreigners at the French Embassy.

Ambassador to Washington Um Sim told the National Press Club on April 11 that perhaps the Cambodians had been naive to put their trust in the Americans. The next day, Ambassador John Gunther Dean and the remaining staff of the embassy departed aboard Marine helicopters. A few high-ranking Cambodian figures had departed with the Americans. Among those who had passed up the evacuation, however, were Prime Minister Long Boret and Prince Sirik Matak. Long Boret spent the last hours writing and rewriting an appeal for peace that was sent out by the radio of the International Committee of the Red Cross to Geneva for transmission to Peking by the Swiss foreign ministry. "He was a man without malice and a higher standard of morality than the members of the unscrupulous circus around him," Jon Swain later wrote in an appreciation. Sirik Matak wrote to Dean:

Dear Excellency and friend,

I thank you very sincerely for your letter and your offer to transport me towards freedom. I cannot, alas, leave in such a cowardly fashion.

As for you and in particular your great country, I never believed for a moment that you would have this sentiment of abandoning a people which has chosen liberty. You have refused us your protection and we can do nothing about it. You leave and it is my wish that you and your country will find happiness under the sky.

But mark it well that, if I shall die here on the spot and in my country that I love, it is too bad because we are all born and must die one day. I have only committed this mistake in believing in you, the Americans.

Please accept, Excellency, my dear friend, my faithful and friendly sentiments.

Sirik Matak<sup>319</sup>

Long Boret surrendered to the Khmer Rouge soldiers who had entered Phnom Penh as the uncontested power-holders in the National United Front of Kampuchea. Sirik Matak was handed over by the French consul who had bravely given him asylum at the embassy; the Khmer Rouge knew he was in the embassy and threatened violence. Also taken away from refuge in the embassy were some 150 followers of FULRO and their veteran leader, Y Bham Enuol. In all, some 80 persons and their wives were executed almost immediately. Having thus disposed of the arch-traitors, as they were referred to, the Khmer Rouge proceeded to empty Phnom Penh and the other towns in Cambodia of their inhabitants. The population, weary of the long war, had welcomed the Khmer Rouge soldiers, who were mostly young, as liberators. An airlift of rice in chartered American planes had kept Phnom Penh's swollen population alive for the final six months of the war. Now they were turned out into the countryside.

Saloth Sar would not enter the city until April 24, in time for the victor's celebratory three-day "special national congress," but he kept a low profile, following Ho's example in August 1945. Radio Phnom Penh, back on the air, listed those attending the congress as 125 representatives of people's organizations, 112 military delegates, 20 representatives of the Buddhist clergy, and 54 representatives of the National United Front of Kampuchea and the Royal Government of National Union (RGNU). It was Khieu Samphan who announced the unanimous decision of the congress that Prince Sihanouk, "a great, high-ranking patriotic personality," would remain head of state. However, there was as yet no sign of Sihanouk or of many of the non-Khmer Rouge ministers of the RGNU. Angkar Loeu would continue to give the orders in peace as in war. The liberation was to be a real revolution, not a restoration.

In Peking, a happily smiling Sihanouk and his consort, Monique, dressed in a formal gown, toasted the good news from Phnom Penh with champagne; he proclaimed himself overjoyed at the victory.<sup>321</sup> The occasion was dampened only by the illness of Queen Kossamak, who died a few days later with her son at her bedside.

Sihanouk sent an indignant message to the France-Cambodia Association in Paris denying press reports that refugees arriving at Cambodia's borders were in poor health. The government had taken "all humanitarian measures," he said. This was demonstrated by the fact that "these so-called mistreated, sick and dying refugees arrived safe and sound, in good health and adequately nourished, at the Cambodian frontier." He said: "Among the so-called dying there were some who were even able to take their poodles with them and these too were in perfect health." Although he no longer had the services of his French press aides, Sihanouk continued to correct what he perceived as erroneous views about Cambodia in the world press.

The Americans had departed from Cambodia and South Vietnam, but there was one final incident that demonstrated to the Indochinese the priorities of American policy at this point. The RGNU, with a view to enforcing Cambodia's claims to the offshore islands in the Gulf of Thailand, which had been a principal cause of tension between Prince Sihanouk and successive Saigon re-

gimes, began halting ships passing through Cambodia's territorial waters as soon as it took power in Phnom Penh. One of these ships, the American container vessel Mayaguez, en route to the Thai port of Sattahip with general cargo (no arms or ammunition), was halted and boarded on May 12 when it passed six and one half miles off Poulo Wai and was forced to anchor off Koh Tang. Its crew of 39 were taken off the ship and to the mainland.

When President Ford and Kissinger learned of this, they immediately set in motion military operations to free the ship and its crew. Marines were helicoptered in to Koh Tang, where they met with unexpected resistance by the Khmer Rouge garrison. Eight out of nine helicopters were shot down or disabled and 15 Marines were killed, adding to the toll of 23 men killed in the crash of an Air Force helicopter staging from Nakhon Phanom to U Tapao. President Ford ordered air strikes not only against the Khmer Rouge on Koh Tang but also against Sihanoukville (Kompong Som) and the naval base at Ream on the mainland. Just before the first wave of planes came over, the royal government's minister of information and propaganda, Hu Nim, issued a lengthy statement explaining the detention.

> Regarding the Mayaguez ship, we have no intention of detaining it permanently and we have no desire to stage provocations. We only wanted to know the reason for its coming and to warn it against violating our waters again. This is why our coast guard seized this ship. Their goal was to examine it, question it and make a report to higher authorities who would then report to the Royal Government so that the Royal Government could itself decide to order it to withdraw from Cambodia's territorial waters and warn it against conducting further espionage and provocative activities.<sup>323</sup>

Thereupon, the Cambodian authorities released the crew, sending them out in a Thai fishing boat flying large white sheets tied to long poles. Fortythree minutes after the captain of a destroyer at the scene reported the crew were safe, the planes hit, bombing a French-built oil refinery near Sihanoukville that had been out of use for years. Several casualties were reported by the Cambodians. The crew escaped unharmed from the action, and the ship was saved.

Kissinger was determined to prevent having American hostages fall again into the hands of the Indochinese Communists; he told reporters he feared their making public ransom demands and thereby freezing their position.<sup>324</sup> For the South Vietnamese, however, the American response to what the Americans touted as the "crisis" over the Mayaguez was further objective evidence of how low they and their country ranked in American priorities. Having studiously ignored a humiliating defeat suffered by the South Vietnamese army, on a scale comparable to that of the French in May 1940, the Americans had sent in their planes to force the release of 39 civilian crew members of an American merchant ship in violation of territorial waters. Had they seen press reports that President Ford was weighing air strikes by B-52s, the South Vietnamese would have found the disproportion even more bizarre.<sup>325</sup>

## THE LAO COMMUNISTS SURFACE

There were no provisions in either the Vientiane agreement or its protocol prohibiting inflammatory propaganda. While the Vientiane government attempted to maintain objectivity in its broadcasts, the Pathet Lao radio did not restrain itself from broadcasting accusations that the "ultra-reactionary rightists," and especially the "special forces," were sabotaging the Vientiane agreement and protocol. Souvanna Phouma could do little but complain to Souphanouvong about these attacks, which were completely at variance with the national reconciliation he sought to bring about. But in fact the propaganda output was entirely under the control of the party.

Immediately after the signing of the Vientiane agreement the rhetoric from the party leaders became more undisguised than usual. On the party's eighteenth founding anniversary on March 22, 1973, Kaysone Phomvihane, identifying himself as the general secretary of the Lao People's Revolutionary Party, sent a message of gratitude to Soviet Communist Party Secretary-General Leonid Brezhnev. He also sent a message to Vietnam Workers' Party Secretary-General Le Duan stating that the LPRP will "spare no effort to nurture the special relationship between the two parties and two peoples." 326

In early November, with the skies clear of prowling American aircraft, Le Duan journeyed to the Front's headquarters in Sam Neua, where he was received by Kaysone and Souphanouvong with all the pomp and circumstance of a state visitor, complete with motorcade in an open car, a flag-raising, and a guard of honor. The schedule was heavily military in nature, as one would expect: visits to various army units, speeches about victories. Le Duan emphasized the "special relationship" between Vietnam and Laos (and Cambodia), which was not just a stray and poetic phrase but was a watchword of the party center's agenda, a theme reinforced by editorials in *Nhan Dan.*<sup>327</sup>

The Front's representatives on the JCIA eluded any action on verifying foreign troop withdrawals by placing the item at the bottom of the agenda of JCIA meetings when they could not avoid the Vientiane side from raising it for discussion. Then, one minute after discussion had begun, they said no time remained and adjourned the meeting. On the Vientiane side, all American military personnel who had been posted at the regional commands, mainly for logistical purposes, were withdrawn, as were some 1,850 Thai "volunteer" troops. 328

The DRV ignored the deadline for withdrawal of foreign troops from Laos in June 1974. It was also reported that the DRV had its advisers in Vientiane. On April 11, 1975, Defense Minister Sisouk na Champassak told the British military attaché, Colonel J. P. Cross, that he knew there were 27 DRV political advisers, recently arrived from Hanoi, in the Pathet Lao camp at Ban Dong Nasok where the neutralization troops lived, not far from Wattay. In the circumstances where control of the movement of men and supplies into Vientiane aboard Soviet transport aircraft under the neutralization scheme was lackadaisical at best, anything was possible. Sisouk said that if the advisers remained, all was lost. 329

On March 27, 1975, the Front, backed by DRV troops, launched a strong attack against the defenders of the road junction of Sala Phou Khoun, as usual

claiming an infringement of the cease-fire by the "ultra-rightist reactionaries." Vang Pao reinforced the small Laotian force with 1,000 of his own men. Preparations for another attack continued night after night. In reply to reports on the situation, the government in Vientiane promised to send an ICC team to investigate. Shortly after midnight on May 5 the Communists attacked all 20 positions at Sala Phou Khoun simultaneously with artillery and tanks. The defenders, who had no artillery or tanks, withdrew. The Communists then drove south on Route 13 as far as Muong Kassy. The cease-fire had been violated massively. Souvanna Phouma, wishing to avoid further bloodshed, reprimanded Vang Pao for ordering his T-28s to launch air strikes against the attackers. The fighting was halted for the moment on May 10 by the intervention of a joint JCIA team.

Meanwhile, a campaign of intimidation against rightist members of the government and officers of the armed forces was gathering momentum in Vientiane. Operating under the umbrella of a coalition of 21 "organizations standing for peace and national concord," the demonstrators used inflation and other grievances to mobilize support in the name of carrying out the 18-point program adopted by the NPCC. Souvanna Phouma tried at first to ban the demonstrations but later gave in and sided with their aims.

The May 1 holiday provided the pretext for the largest demonstration to date. Then on May 8 some 3,000 young people and teachers carrying placards and chanting staged a march past the American Embassy. Laotian and American guards could not get the gate shut, and several demonstrators climbed the fence. A few stones were thrown and an attempt was made to lower the flag, but a student leader sitting on the fence and Front policemen armed with rifles shouted at the demonstrators to move on, and they obeyed. Five cabinet members resigned after this, including Defense Minister Sisouk na Champassak and Finance Minister Ngon Sananikone, who had both been pilloried by Radio Pathet Lao broadcasts as "ultra-reactionary rightists." The embassy began a rapid reduction of its personnel. Souvanna Phouma delayed accepting the resignations, whereupon Sisouk's Front deputy, Khammouane Boupha, following the procedures that had been stipulated in the protocol, announced he was defense minister and proceeded to issue orders grounding the air force and halting all movement of troops and military equipment. After a cabinet meeting had discussed the issue, it was announced that Souvanna Phouma would assume the posts of those who had resigned until the posts could be filled with new candidates.

Demonstrators also took over the offices of the U.S. Agency for International Development in some provincial centers, briefly detaining some Americans. Chargé d'Affaires Christian A. Chapman protested and complained about the lack of protection from police forces. American personnel left the towns of Pakse and Savannakhet just as Front soldiers in tanks arrived in the towns to peacefully take over law enforcement duties from rightists who claimed to be welcoming them. A government spokesman reported that Laos and the United States had agreed to review the 1951 agreement that provided for AID's program and to end all AID activities outside Vientiane. On June 26, AID closed its mission. Chapman, however, decided to maintain the embassy.<sup>331</sup> This decision was approved in Washington.<sup>332</sup>

Souvanna Phouma put the best face on these events. "It is necessary at some point to have one nation, a unified country and not separate sets of territories," he said. "We must integrate the army, we must integrate the bureaucracy." 333 With the departure of many high-ranking officials, individuals with innocuoussounding titles such as "chef de cabinet" appeared suddenly to be wielding great power. The first reports of seminars for civil servants to rid them of "their erroneous conceptions" were reported at the beginning of June. Officers of the royal army of the rank of major and above were invited to attend re-education courses at seminar camps in Sam Neua. The Lao Presse daily news bulletin, which now reflected the LPF point of view, reported that the Front had offered an evening of merrymaking to royal army officers at Xieng Khouang "in an atmosphere of extreme cordiality" prior to their moving to Sam Neua. The government postponed indefinitely elections that had been due to be held before July 10. Asked whether events showed that Laos had turned against the United States, Prince Souvanna Phouma responded: "But not at all, not at all, not at all. We are not at all against the United States. We ask to keep the friendship of the American government. Whether it be myself or the Pathet Lao, it is all the same."334 Phoumi Vongvichit, Souk Vongsak, and Soth Phetrasy left Vientiane at the beginning of July and were replaced in their government posts by younger Front cadres with a reputation for ideological firmness. A crackdown on foreign newsmen and foreign newspapers began. On August 23, the Front completed its seizure of local power with the takeover of the Vientiane city administration by a revolutionary committee.

As 1975 drew to a close, signs multiplied that the revolution in Laos was speeding up. In October, the NPCC established new screening procedures for electoral candidates that effectively eliminated all persons who had not supported the Front. The NPCC also announced that elections to the new National Assembly would be held on April 4, 1976. In November, village and district elections were held in the "new zone," that is, the former Vientiane side zone. Voting was compulsory for all over the age of 18, and all candidates required endorsement by the Front. At the village level, people's committees had already taken over the duties of the village chiefs. The elections were to replace appointed village and district chiefs. The impression given was that these elections were preparatory to the National Assembly elections. The stage was set for the Communists' coup d'état.

Suddenly, in the last week of November, the NPCC and PGNU were convoked to meet at Vieng Sai, the Front headquarters in Sam Neua. While staged demonstrations in Vientiane demanded the end of the PGNU and the abolition of the monarchy, the PGNU and the NPCC endorsed the decision, already taken by the party, to proceed in this sense, "in response to the aspirations of Lao nationalities throughout the country." Souvanna Phouma and Souphanouvong flew to Luang Prabang and obtained the abdication of King Savang Vatthana. Returning to Vientiane, they attended a secret and hastily convened National Congress of People's Representatives, which met in the gymnasium of the former American school in Vientiane on December 1 and 2. There, the

abdication was accepted, and the leaders of the new regime, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, were announced, with Souphanouvong as president and Kaysone, who appeared in Vientiane for the first time, as prime minister. 335 The sovereignty reposed in the throne for 600 years was at an end. The veteran Thomas J. Corcoran, who had replaced Chapman as chargé d'affaires, gained the distinction of witnessing the Communist takeover of two of the capitals of Indochina (Hanoi and Vientiane).<sup>336</sup>

Following the pattern of 1945, the former head of state was appointed adviser to the president, and Souvanna Phouma was appointed adviser to the government. Peace having been restored, obviating the need for further investigations of violations of the cease-fire, the ICC departed, leaving behind mountains of unpaid bills.

## THE AMERICANS RENEGE ON THEIR COMMITMENT TO THE MEO

In 1971, the DRV had introduced into the Laos war, courtesy of the Soviet cochairman of the Geneva conference, 130-mm. artillery pieces. This fearsome weapon, with an effective range of 30 kilometers and great mobility, put all of the Meo territory within range of DRV and Pathet Lao positions. The Meo had nothing, except air power, to counter it, and with dug-in firing positions defended by anti-aircraft guns, it was extremely difficult to put the 130s out of action.

Vang Pao's army, over the years of war, had gradually grown younger, until by 1971 he was drafting 12- and 13-year-olds for military duty. With these recruits, Vang Pao had managed to keep the enemy at bay. The toll on the Meo had been heavy. An estimated 17,000 Meo soldiers had been killed, and uncounted numbers had been wounded. Perhaps as many as 50,000 civilian Meo had been killed or wounded.<sup>337</sup> When the cease-fire went into effect on February 22, 1973, they immediately lost the precious American tactical air support they had been able to call upon when attacked. The Raven program, under which American forward air controllers had supported Vang Pao's troops, also ended. Vang Pao henceforth had to depend on his own T-28 pilots and forward air controllers in case of need. With the deadline for withdrawal of foreign troops from Laos in June 1974, Air America and other civilian contractors that had flown transport for the royal army withdrew. The entire military region now depended on a single Royal Lao Air Force C-47 transport for all airdrops. The CIA also began to draw down its personnel with the Meo. The Americans who had helped Vang Pao defend Long Cheng against the North Vietnamese siege in 1972 were rapidly disappearing, leaving Vang Pao and the Meo in danger.

The danger stemmed from two factors. First, there was only an imprecise cease-fire line, meaning that nibbling efforts by the Communists would have to be prevented by effective counteraction, which threatened the cease-fire. With the government in Vientiane prioritizing the maintenance of the cease-fire, this risked placing Vang Pao in an invidious position. Second, the Communists had repeatedly demanded the dismantling of Vang Pao's irregular guerrilla forces. To forestall this demand, the defense ministry had integrated some 18,000 of these irregulars into the royal army in September 1972. But the rest of the Meo,

with their families, who constituted a people's army under Vang Pao and who had the great merit of holding the Meo clans together, found themselves in limbo with the advent of the cease-fire. There was also the recognition by all concerned that Vang Pao himself had a figuratively high price on his head.

The Americans had come to the aid of the Meo in January 1961 with the CIA's program of furnishing arms and ammunition, run out of CIA headquarters in Washington. Sullivan might argue in a congressional hearing in Washington in 1969 that the Americans had no formal commitment to the Meo, but that was not the way it was perceived in Laos. The Meo felt they had a commitment from the Americans, and that is why they sacrificed themselves willingly to snatch downed American fliers to safety under fire from the Pathet Lao and North Vietnamese. Americans in Laos, also, felt that there existed a strong American bond to the Meo by virtue of the fact that they had irrevocably and of their own free will chosen sides in the war. Probably no group of nationalists in Indochina was as closely tied as allies to the Americans as were the Meo. Nor had the moral commitment ended with the cease-fire and the Americans' departure. The CIA agents who had contracted with the Meo in 1961 had argued that because of their exposure the Meo needed a contingency plan lest the North Vietnamese push hard in Laos. The suggestion was that the Meo needed to be able to retreat to the west into Sayaboury Province to avoid being overrun. 338 But no such plans had been drawn up, even in October 1972 when the Front demanded the disbanding of the irregulars in the first draft of their negotiating proposal. This clear signal that the Meo were being targeted for special treatment was ignored. The same signal was repeated in the Vientiane agreement and in the protocol, but still nothing was done.

The Meo irregulars were still holding the Long Cheng valley and the surrounding area, inhabited by almost 200,000 people. With the cease-fire in effect, there was still the possibility of organizing a safe evacuation of the Meo from what was left of their homeland in north-central Laos and allowing them to establish themselves peacefully elsewhere in Laos, or in Thailand. The evacuation could have been done overland or by air, as it had been done at Saravane in 1970 using C-130s. The funds provided by the CIA to ease the transition from war to peace, funds mainly to support economic development projects, such as those under the Xieng Khouang Development Corporation, would have made a new start possible before this direct American support ceased at the request of the coalition government and before the AID program was terminated. Where they were in 1973, the Meo could not resume their former way of life; most of their villages had been occupied by the Communists, and as long as they did not make their peace with the Pathet Lao they could not return to them. Moreover, many of the soldiers in Vang Pao's force had never farmed and knew only rice that tumbled out of airplanes. Contrary to moving the people out of Long Cheng, however, investments were being made in 1973 and 1974 to fix the people in Long Cheng, in the form of public schools, hospitals and clinics, open-air markets, farmer cooperatives, water systems, and roads linking Long Cheng to the Vientiane plain.

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With the cease-fire, the Meo were tarnished with the reputation they had earned as warriors, and their position became one of outcasts. They could not look to the coalition government in Vientiane to defend them against the threat of reprisal that faces all partisans in war or even to stand up for their civic rights as citizens of Laos, although their loyalty to the king had been exemplary. They were perceived as a threat by the Pathet Lao. The sharpest reminder of this came on May 6, 1975, when the Pathet Lao broadcast an ominous warning under the title "The U.S.-Vang Pao Special Forces Must be Completely Cleaned Up."

When talking about the so-called special forces, one must be fully aware who is responsible for organizing them and what their purpose is. It is the U.S. imperialists, through the CIA's HQ-333 in Udon Thani, Thailand, who formed, trained, armed, and commanded these special forces. They are the U.S. imperialists' tools in interfering in and invading our country. During the war, their U.S. masters considered them their elite combat forces. As a matter of fact, they were the main perpetrators of the barbarous, notorious crimes against the Lao people. . . .

According to the Vientiane agreement and its protocol, which have been in effect for over two years, the special forces organized by the U.S. imperialists in Laos should have been completely disbanded. The obstinate reactionary clique on the Vientiane side—the sponsors of the special forces—must have realized this. But the clique has insisted on illegally maintaining these forces. The Patriotic Armed Forces, however, have no fear of this handful of special forces. We can wipe them out any time. That is not our primary goal, we are constrained to repeat, because we want to preserve the spirit of national concord called for in the peace accords. However, if we can no longer tolerate the sinister acts of the reactionary clique, the Patriotic Armed Forces must exercise our right of self-defense and duly punish or wipe them out.<sup>339</sup>

Even when the situation began deteriorating in Vientiane at the beginning of 1975, the Americans wanted Vang Pao to stay in Long Cheng as a barrier to a Pathet Lao move on Vientiane. <sup>340</sup> By the last week of April, the Vietnamese were so close that their communications were being picked up by CB radio in Long Cheng. Vang Pao himself never seems to have been in danger of being left by the CIA to fall into Communist hands. But only after the May 6 broadcast did some individuals begin to give thought to evacuating the rank and file from Long Cheng. By that time, the Communist offensive along Route 13 had cut off any escape to the west. Vang Pao's CIA contact who stayed with the general in Long Cheng was Jerrold Barker Daniels, a veteran hand. Responsibility for the Meo program lay with the East Asia Division of the CIA, whose chief in May 1975 was Theodore G. Shackley, Jr., who had once served as station chief in Vientiane and who had been awarded the Order of the Million Elephants by King Savang Vatthana.

The final straw for Vang Pao was a meeting he attended in Vientiane with Souvanna Phouma, Defense Minister Sisouk na Champassak, and the other generals. He told them they faced the choice of fighting the Communists or

leaving. When he asked for permission to fight they told him they would neither fight nor leave. Vang Pao replied that he, who had fought the Communists for 30 years, could not live with them. They told him if he did not like it he could quit. Vang Pao pulled off his stars and quit. From there he went to the defense ministry for a final meeting with Sisouk, who, in one of his last acts before resigning, sent a planeload of small arms and ammunition from Savannakhet to Long Cheng.

As a last resort, Vang Pao appealed to King Savang to order him to defend the country. The last Americans had fled from Cambodia and soon, no doubt, that fellow Sihanouk, who was on good terms with the Communists, would be back in Phnom Penh running the show. Kissinger's peace agreement in Vietnam had collapsed like a house of cards, and the Americans had not reacted. The CIA had abandoned the Meo. From all the signs Savang could read, the Americans had proved to be as fickle friends as the French had always warned him they would be. What was the point of prolonging the slaughter? He replied: "Vang Pao, your people are dying. So many have died already. I don't want to see your people die any more. I will not give you what you want." "

By the time Prince Mangkra Souvanna Phouma, the prime minister's son and an air force officer, paid a visit to Long Cheng on May 7, Vang Pao appears to have made up his mind to evacuate his high-ranking military officers to safety. The valley was beginning to fill up with people who had heard about the battle at Sala Phou Khoun and feared an attack on Long Cheng itself. Vang Pao talked in a disorganized manner to Mangkra about the need for an air evacuation while the valley could still be defended. But already it was becoming apparent that there were no means on hand to evacuate more than a few, and they would be the officers and their families. Still, there were no orders to officers in the field, and great uncertainty about Vang Pao's intentions prevailed. Much to Mangkra's relief, Vang Pao made no objection to receiving without resistance his designated successor as Military Region 2 commander, General Chao Monivong.<sup>342</sup>

On May 8, a Meo at the CIA base at Udorn received a call over the CB radio from Daniels, who told him to ask the CIA men to try to locate a C-130 to evacuate all the military commanders from Long Cheng. The next day the first planeload of Vang Pao's relatives arrived at Udorn by the Royal Lao Air Force C-47. By May 11, the airhead of the evacuation flights had been shifted, at Thai suggestion, to Nam Phong, which was some distance away from Udorn and in an unpopulated area. Vang Pao's six wives were saved. The first American aircraft, two C-46s belonging to Continental Air Services, arrived at Long Cheng on May 12, by which time the number of waiting people had increased. The people by the runway, who had been orderly before, now started scrambling to climb aboard the planes.

On May 13, Air Force Brigadier General Harry C. Aderholt, the commander of the military assistance command in Thailand, received a telephone call from Vientiane from someone who did not identify himself other than to say he worked for the embassy or AID. The caller told Aderholt the United States was abandoning the Meo at Long Cheng. He wanted Aderholt to get the

C-130s in to Long Cheng. Fortunately, Aderholt's organization had funds left over from the Cambodian evacuation. Aderholt called Bill Bird of Bird and Son, a contract carrier, who agreed if the flights were authorized. Aderholt got in touch with Howard K. Hartley, a retired Air Force lieutenant colonel who was the Bird and Son manager at Utapao, who informed him there was still one C-130 available from the company's contract flights in Cambodia. Finding a pilot required intercepting the last C-130 pilot, Matt Hoff, at Don Muang airport as he was about to take a commercial flight home. After Aderholt obtained permission in a telephone call to General George Brown, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in Washington, who told him "Whatever you think you can put in there to help the Hmong, you do it," Hoff teamed up with Hartley to fly the C-130 to Long Cheng.<sup>343</sup> (The term Hmong replaced Meo in 1977.)

Vang Pao was extracted from Long Cheng on May 14 according to a plan devised by Daniels to avoid causing pandemonium among the Meo at the sight of their leader departing. Wearing a floppy hat for disguise, Vang Pao was driven out of the valley in a jeep, as if going on an inspection tour, while Daniels drove his Ford Bronco to a rendezvous with a waiting Bird and Son helicopter for their fly-out. At an air strip some distance away they transferred to a Continental Air Services Porter for the flight to Thailand. Daniels left the radios in the CIA compound at Long Cheng switched on so as not to alert people nearby that anything was amiss. It was clear he had received no orders from his superiors to do anything but get Vang Pao and his officers to safety.

An estimated total of more than 2,500 Meo were taken to safety aboard the American evacuation flights, which the Americans shut down as soon as Vang Pao and Daniels were safe. About 40,000 ordinary people, including soldiers, village headmen, and civil servants, were left at Long Cheng, leaderless and without orders or instructions about how to care for themselves and their families. They feared the anger at being abandoned by their officers of the armed soldiers coming in from guard outposts all around. They feared the Pathet Lao. They had to fend for themselves. Escape would now be on foot. Many shed their uniforms, buried their weapons, and tried to fade away in the forest. But they left behind their shadows.

The CIA had never kept personnel or operational files at Long Cheng. Even the timesheets and payroll slips of CIA employees were worked out on temporary lists that were destroyed once payment was made. CIA communications were not filed, either; they were received by teletype, read, and destroyed in what the Meo called the "paper grinder." "Hot" files with names and numbers were never kept at the front line. However, the Military Region 2 personnel records were left intact. The major who had been in charge of the Honekhan Nung (Office #1/Personnel, located in Senathikan, a large wooden building within the Sky compound at the head of the airstrip) in Long Cheng since the early 1960s never received orders to destroy the files when the end came. He explained that Chao Monivong was coming to Long Cheng under orders from the PGNU to replace Vang Pao. The general was a personal friend of Vang Pao's and the orderly change-over was not hostile, so there appeared to be no reason to destroy the files, an

action that would have made further operations difficult. The major said that when he left the Honekhan Nung for the last time he locked all the filing cabinets and took the keys with him. He did not leave in the air evacuation, but stayed in Long Cheng for several days to see what would happen. Chao Monivong was not with the advance troops that entered Long Cheng in the government's name and came only a day or two later. The new troops made it clear that the major and his staff would not be able to return to work without reeducation at a seminar camp first. The major then left Long Cheng, started walking to Vientiane, and crossed the Mekong into Thailand. The locks on the filing cabinets were broken open by the new troops.<sup>344</sup> Duplicate personnel files were kept in the offices of the eight Groupes Mobiles (GMs) based in Long Cheng. These were located in various places in the Long Cheng valley. In the case of at least one of these GMs, the personnel records were burned in time on the initiative of individual soldiers. The personnel records of Hmong soldiers who were transferred to the royal army during the period from 1973 to 1975 had previously been sent to the ministry of defense at Phone Kheng outside Vientiane, where they were probably taken over intact by the Pathet Lao. 345 After the completion of the Communist takeover in Vientiane, the files were transferred from Long Cheng to the interior ministry, where they were to serve the new authorities as a who's who of Vang Pao's secret army and of their "crimes against the people" for years to come.

## **Looking Back**

The South Vietnamese nationalists in January 1973 had to make the best they could of an armistice agreement that provided them with an unverified cease-fire that left the troops of the DRV in the South and deprived them of exclusive sovereignty over the half of their country they had inherited in 1954. Because they held tenaciously to their right to order the affairs of the South in accordance with the rule of law, and because they believed in non-violence, they entered into political negotiations with the Provisional Revolutionary Government of the fictitious Republic of South Vietnam, as provided for in the Paris agreement. President Thieu's refusal to enter negotiations with the PRG would have offended the Buddhists, a great many Catholics, and a wide segment of the South Vietnamese public at large and left him in an untenable position.

Here, then, the stage seemed set for the great political contest that many had been waiting for for years while the war raged out of control. The two delegations were charged with establishing the institutions and working out the procedures called for in the Paris agreement that would embody the right of the South Vietnamese people to self-determination in the post-cease-fire period. What happened? The constructive program put forth by the Saigon delegation for establishing the three-segment body and organizing elections according to a fixed timetable was totally obfuscated by the PRG delegation. It was clear from the latter's raising of extraneous issues and its stream of propaganda statements that it was stalling rather than engaging in negotiations. There was never any

doubt that the PRG was subject to the dictates of the party center in Hanoi, despite the fact that it included some non-Communist Southern nationalists. The party center, then, was not eager to meet the political challenge. The party center thwarted implementation of the political provisions of the Paris agreement. Kissinger's single-handed appropriation of the right, with Bunker's assent, to define what was meant by the self-determination of the South Vietnamese, bears the principal responsibility for the failure of implementation of the agreement he had arrived at, a failure that condemned the nationalists to go on fighting the Communists indefinitely.

Instead of a political contest, as subsequent events were to show all too well, the party center had decided on a last supreme act of violence by committing almost its entire army to a great offensive to annex the South by force of arms, something Pham Van Dong had ruled out as "stupid, criminal" in his conversation with Harrison Salisbury in January 1967. Preparations began immediately in January 1973. When exactly the final offensive would be launched, however, depended on one major factor: the DRV leaders' estimate of how the Americans would react to a military offensive.

Being confronted with a massive invasion of the South so soon after signature of the Paris agreement was not the way Kissinger had planned the "evolution" he talked about. We know what his plan was from one of Martin's cables, sent in the final days at the moment Minh looked ready to assume the presidency but had not yet done so, in reply to questions from Kissinger about what the future held for a continued American presence in Saigon. Kissinger, as Martin understood him, had wanted to leave South Vietnam "relatively quickly," and to leave it "intact." "Whether it made it in the long run would have then been up to their [South Vietnamese] efforts and would not have been seen as the direct responsibility of our abrogation of the agreements that we had undertaken," Martin wrote. Leaving South Vietnam "relatively quickly" after extricating American troops and POWs was Kissinger's way of ending the responsibility the United States had first assumed 19 years earlier and leaving the South Vietnamese to their own salvation.

In attempting to carry out his plan, Kissinger had had to engage the United States in new and yet heavier responsibilities he had not foreseen. The puppet government in Saigon was not proving as flexible as he had thought, and in order to compel it to sign the Paris agreement he had had to promise, in President Nixon's name, the most solemn form of commitment imaginable, to return with air power to rescue the South Vietnamese should the invasion of their country be renewed. Martin persuaded Thieu "to, in effect, accept a de facto partition" that left the western border area in the hands of the DRV troops, but the DRV leaders were meant "to put the war in the South on the back burner for an indefinite period and concentrate on the needed reconstruction in the North." The leaders of the DRV, however, angered by the refusal of the Congress to appropriate funds to pay the war reparations they considered they had been promised by Nixon and that Kissinger appears to have been willing to pay them as part of either a multilateral or a bilateral deal, judging the implications

(much better than did Saigon) of the congressional ban on further military action in Indochina in the summer of 1973, and seeing the stiffening of congressional resistance to continued funding of aid to the Saigon government in the summer of 1974, then opted to shorten the "decent interval" by attacking frontally. In doing so, they exposed for all to see the "direct responsibility" of the Americans for abrogation of the commitments they had given the Saigon government. In Marxist-Leninist jargon, they finally forced the American aggressors to give up the Saigon puppets. The point is not that Kissinger was not prepared to give up the Saigon government; he had been prepared to throw it to the wolves since the early negotiations. What upset his plan was that the United States was seen to be reneging on the administration's *public* commitments in full view; the reneging on the administration's *private* commitments emerged briefly only in the final days, and Kissinger was able to cover it up for the time being. To the extent that Kissinger had any view of American diplomacy beyond the next shuttle, the implications must have frightened him.

There are two indicators in the post–cease-fire period of the intentions of Nixon and Kissinger that merit special attention, in my judgment. First, after initial eagerness to meet with Le Duc Tho in May 1973 to "improve" the Paris agreement (he complained about Tho's dilatoriness in accepting the proposed meeting), Kissinger abandoned the effort to put the best face on the settlement he had made, declaring he was no longer going to involve himself in negotiations on political issues, the most important, and did not even avail himself of the mechanism of the Paris guaranteeing conference to try to win correct implementation of the agreement through international pressure on the DRV. He did not act until April 1975 under Article 7(b) of the act of that conference that allowed the conference to be reconvened upon a joint request of the United States and the DRV or of six of the signatories, a step which would have had wide support in January after the DRV's flagrant violation in capturing Phuoc Binh.<sup>347</sup>

The most telling evidence of his intentions, however, in my opinion, is the fact that Kissinger, who continued to control American policy on Indochina through his recommendations to Nixon's successor after Nixon left the scene, kept the promises Nixon had made to Thieu secret from President Ford and the Congress, thereby preventing their being cited in justification of further American involvement in Indochina. The fact that Ford came to the White House with a clean slate made it easier to renege on commitments given, just as Mendès-France, being his own foreign minister, could claim in June 1954 that he was not bound by undertakings entered into with the State of Vietnam by his predecessor, Bidault.<sup>348</sup>

Thus, in 1975, the American involvement in Indochina reached its dénouement. It was one that had not been expected by the Indochinese nationalists. With their survival at stake, they had counted on the United States for something other than abject withdrawal. Yet the evidence shows that from the spring of 1969 on, the interests of the Indochinese nationalists were sacrificed in a process for which the United States assumed responsibility. No deviation from this course was tolerated. Both the Executive and the Congress had the same

purpose in mind: to extricate the United States from Indochina as rapidly as possible. With influential members of the Congress exerting pressure to hasten the process, Nixon and Kissinger conducted the tortuous secret negotiations with the DRV. Although they succeeded in the October 20 draft agreement in unlinking the release of American POWs from the release by Saigon of POWs, an accomplishment that Kissinger celebrated in his "peace is at hand" statement, they were unable to free the American POWs without forcing the Saigon government to sign an agreement whose terms were seen at the time to mean the loss of South Vietnam. The 591 American POWs released by the DRV were therefore released in exchange for 17.5 million free Vietnamese. Even without counting some 3 million free Laotians and 7 million free Cambodians, mainly in Phnom Penh, this made it the largest ransom deal in world history.

In my opinion, this is the most accurate description in non-Marxist-Leninist terms of the deal that was struck in Paris in January 1973 between Nixon and Kissinger on the one hand and the Vietnamese Communists on the other. The Communists, of course, describe it as a victory for the liberation forces. It cannot be described as a peace agreement. Aside from a tenuous cease-fire, there was no renunciation of violence by the Communists, and this left the nationalists in a situation where they could less and less well defend themselves—Kissinger's "decent interval." There was no agreed-upon demobilization of the kind that was proposed by the Saigon government. This is not to suggest that either General Frederick Weyand, the last commander of MACV, who returned briefly to Saigon in the final days, or General Murray and his staff of Americans at the DAO who were dedicated to helping the South Vietnamese cope with the consequences of the "war in peace," ever condoned this cynical ransom deal; quite the contrary is the case, as testified to by Herrington.<sup>349</sup> Like General Delteil in 1954, they preserved their honor while following orders. Maior General Homer D. Smith, the last defense attaché, later wrote:

> I do not intend to reiterate the whys and wherefores of the failure of the United States to do what it might have done. The decisions were political. Suffice to say, we simply did not carry out our part of the bargain insofar as the Paris Peace Accords of January 1973 were concerned. The South Vietnamese, admittedly with many failings of their own, paid the ultimate price—their freedom as a people and their existence as a sovereign nation.350

President Thieu had talked about the Americans' "inhumanity toward an ally." In view of such a serious charge by a head of state against the top leaders of another state, it would be considered normal for some amends to be made. The American people made amends by accepting to their shores the refugees who fled not only South Vietnam but also Laos and Cambodia. It was an almost unprecedented display of generosity. What about President Nixon and Kissinger? Nixon later wrote "I sympathized with Thieu and shared his concerns," damning faint praise if ever there was such. 351 To my knowledge, Kissinger offered an apology to Thieu on two occasions. The first was in a letter in January

1980 in which he assured Thieu of his continuing regret for the outcome. But the letter was mainly a self-serving defense of his memoirs against the German news magazine *Der Spiegel*, which had published an interview with Thieu.<sup>352</sup> In the second case, Kissinger offered a personal and private, although indirect, apology. He asked Colonel Nguyên Huy Loi, who had been military adviser to the Paris delegation, when they met at the American Embassy in Bonn in December 1989 in the presence of Ambassador Vernon Walters, to tell Thieu he was sorry for what had happened. The apology was never delivered.<sup>353</sup>

To secure its share of the bargain with the Americans, the DRV paid a heavy price, to be sure, and one that would be paid long into the future. Several million dead in a long war, the forfeiting for at least another generation of all prospects for the development of a viable economy; these could be charged against the tiny brotherhood at the helm of the party center. The party's strategy, based on the NLF/PRG, had failed utterly to achieve victory by any other means than the force of arms. The all-wise party tried its best to rationalize the outcome. As Pham Van Dong commented to the French ambassador, Philippe Richer, at a diplomatic reception on April 30, 1975, "All's well that ends well." 354

For the Vietnamese, their experience of the Americans between 1969 and 1975 was a particularly cold-blooded form of colonialism, since it consisted of manipulating the Vietnamese against each other from afar, rather than engaging them at close quarters as the French had done. The politicians of the Third Republic had not called the Vietnamese tin-horn dictators. Even under the Fourth Republic, when the National Assembly had refused to grant the independence that was the only way out from an endless war, arguing that French soldiers had given their lives for the honor of France, not for that of Bao Dai, the leaders of French governments had never threatened the Vietnamese with assassination. Paris newspapers did not publish racist cartoons of the Vietnamese. If a mandarin was found to be corrupt, he was removed from his post by the administration of French Indochina after due process had been brought. The administration, and even the governor general himself, was certainly held accountable by Paris, but the government general, staffed by civil servants who often had a deep appreciation of Vietnamese culture, acted as a sort of buffer between ill-informed politicians in Paris and their subjects in Indochina.

With the Americans, the Vietnamese found that working relationships were best and smoothest at the lowest echelons. <sup>355</sup> As the Americans withdrew between 1969 and 1973, they left behind an embassy and a few high-level observers in field locations who sometimes offered advice and reassurance. But under Bunker and Martin the embassy came under the straightjacket imposed by Washington's colonialist policy. No one wanted to hear what the Vietnamese thought, and between a secretary of state who despised the effete Athenians in their life-and-death struggle with the Spartans and an ambassador who did not particularly like any Vietnamese, it should be little wonder that such relations went from bad to worse. The Executive and the Congress exerted themselves to enforce their will on a hapless government in Saigon that came to be viewed in the United States as incorrigibly corrupt and warlike. President Ford declared

the war over for Americans in a speech at Tulane University on April 23, while the South Vietnamese were still fighting to defend Saigon. One would have to go back to medieval times to find a similar historical example of an undefeated ally of 21 years deciding to desert on the field of battle.

But countries that embrace colonialism, as Nixon and Kissinger chose to do in order to extricate American troops and free the hostage POWs, also pay a price for this embrace. The price for the United States was heavy; it is not the subject of this book, but a few of the costs are mentioned in a brief epilogue.

# The Reorganization of Sovereignty in Indochina

The party had emerged triumphant over the nationalists in South Vietnam and Laos. The nationalists had let the party inherit sovereignty over Vietnam and Laos by default, as it were. It remained only for the party to reorganize the state institutions of these countries so as to give credence to its claim that the liberated people, guided by the all-wise, all-respected party, now exercised sovereignty on the model of the illegal and illegitimate government in Hanoi. In the process of doing this, it revealed itself to be a fountainhead of corruption on a scale never before seen in Indochina.

All the nationalist parties were abolished. The ruling class of the puppet regimes was sequestered for an extended period of re-education. Vietnam was reunified. At its Fourth Party Congress in December 1976, the Vietnam Workers' Party changed its name to the Vietnam Communist Party, a decision that in the heady atmosphere of victory represented a significant step in the direction of resurrecting the Indochinese Communist Party. Finally, steps were taken to bind Laos firmly to the party center in Hanoi.

The party's policy in the South was much the same one it had applied in the North when it took over in 1954: eradication of the middle class, nationalization of large enterprises, and a program of collectivization that effectively abolished the right of the individual to own private property. When the party's agents entered Saigon in 1975, they assumed that those who had money were either agents of the CIA or members of Thieu's political party; in either case, they were subject to immediate expropriation. An announcement by the Military Management Committee prohibited the printing of newspapers, periodicals, or books without the permission of the new authorities. Only two newspapers appeared, Saigon Giai Phong and Tin Moi. A list of proscribed books and publications associated with the old regime appeared. Those who had such materials in their possession, fearing to be arrested by the security agents, whose house searches were known to be thorough, quickly destroyed them. Thus books, diaries, letters, and other archival materials attesting to anything and everything to do with the South in 1954–1975 were consigned by their owners to bonfires, whose smoke hung in the warm spring air over the city. The owners of the many printing shops in the city were relieved to hand them over to the new authorities under requisition orders that at least freed them from the obligation to go on paying their idled workers

and the threat of being accused of exploiting the people. The ceremonies at which such transfers of ownership occurred were the occasion for lengthy speeches by delegates "elected" by the employees and by the representative of the General Workers' Confederation, a party front organization, often ending in the former managers of the enterprise being handcuffed and hauled off to prison on some charge of violating the rights of the workers.

As in Vietnam, the non-Communist parties in Laos disappeared, and the one-party regime of the Lao People's Revolutionary Party was installed. Those who did not like the prospect could leave. Some 350,000 were to avail themselves over the next few years of the opportunity to flee across the Mekong, leaving their homes and belongings, and in many cases their loved ones, behind. Only in Cambodia was the party's triumph forestalled, for the moment, by the ultra-nationalist Khmer Rouge, who continued to contest the Hanoi party center's hegemony by force of arms.

### Punishment of Traitors and Re-education of Puppets

The first step was to deal with the leaders of the old regimes who were considered by definition to be enemies of the people; measures to abolish the non-Communist nationalist parties were included. The PRG's non-Communist members also had to be dealt with. Both groups represented nothing in the new scheme of things. We possess ample documentary materials on the party's policy toward the ruling classes of the Republic of Vietnam and of the Kingdom of Laos and its implementation, thanks to first-hand accounts written by inmates of re-education camps, called seminar camps in Laos. By ruling class is meant not only the top leaders, who were relatively few in number, but more inclusively all those who held positions in the administration and the armed forces of those countries.

The party's practice of re-education, or cai tao in Vietnamese, dated back to the victory over the French, when a system of camps for detention and indoctrination of captured and arrested persons extended over North Vietnam. In the South after April 30, 1975, the system operated in a remarkably similar way, except that those subjected to it were exclusively Vietnamese. In the collapse, many South Vietnamese, especially younger ones, expressed the thought that the victors would be magnanimous toward the vanquished, on the supposition that they were all Vietnamese. Older people, those with memories of the North after 1954, warned such people not to get their hopes up. In fact, their hopes were disabused only gradually, which was also part of the policy. One thing they discovered was that there was no statute of limitations on re-education, ARVN officers who were shipped to camps near the China border found there prisoners who were Catholics from Quynh Luu District of Nghe An Province who had been sent there for inciting and participating in the rebellion in that district in 1953 and also prisoners from the French Expeditionary Corps incarcerated since 1954.356

On May 3, the Saigon–Gia Dinh Military Management Committee issued Order No. 1 regarding the registration of ARVN personnel. To implement the order, the committee issued a communiqué, dated May 7, that specified the

places and times at which various ranks were to report, register, and turn in their weapons. The places were usually schools, which had not operated since April 30, or police stations. Registration of the entire ARVN was to be completed by the end of the month. The committee also issued a separate communiqué stating similar requirements for the members of the police, personnel of government agencies down to the rank of deputy director, members of the National Assembly, and justices of the Supreme Court. Registration, while obligatory, was made to appear to be a simple bureaucratic routine that was in conformity with the PRG's announced policy of concord and reconciliation. On May 25, registration began for Vietnamese in charge of the central organs of the nationalist parties. This was followed by registration of all members of such parties and then for Vietnamese who had worked for commercial agencies, forms, banks, and foreign diplomatic missions.<sup>357</sup>

On June 10, the registration process was officially connected for the first time with re-education when the committee appealed to both civilian and military personnel to "reform themselves and to cleanse their wrongs in order to quickly become honest citizens, loving the fatherland and peace, and to return to the nation." On the same day the committee issued a communiqué on how this opportunity for self-reform was to be administered. All privates and NCOs, civilian employees of the ARVN, and lower-ranking civil servants were to undergo three days of instruction at designated places. They were afterward released, except for those who had served in the intelligence, Marine, Airborne, or Ranger corps.

On June 13, the committee announced that all ARVN officers from second lieutenant to major who had already registered would be expected to attend reform classes "in order to become genuine citizens." The details were provided a week later. Those subject to the order were to bring along paper, pencils, clothes, mosquito nets, food, and money for ten days' use. The committee issued similar orders for senior officers and civil servants, and they were told to bring 30 days' supplies. Particular attention was paid to persons with past connections with the outlawed political parties. When these persons presented themselves at the appointed places, they were asked questions not only about their family background but also about their professional and political activities, and their answers were noted down. Usually, they spent one or two nights sleeping on the floor of their school and then were loaded on buses or trucks and driven away, under military escort, at night. Their destination, they learned on arrival, was a camp that had been improvised in some rural buildings such as former military barracks, orphanages, and so on that offered some shelter from the elements. The whole, they observed, was encircled by a wall or barbed wire fence and was guarded by soldiers. These were the luckier ones among the deportees, because those who found themselves at remote locations in forests usually had to set to build shelters at their new camps from scratch.

The noteworthy feature of re-education was that the whole process was handled as an administrative matter, just as registration had been. No legal justification was cited, and since the persons affected were from the start deprived

of their rights of citizenship, a legal justification would hardly have benefited them. Soon, their families learned not to expect their return in 10 or 30 days or even in one or two years. The party center had not shared even this bit of information with the non-Communist members of the PRG, as the account by Tang, a self-described non-ideological nationalist, of his conversation with Huynh Tan Phat shows.<sup>358</sup> What bits of information they could glean were eagerly shared among families.

The decisions about the identities of those sent for re-education had been made by the appropriate ministries, either defense or interior. However, it turned out that some retirees who had not thought to register were also sent to the camps at the decision of their neighborhood committees, and so it gradually became clear that the reason for re-education was not simply to indoctrinate persons who had served the "puppet" government, but rather to remove from the scene, more or less permanently, anyone who the party felt might act as a spokesperson of resistance to the party's decisions. Tang, the minister of justice in the PRG, was not expecting long-term detention to affect large numbers of people, only a few who deserved punishment for their crimes. He himself drove his brother Quynh, director of the Saigon General Hospital, to his assigned collection point in Saigon on June 13, 1975, unsuspectingly.359 Tang was still writing to Quynh hoping he would be able to join the rest of the family for Tet in 1978. Quynh was detained for more than 12 years for no crime other than being labeled a "political," since he had been an adviser on health policies to the southern branch of the VNQDD, a position he had only accepted, he told a fellow camp inmate, in order to please its leader, who was his patient.<sup>360</sup> This episode makes clear the distinction between the avowed aim of the party's policy and its real purpose.

A central question has always been: How many people were sent away for reeducation? Official answers to this question have been shown to be too low in most cases. A reliable estimate, quoted by a South Vietnamese law professor, puts the number at 343,000. These include the following (but exclude prisoners captured in the DRV army's southward advance): 8,000 elected officials; 5,000 civil servants with the rank of deputy director or above; 20,000 members of the nationalist parties; 60,000 members of the rural development corps; 60,000 ARVN officers with the rank of second lieutenant and above; 10,000 police officers with the rank of second lieutenant and above; 100,000 NCOs from political warfare, intelligence, Special Forces, Marines and Airborne; 50,000 NCOs from police field forces and the Special Police; and 30,000 others, including religious leaders, writers, artists, actors, and students.<sup>361</sup> Other estimates are that the total number of Southerners requiring re-education was well over 1 million persons, most of whom had been located and had presented themselves for registration by the end of 1975.362 The fact that those subjected to re-education were held for varying periods of time ranging from a few months to as many as 15 years, apparently as a result of decisions made on the basis of individual cases, complicates any attempt at making a full accounting.

It was only when those sent for re-education were in the camps that they began to be treated as enemies of the people. They became aware from various signs that they were considered to be prisoners rather than students to be educated. The party's policy, it turned out, was not one of physical extermination (a possibility that had given rise to fears of a blood bath), but rather one of dehumanizing living beings, which was in many respects the "more painful death" of the Catholic exception, and one that continued even after the individual's release from the camp through his disenfranchisement from civic life.

In the camps, the inmates were required to attend lectures, to discuss among themselves their substance, and to write reports on the "results obtained" from these sessions to be handed in to the supervising cadres. Sometimes the exchanges were quite jolly affairs. A reserve lieutenant in a camp at Xuan Loc run by the defense ministry recalls the first lesson, titled "U.S. imperialism has ultimately and permanently failed in its war of aggression against Vietnam." The audience of prisoners baited the instructor, an earnest young party cadre who took their applause, in Communist fashion, for approval of his lecture. In response to the instructor's contention that the superior skill of the party consisted in its knowledge of how to fight and defeat a much stronger enemy, the audience clapped and thanked him for enlightening them on how the Americans could have been so stupid as to lose the war. "The party used the American people to fight the American government, the American press to indict the American leaders, and the U.S. Congress to discourage the U.S. administration. The White House and the Pentagon have been beaten on American soil. We beat the Americans in America itself." The instructor spoke passionately, then burst out laughing, just as actors do on the stage. This provoked the audience to laugh and to clap even harder. American television audiences were given a glimpse of the same kind of behavior when they saw a filmed interview with Pham Van Dong in which he was so satisfied with his answers that he burst out laughing. Order was finally re-established. The instructor went on: "To make this clear, I'm telling you that in this war, there were only two sides: The Americans are the losing side and the Vietnamese people are the winning side. You haven't lost because you too are part of the Vietnamese people. But because you have not completed your re-education, you cannot yet be regarded as belonging to the People. Don't you agree?" It can be said, however, that the effort to indoctrinate the Southerners in the thesis that the American soldiers had been the aggressors largely failed.

A few days later, another instructor, a thin, pale man with a Quang Nam accent, appeared before the same audience to lecture on the crimes of the "puppets." The atmosphere was sober. "If you had not sided with the enemy, our country would have been reunified long ago. The Americans and *nguy* (puppets) were able to cause havoc only with your support. Now you claim to be innocent. Can anybody accept that?" In the rare moments when they were not under the surveillance of the ever-vigilant cadres, as when the doors had been locked for the night, the prisoners engaged in sometimes agitated discussion of their wartime experiences and the reasons for their predicament. "Our leaders were imbeciles and our allies tricky bastards; because of that, we are now subjected to this shameful treatment," was one such thought. The initial hilarity, which did much to reveal to the inmates the mentality of the party's servants,

soon disappeared. And in the camps run by the interior ministry, it never existed at all.

The physical conditions in the camps took a toll, especially the inadequate diet and the lack of any but the most rudimentary medical care. A man who was trained as a doctor and who was held in section "A" of a camp for "politicals" near Hanoi reports that the food rations consisted of about 400 grams of rice twice a day with a thin vegetable soup. Meat was seen only on holidays. The estimated calorie equivalent of this diet was 1,000 calories, which was not much inferior to that of the rest of the rural population in the North at the time. As the camp was considered a "model," the other times the ration improved was on days when a delegation from some fraternal socialist country or human rights organization was visiting. On such days, in a section of the camp known as "F" a reading room and a ping-pong table were set up, to be taken away as soon the visitors left.<sup>364</sup> Among the most telling hardships were those endured by the hundreds of ARVN officers who were shipped north packed into the holds of North Vietnamese freighters that had transported cargoes of coal to the South, then by freight cars on the railroad to their camps near the China border.<sup>365</sup>

The nearness of the camp for "politicals" to Hanoi made it convenient for senior cadres of the ministries to interrogate the many prominent figures and high-ranking ARVN officers it held. Such interrogations lasted for months on end and must constitute a voluminous archival record that researchers may one day be able to consult. The writer in this camp witnessed the death in the autumn of 1976 of lawyer Tran Van Tuyen, who had been Quat's deputy prime minister in 1965, from a cerebral hemorrhage suffered in the conference hall just before he was to give a report on the topic "The responsibility of intellectuals of South Vietnam in the struggle for independence and integrity of Vietnam." Quat himself was said to have died in Chi Hoa prison in Saigon.

Administratively speaking, the inmates of the re-education camps were the property of the interior ministry, and this led to an accounting system between the ministry and the camps. The ministry had to pay the camps for the prisoners' maintenance, equal to 15 piasters per month. In return, the camps paid the ministry a "salary" for the productive labor of the inmates, which was officially fixed in 1977 at 1.35 piasters per person per day of work. A record was kept each day of the number of inmates working, and the number of inmates excused for medical reasons could not exceed 1 per cent of the total. As all the products of this penal labor were sold, either to the camps themselves in the case of agricultural products, or to nearby cooperatives, schools, and other public services; in the case of bricks, tiles, nails, furniture, foundry products (particularly those using scrap from American planes) and the like, the resulting surplus went to support the ministry's budget or to pay for camp amenities.<sup>367</sup> The whole accounting system recalled the slogan of Nazi concentration camps, "Arbeit Macht Frei."

The spates of physical labor were interspersed with periods of idleness due to personnel changes or other administrative snafus. One inmate put his time to profit inventing a domino-like game that he said reflected traditional Vietnamese values of cultural pride and harmony and showed that all peoples in the

world were capable of living in peace with one another. This was a notable effort at reconciliation of the kind the party did not pretend to embrace. Some inmates used the idleness to further their education. After several months of searching through piles of old newspapers, an inmate of the camp for "politicals" found the answer to the question that had intrigued him: In the event of a divergence between the interest of the party and that of the nation, which would prevail? He found an article in which none other than Le Duan, the party's secretary-general, had posed the question "In case of a great-power conflict, would Vietnam take the side of the Soviet Union?" and answered it. Even though Vietnam might suffer enormous destruction and loss of life, and even be temporarily occupied, Le Duan had written, it was the duty of Communists to defend the Soviet Union. Vietnam would be rebuilt, with Soviet aid, a hundred times more beautiful. 368

The inmates found ingenious ways of letting their families know where they were incarcerated, in spite of the strict prohibition against divulging this information, by writing in their letters home the names of friends who were associated with a particular place or recalling trips made or other associations from the past. One wife sent her husband a green mango from her garden with a note, intended to get past the censor, expressing the hope he would be allowed to eat it green; it was her way of letting him know she knew he was not far from home.

The *chieu hoi* were in a separate category of "puppets." These were defectors from the Viet Cong and the DRV who had been integrated into the Southern administration after a suitable period of re-education by the Saigon government. During the war, they were always regarded as people at risk of reprisal. Now, they were sent back to the units from which they had defected and were subjected to a special form of re-education. Standing before their former comrades, they were made to retell the story of their betrayal, recount all their services to the enemy, and listen to the stories of those who had died or suffered on their account. Former inmates of re-education camps recalled that the *chieu hoi* in their midst always made the most eager of informers.

The Southerners who had been persuaded to join the NLF for good nationalist reasons were now discovering the emptiness of the party's propaganda about the (limited) sovereignty of the so-called Republic of South Vietnam. Up to now, in the analogy of Cao Giao, a veteran journalist, Vietnam had been a house with two entrances. Over one was written PRG—democratic, nonaligned, and so forth. Over the other was written Hanoi—socialism, and so forth. You went inside and you found the same people.<sup>370</sup> Now one of those doors was being slammed shut. The crime of the followers of the PRG was nothing more than to have fought on the winning side, yet the party treated these people who had been presented to the world as the "sole authentic representatives" of the South Vietnamese people little better than the "puppets."

After a fortnight's delay in Hanoi, where they had gathered in Nguyên Huu Tho's house, and a banquet in their honor offered by Truong Chinh and Xuan Thuy, Tang and the other PRG leaders were flown to Saigon. There, they immediately realized their naiveté in having believed they would have a role to

play in the unfolding events. Groups of Northern cadres had already landed in Saigon to organize things, setting themselves up in requisitioned houses and offices. On May 15, a victory celebration was held in front of the former Independence Palace, with Ton Duc Thang (the president of one country, not two), Pham Hung, Le Duc Tho, General Van Tien Dung, Nguyên Huu Tho, Huynh Tan Phat, and others appearing on the second-floor balcony. In the parade, Tang was surprised to see only a few ragtag units representing the Viet Cong bringing up the rear, and carrying the DRV flag at that. In answer to his inquiry, General Dung told him the army had already been unified. When he insisted on fulfilling the PRG's prerogatives in the administration of justice, Tang was visited in his office by Northern cadres who conveyed to him in no uncertain terms how fundamental the North's resolve to control the PRG was.<sup>371</sup>

It was not long before people such as Tho and Phat were fudging the line between South and North that had been created and maintained throughout the war with statements such as "It is certainly not a question of relations between two states, since North and South are not two different states. . . . We must find a new formula to define these relations." Once the party center realized that all resistance had collapsed, it shunted aside the PRG as an instrument that was of no further use to the revolution; the PRG and its adjunct front organizations were folded into the Fatherland Front. Manac'h's friend Tran Buu Kiem was forced into early retirement for having crossed his party minder, Tran Hoai Nam. Madame Nguyên Thi Binh, on the other hand, continued to prove her loyalty to the party by not protesting its decision to prevent the establishment of embassies in Saigon after the victory and was rewarded with honorific posts in Hanoi. Several foreign countries had made moves to establish such embassies, and France had even named its chargé d'affaires, Huriet, on May 11.372 Thus ended the charade of the pseudo-foreign relations of the so-called Republic of South Vietnam. Among those who thought an injustice had been committed toward the old-line NLF leaders was Professor George McT. Kahin of Cornell University, who admitted later to "quite a disappointment" at their treatment.<sup>373</sup> The remaining diplomats accredited to the former regime were told they would have to leave Saigon; Mérillon left on June 5. The 7,000 French residents in South Vietnam, seeing they had no future in a socialist South Vietnam, also began to leave, disposing of their property as best they could.

Tang continued to struggle, but his morale was sapped by the fate of his brother Quynh and by the suicide of a member of his staff at the ministry of justice who had been unable to live with the reproaches of his wife and mother for his inability to obtain any news of his son, an ARVN officer who had reported for re-education like everyone else. Tang, obtaining the approval of Pham Van Dong, was instrumental in drafting a working corpus of law with the intention of reining in the party's cadres who were arresting people in the middle of the night and taking them off and otherwise behaving as in occupied territory.<sup>374</sup> It was a hopeless exercise, however, as Tang soon realized, and he fled into exile. Dr. Duong Quynh Hoa, his cabinet colleague as minister of health, stuck it out in Vietnam, but she resigned from the party and refused an

invitation to attend a reception marking the twentieth anniversary of the victory. "I put a question to the leaders in Hanoi," she told an interviewer on that occasion. "What is your final goal—the final goal of the revolution? Is it the happiness of the people, or power?' Then I answered the question. 'I think it is power." And she added the usual saying about power breeding corruption.<sup>375</sup>

Old-line Southern revolutionaries formed the "group of the Tran," consisting of General Tran Van Tra, Tran Van Giau, and Tran Bach Dang, who constituted a private Association of Former Resistance Members (Hoi Cuu Khang-Chien) in Ho Chi Minh City that had its own journal, Truyen Thong Khang Chien (Tradition of the Resistance). Because they were so prominent, the party dared not take overt action against them except to censor their publications. On the 25th anniversary of the Communist victory, well-informed individuals told visiting foreign correspondents that all the rank and file of the NLF had been quietly either jailed or executed.<sup>376</sup>

Conditions in the seminar camps in Laos were a good deal worse than in those in Vietnam, from survivors' accounts. Even before the party consolidated power in Vientiane, the LPDR made those judged unable to play a part in the new society in their present frame of mind construct a series of camps. Known only by their numbers to the people who built and then occupied them, there was Camp 01 at Sop Hao; Camp 03 near Na Kai, now given the Pali name Vieng Say, meaning "Victorious Town"; Camp 05 near Sam Teu; and Camps 04 and 06 near Muong Et, all in Sam Neua Province. There was also a camp at Muang Khoua on the Nam Ou and camps in the center and south. In July 1975, the first groups of high-level officials, including chao khouengs and chao muongs, had been transported to the camps. They had received letters signed by Souvanna Phouma ordering them to attend an important meeting in Vientiane. They arrived in full dress uniform. After an overnight stay in Vientiane, the group were flown to the Plain of Jars, where a festive atmosphere prevailed. The officials, about 70 in all, were given a party, with food and a movie, and with Vietnamese advisers present. They were then flown to Sam Neua and separated into small groups. They were organized into work parties.<sup>377</sup> There are no official figures on the numbers sent for re-education; the entire network of camps was a secret from the outside world and the only news of them was brought out by former inmates and their families. Published estimates have put the number at 30,000,<sup>378</sup> 37,600,<sup>379</sup> and 50,000.<sup>380</sup>

An inmate who survived the Keng Khanh seminar camp northwest of Tchepone described procedures and conditions in the camp. The prisoners were divided into three categories: those awaiting investigation, those already investigated, and selected prisoners from the second category. Prisoners in the first category were housed in a series of cellars about two meters underground. Each was about one and a half meters high, too low to stand upright, about five and a half meters long, and four meters wide. The ceiling was made of heavy wooden beams, and the floor was made of bamboo. There were 10 such cellars. Each held 20 persons, 10 on each side. Running along each wall, about seven-tenths of a meter off the ground, was a wooden frame supporting horizontal bamboo slats. These platforms were just wide enough for a man to lie with his head to the wall and his legs sticking out into the center aisle. The legs were held in stocks. During the six months the survivor was in the camp, the leg stocks were locked day and night. The room was dark and smelly. When someone died, his body was attacked by rats. There were mosquitoes and cockroaches all around. After he had been investigated, the survivor was allowed to live in a hut above ground for the next two years. Then he spent 18 months as a third-category prisoner.<sup>381</sup>

In August and September 1977 an incident occurred at Camp 05. A group of 26 "reactionary" high-ranking officials and military officers were accused of plotting a coup and arrested. They were taken away to Camp 01. They included Pheng Phongsavan, the government minister who had signed the Vientiane agreement; Touby Lyfoung, the Meo leader; Soukan Vilaysane, another of Souvanna Phouma's ministers who had been with him in the Lao Issara and had risen to be secretary-general of the Neutralist Party; and Generals Bounphone Maekthapharak and Ouan Ratikoun of opium-smuggling fame.<sup>382</sup> All died there. Touby's death was particularly poignant. He had not been arrested until November 1975, when Souvanna Phouma ordered him to Sam Neua to inaugurate a school for the Meo. Too weak to climb the bank of a stream where a group of prisoners had gone for their weekly bath, he was shot down by a guard, the teenaged son of a local party cadre. 383 Thus, those who played roles in the modern history of Laos were relegated by the new regime to the status of nonpersons and their fate was placed in the hands of their prison guards. Others, such as Tiao Sisoumang Sisaleumsak, one of two ministers who had held Souvanna Phouma's government together at Khang Khay in the dark days of early 1961; General Sengsouvanh Souvannarath, who had taken command of the Neutralist forces in 1966; and even Sing Chanthakoummane, who as a young lieutenant in the Second Paratroop Battalion in 1960 had taken part in Kong Le's coup, survived; they were held in seminar camps for 15 years or more before being released.<sup>384</sup> Ironically, nationalist leaders who had been considered "pro-Western" fled to safety in foreign countries, while others such as Pheng Phongsavan and Tiao Sisoumang who had been suspected by the Americans of "neutralism" resisted the Communists even in the seminar camps.

In Laos, the former sovereign, Savang Vatthana, lived quietly in the royal palace as a private citizen until March 1977, when he, Queen Khamboui, and the crown prince were spirited away by helicopter to Sam Neua, officially for their own safety, but in reality to prevent the monarch from being used as a popular symbol of resistance to the regime. Perhaps the ministry of interior had intercepted some communication between the king and those still faithful to him. Imprisoned in Seminar Camp 01, the crown prince died on May 2, 1978, and the king died 11 days later of starvation. The crown prince had insisted his father share his meager rations. The queen died on December 12, 1981. All were buried in unmarked graves beside a small stream outside the camp's perimeter, according to an eyewitness. To official announcement was made. More than a decade later, during a visit to France in December 1989, Kaysone confirmed reports of the king's death in an innocuous aside that attributed it to old age.

#### REUNIFICATION OF VIETNAM

The next step for the party, a logical sequel to the removal from the public scene of the ruling class of the old regime of the South, was to reunify the liberated South with the socialist North, fulfilling the pledge it had made in 1954 after the DRV's delegation at Geneva had signed the agreement partitioning Vietnam. Two negotiating teams, each consisting of 25 delegates, one representing the North and one the South, met for a consultative conference on national reunification at the former Independence Palace on November 15-21, 1975. Despite appearances, the PRG and the Republic of South Vietnam were not present to offer arguments for Southern autonomy or even to present the case that after 21 years the South and the North had gone their separate ways, much less to actually negotiate with the North over any issue of reunification except the modalities. The fact that the Northern team was led by Truong Chinh, the chairman of the DRV National Assembly's standing committee and third-ranking member of the party leadership, and the Southern team was led by Pham Hung, fifth-ranking member of the party leadership, showed the underlying reality of this "consultation." The whole affair was marked by a series of unanimous decisions roundly applauded.

Pham Hung had been born in 1912 in a scholar-gentry family in Vinh Long Province and had joined the party as one of its founding members in 1930. Since 1967 he had headed COSVN, and in the conference proceedings he was identified as representative of the party in the NLF. To the extent that the "third force" was represented at all in the Southern delegation, it was represented by Father Chan Tin, the Redemptorist priest who had made the issue of the Saigon government's political prisoners his own; lower-house member Ho Ngoc Nhuan, who, with the help of foreign journalists, had publicized the "tiger cages" of Con Son; student agitator Huynh Tan Mam; and lawyer Tran Ngoc Lieng.

The conference "unanimously" decided on the method of reunification. A general election, following "strict observance of the democratic principles of universal, one-man-one-vote, direct and secret ballot," was to be held to elect a common National Assembly, which was to be the highest organ of state power. It would determine the structure of the state, elect the leading organs of the state, and prescribe the new constitution of a unified Vietnam. 386 There was no question that the election would decide the nature of the regime. "That has been decided during the struggle," Hoang Tung, editor of Nhan Dan, explained to an inquiring foreign journalist.<sup>387</sup> On February 25, 1976, the radio announced the reorganization of the provinces of South Vietnam in preparation for reunification.

The general election was held on April 25, 1976. True to Pham Van Dong's closing speech at Geneva, it was an election by and of "patriots." 388 As a final contribution to the party, the NLF and the Vietnam Alliance of National, Democratic and Peace Forces were to select and recommend "patriots who have recorded achievements in fighting the imperialists and their henchmen and who stand for national reunification and socialism" to run in the election. 389 In the North, candidates were simply appointed by the local party offices. Although a semblance of representativity was assured by including candidates from various

social and religious groups, such as Buddhists, Catholics, industrial workers, women, youth, and so forth, only candidates from "progressive elements" in each group were allowed to run. Finally, voters were instructed as to how to cast their ballots. Those who had been deprived of their civic rights for committing "crimes against the people" by association with the puppet regime were not eligible to vote. Not surprisingly, Mme. Nguyên Thi Binh received 97 percent of the vote in her district.

# THE SOCIALIST REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM AND THE LAO PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC

In its first session after reunification in June 1976, the National Assembly of the DRV renamed the new regime the Socialist Republic of Vietnam. With its victory complete and all organs of state power under its control, the party no longer had any reason to hide its Marxist-Leninist leadership from the masses; accordingly, in December 1976, at its fourth congress, the party dropped the name Vietnam Workers Party and renamed itself the Communist Party of Vietnam.

In Laos, there was not even a constitution to lend the regime of the Lao People's Democratic Republic some aspect of legality. The first Supreme People's Assembly, whose 44 members had been unanimously elected by the National Congress on December 2, 1975, in an attempt to give the party's monopoly of sovereignty a facade of legitimacy, faded rapidly into obscurity; its twice-yearly meetings were reported in the controlled press. Here, if anywhere, Souphanouvong as its unanimously elected chairman might have made a contribution to the expeditious drafting of the promised new constitution. It was not until 1988, however, that signs of movement began to appear on this front.

Elections were held on June 26, 1988, for 2,410 seats on district-level people's councils, and on November 20, 1988 for 651 seats on province-level people's councils. On March 26, 1989, elections were held for a new Supreme People's Assembly. Candidates in all these elections were screened by the party. Sixty-five of the 79 persons elected to the Supreme People's Assembly were party members. The second Assembly had as its task the completion of the draft constitution. This document was at last approved by the Assembly on August 15, 1991, and officially adopted. Elections for the third Assembly, now renamed National Assembly, were held on December 20, 1992.

The constitution adopted in 1991 legalized the party's monopoly of power by giving it "the leading role" in the regime. Those who contested the system were subject to punishment. Latsami Khamphoui, for example, had been president of the Royal Lao Students Association in Vientiane at the time of Kong Le's coup. Like many of his fellow students, he joined the revolutionary movement in 1961 by leaving Vientiane and going into the liberated zone. In 1963, he went to Hanoi to study at the University of Economics and Planning and became president of the Association of Lao Students in Vietnam, a privilege bestowed by favor of the party, although he was not a party member. He returned to the liberated zone of Laos in 1968 and worked as a cadre until 1975. After formation of the LPDR, he was made director of the animal husbandry and

veterinary service. In 1981 he was appointed vice-minister of agriculture, forestry, and irrigation, and in 1983 he became vice-minister of economics and planning. In January 1990, he wrote letters saying that Laotian intellectuals were "despondent and no longer know to whom they can turn, in face of the failures and the crises of confidence and hopelessness that have befallen them, in the face of corruption and anarchy, the lack of order and discipline, and the opportunism at every turn."390 He and two other intellectuals who had served the regime, Thongsouk Saysangkhi, vice-minister of science and technology, and Feng Sakchittaphong, a high-ranking civil servant in the ministry of justice, were arrested in Vientiane on October 8, 1990. One day before the elections to the National Assembly in December 1992, they were sentenced to 14 years' imprisonment and sent to seminar camp No. 7 in Sam Neua. Thongsouk was reported to have died there on February 12, 1998, of lack of medical care. Lao residents abroad were more free to criticize the system. Hundreds of Lao students in Prague and Warsaw took part in demonstrations in July 1990 demanding an open, multi-party system. With changes occurring in Eastern Europe, it seemed to them more than ever unfair that a party with 40,000 members should have the monopoly of power in a country of 4.5 million.

The large ministerial apparatus of the LPDR provided foreign trips and other perquisites barely imagined by those who had lived in caves for so many years. Kaysone took an annual extended summer holiday in the USSR. While many in a position to do so sought a share of the spoils that went with it, not all did so, however. Genuine nationalists such as Sithon and Faydang who had avoided joining the party were given largely ceremonial posts as a reward for their services during the national liberation phase of the revolution. Sithon and Faydang, until their deaths in 1977 and 1986, respectively, served as vice presidents of the SPA. While the top party leaders held on to power until their dying breath, it is notable that Souphanouvong resigned the presidency, for reasons of age and health according to the statement made by Phoumi Vongvichit, on August 15, 1991, and lived an apparently simple life in Vientiane until his death on January 9, 1995.

In Laos, beyond the brutality shown to their defeated enemies, the actions of the party leaders in 1974–1975 and immediately afterward showed how little importance they attached to the well-being of the population at large. Politically motivated strikes had already crippled Laos's tiny industrial base before the takeover of power, and those who still sought to end them by applying Lao labor laws or invoking UN precepts were packed off to be re-educated about workers' rights.<sup>391</sup> Trained personnel in any and all economic organizations faced a difficult choice between risking being sent for re-education because of their association with the former regime and fleeing the country. Many of the educated chose the latter course, ending up in the United States, France, Australia, and other countries where they despaired of ever being able to serve their homeland. The regime with its dogma of class struggle uttered not a word of reassurance to these people to try to stop the exodus.

Perhaps more understandable was the attitude of hostility adopted by the party leadership toward the large American aid program, which had been di-

rected at supporting the royal government. Even so, the public humiliations inflicted on the AID mission until the last of its personnel had departed, leaving behind everything they could not carry aboard the plane, were excessive by any standard. Aid projects such as the Operation Brotherhood hospital at Long Cheng were simply abandoned overnight. In spite of Souvanna Phouma's assurances to Whitehouse that the government would provide for continuity in medical services, the foreign nurses and other technicians were never replaced by Laotians or "fraternal" foreigners. The advent of the new regime coincided with serious food shortages in many parts of the country. Inflation, the pretext for May's anti-government demonstrations, spiraled out of control.

In spite of the regime's revolutionary rhetoric about self-reliance on the march to socialism, Western aid was simply replaced over the 1970s and 1980s by aid from "fraternal countries" of the Soviet bloc, while living standards declined further. Non-governmental organizations, including American ones, in cooperation for the most part with the local authorities, created small-scale aid projects that were among the few that reached out to real needs in terms of health, education, and economic development. Meanwhile, Kaysone and his colleagues, following the well-known examples of Soviet and East European party leaders, led carefully protected lives behind the walls of their guarded compounds in the capital, secluded from public scrutiny and shielded from any manifestation of hostility. The minister of interior, Somseun Khamphithoun, whose ministry was responsible for the operation of the seminar camps, was never seen publicly in Vientiane.<sup>392</sup> Corruption, which had reached sizeable proportions in the years of the American aid program and the military pay program, continued under the new regime, just as widespread but more modest in its rewards.

## TREATMENT OF RELIGIONS AND ETHNIC MINORITIES

The largest mass organization in South Vietnam at the time of the Communist takeover was the Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam (UBCV). During 1964–1975, an estimated 2 million Vietnamese participated actively in the life of the church, another 8 million attended pagodas regularly, and another 4 million came to pagodas on special occasions. The vibrant Buddhist movement in the South contrasted with the Association of Unified Buddhism in the North, a largely passive body in conditions in which pagodas had become decrepit and the bonzes that tended them had become senile for the most part, like their superior Thich Tri Do, and fearful, obsequious, completely cut off from the rest of society.

The UBCV mobilized 900 religious persons to participate in the May 15, 1975, victory celebration in Saigon, to which they had not been invited, and on Ho Chi Minh's birthday, May 19, 20,000 Buddhists gathered at the An Quang pagoda. In August 1975, the formation of the Liaison Committee of Patriotic Buddhists was announced; this party intervention in church affairs was opposed by UBCV leaders. In a sign of growing restrictions on expressions of freedom, which applied to the Buddhist church as well as to other institutions, in No-

vember 1975, 12 religious persons immolated themselves at the Duoc Su pagoda in Can Tho to protest the prohibition against flying the Buddhist flag and other imposed restrictions.

April 6, 1977, saw the beginning of severe repression with the encirclement by police of the An Quang pagoda and the arrest of six principal UBCV leaders led by Thich Quang Do (from Thai Binh) and Thich Huyen Quang (from Quang Ngai). Also, Van Hanh University, which had for long been associated with Buddhist activism in the South, was ordered closed. Hundreds of pagodas were confiscated. Presses and printing shops connected with the UBCV were closed.

In April 1978, Thich Thien Minh, who had been one of the signatories of the joint communiqué of 1963, was arrested; he died in prison in October 1978, the first Buddhist martyr under the new regime. In December 1978 the public trial of imprisoned UBCV leaders was held, and they received relatively light sentences.

The leadership of the liaison committee of patriotic Buddhists founded at the time of victory under the aegis of the party's Ho Chi Minh City branch was entrusted to Thich Minh Nguyet, a veteran revolutionary who had been imprisoned for 15 years at Con Son island and had been released at Loc Ninh after 1973. The party ordered the government's Bureau of Religious Affairs to study various proposals for unifying the various Buddhist groups. One such proposal was submitted by Thich Don Hau, a Southerner who had joined the Alliance of National, Democratic and Peace Forces in 1968 as a vice-president, and had been a member of the Southern team at the reunification conference. Thich Don Hau proposed unifying the Southern and Northern churches, but his determination to keep the church free of party interference met with the disapproval of the party leaders, who feared the dynamism of the Southern church superiors, particularly Thich Tri Quang, whom some suspected of working for the CIA.

A plan to arrange a "chance" meeting in Hanoi in November 1979 between Tri Quang and the highest party official responsible for religious affairs, Xuan Thuy, fell through when Tri Quang's suspicions that his planned visit to the North to pay respects to his late master, Thich Tri Do, had an ulterior political purpose were aroused by an over-zealous party cadre. Thereafter, Thuy was succeeded by Nguyên Van Linh, who seems to have approached the problem with an open mind but talked mainly in generalities, citing for instance the constitutional guarantee of freedom of belief or non-belief. He did not last long, however, before he was replaced in a reshuffle of posts by Tran Quoc Hoan, the former interior minister who was in charge of the secret police. Hoan represented the party's determination to exercise complete control over the Buddhist church, and this led, after much discussion, to the holding in Hanoi on November 4–11, 1981, of a Congress for the Unification of Buddhism, which established the Buddhist Church of Vietnam, defined in its charter as "the only Buddhist organization representative of Vietnamese Buddhism, for all relations in and outside the country."

On February 25, 1982, Thich Quang Do and Thich Huyen Quang were arrested and banished from Ho Chi Minh City. On April 23, 1992, the death of

patriarch Thich Don Hau occurred in Hue. He had been taken to the North in 1968 and returned in 1975. He proved to be not a puppet, as the authorities had hoped, and he raised his voice against the repression of 1978. Thich Huyen Quang was designated to succeed him as patriarch.

The author of the unification proposal finally adopted in 1981, Do Trung Hieu, was himself arrested on the same day as Hoang Minh Chinh, June 13, 1995. Hieu had hoped that by submitting his proposal he would be able to prevent the party's applying unification from the top down and enable some input to be made from the grassroots. In this he was deceived. Instead, distrust and suspicion have prevailed, as the party has prevented any participation by laity in the work of the official Buddhist church and has denied the right of the church to play any social role other than mobilizing support for the party's policies.

Since 1981, the party's relations with the Buddhists have remained tense. Buddhist bonzes who wanted nothing to do with the party-sponsored church, or who undertook social work in the name of the Unified Buddhist Church, such as Thich Huyen Quang and Thich Quang Do, were arrested and subjected to internal exile. The former continued to defy the government by issuing statements by samizdat, as it were, from his temple in Quang Ngai following his house arrest in 1982. Thich Quang Do, one of the most talented and well-known monks in Vietnam, was sent into internal exile in the North in 1982; he returned on his own to his temple in Ho Chi Minh City in March 1992 and in August 1994 sent a scathing 40-page letter to party secretary Do Muoi chronicling government abuses of Buddhists. He was sent to prison for having supported the Unified Buddhist Church's rescue mission for flood victims in the Mekong Delta in November 1994. The party, however, has not dared to ban the Unified Buddhist Church, and as a result it continues to co-exist uneasily with the party-sponsored church.<sup>393</sup>

On December 2, 1999, Thich Huyen Quang received David Young, first secretary of the American Embassy in Hanoi, in his place of house arrest in Quang Ngai. The interview was surprising in that it was completely unannounced, and its content was soon reported in Europe. The two men had a good chat. After some preliminary discussion about the venerable's health, Young turned to the difference between the UBCV and the state Buddhist church. He then asked what the venerable's hopes were and whether the Americans could be helpful in that regard.

Thich Huyen Quang replied "I hope that Vietnam achieves liberty in all domains, that human rights will be respected, that democracy will be realized, and religion will be freely practiced. With liberty, religion will be able to contribute to the restoration of moral values that are gravely compromised in a society devastated by social blights against which the state is powerless. For Buddhism, there will be religious liberty only when the Unified Buddhist Church is restored and is no longer the object of prohibition as at present. At that time only will I be entirely satisfied." He added: "Perhaps your country can help our people realize these profound aspirations."

Asked if he had had the opportunity to discuss these questions with the authorities, Thich Huyen Quang answered that he had been putting his ideas in

writing since 1992. "My opinion is that religion has no cause to interfere in the affairs of government, but also that government must abstain from any intervention in the internal affairs of religion. I have never heard it said, or read in the press, that the president of the United States intervened in the internal affairs of religions. Even Vietnamese Buddhists in the United States are completely free in their activities. The American government has never committed any violation or posed any obstacle in this regard. It has never posed conditions likely to harm the dignity or prestige of our church." Unfortunately, the visit coincided with the serious floods in Central Vietnam, and two days afterward the venerable had to be evacuated from his house by boat.

Thich Quang Do, in a letter to the leaders of the Vietnamese Communist Party and government of the SRV on the occasion of the lunar new year in 2000, reminded them that in 1945 the Buddhists had supported Ho Chi Minh in fighting against three enemies: hunger, ignorance, and the invader. Only one had been defeated—the invader—the venerable's letter stated. The Buddhists were still committed to defeating the other two, but they were denied this opportunity. The venerable asked for amnesty for prisoners of conscience, tax remission for poor peasants, freedom for the UBCV to carry on its activities (made all the more urgent by the need to fight social blight and moral decadence), and abolition of the death penalty (an issue that was discussed in the National Assembly during the previous December).

The recent history of Buddhism in Vietnam illustrates the incompatibility between Marxism-Leninism (a foreign import) and Buddhism (an indigenous phenomenon). This incompatibility stems from the opposition between class struggle and reconciliation. Thus, the director of the Bureau of Religious Affairs, Le Quang Vinh, was mistaken when he talked of the absurdity of a campaign seeking to legalize "any old movement authorized by the Americans or the puppet government in the regions temporarily occupied." A study of history shows that the growth of influence of Buddhism in the South was a mass phenomenon. Moreover, Buddhist influence is non-violent, which sets the UBCV apart from the party, which sanctifies the use of revolutionary violence against its opponents. From the above, it may be seen that the UBCV is uniquely qualified to act as a vehicle to the creation of a civil society in Vietnam that derives from popular support, eschews violence, and is founded on the rule of law rather than the diktat of a minority temporarily holding power.

The relations of Vietnamese Catholics with the new regime were troubled from the start. One of those the Communists seized was Father Hoang Quynh, who had earned the party's enmity by commanding the anti-Communist militia of Phat Diem and Bui Chu dioceses before the partition of 1954. He was arrested at his home in the Saigon suburb of Binh An Thuong and then tortured to death, probably in Chi Hoa prison, in early 1977. The Vatican ordered the apostolic delegate, Monsignor Lemaître, who had brought to light the Cambodian massacre of Vietnamese in 1970, to stay on in Saigon. On April 24, six days before the "liberation," Lemaître named a nephew of Diem, François-Xavier Nguyên Van Thuan, coadjutor to the archbishop of Saigon, Paul Nguyên Van Binh. Demon-

strators paraded outside the delegation on Hai Ba Trung Street carrying signs reading "Lemaître must go!" The departure of Lemaître with other diplomats accredited to the former regime eased the tension. The government refused to accept Thuan's nomination and placed him under house arrest in his former diocese in Nha Trang, then took him north to a re-education camp for more than 12 years. He was eventually allowed to travel to Rome but not to return to Vietnam. On February 21, 2001, he was among 44 prelates elevated to cardinal by the Pope, the fourth cardinal in the history of the Vietnamese church.

In 1988, Pope John Paul II canonized 117 martyrs from Vietnam. Nearly 100 of the new saints were Vietnamese who had been tortured or executed between 1745 and 1862, while others were Spanish Dominicans or French priests who had worked in Vietnam. "Vietnamese Catholics feel themselves to be authentically Vietnamese and faithful to their land," the pope said on the occasion. The Socialist Republic of Vietnam (SRV), however, saw the ceremony as a violation of national sovereignty and banned churches from celebrating it.

Official contacts between the Vatican and Vietnam resumed in July 1989 with the first visit to Hanoi by a Papal envoy in 35 years. Pope John Paul sent his close adviser Roger Cardinal Etchegaray, who celebrated mass at the cathedral as thousands gathered in the small square outside and cheered when he told them the pope wanted to visit Vietnam. The cardinal also visited Phat Diem and Ho Chi Minh City, where tens of thousands stood in Hoa Binh Square as the cardinal said mass in the cathedral. Of this visit, the media reported only the cardinal's meeting with Prime Minister Do Muoi.

Arguments over the right of the Vatican to make appointments in the Vietnamese church and a coolness to the idea of receiving a papal visit are the most visible evidence of the state of relations between government and the church. The church is not susceptible to the same sort of co-option that has been applied to the Buddhists. The regime has found other ways of controlling the church, through restricting the number of seminaries and the training of priests, forbidding priests to adopt any role as a political and social conscience, and carefully limiting even their movements. Nevertheless, a softening of the party's stand on the historic role of the Church in Vietnam became visible in the late 1990s. At a seminar organized by the official body responsible for relations with Catholics in Ho Chi Minh City in December 1999 on the occasion of the two-hundredth anniversary of the death of Pigneau de Béhaine, the respect for Vietnamese culture shown by the French monsignor was commented upon favorably, and a new edition of the monsignor's Vietnamese dictionary was published. This marked a departure from 1980 when Tran Van Giau wrote in a book on Vietnamese traditional spiritual values that "the Catholic Church contributed nothing to Vietnam worth mentioning."394

Nay Luett, the last minister of Montagnard development, had been among those who were not evacuated in April 1975. He returned to the Central Highlands, where he was arrested and reported to be placed in solitary confinement in the Dam San re-education camp east of Banmethuot. Y Bih Aleo, the main Montagnard representative in the NLF, visited Ban Me Thuot and surrounding

villages, accompanied by a Vietnamese officer who spoke fluent Rhadé. In July, Kpa Koi and other FULRO leaders learned of plans to move large numbers of Vietnamese into the highlands and went into the forest to try to organize resistance. In September, all French priests and nuns were expelled from the region. By the beginning of 1976, it was apparent that the oft-promised autonomy for the highlands that had been at the heart of so much Communist propaganda was not to be.395

In Laos, the party did not dare abolish the Buddhist sangha, of which the king had been the supreme patron, although it did modify the traditional position of this body so as to shape it into an instrument of control. In March 1979, the Venerable Thammayano, the 87-year-old Sangha-raja of Laos, the country's highest-ranking abbot, fled by floating across the Mekong on a raft of inflated car tubes. His secretary, who engineered the escape, reported that in Luang Prabang the Sangha-raja was confined to his monastery and was not permitted to preach. After a few initial experiments on a local level, in which monks were denounced as parasites, threatened to cause popular agitation against the regime, monks were not directly ordered to work. But a monk was not eligible for a government rice ration unless he worked by gardening or engaging in some other productive task, as for example teaching handicrafts or addressing meetings on behalf of the government. Ordinary monks were not forbidden to preach, but their sermons were commonly tape-recorded and monitored for signs of dissidence. As a result of these pressures, the number of monks in Laos decreased sharply after 1975. Spirit worship continued, but its existence in Laos, as opposed to in Thailand, was officially denied.

In spite of its historical reliance on the support of the ethnic minorities along the Vietnam border in its long struggle to attain power, the new regime continued the discriminatory practices of the old regime, especially in political representation. Of the 79 members elected to the Supreme People's Assembly in 1989, 66 were ethnic Lao. There was some suspicion that the regime was attempting to turn the mountain peoples into Lao culturally and economically.

For the Hmong of Laos, the war had never really ceased in 1975. After the departure of their American patrons, they had to defend themselves against a new campaign of extermination waged by the LPDR with mycotoxins fired from aircraft as weaponry. These weapons came from the Soviet Union's extensive biological weapons arsenal, another "benefit" of Sullivan's template for a pattern of peace. Beginning in 1976 and in increasing numbers each year Hmong survivors who reached safe haven in Thailand gave eyewitness reports and showed symptoms of the use against their villages in Laos of these weapons. 396 The evidence was controversial, and it led to a major scientific debate over the issue of the cause of deaths and injury to the Hmong in large numbers. Some interpreted the physical evidence to consist of bees' feces. What was incontrovertible from first-hand reports was the fact that in Laos biological agents caused the decimation of one particular group of people, the Hmong, in the years 1976–1980.

#### **Exopus**

With worsening economic conditions in the South because of the party's dogmatic imposition of socialism on a free-market economy and political repression in the ever-present guise of class struggle, many Vietnamese made up their minds to flee. In 1977, famine appeared in Vietnam for the first time since 1955. Those who had been released from re-education camps found that their children were disqualified from attending school or getting jobs. Land routes across Cambodia to Thailand, however, were highly risky because of the Khmer Rouge reign of terror. The only practicable way was by sea. Because the Vietnamese were a people used to living by the sea, there was an ample supply of small fishing and cargo boats. These became the conveyors of a vast exodus of what came to be known as the boat people.

The numbers of such escapees rose until in 1979 there were 100,000 housed in makeshift camps in the surrounding countries of Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand (which was also receiving refugees from Cambodia and Laos), the Philippines, and Hong Kong. They had located boat-owners and paid for their passage in ounces of gold or hoarded dollars, risked capture by Communist patrols, risked sinking in the South China Sea with its storms, and, finally, risked capture by heavily armed Thai pirates who preyed on them. They were crowded in the hold or clinging precariously to the decks of boats that were often unseaworthy, and they put themselves at the mercy of people who often had little or no experience of navigation, trusting to fate. Between 1975 and 1997, 859,251 persons left Vietnam in such boats and survived the sea voyage.<sup>397</sup> In addition, an unknown number, possibly as high as several hundred thousand, perished at sea.

At first, the boat people received a hostile reception, both from ships that passed them by in the sea lanes and from the governments of the countries where they landed with their food and water exhausted. Malaysia practiced a policy of towing them back out to sea to prevent them from landing. Gradually, however, as their plight became better known, their fate at the hands of those who received them improved. One factor in this was newspaper accounts. In Japan, where many of the freighters and tankers that picked up boat people landed, Henry Kamm of The New York Times, an experienced Indochina reporter, described the difficulties placed in the way of such ships' unloading their human cargo. Kamm's dispatches attracted the attention of high officials of the Carter administration in Washington, who were instructed by the president to "get on the Japanese." Kamm received permission from his editors to report on the plight of the boat people closer to the scene and traveled from Singapore up the coast for several months looking for refugees who were encamped in the oddest of places, suffering mistreatment of all kinds. His dispatches won him a Pulitzer Prize in 1978. More important for the refugees, they made the governments of the United States and other potential recipient countries of this human flotsam more receptive to granting the refugees permanent asylum, relieving the Southeast Asian nations of the fear that they would be left with permanent camp populations of Indochinese and greatly heightened their readiness to allow temporary asylum.<sup>398</sup> On July 3, 1977, the State Department requested the White House to approve the emergency admission of 15,000 Indochinese refugees, the opening wedge in a major shift in policy that finally led to the admission of 168,000 such refugees a year.<sup>399</sup>

In the immediate aftermath of the evacuation of 1975, Indochinese who came to the United States were not welcomed. With the American involvement finally over, there was a widespread wish to forget about the Indochinese. Administration spokesmen faced hostile questioning from reporters about under whose authority the refugees were being admitted, and hometown newspapers at the first refugee reception centers in California, Arkansas, Pennsylvania, and Florida reported expressions of opposition. However, the experience passed off peacefully, thanks in many cases to the volunteer efforts of individual Americans who had served in Indochina and who happened to be in the right place at the right time. Gradually, feelings improved, as the American tradition of helping people in distress, which was more deep-seated than the political posturings of the establishment, reappeared, and the refugees were welcomed into American churches, schools, and homes. By the time the refugees were ordinary ARVN soldiers, laborers, farmers, and fishermen instead of the generals and wealthy and privileged that Oliphant had lampooned, they received a warm welcome. The United States also instituted the Orderly Departure Program for ARVN personnel released from re-education camps, who faced a bleak existence in Vietnam without civic rights, to leave with their families. Under this program, an additional 458,367 persons reached the United States. 400 By 1987, 847,569 Indochinese refugees, including 529,706 Vietnamese, had sought and been granted refuge in the United States. There, the Vietnamese exiles proudly flew their yellow flag with the three red bars. Today some of them lie buried in small country cemeteries in Maryland hills alongside veterans of the American Revolution and Civil War.

#### "SPECIAL RELATIONS"

In December 1976, a resolution of the Fourth Congress of the Vietnamese party stated that Vietnam would "preserve and develop the special relations between the Vietnamese people and the fraternal peoples of Laos and Kampuchea, strengthen the militant solidarity, mutual trust, long-term cooperation, and mutual assistance in all fields." The party center was looking forward to rapid revolutionary gains in Laos and Cambodia. As it happened, the gains were restricted for the moment to Laos; in Cambodia, it had to put its plans on hold. It was eventually to realize them in February 1979.

In July 1977, during a high-level party and government delegation visit to Vientiane, the Socialist Republic of Vietnam signed with the Lao People's Democratic Republic a 25-Year Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation modeled on the mutual defense treaties Stalin extracted from the Baltic states following the Nazi-Soviet conquest of Poland in 1939. The two countries also agreed on redefining their common border, which was demarcated in 1986 and gave 14 square kilometers of Savannakhet to Binh Tri Thien Province of Vietnam. In early 1989, the Vietnamese troops that had been stationed in Laos continuously since 1961 were reported to have been withdrawn.

In accordance with Le Duan's statement in Sam Neua in November 1973, the organic links between the Vietnamese and Laotian parties that have been acclaimed by the highest party leaders<sup>401</sup> have been codified as "special." The term "special relations" (in Lao: khane phoua phan yang phiset) implies something less than full sovereignty. Thereafter, and with increasing insistence after the takeover of power, "special relations" was the term emphasized in joint statements. Unveiled from secrecy in indirect ways and only partially, like the existence of the party itself, the term appears loaded with meaning and leads one to the conclusion that what is still known only to the top party leadership will be fully revealed when the circumstances are appropriate in the ongoing revolution led by the parties in the two countries. One possibility is that the stillsecret plan involves a projected reintegration of the two parties into the old Indochinese Communist Party, which was only tactically split up in 1951. This might lead to the formation of a union of Indochinese states, with a single allunion party holding power in several quasi-independent republics on the model of the Soviet Union.

### **Democratic Kampuchea**

With the expulsion of all foreigners, including diplomats, from Phnom Penh, news about what was occurring in Cambodia following the victory of the revolutionaries on April 17, 1975, came only from Khmer refugees who managed to escape to the borders. Accounts of the upheaval in the countryside were first pieced together and published in the West by Henry Kamm of *The New York Times* and François Ponchaud, a Khmer-speaking French missionary. They would soon be followed by first-hand accounts by survivors, such as that of Pin Yathay, an employee of the public works ministry.

Kamm's account, published in July under the headline "Recent Refugees from Cambodia Tell of Terror and Revolutionary Upheaval," was the fruit of interviews in three refugee camps along the Thai-Cambodian border. The refugees spoke of the population being used to clear jungles, forests, and shrubstudded plains for the planting of rice while fields long under cultivation lay fallow because they were near once-inhabited places or main roads. Money was no longer used. Medicine was unavailable. Children supervised the work of their elders and reported their failings to the authorities for punishment. The people were told that the past was finished and that all habits of the past had to be cast off; that all people were equal and everyone was master of their destiny.

Old forms of address were no longer used. The higher organization that directed everything, the Angkar Loeu, remained anonymous. None of the many people interviewed had ever seen any official higher than the local chiefs of the huge agricultural cooperatives into which they have been organized or knew the name or whereabouts of any higher leader. They saw only the black-uniformed, very young soldiers who supervised their work and whose names they rarely knew. They did not know whether Cambodia had a functioning capital or any bodies of government.

Those who resisted were warned they would be crushed by the revolutionary wheel. All those interviewed spoke of killings. Many said they had witnessed such killings, and most said they had seen bodies of people who had died by violence. People were taken away, usually at dusk, and never were seen again. Every day was a working day and it began at 5 A.M. with the sounding of a gong. People had two hours to prepare their food, eat, and go to the fields. After a lunch break, they worked until 5 P.M. After work, they had to search for food in the forest to supplement their rations and draw water. Two or three times a week, the gong rang again at about 7 P.M. for political instruction sessions.<sup>402</sup> Ponchaud's accounts, published first in a series of articles in Le Monde in January 1976, and then in book form, told much the same story. In point of fact, at a five-day meeting in May the number two figure of Angkar, Nuon Chea, talked of dividing the population into two classes: "full-rights" citizens (neak penh sith, those who had lived in Khmer Rouge zones before April 17), and "candidates" (neak triem) for such status, especially the newly evacuated deportees or "depositees" (neak phnoe) from the towns. 403 The complete collectivization of agriculture, however, was still months away.

The new regime's relations with Vietnam were confrontational, reflecting the rivalry between the still-secret CPK and the party center in Hanoi. One of the resolutions adopted at the April congress was the prohibition against foreign military bases in Cambodia, a decision aimed obviously at the DRV.<sup>404</sup> The first armed confrontation came at sea.

On May 4, using the naval vessels it had captured intact from Lon Nol's navy, the RGNU launched a seaborne assault on the large island of Phu Quoc (called Koh Tral in Khmer). Six days later, Khmer troops landed on the island of Poulo Panjang (called Tho Chu in Vietnamese, Koh Krachak Ses in Khmer) and evacuated at gunpoint 500 Vietnamese inhabitants, who were never heard of again. Both Phu Quoc and Poulo Panjang were located southeast of the Brevié Line. DRV troops counterattacked and drove the Khmer off both islands. 405 Further, on the night of June 10, DRV troops landed on Poulo Wai, located northwest of the Brevié Line and well within the Gulf of Thailand, and captured it after overcoming resistance of the Cambodian defenders.

At the same time, the RGNU was preparing to expel large numbers of Vietnamese from their homes in Cambodia on suspicion of being a fifth column. Following the example of Lon Nol's government in 1970, in the five months after April 17, more than 150,000 destitute Vietnamese were pushed across the border. They were joined by many Cambodians and Chinese residents of Cambodia, some of whom sought refuge in a pagoda in Cholon. The Vietnamese were allowed by the DRV to stay, but the Cambodians and Chinese were forced back into Cambodia.<sup>407</sup>

Urgent consultations at the top level between the two parties failed to solve either problem. On June 2, Nguyên Van Linh, a Politburo member, drove to Phnom Penh and was received by Saloth Sar, who offered excuses. Saloth Sar himself, accompanied by Nuon Chea and Ieng Sary, arrived in Hanoi on June 12. Outwardly, it was another "fraternal visit," but in private relations were less

brotherly. The Khmer tried to raise the issue of the border dispute. They proposed a settlement based on the DRV's 1967 declaration recognizing the "present borders" of Cambodia, made to the royal government at a time when the DRV desperately needed expanded sanctuaries in Cambodia. The Vietnamese refused to discuss the question. Then on August 12, Le Duan himself, accompanied by Pham Hung (who as head of COSVN had been the party leader responsible for relations with the Cambodians) and Xuan Thuy, flew to Phnom Penh for a brief visit. Le Duan and Saloth Sar met as equals, a new situation for the former. The Vietnamese conceded that Poulo Wai was Cambodian territory and promised its early return, and Linh met Nuon Chea on August 10 to inform him the DRV troops had been withdrawn. The differences between the two sides were papered over in a meaningless statement on the radio.

From Hanoi in June, Saloth Sar and his delegation had gone on to Peking. They began discussion of Chinese aid to the RGNU. In August, a delegation led by Khieu Samphan and Ieng Sary received a promise of 1 billion dollars in aid from China over a five-year period. Some \$20 million was to be an outright grant. Immediately, teams of experts from China's defense ministry conducted surveys to determine Cambodia's defense needs. On February 10, 1976, Wang Shangrong, deputy chief of the Chinese army general staff, signed a military aid agreement with Defense Minister Son Sen. 410

The Khmer intellectuals-turned-revolutionaries who remained anonymous behind Angkar Loeu kept Sihanouk, their titular head of state, cooling his heels in Peking and Pyongyang for several months. They had no further use for him in mobilizing the masses of peasants, whose loyalty was now to Angkar Loeu. Sihanouk belonged to the old society that was to be totally and ruthlessly abolished while a new society, young in age and in spirit, was to be erected on the debris of the old. For Sihanouk, the warrior king (although, unlike his ancestors, his war had been against his own people), his treatment was humiliating, to say the least, although not unexpected. He counted on his friends Kim Il-sung and the Chinese to see that he was protected once he returned home.

In the company of Khieu Samphan, Sihanouk visited Hanoi for the DRV's national day celebration on September 2. Samphan politely turned down Pham Van Dong's invitation to a dinner with representatives of the PRG and the Lao Patriotic Front, "companions in arms." Later that month, Sihanouk, his consort Monique, and a small suite returned to Phnom Penh, but only for three weeks preparatory to undertaking a diplomatic mission abroad, including representing the RGNU at the UN General Assembly. Sihanouk saw little during this initial stay in Phnom Penh, as he was restricted to his residence and only went out on one occasion, for a boat ride on the river, whose banks, he noticed, were deserted. The people are away working in the paddy fields, he was told. 412

In Peking in December, on the way back to Phnom Penh after his mission abroad, he was informed by Teng Hsiao-p'ing and by French Ambassador Claude Arnaud that it was the intention of the RGNU to establish diplomatic relations with Thailand. Sihanouk was stunned by the news, which he interpreted as a breach of the promise he had made to establish relations with France

before doing so with any of the countries that had recognized Lon Nol's republic. 413 Relations between the Khmer Rouge and Thailand were, from the start, very close, so much so that the Thai army turned over several figures from Lon Nol's regime who had crossed the border in the vain hope of obtaining asylum.

Another piece of news for Sihanouk was the fact that a new constitution had been drafted without his having been consulted or even informed. Sihanouk, the master at drafting and amending constitutions, again felt himself humiliated and asked Samphan to send him the text in Peking. Samphan replied that he would be shown the text when he arrived in Phnom Penh. It was no longer the RGNU, but simply the Government of Kampuchea now, and the NUFK also went into limbo. The preamble paid tribute to the sacrifices during the war of liberation of the workers, poor peasants, lower-middle-class peasants, and other strata of urban and rural working people who made up 95 percent of the population, as well as those of the Kampuchean revolutionary army. The official name of the state was Democratic Kampuchea. 414 Aside from this, Democratic Kampuchea issued no decrees nor promulgated any laws; in their absence, the decisions of the party were the law.

Arriving at Pochentong aboard a Chinese aircraft on December 31 to chants of "Long Live Angkar Loeu extremely serious, extremely clear-sighted, extremely formidable!," Sihanouk and his small suite were taken to the Khémarin Palace, located next to the throne room inside the enclosure of the royal palace on the bank of the Quatre Bras, where the Mekong, Tonle Sap, and Bassac rivers meet, and where in more peaceful days lovers used to stroll arm in arm. It was here, guarded by Khmer Rouge soldiers, that Sihanouk was to live a virtual prisoner for the next three years, isolated from the rest of the world except for a transistor radio. Those who shared his internal exile were his consort Monique and her mother, his daughters Sorya Roeungsy and Botum Bopha and their families, and two ladies of his late mother's household, whom Monique had managed to convince Ieng Sary's wife to have recalled from the cooperatives to which they had been sent. They were soon to lose the two daughters, who disappeared with their families in the cooperatives following Sihanouk's resignation, never to return. The former director of royal protocol, Kèr Meas, disappeared from the palace between September and December.

On January 5, 1976, Sihanouk presided over the cabinet meeting at which the new constitution was approved, a disagreeable business, he notes, in that it legalized for the second time the abolition of the monarchy. The humiliations heaped upon him by the new regime were becoming unbearable. He was not allowed to receive credentials of the few ambassadors who came to Phnom Penh, and he was not consulted about the appointment of ambassadors abroad or even allowed to sign their letters of credence. At the rare opportunities that came his way, Sihanouk vented his spleen. Seven foreign envoys based in Peking visited Phnom Penh in February 1976 to present their credentials. When one of them asked Sihanouk at a dinner in their honor how Cambodia managed when all its intellectuals had been dispatched to the countryside, Sihanouk replied gamely, pointing around the table, "We don't lack intellectuals here. There

is Khieu Samphan, who has a doctorate in economics, there is Thioun Thioeunn, a medical doctor, there is Ieng Sary, a French-educated intellectual."<sup>415</sup> Sihanouk had transferred his hatred of the French-educated Khmer intellectuals from the Phnom Penh bourgeoisie to the Khmer Rouge leaders. He bore a particular hatred for Ieng Sary, his former minder from Peking days, who had shouldered aside Sarin Chhak as RGNU foreign minister without so much as asking Sihanouk's assent. The leaders of Democratic Kampuchea, however, found a use for Sarin Chhak's doctoral thesis on his research in the French archives into the delineation of the border between Cambodia and Cochinchina.

Considering all this, Sihanouk drafted a letter of resignation and handed it to the chief of the palace guards two weeks before elections for a people's assembly were scheduled to be held. This rash action brought Khieu Samphan to the palace a few days later with arguments against Sihanouk's decision. The leaders were obviously angered by Sihanouk's decision. Ieng Sary and Prince Norodom Phurissara were brought in to try to persuade him to change his mind; it had been decided to send Sihanouk to represent Democratic Kampuchea at the next summit meeting of non-aligned states in Colombo. The thought of publicly embracing Pham Van Dong again was too much for Sihanouk, however, and there was always the implicit threat of disappearing from view for good should he commit a faux-pas. Sihanouk taunted Ieng Sary by asking what would happen if he decided to defect at Colombo. He saw his cousin Phurissara turning pale. No, he said, he would not defect; he preferred to live a life of loyalty to the respected Angkar and asked only that he be liberated from further state duties. 416 Sihanouk's letter of resignation 417 was finally accepted in a government statement 418 and ratified by the people's assembly that had been elected on March 20. The assembly elected Khieu Samphan to be president of the state presidium, the new head of state, and "Pol Pot" to be prime minister; it was the first time Saloth Sar had used this name.

Sihanouk told Samphan he accepted the designation of "great patriot" and refused all other honors, such as a statue. But the leaders of Angkar were very annoyed with him, and from that time on, his existence was at their mercy. The first thing they did was to recall his two sons studying in Pyongyang and Moscow, as there was no reason an ordinary citizen should receive such favors as a foreign education for his sons (they conveniently overlooked their own). Sihamoni and Narindrapong accordingly returned to share their father's internal exile.419 At the celebration of the first anniversary of the great victory, Sihanouk had to listen to an interminable speech by Samphan in which the new head of state, without mentioning Sihanouk's name, denounced the "ultra-fascist, ultra-feudal, ultra-bloodthirsty, and arch-corrupt" regime of the Sangkum years. Samphan took all the credit on behalf of the still-secret CPK for refusing American aid, for breaking diplomatic relations with the United States, for initiating the NUFK, and for declaring war against Lon Nol and said the Khmers had risen up between March 1970 and April 1975 to fight against not only American imperialism but also to prevent at all cost the return of feudalism (read the monarchy). He was followed on the tribune by speakers representing

soldiers, peasants, workers, and women whose denunciations were even more violent, verging on the hysterical—the result of their indoctrination. 420

In these early months of his exile, Sihanouk was taken on two carefully stage-managed tours by car and train in the Cambodian countryside, where he had his first glimpse of the results of the five years of civil war that had been waged in his name and of their aftermath. Trekking through the unpopulated jungle with the Khmer Rouge leaders and an escort of guerrillas, as he had done in March 1973, was faintly romantic, but seeing at first hand the destruction of Cambodian society and the enslavement of the population was something quite else. The first tour was in January and took him to Kompong Cham. On the road the party stopped to inspect a huge project in which thousands dug a deep basin in fallow and infertile land and removed the earth to construct great dikes. Kompong Cham had been a charming town on the Mekong, the prosperous capital of the province that had produced a large share of Cambodia's rubber exports before the DRV's intervention in Cambodia. It had been besieged by the North Vietnamese and Khmer Rouge. Now, it was deserted and in ruins; the Khmer Rouge had completed the devastation by throwing all the furniture of its buildings into the street, as they had done in other towns. Sihanouk found the governor's mansion without running water, its pipes rusted. He was shown factories set up in the few buildings still whole—a soap factory in the offices of a tobacco company, a medicine factory in a former Chinese school, an iron foundry where workers were melting down the plentiful scrap metal left from the war in a scene medieval in its starkness. He was taken to visit the Chamcar Andaung rubber plantation, formerly French-owned, now nationalized; most of its machinery was out of commission and its production was now on an artisanal basis. He returned to Phnom Penh by boat, escorted by two of Lon Nol's American gunboats. The only pleasant memory he had of the trip was being recognized by some of the peasants and workers belonging to the "old society" whose path he crossed, although he writes that he dared not respond to their obvious relief at seeing him.<sup>421</sup>

His second tour was in February 1976 and took him, accompanied as usual by Monique and the ever-smiling Samphan, to the western provinces by train over the railway line repaired immediately after the war by massive Chinese aid. At Battambang, another lovely town before the war, he found the large textile factory, a gift of China to his government, in full production and occupied by many of the same workers as in the days of the Sangkum, but the town dirty and old-looking. At Sisophon, the smuggling trade was in full swing, as it would be so long as Cambodia's normal trade was cut off. He went on to Siem Reap and Angkor, over which he tarried, and returned by Kompong Thom, which was completely destroyed, and Skoun along the road where Lon Nol's army met its end in the ill-fated Chenla monsoon offensives of 1970 and 1971.

Everywhere it was the same. The population was completely uprooted and working in cooperatives in places whose old familiar names had officially vanished, to be replaced by the numbering system used in Communist countries. There were no more individuals, only cogs in a giant machine whose purposes

were known only to Angkar. Memory itself had been abolished; the building that had housed the national archives of the Kingdom of Cambodia had been used as a pig sty and the records it housed had been wantonly destroyed. Into the maws of this inhuman machine no fewer than five of Sihanouk's children and fourteen of his grandchildren were fated to disappear.<sup>423</sup> Naradipo, his son whom he had designated his "heir" in 1963, 424 who had been trapped in Phnom Penh by the events of March 1970 and sentenced by a Lon Nol court to five years in prison for pro-Sihanouk activities, had been killed shortly after being evacuated from the capital by the Khmer Rouge. His son Khémanourak, who had taken part in the resistance under the Khmer Rouge, was allowed to visit his father once in September 1975 and then disappeared. His daughter Sujata had been expelled in April 1975 from the French Embassy, where she, her Laotian mother, her husband, and their children had taken refuge, and killed. Two other daughters disappeared in the cooperatives after Sihanouk's resignation. In addition, many notables more remotely related to Sihanouk or whose careers had been closely intertwined with his own were similarly killed, among them his uncle Prince Sisowath Monireth and Princes Norodom Phurissara and Sisowath Methavi, and former RGNU minister Chea San, who was tortured and died in the notorious Tuol Sleng prison in Phnom Penh. Likewise, his devoted aide de camp Captain Ong Meang, whose death appears to have touched Sihanouk especially deeply. 425

Sihanouk's personal losses were but the tip of the iceberg. An estimated 1.7 million persons disappeared during the years from 1975 to 1979. Soon enough, the machine began to swallow some of its own in vast purges. The purges began in September 1976, which was the month that Mao Tse-tung died. Pol Pot paid public tribute to Mao Tse-tung's thought for the first time and eulogized him. The previous month, the party had decided to collectivize agriculture and industry and to introduce nationwide communal kitchens. September 30, an important date, was the CPK's twenty-fifth anniversary of its founding. Preparations for the celebration were going forward when Keo Meas and Nay Sarang, veteran party leaders who had taken part in the founding and were probably members of the ICP as well, were arrested on September 20. They were taken to the state security interrogation center in the buildings of the former Tuol Sleng secondary school in Phnom Penh; after a month of torture and writing confessions, they were put to death. Their arrest was in line with Angkar's policy of eliminating cadres viewed as being subservient to the party center in Hanoi, but the rationale given by the still-secret CPK represented a nationalist challenge to Hanoi. A special September-October issue of the party journal Tung Padevat (Revolutionary Flag), which would find its way to Hanoi, was published to explain why the party's founding date was not September 30, 1951, but September 30, 1960. "We must arrange the history of the party into something clean and perfect, in line with our policies of independence and self-mastery," it said. From October to December 1976, 631 people entered Tuol Sleng, no doubt most of them suspected of being pro-Hanoi. Before the purges ended with the flight of the party center from Phnom Penh at the beginning of 1979, prominent Khmer Rouge figures such as Hou Yuon and Hu Nim would also be swallowed up. 426 At about

the same time, the people's assembly allowed Pol Pot "temporary leave to take care of his health," appointing Nuon Chea acting prime minister in his absence. But this was only dissimulation, perhaps connected with the ongoing purge in the party's ranks. In fact, Pol Pot continued his grasp on power.

Behind the doctrinal dispute over the independence of parties, Democratic Kampuchea and Vietnam continued their game of cat and mouse. Beginning in January 1977, Democratic Kampuchea started raiding villages over the border in Kampuchea Krom, massacring their inhabitants. In Tinh Bien District, where the DRV's forces had engaged in fighting with the ARVN in 1973, about 100 civilians were killed on the night of April 30, according to survivors' accounts. These attacks produced a Vietnamese willingness to engage in high-level talks on the border dispute in the form of a letter handed by the foreign ministry to Democratic Kampuchea's embassy in Hanoi. The letter pointed out that the coordinated nature of the attacks belied their attribution to the initiative of local authorities, as in the past. At this time, the foreign ministry of Democratic Kampuchea issued an internal document titled "History of the Kampuchea-Vietnam Border" that demonstrated the loss of territory to Vietnam under the French colonial regime. Also, Hanoi's signing of the treaty of friendship and cooperation with Laos did much to stiffen the CPK's resolve to be vigilant against similar attempts to trample on Cambodia's national rights. 427 As usual, when faced with a serious security problem, the DRV's leaders relied on the Soviets. Pham Van Dong and Le Duc Tho were both in Moscow for prolonged talks in May and June 1977, and the SRV took steps to join Comecon, the Soviet-bloc trade group. Again, there was a military aid agreement, and the DRV's press waxed eloquent on all things Soviet. Le Duan and Truong Chinh were in Moscow in November for the anniversary of the Bolshevik Revolution.

### The Americans Reappear

The propaganda of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam had adroitly converted its military victory over the demoralized ARVN into a victory over the United States. The "puppet" regime was simply airbrushed out so that the party's propaganda could claim that the valiant Vietnamese, led by the all-wise party, had defeated the Americans after having defeated the French and that these victories were in the tradition of Vietnamese resistance against the Chinese and the Mongols. The propaganda was so successful that in the United States a young generation grew up believing in "the American defeat in Vietnam."

In February 1977, shortly after taking office, President Jimmy Carter appointed a Presidential Commission on Americans Missing and Unaccounted for in Southeast Asia, chaired by Leonard Woodcock. Although the commission was not empowered to negotiate, it was instructed to seek all available information and listen carefully to the concerns of the governments of Vietnam and Laos on other matters of interest. The hope was that they would be more forthcoming on MIA matters if they sensed a willingness on the part of the Americans to consider such issues as normalization of relations and reconstruction aid.<sup>428</sup>

On March 16, 1977, Woodcock and a group consisting of Senator Mike Mansfield, Ambassador Charles Yost, human rights activist Marian Edelman, and Congressman Sonny Montgomery, who had chaired an earlier congressional investigation on the MIA issue, arrived in Hanoi. On their first evening, the Americans received a visit at their guest house from Foreign Minister Nguyên Duy Trinh. Trinh told them that they could not expect the DRV to fulfill its obligation to assist in resolving the MIA issue under Article 8(b) of the Paris agreement unless the United States fulfilled its obligation under Article 21. Woodcock replied that the Paris agreement was dead; the issue had to be resolved on humanitarian grounds. At the formal session the next day, Woodcock read a prepared statement to this effect, but Deputy Foreign Minister Phan Hien stuck to the demand for reparations. After a break, Phan Hien took out three folders from a briefcase and said, "Okay, there are three issues—MIAs, normalization, and economic contributions. They are separate issues but closely interrelated." Hien announced that the delegation could take back 12 sets of MIA remains identified by the Vietnamese. He said a special office had been set up to seek information on MIAs and recover remains. It was the first of what would be a series of SRV offers extending over some 20 years to return remains or fostering hope of remains in return for political concessions. Woodcock and his party also visited Vientiane. They were rebuffed in their attempt to visit Phnom Penh, where Mansfield's presence as an old friend of Sihanouk would have caused insuperable problems. The Woodcock Commission concluded that "for reasons of terrain, climate, circumstances of loss, and passage of time, it is probable that no accounting will ever be possible for most of the Americans lost in Indochina."429

Carter chose Cyrus Vance to be his secretary of state and Richard Holbrooke to be assistant secretary for East Asia and the Pacific. Thus, although Carter had reserved his position on the war, the administration had two top officials thoroughly familiar with negotiations with the Vietnamese Communists. As a follow-up to the Woodcock mission, negotiations opened between the United States and the SRV in Paris on May 3 and 4, 1977. Holbrook faced Phan Hien, who had been one of his interlocutors in 1968. Holbrooke's instruction was to propose to the Vietnamese mutual recognition without preconditions. The SRV was well informed about the American position because it was receiving classified State Department documents photocopied by Ronald Humphrey, a United States Information Agency employee. 430 Phan Hien, citing President Nixon's promise to Pham Van Dong of February 1, 1973, still insisted on the American responsibility to contribute to healing the wounds of war and to postwar reconstruction. 431 The differing priorities were hidden in a statement issued by the Vietnamese saying that "the two sides stated that they shared the objective of an early normalization of relations between the two countries."432

Now that large numbers of them were dispersed around the world, the Vietnamese nationalists could finally claim to speak out on behalf of their countrymen. Those in Paris had organized the Vietnamese Committee for Human Rights, and it now issued an open letter to Carter calling on him not to establish

relations with Hanoi or give it any aid until repression had ended. "Whether you accept it or not, the United States bears a great part of the responsibility before world history for the annexation of South Vietnam by the Communists and for the imprisonment of hundreds of thousands of their own allies," the letter said.

The same feeling was appearing also in the Congress. It so happened that a State Department authorization bill was being debated on the floor of the House of Representatives when the evening television news reported that Vietnam was demanding more than \$4.5 billion in American aid. An angry Representative John M. Ashbrook of Ohio offered an amendment stating that none of the funds authorized "shall be used for the purpose of negotiating reparations, aid or any other form of payment to the Socialist Republic of Vietnam." The amendment passed after barely 10 minutes of debate by a 266 to 131 vote. 433 To reinforce the point, in June the House overwhelmingly approved an amendment to the foreign aid bill, which was introduced by Representative Lester Wolf, to formally renounce Nixon's promise of aid to Hanoi. The significance of these votes was that the House members were formally renouncing American colonialism in Indochina and any atonement for it; their votes reflected the traditional American belief in fairness in a more balanced manner than the House and Senate votes of 1969-1975 when it had been a question of taking a position with respect to "tin-horn dictators." A second and third round of talks between Holbrooke and Phan Hien in Paris in June and December ended without result, despite Phan Hien's attempt to revive the "Phase A, Phase B" formula during a tea break in the talks, Phase A this time being normalization of relations and Phase B being a private commitment of aid. 434

On September 24, 1977, Democratic Kampuchea launched an attack on Tan Lap village<sup>435</sup> in Tay Ninh, in the area of the rebellion led by the Cambodian Pou Kombo in 1866 and where the border had been delineated by French inspectors of the Cochinchina and Cambodia administrations in the 1870s intent on putting an end to the practice of the local inhabitants of declaring themselves to be subjects of the Cambodian king when the French tax collectors appeared and claiming French nationality when the king's tax collectors appeared. 436 The Vietnamese went out of their way to publicize the attack, even allowing foreign journalists to tour the border area freely. Shortly afterward, the first rumors began to circulate in diplomatic circles in Hanoi about an anti-Pol Pot resistance being organized by veterans of the ICP.437

The Tan Lap attack coincided with the appearance of Pol Pot in Peking to a triumphant welcome from the Chinese and a position of honor at the parade on Tienanmen Square, ending the speculation about who he was. And in a marathon speech recorded prior to his departure from Phnom Penh he revealed publicly the existence of the CPK. With Cambodia threatening to escape from its control, the party center in Hanoi dispatched Phan Hien on a secret mission to Peking to ask the Chinese to arrange a meeting with Pol Pot's delegation and to sound out the depth of Chinese support for Democratic Kampuchea. The two sessions between Phan Hien and the Cambodians proved acrimonious and

futile. Phan Hien also opened talks with the Chinese on the two countries' 797-mile-long land border and the maritime border, which were to continue for 10 months before hostilities put an end to them. The Chinese also provided more military aid to Democratic Kampuchea. Pol Pot continued his tour with a visit to North Korea. Radio Phnom Penh broadcast a message to Pol Pot from Sihanouk congratulating him on the success of these visits and attributing them to "the extremely wise and correct long-term leadership of the KCP [CPK]" and its secretary.

A visit to Peking in November by Le Duan at which there was some frank talk about the "special relationship" the Vietnamese party claimed with Cambodia was fruitless. <sup>439</sup> The following month, the Vietnamese army launched a punitive expedition into Cambodia. The government of Democratic Kampuchea denounced the aggression and announced it had decided to sever diplomatic relations with Vietnam temporarily until the Vietnamese forces had withdrawn and a friendly atmosphere was restored. <sup>440</sup> The Vietnamese, caught unawares, withdrew their forces on January 6, which was celebrated as victory day by an extra plate of rice in the communal kitchens for cadres in Phnom Penh.

The Vietnamese party's politburo met in Ho Chi Minh City in January 1978 to assess the situation. Le Duc Tho took the lead. A Vietnamese proposal for mutual withdrawal from the border, the signing of a non-aggression treaty, and international supervision of the border was rejected by Phnom Penh, as the Vietnamese expected. It was at a meeting at the secluded compound of the former police training school in nearby Thu Duc in mid-February that the Politburo made the important decisions with respect to the double challenge from Phnom Penh in the nationalist claim to rectify the border and the doctrinal independence of the CPK. The first would be met by Vietnamese armed force while the second would be met by resurrecting the old Khmer People's Revolutionary Party of 1951 to be totally subservient to the party center in Hanoi. Both actions would be given the veneer of an internal Cambodian "resistance" to the government of Democratic Kampuchea, whose dullness could soon be polished up by the party center's propaganda experts in the form of denunciations of the crimes of Democratic Kampuchea. If all went according to plan, the invasion would actually be welcomed as a major human rights triumph. Once the government had been driven out of Phnom Penh, the Vietnamese thought, a new and pliant government could be set up and the new party would be there to make decisions ensuring its actions conformed to party policy.

The veneer of "resistance" would, of course, be provided by a new front in the time-honored style of the Viet Minh, the NLF, the LPF, and the NUFK. The natural figure to lend nationalist respectability to such a front was Sihanouk, but unfortunately for Hanoi he was firmly under the control of the government of Democratic Kampuchea. An important asset in the hands of the Vietnamese, however, was the thousands of Cambodians, including cadres, who had fled into Vietnam following the fighting, and from this raw material the front could be created. Le Duc Tho and Le Duan met separately with Cambodian party cadres who had lived in exile in Hanoi since 1954 and the ones who

had recently escaped from Cambodia to determine their suitability as candidates for leadership of the front. Among the former were Pen Sovan; Chan Sy and Khang Sarin, majors in the Vietnamese army; Tang Saroem, who was working as a labor supervisor in the Hon Gai coal mines; Keo Chanda, the Khmer-language news reader on Radio Hanoi; Chea Soth, a news editor from the Vietnam News Agency; and Yos Por, whom Chanda met in March 1978 in one of a string of refugee camps created by the Vietnamese where, under his pseudonym "Mr. Duc," he was training Cambodian "resistance" fighters, and who would become the leader of the soon-to-be-created Kampuchean National United Front for National Salvation (KNUFNS). Among the latter was a young regimental commander named Hun Sen who had fled in 1977. Le Duc Tho told them that the time had come to restore the ties of cooperation that had existed between the Vietnamese and Cambodian Communists. Each was to develop the political and military structures of the "resistance" movement. 441 By the end of 1978, several brigades of "resistance" forces, actually of battalion strength, had been commissioned in preparation for the invasion of Cambodia.

The Politburo in its February meeting also decided on matters concerning the socialization of the South. On March 24, 1978, the party launched a vast operation to expropriate the Chinese community in Cholon. This pogrom had all the markings of the party's operations in 1946 against the nationalists in the north. The Chinese made an easy target; their main crime was to have amassed wealth. Truckloads of policemen in beige uniforms, soldiers in green, and youths wearing red armbands fanned out in Cholon. While armed men took up positions in the streets, the youths entered houses and shops to look for hidden gold and dollars and to make inventories of goods seized by the government. The seized gold was said to weigh seven tons. Some 18 distraught Chinese were said to have committed suicide. The government made sure no foreign journalists were present to report the pogrom.<sup>442</sup>

The Chinese of Cholon, known as Viet Hoa, had lived peaceably alongside the Vietnamese since their immigration in the nineteenth century. Now they were forced not only to give up their wealth but to leave Vietnam. The campaign against the Chinese, known by the sinister appellation "X2," has been compared to ethnic cleansing in Serbia. In the summer, the Public Security Bureau set up offices in the coastal towns to build boats and dispatch the Chinese who "wanted" to leave Vietnam after paying fees in gold or dollars. One estimate is that 40,000 died at sea, either by drowning or at the hands of pirates. Nguyên Co Thach told a journalist that the fact that the Chinese were paying to leave showed they were not being coerced to go; in reality, they were being coerced to pay and to leave. The campaign was also put into effect in the North, where a fewer number of less-well-off Chinese lived, and Hanoi's population of Viet Hoa fell from 20,000 to 2,000. The economic effects were severe. Coal production slumped and port operations felt the absence of porters. But the party enriched itself in the process. 443

With its plans for invading Cambodia taking final shape and assurances of support from the Soviet Union in hand, the party center in Hanoi decided to

engage the United States in another round of negotiations for normalization of relations, with the obvious expectation that having an American Embassy in Hanoi would add to the legitimacy of its action in Cambodia. Deputy Foreign Minister Nguyên Co Thach, mindful of the debacle in Paris the previous year, met secretly with Holbrooke at the Vietnamese mission in New York on September 22, 1978, and again five days later. Again, as before, the DRV was holding out for aid. At the second meeting, after a fruitless discussion, Thach offered to normalize relations without preconditions and asked Holbrooke to sign a memorandum of understanding to that effect. Thach offered Holbrooke the old American Consulate in Hanoi as an embassy, and Holbrooke offered Thach the former South Vietnamese Embassy in Washington, which had been vacant since April 30, 1975. In the meantime, however, the espionage case against Ronald Humphrey and his Vietnamese associate, David Truong, the son of Truong Dinh Dzu, had materialized in the form of indictments, and the SRV's ambassador to the United Nations, Dinh Ba Thi, had been named as an unindicted co-conspirator and expelled from the United States. A fourth round of talks between Phan Hien and Holbrooke, scheduled for February, was canceled. Inadvertently, Humphrey and Truong had quite possibly saved the United States from being in the position of legitimizing the SRV's conquest of Cambodia.

There is no record of any discussion by the American Embassy in Vientiane of American "participation" in healing war wounds and reconstruction aid mentioned in Article 10(c) of the Vientiane agreement.<sup>444</sup> But even had there been a predisposition to discuss this matter, the humiliating circumstances of the closing of the AID mission would have precluded it. The embassy itself was reduced to a skeleton staff, and Whitehouse, the last American ambassador to the Kingdom of Laos, departed on reassignment in April 1975. Ambassadorial relations with the LPDR were not restored until 1992.

## The Vietnamese Invasion and Occupation of Cambodia and the PRK

As early as August 1978, Raphael Iungerich of the State Department's Bureau of Intelligence and Research had written an assessment predicting a Vietnamese-engineered overthrow of Democratic Kampuchea in six months. The evidence of preparations in the form of repair work on roads leading into Cambodia and troop movements was already coming in from interceptions of signals before Thach held his meetings with Holbrooke. On November 3, the Vietnamese firmed up their Soviet support by signing a 25-year treaty of friendship and cooperation in Moscow, with a delegation of the party and government constituting almost half the members of the politburo in attendance. The treaty provided for supply of arms and equipment and for emergency food aid including 1.5 million tons of grain. In return, the Vietnamese ceded base facilities for the Soviet navy and air force. Le Duan, saying Vietnam would be more inspired to accomplish its "sacred national task as well as its noble internationalist duty," bowed twice to his Soviet hosts before boarding the plane to return to Hanoi on November 9. The Viet-

namese thought that everything was now in place for the invasion. Only the normalization with the Americans was missing, and Pham Van Dong had been rebuffed in his attempt to enlist Thailand in an anti-Democratic Kampuchea alliance. And the Vietnamese had failed in two attempts late in 1978 to enlist Sihanouk's son Prince Norodom Ranariddh, in Aix-en-Provence where he taught law, as a representative at large of the soon-to-be-announced KNUFNS. 445 Ranariddh had no desire to place himself in vassalage to the rulers of Vietnam or Thailand, as the Cambodian kings had done before the arrival of the French.

The Vietnamese invasion was timed for the dry season when the ground following an exceptionally heavy monsoon would be hard enough for tanks and when the rice crop would be ripe to feed the Vietnamese army. Preparatory to the invasion, on December 2, 1978, several thousand Khmers trucked in from Vietnam met in a small clearing in a rubber plantation east of Snoul about two miles inside Cambodia to proclaim the establishment of the KNUFNS. One after another, 14 members of the front's central committee, of whom six, including the chairman, Heng Samrin, were Khmer Rouge defectors, were given flowers brought from Vietnam as they were introduced to cheers. Samrin read out the front's program, and afterward walked over to thank Le Duc Tho, who was watching from the sidelines.<sup>446</sup> The front's flag was the same as that of the Khmer Issarak in the 1950s. A radio station calling itself "Voice of the Kampuchean People" began broadcasting from Ho Chi Minh City.

The invasion by the usual Vietnamese "volunteers" was launched from Ban Me Thuot at midnight on December 24. There was no prior appeal by any Cambodian authority, for none had yet been constituted. Columns of T-54 tanks and trucks loaded with troops rolled down Route 14 in the direction of the border; within five days they had reached the Mekong and captured Kratie. By January 1, 1979, Vietnamese forces advancing from Laos captured Stung Treng. By January 4, the Vietnamese had gained total control of the east bank, comprising seven provinces. The army of Democratic Kampuchea, unable to answer the heavy air and artillery bombardment mounted by the Vietnamese, fell back and dispersed into small units. On January 6, Vietnamese units crossed the Mekong at Neak Luong and north of Kompong Cham. A commando raid on Phnom Penh failed in its objective, however, of seizing Sihanouk in the small house behind the Botum Vaddei pagoda in the enclosure of the royal palace into which he had been moved. Led by tanks and armored vehicles like the panzers crossing the fields of northern France in May 1940, nine of Vietnam's 12 divisions closed in on Phnom Penh from the south and north.

Phnom Penh's defenders evacuated the capital in haste but in good order. The evening before he left aboard a Chinese plane from Pochentong on January 6, Sihanouk had a meeting at the government palace with Pol Pot, only the second time he had met him since 1973, and Ieng Sary. They greeted him with the traditional sâmpeah (bow). While aides served small cakes and fresh orange juice from Pursat, a delicacy, Sihanouk and Pol Pot held a four-hour conversation and then bid each other farewell "for the duration of the war." Sihanouk was unable before his departure to pay his respects to the Buddha and the stupas

of his royal ancestors located in the Silver Pagoda because they had been carried off by the Khmer Rouge. 447 Trains evacuated Khmer Rouge cadres and several hundred Chinese experts and technicians on January 7 ahead of the Vietnamese. All the leaders of the CPK escaped. One of those who was left behind was former Foreign Minister Sarin Chhak, who had no reason to be well treated by the Vietnamese and who was never heard of again. The Chinese crossed the Thai border and were picked up at Utapao by Chinese planes. On their entry into a deserted Phnom Penh, the Vietnamese commanders were particularly pleased to find a cellar at the vacated Chinese Embassy well stocked with French cognac, while their soldiers went from house to house ripping up mattresses and pillows in search of gold.

Confident of its success, the Vietnamese army raced the retreating remnants of the army of Democratic Kampuchea to the Thai border. But once there, the guerrilla war began as the Khmer dug in along the border to defend sanctuaries much as the North Vietnamese had done along the border between Cambodia and South Vietnam. The "Voice of Democratic Kampuchea" radio station, which had fallen silent on January 7, was back on the air by January 16 with its Khmer announcers broadcasting from China. For the next 10 years, the Khmer resistance fed by the 300,000 refugees in camps on the Thai border would tie down a Vietnamese army of 180,000 led by Fourth Corps commander General Le Duc Anh. Democratic Kampuchea had prepared for such a war by stockpiling arms and ammunition in the mountainous southwest of the country, and by relying on Chinese resupply across the border itself, as arranged at a secret meeting between the Chinese and Thai governments at Utapao on January 14.448 The Vietnamese army was no longer the army of old; raw recruits had replaced the mechanized units at the front, and casualties due to land mines and malaria bled it and forced it to evacuate Cambodia in 1989. The crippled of a new generation of war veterans returned home to Vietnam, considering themselves lucky to be still alive. The war cost the SRV an estimated 60,000 killed, more than the Americans killed in the earlier war.

Sihanouk was greeted at the Peking airport by Teng Hsiao-p'ing, who hosted a banquet in his honor the following evening in the Great Hall of the People. Sihanouk writes that he was too tired to compose his own speech, a job he left to a Khmer Rouge aide, and pronounced the slogans of Angkar Loeu with a heavy heart. However, the attention of his hosts was focused on news dispatches from Cambodia reporting the entry of the Vietnamese army into Phnom Penh. He cited de Gaulle's words about losing a battle but not the war and proposed that all raise their glasses of *mao t'ai* to toast the forthcoming victory. The following morning, Sihanouk held forth for more than six hours before almost 200 journalists in Peking. His hosts had hoped he would use the press conference to condemn Vietnam's invasion. But the questions soon turned to Sihanouk's relations with the Khmer Rouge, and he "literally exploded, like a machine compressed for a long time by the mechanics" and spared no one among the leaders of Democratic Kampuchea, whose brutality was coming to light at last. He managed to elude the question of his responsibility for his ally's coming to power.

But in New York, where he was to represent Democratic Kampuchea at the UN Security Council debate on the invasion, Sihanouk found the journalists still snapping at his heels and starting to ask questions about what he had done personally to save his countrymen from what, on the basis of the testimony of refugees, was coming to be called genocide. Lodged comfortably by the Chinese at the Waldorf-Astoria, he was also increasingly irritated by the presence of his three Khmer Rouge minders, Thiounn Prasith, Keat Chhon, and Poc Mona, who had followed his every step since leaving Phnom Penh and who gorged themselves in their room adjoining his and Monique's. The final insult was a message from Peking that after the Security Council debate on the Vietnam invasion Sihanouk was to head the delegation ad interim while awaiting the arrival of Ieng Sary to take over. He left his room in the middle of the night and sought refuge with American diplomats; the Chinese proved very understanding. Thanks to Sihanouk's personal plea, the debate went well and the Council unanimously condemned Vietnam for its invasion with the exception of the Soviet Union, which used its veto.

At Blair House during Teng Hsiao-p'ing's visit to Washington in January 1979, Sihanouk had a cordial talk with the Chinese leader. The Khmer Rouge, Teng told Sihanouk, had recognized the error of their past chauvinist policy and were determined henceforth to follow a policy of national union; they wished Sihanouk to assume once again the role of head of state of Democratic Kampuchea. Sihanouk's reply was up to the occasion: "Even if I was so mad as to try a new experience of a united front with the Khmer Rouge, they would certainly liquidate the non-Communist members, including Sihanouk, after our victory over the Vietnamese." Teng did not insist. He invited Sihanouk to take up residence in Peking once more until such a time as he could return to Phnom Penh, an invitation Sihanouk accepted with a glad heart, for his soundings about asylum in the United States and France had been politely rebuffed. 451

In late February, China launched operations across its border with Vietnam, using artillery and then ground troops in a 12-mile-wide swath all along the border. Demolition squads systematically blew up buildings in the towns of Lai Chau, Lao Kay, Ha Giang, Cao Bang, and Lang Son. The towns were inhabited by small traders who made a living smuggling goods across the border, and they had been spared American bombing for fear of creating an incident with China. Now they, too, were reduced to the general level of misery of the rest of the population of North Vietnam. Hanoi decreed general mobilization in response to the Chinese attack; four years after its victory in the South, the SRV was again on a war footing. The Soviet Union did not respond to the Chinese attack.

A permanent Cambodian mission to the UN was installed in March, and Prasith was accredited by the UN secretary-general as permanent representative of Cambodia, in which capacity he served for 13 years. In the General Assembly, where there was no Soviet veto, Democratic Kampuchea retained the seat of Cambodia by virtue of a vote of six (including the United States) to three in the Credentials Committee and 71 to 35 to 34 in favor of the Credential Committee's recommendation on September 21, 1979. For the Americans, the choice was between moral principles and international law, and the rule of law prevailed.

The putting to flight of the Khmer Rouge by the Vietnamese might have gone down in history as a selfless humanitarian gesture. The Cambodians today remember that period as one in which the Vietnamese tried to promote socialist ideology and, by extension, the integration of Cambodia into the internationalist socialist community centered on the Soviet Union. 452 Every year, the Khmer People's Revolutionary Party celebrated its lineage from the ICP on the latter's founding anniversary and emphasized the "special relations" between itself and the VCP. The Vietnamese proceeded to create a puppet regime in Phnom Penh, the People's Republic of Kampuchea, on the model of the Soviet Union's Eastern European satellites. Vietnamese advisers were posted in the party apparatus, in each department of each ministry, in all provincial and municipal administrative offices, and in state economic enterprises. The PRK's subservience to Hanoi was manifest in its propaganda, always the litmus test in Indochina, and in the 25-year treaty of friendship and cooperation signed in February 1979, patterned on the one between the SRV and the LPDR. The SRV also signed border agreements with the PRK in 1982, 1983, and 1985.

The leaders of the PRK considered their collaboration with the occupying power to be a lesser evil than a return of the Khmer Rouge. However, the party center in Hanoi encountered some initial difficulties in choosing willing puppets. Pen Sovan, whose positions as general secretary of the party, prime minister, and minister of defense made him the most powerful figure in the PRK, was removed in 1981 and imprisoned in Vietnam until 1989, reportedly because he showed too much nationalist sentiment. He was replaced in his government posts by his deputy, Chan Sy, and as party general secretary by Heng Samrin. Chan Sy in turn displeased the Vietnamese, and they reportedly arranged to have him killed by the usual Stalinist method of a lethal injection of "medicine" for an illness in December 1984. Under the treaty, the Vietnamese had responsibility for security. In 1984 they demonstrated their power by arresting the party secretary of Siem Reap Province, whose name had been given the Vietnamese by a captured Khmer Rouge unit commander under torture. The arrested official, accused of collaborating with the Khmer Rouge, attempted to point out the sovereign status of Cambodia and its party, but he managed by ruse to commit suicide. 453

On the nationalist side, Cheng Heng and In Tam visited Sihanouk in Pyongyang in late 1979 and issued a joint declaration calling for a Union of Khmer Patriots and Nationalists to struggle against the Vietnamese aggressors that also severely condemned the Pol Pot regime. The CPK announced its dissolution in December 1981. Although this was a move on the order of the ICP's dissolution in November 1945, Pol Pot henceforth remained in the shadows, working as an "ordinary researcher" and leaving Khmer Rouge representational duties to Khieu Samphan.

The arrival of several hundred thousand refugees on the Thai border in 1979 gave evidence of the famine conditions that prevailed in Cambodia after five years of war and a further four years of mass uprootings and more war. A self-sufficient country had been turned into a wilderness with little food. With their food stocks exhausted, the Khmer Rouge fled their mountain sanctuaries

by the thousands and appeared in the Thai border villages seeking help. Eyewitnesses described them as wearing the traditional Khmer Rouge clothing of loose black pajama shirts and pants and sandals made from rubber tires. They walked silently to the villages, rarely speaking or looking at others. Their eyes and cheeks were sunken, their bodies ravaged by cerebral malaria or other diseases. The women and children had endured the worst hardships, as all available food had been given by priority to the soldiers. Local Thai commanders tried at first to prevent them from entering, but the villagers, moved by the pathetic sight, handed food through the barbed wire to the silent refugees.

As the numbers of refugees increased, an international relief effort began to take shape. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) took the lead. The Thai government reversed its original position and supported the effort on the border. But when the ICRC and UNICEF attempted to negotiate an agreement for relief inside Cambodia with the Phnom Penh government the Thai grew alarmed that they might be left to cope with the border situation alone and insisted on an international presence there. The negotiations in Phnom Penh proved frustrating, as the government refused to sign an agreement with organizations that were also supplying food to the Khmer Rouge and declined international demands to monitor food distributions inside Cambodia designed to ensure that the food was not going to feed the Cambodian army and its Vietnamese allies. Hanoi also denounced the aid-to-both-sides "trick." Finally, a number of relief organizations, led by Oxfam, accepted the government's conditions and began airlifting food to Phnom Penh. Funding for the food distribution on the border was provided by the American Embassy in Bangkok, which maintained a large emergency contingency fund for the purpose. Within the overall framework of Thai policy, American money and advice talked. As a result of the massive effort, large-scale starvation was prevented in 1979. Gradually, these efforts grew more sophisticated, with food-for-work projects and rice seed distributions complementing the food rations. There were Khmer Rouge camps, which were generally better disciplined, and other resistance camps, where fighting the Vietnamese consisted mainly of talk and where protection rackets flourished.

The nationalists' dream of a united front against the Vietnamese took shape finally in June 1982, when Sihanouk agreed to head a resistance coalition of Democratic Kampuchea comprising the forces of the Khmer Rouge, Sihanouk, and a Khmer National Liberation Front led by Sonn Sann, with himself as head of state. Sihanouk gives most of the credit for this development to Thai Foreign Minister Siddhi Savetsila, who he says negotiated with him and with the Khmer Rouge and China, and to the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), which managed to impose on Democratic Kampuchea the formation of a coalition government. China furnished arms to the Khmer Rouge, while a number of other countries, including the United States, supplied the two other members of the coalition.

In spite of annual dry-season offensives, the Vietnamese occupation army could not overcome the Khmer resistance. In the 1984–1985 offensive, the Vietnamese drove the resistance out of its bases on the Cambodian side of the border. In order to solve the problem of large-scale infiltration (and to prevent more refugees from fleeing), the Vietnamese constructed the K5 defense line the length of the 700-kilometer border. A 100-meter-wide strip five to ten kilometers inside the border was cleared and fortified with a barbed wire fence made of bamboo poles, among which anti-personnel mines of Soviet manufacture designed to escape metal detection were laid. Every few hundred meters watchtowers were built. In the face of an endless guerrilla war, the SRV had decided by 1985, partly because of lessening Soviet aid, to withdraw, and withdrawal was made easier by the death of party secretary-general Le Duan in 1986.

# Cambodia: A Lawless State, a Lawless Kingdom

On December 2-4, 1987, Sihanouk and Hun Sen, the former foreign minister who had become prime minister of the PRK in January 1985, met, for the first time, at the prince's temporary residence at Fère-en-Tardenois in Picardy. The head of state and the prime minister carefully avoided signaling acceptance of the other's legitimacy. The only documentary record we have so far is from Sihanouk. Hun Sen opened the meeting with a historical account of the resistance that grew up after 1973 against Pol Pot which led ultimately to a call for help from Vietnam. The Vietnamese would definitely withdraw by 1990. Hun Sen was willing to include the KPNLF and the Khmer Rouge in the talks, but otherwise he and Sihanouk would have to continue to seek a rapprochement and a comprehensive solution to the conflict, a play on Sihanouk's desire to resume center stage. However, Sihanouk declined an offer to serve in a high government position in the PRK, which would have been an unseemly change of horses even for the nimble Sihanouk. He made it clear he would return to Phnom Penh only in the capacity of president of a new Khmer state, which would be neither "Democratic" with a capital "D" nor a "People's Republic" with capital "PR," but rather a parliamentary democracy. 454 At these meetings Sihanouk reportedly obtained a promise from Hun Sen that the Khmer Rouge leaders would not be put on trial during Sihanouk's lifetime. 455 Hun Sen's nightly conferences with Vietnamese and Soviet diplomats at his hotel in Soissons, 26 kilometers away, were noted by journalists. It was now Vietnam that was in the position of negotiating favorable political terms for its puppet in exchange for its agreement to withdraw its troops from the puppet's territory.

The negotiations continued sporadically in France, China, and Indonesia, with Sihanouk resigning and then changing his mind and resuming the presidency of the coalition of Democratic Kampuchea, and both sides making moves in accordance with understandings that were never publicly announced. Throughout the negotiations, Hun Sen, a man of very humble origin, played on Sihanouk's visceral dislike of intellectuals such as Pol Pot and Ieng Sary. Sihanouk continued to demand a public commitment to troop withdrawal by Vietnam in a timetable to be coordinated with a political settlement. He suggested the simultaneous disman-

tling of the PRK and Democratic Kampuchea and their replacement by a State of Cambodia, a non-Communist, non-socialist, neutral, and nonaligned state. He suggested a quadripartite coalition government. At one of their meetings, Hun Sen suggested the formation of a national reconciliation council, another echo of the DRV's negotiations with the Americans, this one to be headed by Sihanouk, of course.

An issue that was coming to the fore in the international arena was the problem of having a fair election in a country where one party controlled most of the territory and most of the population of Cambodia. Sihanouk continued to call the PRK "a creation and a creature of the expansionist and colonialist Vietnam Communist regime." 456 In April 1989, in response to Sihanouk's demand, the PRK changed its name to State of Cambodia, and by September the SRV had completed the withdrawal of its troops. When François Ponchaud revisited Phnom Penh a year later, he found a city that had gone from being depopulated to being overcrowded. Squatters were living in apartment buildings whose broken windows had been papered over, camping in the grounds of the major pagodas, or simply sleeping on the sidewalks. The Tuol Sleng interrogation center and the Phnom Sampeuou near Battambang had been converted, with East German technical assistance, into museums where the horrors of the Pol Pot regime were on display. The Vietnamese presence was carefully camouflaged. It was common knowledge that there were 6,000 Vietnamese technical experts in the ministries. Vietnamese was heard being spoken in odd places. When a bicycle collided with a motor scooter the scooter rider, in the uniform of a Cambodian soldier, spoke Vietnamese. In a café in Siemreap, a group of "Cambodian" soldiers spoke only Vietnamese. 457

### THE PARIS AGREEMENT AND SIHANOUK'S TRIUMPHANT RETURN

After further meetings in Indonesia, marked by arguments among the coalition partners and between them and Hun Sen, the main protagonists and their foreign supporters gathered in Paris for what were to be the climactic meetings of the 10-year-long negotiations, co-chaired by France and Indonesia. The plan was to create a United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC), under a special representative of the UN secretary-general, Yasushi Akashi, which would be empowered to return the refugees from the Thai border, disarm the four parties, and supervise elections for a new constituent assembly. A voluntary cease-fire was to begin on May 1, 1991. To get around the problem of UNTAC's appearing to exercise sovereignty during the transition a supra-national four-party body, the Supreme National Council (SNC), was created to embody Khmer sovereignty temporarily until elections were held. To enable Sihanouk to preside over the SNC, he resigned as head of the political party he had formed in exile, known by its acronym FUNCINPEC (National United Front for an Independent, Neutral, Peaceful, and Cooperative Cambodia), and was succeeded by his son, Prince Norodom Ranariddh, who had been present at his meetings in France with Hun Sen. It seems probable that Sihanouk had received prior guarantees from Chea Sim and Hun Sen that they would support him for president of the State of Cambodia. The participants in the Paris conference, including the UN secretary-general and the foreign ministers of 19 countries, signed the final act on October 23, 1991.

The period until the eventual formation of the new government is one for which we have plentiful primary sources, for three of the Cambodian parties had their own radio stations—Radio Phnom Penh (State of Cambodia), Voice of the Khmer (FUNCINPEC), and Voice of the Great National Union Front of Cambodia (Khmer Rouge). On October 17, 1991, the KPRP at an extraordinary party congress recast itself, chameleon-like, as the Pracheachon (People's Party), a throwback to the 1954–1960 period when the party had been hounded by Sihanouk. The new party statutes muffled the rhetoric about class struggle. This time the party stood for a program of privatization of the economy and a liberal democratic political system. Chea Sim was secretary-general and Hun Sen was vice chairman. 458 Obeisance to Vietnam and the formula of the "special relationship" were immediately toned down to "the traditional relations of solidarity and friendship between the parties and peoples of our two countries," although the Pracheachon sent its annual message of greeting to the VCP on the February 3 founding anniversary. 459 Hun Sen successfully defended his thesis of associated doctor of philosophy at the Nguyên Ai Quoc Institute in Hanoi in December 1990. His thesis was titled "Characteristics of the Cambodian Revolution" and analyzed the nature and origins of the Pol Pot genocidal regime and the historic turning point which saw the birth of the people's republic; it stressed the irreversible advance of the Cambodian revolution toward socialism, according to Radio Hanoi. 460 On March 16, 1991, he successfully defended his Ph.D. thesis in political science. 461 During October a number of political prisoners were released. They included former Transport and Communications Minister Ung Phan, who had been arrested in May 1990 for advocating a multiparty system. The SRV's ambassador and a powerful figure since 1979, Ngô Dien, departed for Hanoi a few days before Sihanouk's return.

In spite of the name changes, the Pracheachon and the State of Cambodia, interwoven one with the other and in the final analysis beholden to a tiny coterie at the top, managed to retain their hold on the administration. Just in case UNTAC was serious about taking over, they split key ministries such as interior so that the visible part of the ministry could be safely placed under UNTAC's temporary administration, while the real orders continued to be issued by a less visible backup ministry controlled by the ruling party.

In Phnom Penh, it was like a gathering of old friends, determined to bury the past, or at least the parts of it that were inconvenient. A broadly smiling Charles H. Twining, the American special representative to the SNC, deplaned at Pochentong on November 11, a sign the United States intended to play an active role. From Peking, Sihanouk, accompanied by Princess Monique and Hun Sen, returned to Phnom Penh for the first time in almost 13 years on November 14, 1991, and was given a triumphant welcome by the authorities of the State of Cambodia. He took up residence once again in the newly refurbished Khémarin Palace.

The leaders of the State of Cambodia proceeded to lionize the prince, and FUNCINPEC could not allow itself to be far behind. A dinner hosted by the Pracheachon and the government at the Chamcar Mon Palace on the evening of November 14 brought together all the leading figures of Phnom Penh. In the first of many speeches delivered at mass meetings in Phnom Penh and around the country, Sihanouk recited a version of recent history, portraying Hun Sen, Heng Samrin, and Chea Sim as patriots who had answered his summons to arms on March 23, 1970, although not mentioning their superiors. 462 At a press conference the same day, he went farther and announced an alliance between his followers and the Pracheachon. He predicted the Pracheachon "certainly" would win the elections. He also began referring to Hun Sen as his son, on an equal footing with Ranariddh, 463 and as "my most beloved son." Even for someone who referred to all Cambodians as his children, this was going quite far. "I trust His Excellency Hun Sen, His Excellency Chea Sim, His Excellency Heng Samrin, the Pracheachon, and the State of Cambodia one hundred percent," Sihanouk effused in a speech in Kandal Stoeung District. 465 He praised the Pracheachon as the vehicle that continued the policies of the former Sangkum. On November 20, FUN-CINPEC issued a statement saying it considered Sihanouk to be the head of state retroactive to the "illegal coup d'état of March 18, 1970," and announced support for Sihanouk "in the future election of Cambodia's president or head of state." The Paris agreement had provided for elections for a constituent assembly, but not for a president, so things were already beginning to go off the rails barely a week after Sihanouk's return. To firm up the alliance even more, the Pracheachon made Sihanouk's son Prince Norodom Chakrapong a member of its central committee and gave him a cushy job as vice chairman of the council of ministers of the State of Cambodia. With the Khmer Rouge continuing to fawn over Sihanouk, only Son Sann's among the four parties took a reserved position with respect to Sihanouk's ambitions for power.

The next step, coming on the heels of these surprising developments, was a stage-managed riot at the villa occupied by Khieu Samphan and Son Sen of the Party of Democratic Kampuchea, as the Khmer Rouge now called themselves, who had returned to Phnom Penh a few days after Sihanouk and who supposed themselves to be under the immunity of the Paris agreement, which ratified their membership of the SNC, along with that of representatives of the other three parties. The rioters were armed with hammers, iron bars, and axes and broke into the villa. The villa was ransacked, the two men were manhandled, and one of their aides, Kun Tieng, was taken away by the police for interrogation. It recalled the mob scenes at the DRV and PRG embassies in March 1970. Khieu Samphan and Son Sen immediately returned to Bangkok. Sihanouk, flustered by the development because of what it might portend for the international peace-restoring effort, convened the next meeting of the SNC in Thailand. The PDK demanded that the SNC be assured of security to hold its meetings in Phnom Penh and that UNTAC be dispatched to Cambodia without further delay.

Security was in the hands of Chea Sim. A wave of demonstrations broke out in Phnom Penh on December 17–20, 1991, led by several hundred state

employees protesting against corruption among high-ranking officials of the government, especially the private appropriation of funds resulting from the sale of state assets by ministers. Police intervened and arrested several of the demonstrators, including several students. Students then took to the street en masse demanding the release of those arrested. The police reacted violently, killing four students. At least 24 students were arrested by the army and held in the Tuol Sleng prison, the armed forces' national detention center. A curfew was imposed. In early 1992, with UNTAC still not deployed, there was open season on dissidents. Officials belonging to the parties opposed to the Phnom Penh government were on numerous occasions abducted and their bodies were found later, or they were simply assassinated by thugs who operated on motorbikes in broad daylight in Phnom Penh. Protests were registered by Khmer and UN spokesmen alike, but the killers were never brought to justice and it was clear they enjoyed official sanction. Ung Phan himself was wounded by gunmen the week after he announced the formation of a Liberal Social Democratic Party. Aside from these intimidations, the Phnom Penh government was also acquiring a reputation for corruption, an evil that had afflicted Sihanouk's regime, but the difference was that people were emboldened to speak out.

One act of UNTAC when it eventually deployed was to provide protection for the last group of armed followers of the United Front for the Liberation of Oppressed Races (FULRO), who gave up their jungle abode in eastern Mondolkiri Province in return for temporary sanctuary in Phnom Penh. The 398 Montagnard fighters and family members were shuttled out aboard helicopters in October 1992, handing over their light weapons and their flag to soldiers of Uruguay. French troops had made contact with them in June in their forest redoubt, 30 kilometers from the nearest settlement, with its wood and bamboo huts and openair Catholic and Evangelical churches where they were in the habit of singing hymns in the morning mist. Here they lived off the land, growing rice, maize, squash, pumpkins, and chilies and raising chickens and fishing in streams. They had crossed over from Vietnam in 1979 with the Vietnamese occupation of their tribal lands. Now, their leader, Colonel Y Peng Ayun, declared: "I stop fighting the Vietnamese Communist government in Hanoi." They asked for UN protection and the grant of refugee status and resettlement in the United States or France. 467

### THE MAY 1993 ELECTION AND COALITION GOVERNMENT

Up to the end of 1992, anyway, the main danger had been that UNTAC would turn a blind eye while the Pracheachon used its control of the administrative machinery to roll up the election. The rate of terrorist attacks against personnel of opposition parties increased. According to Son Sann, 23 members of the KPNLF and 21 members of FUNCINPEC were killed between November 1992 and February 1993. 468 The Pracheachon's terror campaign against its political opponents employed local thugs to assassinate provincial workers and ransack or attack with grenades, rockets, or gunfire opposition party offices, as was documented in a UN report. Not only did the State of Cambodia fail to bring to justice any of the accused perpetrators of these acts of violence, it is

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thought to have engineered a jailbreak in which one of them, the son of a government official, escaped under the noses of UNTAC guards. The Khmer Rouge continued its violence by targeting hapless Vietnamese civilians. Hun Sen, using doublespeak, told his campaign audiences that once the election was over the Khmer Rouge would be treated like outlaws and their leaders would be subject to prosecution by the new government.

The factor that changed everything was the withdrawal of the PDK from the election process just weeks before the voting. In April Khieu Samphan, the last PDK member of the SNC remaining in Phnom Penh, citing insecurity, closed the PDK office and withdrew. With the PDK no longer a factor in the election, the State of Cambodia could no longer justify strong measures to UNTAC. Ordinary Cambodians no longer felt afraid of retaliation if they voted against the Pracheachon, with its close association in the minds of many with the Vietnamese. This popular confidence, as much as Sihanouk's picture on FUNCINPEC's campaign posters, accounted for the Pracheachon's defeat at the polls.

Hun Sen and other leaders of the Pracheachon still made stump speeches intended to make voters believe it was they who had driven the Khmer Rouge from power in 1979, and their spokesmen were confidently predicting a 70 percent majority for the Pracheachon. Although as election week approached, the Pracheachon toned down its rhetoric against UNTAC for withdrawing its security forces from areas controlled by the Khmer Rouge and other failings; tension between the Pracheachon and UNTAC mounted almost visibly behind the polite formulas of diplomatic parlance. Tensions between Sihanouk and Akashi were particularly visible. Prince Norodom Chakrapong boasted that UNTAC personnel "would lose their jobs and go to join the ranks of the unemployed" if the State of Cambodia ceased its cooperation.

The Khmer Rouge, for their part, were too politically adroit to play into the Pracheachon's hands. In the days preceding the election, Khmer Rouge propaganda played heavily on the anti-UNTAC theme, pointing out UNTAC's earlier failures to make the SNC the real executive power during the transition and to take over five State of Cambodia ministries, and going so far as to call it "UNTAC's election." This found favor with voters, who were susceptible to the suggestion that their country, after having been occupied by 180,000 Vietnamese soldiers, was now occupied by 22,000 other foreigners. The Khmer Rouge punctuated their propaganda by isolated attacks on UNTAC personnel engaged in registering voters, setting up polling stations, and generally ensuring that the nearly 20 contesting political parties had a fair chance to campaign. But the Khmer Rouge were careful not to attack Cambodians, knowing that such attacks would quickly turn to their propaganda disadvantage. Exploiting another potent issue (one that was also exploited by the other non-Communist parties), Khmer Rouge propaganda continued to point out the Pracheachon's organic links with Hanoi, calling Hun Sen and other leaders "country-selling lackeys" of the Vietnamese.

When election week came, therefore, the voters saw that the State of Cambodia was still exercising power as it had always done, going about its routine of

holding cabinet meetings and sessions of its National Assembly to pass laws and receiving foreign dignitaries as if nothing had changed or was about to change. They saw that the Pracheachon, behind its facade of bureaucratic capitalism, was still the pre–Paris agreement KPRP, linked by the ritualistic speeches of its leaders at its party congresses to the ICP and therefore to Ho Chi Minh's ambitions of Vietnamese hegemony in Indochina. And they saw the Khmer Rouge on the sidelines.

The Cambodian election of May 23–28, 1993, was the first free election in Indochina since the departure of the last American troops in 1973. UNTAC ran the election without accepting any bluff from the State of Cambodia and was able to ensure that the voting took place under near-perfect security. This singular achievement was due to UNTAC's team of 945 international polling station officers from 43 countries, which in early May held an intensive training course out of snooping range in Thailand. This ensured that voters would not fear retaliation and that the balloting would not be subject to tampering. An important element was UNTAC's decision to hold the ballot boxes overnight in secure places guarded exclusively by UNTAC personnel. This last-minute decision particularly annoyed the Pracheachon, judging by the tone of its protests to UNTAC, and may have upset a plan to use its nationwide network of civil servants and military and alleged security threats as an excuse for placing restrictions on non-State of Cambodia personnel and to tamper with the ballot boxes away from the eyes of the other political parties. In the final analysis, one party held all the levers of civil power except for the one that really counted the paper ballots in people's hands.

In the voting, the Cambodians surprised all the pundits who had predicted a big win by the Pracheachon. FUNCINPEC received 1,824,188 votes, or 45.47 percent; the Pracheachon 1,533,471, or 38.22 percent. The former won 58 seats in the 120-seat Constituent Assembly, with 51 to the latter, 10 to Son Sann's Buddhist Liberal Democratic Party, and one to Moulinaka, an offshoot of FUNCINPEC. The voter turnout was 89.56 percent of those eligible.<sup>469</sup>

The voting was hardly over, however, before the struggle for power was resumed in Phnom Penh. As part of its plan to make the voting as transparent as possible, UNTAC had arranged to announce the results bit by bit, instead of withholding them until all the votes were counted. In fact, the very first partial results announced, from Phnom Penh and Kompong Cham, gave FUNCINPEC a large majority. Exit polls conducted by Kyodo News Service on the first two days of voting showed FUNCINPEC leading in Phnom Penh, Kompong Cham, Kompong Thom, and Siem Reap. Hun Sen, from the first day of voting, was quoted as suggesting that the Pracheachon would be willing to form a coalition provisional government with parties other than the Khmer Rouge even if the Pracheachon won a majority.

The 70-year-old Sihanouk, who returned from Peking the day before the voting started, did not vote but started maneuvering almost immediately. On May 26, even before the voting was over, Sihanouk used the occasion of a visit of French parliamentarians to announce his availability to continue as head of

state in whatever form the Constituent Assembly would decide—an amazing display of his unquenched thirst for power and prestige.<sup>470</sup> There had been a rather chaotic dialogue involving Sihanouk (who went periodically to Peking for medical treatment), the State of Cambodia, and UNTAC on the question of whether the peace process should include a presidential election, a question on which the Paris agreement was silent, but in which the French government appears to have played an active role. The final answer was No.

Sihanouk also admitted he had been mistaken in previously proposing the formation of a quadripartite government of national reconciliation to include the Khmer Rouge. He went on to suggest that if it was impossible to gain the two-thirds majority in the Constituent Assembly required by the Paris agreement to ratify the new constitution, he as the head of the SNC and Akashi should approach the Assembly to adopt a simple majority. Akashi flatly rejected this startling proposal by pointing out that the elected Assembly was competent to decide its own procedures, forcing Sihanouk to pull back on this front, too.

As if this was not enough to show his contempt for both the international community and the voters, Sihanouk then proposed on June 3 to form a coalition government as prime minister, with Ranariddh and Hun Sen as co-deputy prime ministers. He also announced the dissolution of the State of Cambodia. <sup>471</sup> A communiqué from the Pracheachon immediately announced acceptance of this arrangement. 472 Apparently in a panic after UNTAC started broadcasting the election results, Hun Sen, Chea Sim, Heng Samrin, and the other Pracheachon leaders had gone to Sihanouk and pleaded with him to announce the formation of a coalition government. Ranariddh demurred at his father's suggestion, however, citing threats to his safety by hard-liners of the Pracheachon, but in actual fact seeing a power play behind the proposal that would have negated the result of the election. Akashi denounced Sihanouk's maneuver as a constitutional coup. Sihanouk was forced to write to Ranariddh that he had "relinquished the idea of forming and leading the national government."473 But in a radio broadcast, he told FUNCINPEC that it had won the election by using his name, that it had promised voters that "voting for FUNCINPEC means voting for the prince father to return to full power, like before," and that it meant the country would know glory, prosperity, and peace as in the era of the Sangkum. 474 Thus, after having bestowed the title of continuator of the Sangkum on the Communist Pracheachon, this autocrat tried to do the same with its principal nationalist rival. He was reportedly irritated by foreign journalists' references to the election as having been the fairest since 1955, that is to say, before the Sangkum period.

The United States also deserved a share of the credit for respecting the people's expressed will. According to one published account, the United States faced down pressure from France and Japan to go along with the formation of an interim coalition outside the Assembly. A working paper circulated in Phnom Penh in early June spelled out the position:

The U.S. is concerned that recent discussions among the Cambodian parties concerning the immediate formation of an interim coalition government may lead to a violation of the Paris accords and the spirit of

the successful election. . . . We thus want to underscore the importance of ensuring that any attempts to forge a coalition . . . adhere strictly to the process laid down by the Paris accords. In particular the Constituent Assembly must be permitted to carry out fully its responsibility to draft a new constitution and forming the new government in Cambodia.

As an astute American correspondent on the scene reported, "At a moment when Cambodians seem desperate only for peace and for the chance at last to rebuild their country, there is a sense that Prince Sihanouk is concerned too much with the fate of Prince Sihanouk, and with making sure that he has unquestioned control over whatever government emerges from the elections that were held last month."

It became clear from what Sihanouk himself said that he was acting at the behest of the Pracheachon. The only way for the Pracheachon to hold onto power in the election aftermath was to persuade Sihanouk to take it under his wing, disregarding the Assembly, a task to which Hun Sen and Chea Sim bent themselves in repeated visits and telephone calls to Sihanouk during that crucial week. The State of Cambodia had no intention of dissolving itself, a fact that was evident from charges by several State of Cambodia spokesmen that there had been irregularities in the voting and in the ballot counting, charges that UNTAC denied but, mindful of the danger of alienating the State of Cambodia completely, promised to investigate. The Pracheachon did not accept the results of the election until June 19, when it did so grudgingly.

Meanwhile, the authorities in seven eastern provinces announced their secession to form an autonomous zone in protest against the election irregularities. Whether Hun Sen secretly sanctioned this move as a device to bring pressure on UNTAC to reschedule the voting in some areas, as some believe, or not, the move had the backing of Chakrapong and other senior Pracheachon leaders. Before the move collapsed days later, several ugly incidents had been staged in the seven provinces against UNTAC personnel, who were in some cases withdrawn as a precaution.

On June 14, the newly elected Constituent Assembly convened in the same building where its predecessor had voted to divest him 23 years before. Sihanouk was vested with the powers of head of state by the newly elected Constituent Assembly, which passed a resolution declaring "null and void the illegal coup d'état." At its first plenary session on June 30, the Assembly established a permanent commission to draft the new constitution. The provisional government, consisting of 28 cabinet ministers, was approved by the Assembly the same day.

By August, published reports already spoke of agreement in the Constituent Assembly to restore the monarchy.<sup>477</sup> After consultations with Sihanouk at his residences in Peking and Pyongyang, the Assembly adopted the new constitution at its second plenary session on September 21.<sup>478</sup> Sihanouk signed it in a ceremony at the royal palace and became king again on September 24, thereby going back on the promise he had given the people in June 1960 not to sit on the throne again.<sup>479</sup> He was following the precedent of King Chêy Chêtthâ IV,

who in the chaotic days of Siamese and Vietnamese rivalry in Cambodia had no fewer than four reigns. Having ascended the throne at the age of 19 in 1675, Chêy Chêtthâ fought successfully to defeat the other contenders for the throne who had had the foreigners' support, codified the laws and abolished the death penalty, and gave lands to Cham refugees from Vietnam. In 1695 he abdicated in favor of his nephew, but re-ascended the throne at his death 10 months later. Faced with a fresh insurrection led by a mandarin who called in the Vietnamese once more, Chêy Chêtthâ abdicated a second time in favor of his son-in-law, but, dissatisfied with the new ruler's conduct, deposed him. In 1702 he abdicated for the third time, in favor of his 12-year-old son. He then took back the throne until 1706, when his son again became king. By these successive abdications, in the judgment of the French historian Dauphin-Meunier, Chêy Chêtthâ destabilized the monarchy and created the conditions for 50 years of internecine royal struggles.<sup>480</sup> Sihanouk also antedated his reign to March 18, 1970, which gave him the satisfaction of relegating, as he thought, the republics of Lon Nol and Khieu Samphan to footnotes in Cambodian history. But his action also imposed on Sihanouk responsibility for the genocide of the Khmer Rouge as having occurred under his reign; it was a responsibility which, of course, Sihanouk did not acknowledge publicly.

The Assembly became the National Assembly of the new regime. The missions of UNTAC and the SNC were terminated. At its opening session the National Assembly elected Chea Sim as its chairman. 481 The constitution stipulated that the king reigned, and for life, but exercised no political power. The king's consort was named queen, but under Article 15 she did not reign. As under the 1947 constitution, the choice of a successor was left to the Council of the Throne. Under the new constitution, as under the 1947 constitution, the chairman of the Assembly assumed the powers of head of state ad interim in case of incapacity of the king, and he was also a member of the Council of the Throne. Another aspect left vague was the relationship between the king and the royal government. Article 100 stipulated that the king appointed the government after it had received a vote of confidence from the Assembly; but there was no mention of whether the king was empowered to dismiss the government. The cabinet list of the royal government was announced with Ranariddh and Hun Sen as first and second co-prime ministers. 482 It had co-ministers from the two majority parties, leading the Khmer Rouge to call it in their propaganda, with some justification, the two-headed government. Under the new government, the rolls of civil servants, and with them their budgets, were to increase manyfold.

The Khmer Rouge, having withdrawn to their insalubrious mountainous base areas on the Thai border, were still actors on the Cambodian stage upon whom the curtain had not yet dropped. In July 1993, Sihanouk expressed irritation at American pressure to prevent talks with their leaders. "I am more and more angered by these incessant warnings from the Americans, which have made me even more ill than I was in the recent past. So as not to end my life in a mental asylum, I abandon plans to organize in September 1993 or later a

'round table' with Mr. Khieu Samphan or other Khmer Rouge," he said. 483 Military operations against the Khmer Rouge redoubts soon resumed against the backdrop of the infighting in the capital. It was good propaganda for the government, particularly abroad, and if the final objectives were never attained the operations did not cost much, except for the never-reported toll they took of the poorly paid and ill-led government conscripts engaged therein. The Khmer Rouge were finally declared outlaws under a decree passed by the Assembly on July 7, 1994, which did not put an end to the matter, either. 484

Corruption flourished, particularly the sale of medicine, much of it donated, from clinics and hospitals to the members of the ruling elite. But virtually everything was for sale, including academic certificates, government jobs, and statuary from Angkor Wat. There was large-scale logging from Cambodia's forests. The Khmer Rouge carried on a brisk trade in the rubies from Pailin. Both Hun Sen and Ranariddh assiduously expanded their personal security details into veritable private armies.

Meanwhile, Sihanouk again displayed his agility by embracing General Le Duc Anh, who had commanded the Vietnamese occupation troops and had risen to be president of the SRV, during the general's official visit to Cambodia in August 1995. "The time-honored and fraternal friendship that links our two countries for the noble and vital benefit of the peoples of the two countries is an essential factor for stability, peace, and prosperity in this entire region," Sihanouk said at a state banquet in honor of his guest. 485

Hun Sen proved himself an adept student of Ho Chi Minh's coalition tactics; it was not for nothing that he obtained a doctorate at the Institute of Marxism-Leninism in Vietnam. Hun Sen had organized a government that was a coalition at the top only; the Pracheachon, like the Viet Minh in 1945, retained almost all administrative posts below the central level. Furthermore, he obtained, by mixed use of threats and bribes, the defection to the Pracheachon of eight FUNCINPEC members of the Assembly, for whom the Pracheachon provided security. Even the Liberal Democratic Party of Son Sann was torn apart by dissension in its ranks, carefully cultivated by the Pracheachon. A grenade attack on its headquarters in September 1995 wounded 31 party members during a party congress. The non-violent nationalist parties proved grist for the mill of the Pracheachon, which used violence as a matter of course.

Nor was the Pracheachon about to surrender its near-monopoly of local administration, manifest in its party branch in each village, that was the guarantee of election victory. In a move to tighten his power over the population even further, Hun Sen gave village chiefs authority to control the movement of villagers, which had been a basic feature of the Khmer Rouge regime. The two coministers of interior, Sar Kheng and You Hockry, signed an agreement on division of power at the local level in December 1995. The two majority parties were to designate their nominees for heads of the 174 *srok* (districts). When a head belonged to one party, his deputy would belong to the other party. In February 1996, another agreement was signed allowing FUNCINPEC to nominate 1,648 of its members to posts at the *srok* and provincial levels. With his

undermining of rival parties well under way, Hun Sen repudiated these agreements the following month, precipitating a showdown.

On March 21, 1996, Ranariddh threatened to resign from the coalition government if FUNCINPEC did not receive an equitable division of power. Casting appearances aside, Hun Sen brought tanks into Phnom Penh in a show of force. Addressing 900 party members at their 45th founding anniversary in June, Hun Sen challenged Ranariddh to make good on his threat to resign and said that if he did not do so he was "a real dog" (chhkae sot). Sihanouk, meanwhile, continued his meddling in politics, even going to Chea Sim's house on March 26, 1996, to meet him, an unprecedented event in the Cambodian monarchy; when challenged by the politicians, he fell back on his customary denials of any political ambition and threats to abdicate.

In these circumstances, Ranariddh was unable to develop any independence of action, and his participation in parliamentary fraud further discredited him among the nationalists. He became just another cog in the wheel of the corrupt regime in Phnom Penh, and when his position was threatened by other FUNCINPEC leaders, such as Sam Rainsy, the former finance minister who had balanced the first budget following the 1993 election and who proposed investigating corrupt contract deals, he simply turned against them, not hesitating to forge signatures on petitions to remove them from the Assembly and replace them. Ranariddh was able to do this because the peculiar law adopted in the Paris agreement made representation in the Assembly based on party rather than as individuals, meaning that a deputy could be replaced by someone from his own party at the decision of the party leader. The tactic was shortly to be turned against Ranariddh himself.

Legislators such as Rainsy were obliged to establish their own parties to fight for what they believed in, in Rainsy's case the Khmer Nation Party. They also learned that the obstacles to such a course were not all bureaucratic. On March 30, 1997, a grenade attack was made on a demonstration organized by the Khmer Nation Party in front of the National Assembly to denounce the Pracheachon's control over the judicial system and to demand the setting up of an independent system of courts. The demonstration drew about 170 people, including women workers from a textile factory protesting poor working conditions (they had received the required permission from the ministry of interior) and journalists from opposition newspapers. The police were absent, except later when a score arrived but stayed well away. Armed soldiers from one of Hun Sen's special units were posted about 100 meters away, in front of the Botum Vodey pagoda and the Pracheachon headquarters. At 8:20 A.M., two men in the back of the crowd threw two grenades toward Rainsy and then ran toward the armed soldiers, who turned back their pursuers. Rainsy's bodyguard saw the grenades coming, threw Rainsy to the ground, and was instantly killed. Ten minutes later, in the confusion, two more grenades were thrown by passersby on motorcycles or in cars. The carnage amounted to 16 dead and more than 125 wounded, including an American consultant and a Chinese reporter. The complicity between the attackers and the soldiers, obvious to many observers, suggested strongly that Hun Sen was behind the attack and that he no longer feared intimidating the *Phnompenhois* in the middle of the capital in broad daylight. An investigation by agents of the U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation, made because an American was injured, reportedly found that the culprits who lobbed the grenades were in the employ of Hun Sen. 486 Rainsy was allowed to leave a few days later on a long-planned trip to France and the United States.

### THE COUP D'ETAT OF JULY 5-6, 1997

With signs multiplying that factions of the Khmer Rouge were seeking to defect, Hun Sen offered defectors integration into the armed forces at equivalent rank. Ieng Sary became the first important Khmer Rouge leader to defect. Ranariddh visited Ieng Sary's base near Pailin on the Thai border, and he and Hun Sen asked Sihanouk in September 1996 to grant Ieng Sary an amnesty from charges under Cambodian law. The king signed the amnesty without public discussion. Thereby both the death sentence in absentia passed by a show trial in Phnom Penh in 1979 and the more recent law declaring the Khmer Rouge to be outlaws were conveniently ignored. A group of Khmer Rouge were scheduled to announce their return to the nation on July 6 after successful negotiations with Ranariddh's envoy, General Nhiek Bun Chhay. Sihanouk announced he would not grant amnesty to any more Khmer Rouge leaders, a safe statement as none had yet been put on trial. It is significant that for all his calumnies against the Khmer Rouge over the years, Sihanouk never called for putting their leaders on trial.

As infighting among the remaining Khmer Rouge factions intensified and more defections were negotiated, relations between Hun Sen and Ranariddh grew tense. Attempts by Ranariddh to form a united front with the Khmer Nation Party (despite his collusion with Hun Sen to have Sam Rainsy expelled from the Assembly) and the political implications of such an alliance also alarmed Hun Sen and determined him to take action against Ranariddh.

There was an exchange of gunfire on June 17 between Hun Sen's and Ranariddh's security details in the capital. A week later a Khmer Rouge defector charged at a press conference at Hun Sen's house that Ranariddh was negotiating with the Khmer Rouge to bring more soldiers into Phnom Penh to fight Hun Sen. This false charge was repeated over the next few days by Pracheachon spokesmen. Hun Sen now adopted a strategy of using armed units directly accountable to himself to disarm and demobilize soldiers in army units commanded by Ranariddh loyalists and to isolate, arrest, or execute senior FUNCINPEC officials. His aim was to cow the nationalists. On July 2, Hun Sen's units stopped a 20truck convoy near Prek Taten naval base, 25 kilometers north of Phnom Penh; several soldiers were wounded in the exchange of gunfire. The following day, 200 of Hun Sen's military police disarmed members of Ranariddh's motorcade. Then, on the morning of July 5, Hun Sen's forces attempted to disarm soldiers at Taing Krasaing near Pochentong, FUNCINPEC's main base, where General Nhiek Bun Chhay ordered his soldiers to resist, and the fighting between the two camps soon engulfed the city itself.

Both co-prime ministers were out of the country, Ranariddh in France and Hun Sen in Vietnam, "purely on private vacation," according to a foreign minis-

try spokesman in Hanoi. Vietnam had every reason to support the crushing of Ranariddh, who had recently been making speeches about the border issue and Vietnam's refusal to engage in negotiations on it. 488 Over the next few hours, Hun Sen's followers deployed several units with tanks and armored personnel carriers in strategic locations throughout the city. The key units were commanded by Hok Lon Dy, Keam Savuth, and Nat Saveun and were backed up by former Khmer Rouge soldiers led by defectors Keo Pong and Pon Pheap. After an overnight suspension, the firing resumed on the morning of July 6. Tanks took positions around the homes of Ranariddh and senior FUNCINPEC officials. By evening, Hun Sen controlled Taing Krasaing, the airport, the defense ministry, and the television station, effectively bringing the coup d'état to an end.

On radio and television that evening, a returned Hun Sen declared martial law and said Ranariddh would stand trial for a list of alleged crimes if he returned to Cambodia. The crimes included importing two tons of arms that had been seized at Sihanoukville on May 23 and bringing the Khmer Rouge into Phnom Penh. If these were crimes, Hun Sen was guilty many times over, for he had imported 30 containers of Chinese arms and 196 military vehicles and had invited Ieng Sary to Phnom Penh on two occasions. Hun Sen had attracted more Khmer Rouge defectors to the Pracheachon's ranks than Ranariddh had to FUNCINPEC's. But as no system of justice had yet been set up in Cambodia, such details mattered little.

Hun Sen called on renegade and surrendered FUNCINPEC leaders to nominate a new first co-prime minister. Although Hun Sen had reportedly tipped Toan Chhay, the governor of Siemreap, for the post, his lack of an Assembly seat posed a problem, so Hun Sen saw to the nomination of Foreign Minister Ung Huot instead. His nomination was approved by the Assembly on August 6, in a session that was attended by 99 of the 120 members. Only 11 of FUNCINPEC's 30 steering committee members were in Cambodia at the time, however, so the nomination was a breach of FUNCINPEC's bylaws. In addition, Huot's nomination required the consent of both vice-chairmen of the Assembly, but one of them, the Buddhist Liberal Democratic Party (BLDP) leader Son Soubert, had expressed his opposition to Huot's candidacy from his exile in Bangkok. And Ranariddh had not been impeached or removed from office in accordance with the constitution.

Over the next few days, Hun Sen's forces, dispensing with arrest warrants, and of course disregarding the constitutional guarantees of human rights and due process of law, ruthlessly carried out executions of Ranariddh loyalists. Among the first victims were four of General Nhiek Bun Chhay's bodyguards (although the general himself escaped), whose bodies, their eyes gouged out, were displayed on a street for two days; Ho Sok, an outspoken critic who had publicly accused Hun Sen of involvement in the March 30 grenade attack; Chao Sambath, whose execution was attributed by human rights watchers to members of Regiment 911, an elite commando unit trained and equipped by the Indonesian army, as well as two of his security guards, found near a pagoda handcuffed and shot in the head; Generals Kroch Yoeum, Ly Seng Hong, Sam Norin, and Naen Bun Thon, all of whom had held posts in the administration; one of Ranariddh's bodyguards; and Major Lak Ki. Altogether, 60 of these "extra-judicial" killings (in the term used by human rights advocates) were documented. The government had made sure that the numerous non-governmental organizations in the country pulled their field personnel back to Phnom Penh at the first clashes for their safety, so there would be no foreign observers of these atrocities. A wave of arrests, 564 by the Pracheachon's own count, culminated in the establishment of six detention centers in Kandal Province, which held what were officially described as "illegally recruited soldiers" or "Khmer Rouge elements." Again, the Pracheachon's use of legalistic language to cover its illegal activities, as if words meant nothing, stood out. Within a week of the coup, more than a dozen National Assembly members had fled to Thailand. In addition to these more fortunate exiles, 30,000 refugees fled to the border to escape fighting. 489

While the actions of the Communists were to be condemned, Ranariddh's poor performance in leading his party did much to bring catastrophe upon the nationalists. The lesson of the entire affair for the nationalists seemed to be that once they allowed themselves to be provoked into mimicking the Communists' preparations for open warfare they were bound to lose out, as the VNQDD and the Dai Viets had learned to their cost in 1945 and 1946. Human Rights Watch established the assassination of 263 persons between January 1997 and October 1998, most of them by the military or police.

From his residence in Peking, Sihanouk preserved a public silence on the actions of his royal government in Phnom Penh. He did tell a Japanese diplomat with whom he met privately that he regretted the use of torture. There was an interesting progression here. He had been responsible for the deaths of South Vietnamese and American soldiers, about whom he certainly cared nothing, by turning Cambodia into a springboard of aggression against South Vietnam between 1964 and 1970. Then he had been responsible for patronizing the Khmer Rouge to unleash their holocaust against Cambodia's citizens between 1970 and 1979. Now he had on his hands the blood of Cambodia's nationalist leaders who were struggling to keep their country out of Vietnam's clutches and to establish something resembling a civil and law-abiding society.

In February 1998, as desultory talks went on to arrange a cease-fire, General Nhiek Bun Chhay, who had managed to establish a resistance base at O Samay in northern Cambodia, and who was accused of the same crimes as Ranariddh, called for Hun Sen to be tried for his responsibility for the student deaths in December 1991, the assassinations of the election campaign of 1993, the murders of opposition journalists, the grenade attack on the BLDP party headquarters in September 1995, and the grenade attack of March 30, as well as the 60 "extrajudicial" deaths following the coup d'état of July 5–6, 1997.

Following the success of his coup d'état, Hun Sen carried on as if nothing had happened. Reaction abroad had admittedly been unfavorable, especially at the UN General Assembly, where the reconstituted government was denied the representation of Cambodia. The State Department, on the other hand,

following a long tradition, did not demur at this Thai-style coup, which had been accepted by the head of state, except for his regret at the use of torture, and therefore legitimized. Congressional sentiment was rather sterner.

Hun Sen made a number of small gestures, for example lifting the suspension of six opposition newspapers closed on the usual trumped-up charges to please a visiting European Union delegation. But he counted on the elections to the National Assembly to win him a success in the international arena now that he no longer feared a united nationalist opposition. The election was set to take place July 26, 1998, and Hun Sen again talked confidently of winning big. His major opponent was now no longer Ranariddh but Sam Rainsy. Rainsy did not resort to violence, but instead, showing courage, used his legal training to file suit against the government on behalf of the widows of the victims of the coup d'état, strictly on principle.

Hun Sen, fearing Rainsy's growing popularity, did his best to put him away. Rainsy's party was obliged to drop the name Party of the Khmer Nation after a dissident member, Kong Mony, registered a party of the same name. Rainsy accused Interior Minister Sar Kheng of being behind the move. If true, it would show Hun Sen's taking another trick from Ho Chi Minh's book of nationalist-Communist coalition politics. Rainsy renamed his party the Party of Sam Rainsy on the theory that Hun Sen would have a difficult time finding another Sam Rainsy before election day. Son Sann followed suit, renaming his party the Party of Son Sann. In February, observers in Phnom Penh were surprised by the sudden blossoming of new political parties, some carrying names very similar to Sangkum, including one formed by the first co–prime minister, Ung Huot, as well as others by leaders of the shattered FUNCINPEC. None of these parties had any real following, but they helped Hun Sen create the appearance of a democratic election, necessary for foreign consumption, and drew a few votes away from Rainsy.

In early 1998, several dozen politicians and family members who had taken refuge in Thailand returned to Phnom Penh. The Assembly had had to annul 10 sessions for lack of a quorum, and some suspected the returning deputies were mainly anxious to collect their back salaries, which amounted to the handsome sum of \$2,300 per month. Abroad, diplomats tried to solve the problem of getting Ranariddh, now no longer co-prime minister but simply a deputy, back to Cambodia. The Japanese eventually produced a formula that would save face all around and assure the normalization of Cambodia's foreign relations. The debate inside Cambodia focused on the pertinent question of whether in the future members of the royal family should be banned from participating in politics, with Sihanouk, as usual, taking a position that such a ban was unenforceable while disclaiming any political ambition himself. In addition to Ranariddh, there was also the case of Prince Norodom Sirivudh, a younger son of King Norodom Suramarit by a minor wife, who had been FUNCINPEC's secretary-general and then foreign minister. Faced with a trumped-up charge of concocting a plan to assassinate Hun Sen and the lifting of his parliamentary immunity, Sirivudh

again went into exile. The plan agreed to was for Ranariddh to be convicted in absentia of the false charges that had been lodged against him and then to receive a royal pardon. In two typical Communist-style show trials before 300 spectators on March 4 and 17, whose intent was not to prove guilt but rather to carry out the party's decision, Ranariddh was duly convicted and sentenced to 30 years of imprisonment and fined \$54 million to be paid, of course, to victims of the upheaval of July 5–6. At the written request of the co–prime ministers, Sihanouk granted his son a pardon on March 20, but not before seizing the occasion to spin the drama out further with his rejection of a plea by Bopha Devi on her brother's behalf and several rapid changes of mind designed to keep everyone guessing.

Considering himself to have been cleared by this travesty of justice, Ranariddh returned to Cambodia at the end of the month, accompanied by Stephen J. Solarz, who had been named American special envoy in the wake of the coup d'état, and Lakhan Mehrotra, special representative of the UN secretary-general. In return for the acceptance of this plan by the Cambodians, the international community allocated financial support for the election. The European Union, Japan, Canada, and Australia provided more than \$20 million, while the United States provided \$2.3 million, reflecting the prevailing American lack of interest in supporting democracy in Indochina that had become evident the previous year.

On April 16, the radio of the Khmer Rouge announced the death of Pol Pot. He was cremated in the traditional Khmer way. By dying quietly in his sleep, Pol Pot deprived self-serving governments and media experts of making him the symbol of universal opprobrium. As a subhead in *The New York Times* put it, "In Pol Pot, we lost a criminal we cannot punish." The urge to punish was highlighted by Elizabeth Becker in a sidebar reporting that President Bill Clinton had ordered that efforts to bring other Khmer Rouge leaders to trial be continued. The noticeable reluctance of the Cambodians themselves to see such trials take place was not mentioned by American commentators. In an appearance on American public television, Sydney Schanberg linked the "evil" of Pol Pot with the American bombing of Cambodia, a favorite theme in some American quarters.

Hun Sen still controlled all the administrative and electoral machinery. A National Election Commission had been established but was seen as being under the domination of the Pracheachon. Registration of voters was calm, however, and 97 percent of eligible voters were registered, as had been the case in 1993. The campaign proceeded without major problems, although there were again a high number of assassinations, estimated at 40. On election day, July 26, people cast their ballots in what two foreign observers, Professors MacAlister Brown and Joseph J. Zasloff, described as a festive mood.<sup>490</sup>

The turnout of 93.74 percent of registered voters surpassed that of the 1993 election. The Pracheachon received 2,030,802 votes, a half million more than in 1993, or 41.42 percent of the total valid votes cast. FUNCINPEC received 1,554,374 votes, less than in 1993, or 31.71 percent. The Party of Sam Rainsy

received 669,653 votes, or 14.75 percent. The allocation of seats in the 122-member Assembly was up to the National Election Commission, using a complicated formula that resulted in the Pracheachon's receiving 64 seats, FUNCINPEC 43 seats, and the Party of Sam Rainsy 15 seats, thereby depriving the last two of the combined majority they would have received under the formula used in 1993 and the post of prime minister. Minor parties received the remaining votes, 12.12 percent of the valid votes cast, about the same as in 1993, except that this time there were 37 such parties instead of 16. They gained no seats.<sup>491</sup>

The opposition called for demonstrations contesting the fairness of the election. After several days, the police got tough and fired into the crowds, killing several. During this time, Sihanouk remained secluded at his residence in Siem Reap, urging Hun Sen not to have recourse to arms, "which could aggravate the national crisis and trigger the death of the nation." Tension mounted when an assassination attempt was made against Hun Sen by rockets fired at his motorcade as he and members of the Assembly were driving to be sworn in by Sihanouk. Sihanouk also feared assassination, and was now always surrounded by his North Korean bodyguards, a gift from his great friend Kim Il-sung. Fearing for their lives, as after the failed bomb attempt against Hitler in 1944, Ranariddh and Sam Rainsy left the country. Sam Rainsy did not return until the end of November.

Under the constitution, 82 votes of the Assembly were required to approve a government. It was not until November 13 that an agreement on a new government was signed between the Pracheachon and FUNCINPEC, allowing Sihanouk to leave for Peking as scheduled the following day. Under the agreement, Hun Sen was named prime minister and Ranariddh was named chairman of the National Assembly, where he was removed from the exercise of any but ceremonial duties. It seemed a fitting end for the political career of someone who had demonstrated such a high degree of incompetence.

The two majority parties agreed to create a Senate by amending 10 of the 14 chapters of the constitution and adding one chapter. The National Assembly approved on March 4, and Sihanouk signed the amended constitution on March 9. The chairmanship of the Senate went to Chea Sim, secretary-general of the Pracheachon, who under the revised constitutional arrangements retained his right to act as interim head of state in case of the absence or incapacitation of the king. The Senate met in the Chamcar Mon Palace, its 59 members initially nominated by the parties represented in the Assembly, then subject to indirect election. Many of them were Assembly deputies who had lost their bids for re-election or corrupt individuals such as General Soy Kéo, the former commander of the Stung Treng military region and one of the chiefs in the timber trade. At all events, the Senate had even less to do with the problems faced by the majority of Cambodians than the Assembly.

A new coalition government headed by Hun Sen and containing only two shared ministries (interior and defense) was approved on November 30. The Pracheachon had 14 ministries and 26 vice-ministries, FUNCINPEC 13 ministries and 27 vice-ministries. At the National Assembly, for the first time, a minister answered a written question on the Assembly floor.

General Nhiek Bun Chhay and several others convicted of political crimes were amnestied and reintegrated under the November 13 agreement. The general assumed the post of vice-chairman of the Senate, showing how fluid party loyalties could be. The year ended with the submission of two leading Khmer Rouge figures, Nuon Chea and Khieu Samphan. They wrote a letter to Hun Sen on December 25 expressing their wish to live in society as ordinary citizens. Hun Sen replied that it was not only he but also the royal government and the armed forces that sent warm greetings to their Excellencies who come back to live in the national society. The two then were transported to Phnom Penh and put up in a luxury hotel. The scene of a magnanimous Hun Sen receiving the allegiance of his defeated enemies was in the tradition of the Khmer kings. The two, after spending a weekend at the beach, then paid a visit to Angkor Wat to imbibe them with the spiritual origin of the nation, before returning to Pailin, where their security was assured. At a press conference in the capital, both expressed sorrow for the sufferings of humans and animals under their reign, also in keeping with Cambodia's Buddhist beliefs.

Hun Sen, mindful of the promise he had made to Sihanouk, handled international pressure for trials of the Khmer Rouge leaders with his usual adroitness, first claiming sole jurisdiction over the matter for Cambodia, then making concessions on participation in the process by non-Cambodian legal experts, and finally putting the whole thing off into the indefinite future. It was not that no one knew the whereabouts of these men. On August 1, following the election, the Cambodian army arrested Nuon Paet, the former Khmer Rouge general accused of ordering the murder of three young tourists, French, British, and Australian, in 1994; living quietly on his farm near Pailin, he was lured to Battambang and then imprisoned in Phnom Penh. In view of the publicity given the murders at the time, it looked like Hun Sen's payoff to the Europeans for certifying the election's fairness. He was acquitted at his trial.

Talks on the border between Cambodia and Vietnam resumed in March 1999 in the form of a mixed commission, which referred in its communiqué to the agreements signed by the PRK. It was pointed out, however, that these agreements had never been ratified by the National Assembly. The Cambodian side, led by Var Kim Hung, a former diplomat, refused to give up the Brevié Line; the maritime border was important because of the possibility of undersea oil reserves. The National Assembly passed a law extending the period of pretrial detention of persons charged with genocide, war crimes, or crimes against humanity from six months to three years. <sup>493</sup> One candidate of a token trial was Kang Kek Ieu, better known as Duch, the former commandant of the Tuol Sleng prison, who also expressed contrition and readiness to stand trial in keeping with his new Christian faith; the government had known for two years his whereabouts before he surfaced publicly in April 1999. <sup>494</sup>

# The Communist-Nationalist Struggle Continues

The party's victory over the nationalists did not seem to be permanent. The security organizations were still kept busy. Dissent assumed many forms, driven by

continued low living standards, restrictions of all kinds in everyday life, and the corruption of party members, all phenomena which seemed to shout out that the ideals of the revolution had been betrayed. At first, dissent focused on the privileges of the party leaders, who were still the men who had led the country through the long war years, but it gradually broadened to include many other objects of discontent. The party reacted by applying "administrative measures" against dissidents, as if they were not worth bothering about; a few were put on trial, but the evidence produced at these trials was designed simply to show their guilt to the audience. But the party took the dissidents seriously, and did not hesitate to resort to illegal methods on occasion in an attempt to cow them.

The Socialist Republic of Vietnam was in serious danger of becoming a gerontocracy. The party was aging. According to membership figures released in 1996, pensioners made up the biggest group of members. While the share of the population aged under 30 was around 60 percent, the share of the party membership under 30 was barely 11.6 percent, down from 15.6 percent in 1991. While the share of the population aged over 41 was around 30 percent, the share of the party membership over 41 was 56 percent. At the time of the Eighth Party Congress in June 1996, the party had 2,128,742 members, which were distributed very unevenly; Ho Chi Minh City, with a population of 5 million, had just 85,294 members. Fewer than one in seven party members had a university degree, and nearly half had no education beyond the age of 14. A leadership group worse suited to bringing Vietnam into the twenty-first century could hardly be imagined.

In an effort to let some of the steam out of the system, the party's general secretary at the time of the economic reforms of 1986, Nguyên Van Linh, urged writers to speak out frankly and freely. A proliferation of publications that were critical of the regime and addressed issues that had been considered taboo followed, much as had happened in 1957–1958, and recalled, even farther back, the *phong su* journalism of the 1930s. Once again, it was a case of repression following liberalization, accelerated by the events in Eastern Europe and China in 1989, which caused a wave of fear in the party. At the Seventh Party Congress in 1991 the hard-liners made a comeback. The elections to the National Assembly in 1992 had a liberal veneer, but underneath the party still controlled everything. Of the 395 members elected, 92 percent were party members, and the rest were approved by the party. In the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, the Communist Party was enshrined as the sole holder of power in Article 4 of the 1992 constitution.

One of those against whom administrative measures were applied was Father Chan Tin, who incurred displeasure by openly criticizing the party's relations with religious groups; he was ordered held under house arrest in May 1990. A bitterness very possibly born of the realization that he had been used by the party in 1975 propelled him to go on speaking out even after his release in May 1993. As the Italian journalist Tiziano Terzani learned after witnessing the "liberation" of Saigon, the Communists had infiltrated its agitprop agents into all the "third force" movements prior to 1975, and Father Tin's campaign on behalf of political prisoners was a prime target of their disinformation. On May

4, 1998, while on his way to attend the funeral of the 84-year-old veteran Southern revolutionary Nguyên Van Tran, who had been an associate of Tran Van Giau in the seizure of power by the Viet Minh in Saigon in August 1945 and had been elected a member of the DRV's first National Assembly, an unknown person steered alongside Father Tin's motorbike and kicked the handlebar, causing an accident that injured Tin and his passenger, Nguyên Ngoc Lan, another of the naive self-appointed third force advocates of 1975. The late Nguyên Van Tran had offended the party by publishing a 500-page volume of memoirs under the title *Writings for My Mother and the National Assembly* which contained demands for democracy and respect for Southern autonomy. The book was banned by decision of the People's Committee of Ho Chi Minh City on November 22, 1995. Ironically, for Tran had held the post of chief of public security in 1945, the People's Committee ordered the director of public security to investigate the printing and distribution of Tran's book.<sup>495</sup>

The idiocy of the party's use of security regulations to try to silence intellectuals who questioned its legitimacy is perhaps best revealed by the case of Nguyên Xuan Tu, who was born in 1940 in Bac Ninh Province and who received his postgraduate degree in biology in Czechoslovakia. After he was forced to retire from his post as deputy director of the Science Institute, he applied his knowledge to growing mushrooms for the market and brewing home-made beer at his home in Dalat. He also turned to the study and analysis of social problems. In September 1988, under the pen name Ha Si Phu, he published an article analyzing the contradictions of socialism as practiced under the party's rule. He was made the target of a state-sponsored effort to discredit him; more than 30 newspaper articles were published by a wide variety of spokespeople attacking his ideas. In April 1991, while visiting the dissident writer Duong Thu Huong in Hanoi he was arrested and interrogated. Thereafter he was kept under surveillance. Encouraged by the acclaim his article received at home and abroad, he wrote a book, A Few Thoughts from a Citizen, in which he scientifically discussed the social path led by the party and proposed a way out of it. The main obstacle to greater openness in society was the party's absolute power to screen candidates in national elections, which meant that the social path was determined by the tiny group who formed the party leadership rather than by the masses who cast their ballots, he argued. In December 1995, while visiting his family in Hanoi, Ha Si Phu was arrested again and charged with "stealing state secrets" for having in his possession a copy of a confidential letter to the politburo by Prime Minister Vo Van Kiet dated August 9, 1995, complaining of the party's backwardness. In view of the well-known habit of the top party leaders of shrouding their discussions in absolute secrecy, many Vietnamese joked that Ha Si Phu was, indeed, guilty as charged and that the main state secret he had stolen was that the party had no scientific basis for its leadership role.496

It was dangerous reactionaries such as Ha Si Phu, the state-controlled media argued, who were propagating the subversive thesis of "peaceful evolution" against which the people had to be vigilant. "Continuing to use the 'peaceful evolution' strategy in a more intensive fashion to eradicate socialism in the re-

maining socialist countries, including Vietnam, is now an important goal of imperialism and the hostile forces," the deputy director of the army's political department wrote in the party journal Tap Chi Cong San. 497 The campaign against "peaceful evolution" became a powerful weapon in the hands of the party powerholders who were suspicious of outsiders and were determined to see the party's control over the bureaucracy maintained in the face of demands for reforms from foreign organizations such as the International Monetary Fund. Of course, any attempt to bring political change to Vietnam by non-violent means was suspect in the eyes of a party that elevated violence against its enemies (of which there was always a plentiful supply) to doctrine. To meet the threat of the "peaceful evolution" the regime introduced the "Administrative Detention Directive" (31/CP), signed by Prime Minister Vo Van Kiet on April 14, 1997. Article 2 of this directive stated that "administrative detention applies to those individuals considered to have violated the laws, infringing on the national security, as defined in Chapter 1 of the Criminal Code, but [whose violation] is not serious enough to be prosecuted criminally." The directive authorized detention of anyone voicing political dissent or opposition by decision of village-level people's committee and public security officials for periods of six months to two years. The directive appeared to be a throwback to the colonial regime of the 1930s, and it violated Article 72 of the SRV constitution of 1992, which stated that "no citizen shall be considered guilty and liable to punishment until a verdict has been reached by the court and come into effect."

Protest by writers and intellectuals against the one-party system was one thing. Multi-party regimes were not plentiful in the Southeast Asia of the 1970s and 1980s, after all. Quite another was criticism of the party for having sacrificed the lives and welfare of the people in vain, especially when such criticism came from veterans of the war, who as a class had remained largely neglected. It was not until American veterans' groups began revisiting Vietnam that the government even formed its own veterans association. The war wounded were given little help; the seriously maimed and shell-shocked were segregated out of sight. There were not even any official figures on the numbers of casualties, although it was reported that there were 300,000 unresolved cases of missing in action; the Americans, during President Bill Clinton's administration, opened military records in the National Archives to Vietnamese researchers in an effort to help in the matter. It was not until 1994 that 20,000 women were awarded the title of "Heroic Mother" given to those whose children had died in the wars lasting from 1946 to 1989, and several hundred of them dressed in formal black ao dais attended a ceremony at the presidential palace in Hanoi where they were greeted by Giap and Dong.

The veterans' criticism, addressing the party leadership's responsibility for decision-making, was more telling in my opinion than other criticism because it lifted the veil of myths that the party's propaganda had draped on recent history. It made its appearance in the early 1990s. Bao Ninh was the pseudonym adopted by a young man of 17 who joined the army in 1968; he spent the rest of the war fighting the "puppet army," ending with the battle for Tan Son Nhut. In

the late 1980s he published a short story, "Gio Dai" ("Wild Wind"), about a prosperous village in the Central Highlands that had been guarded by American troops and fell into disrepair and hopelessness after "liberation." The story was criticized in the army newspaper, which wrote:

Here was a remote Vietnamese village halfway around the world from the United States. Who asked Americans to come here to defend it? How strange! When foreign troops occupy another country and butcher the people there, that is called an "invasion." But instead of using the word "invade," the writer used the word "defend." Throughout the world everyone knows that the Americans invaded Vietnam. . . . It is clear that the United States was the aggressor, but Bao Ninh turned this war into a civil war.

The reviewer was particularly outraged that Bao Ninh had created an "antiwar" character in his story, a soldier named Tuan. 498 Bao Ninh said he never fought against American infantry, only South Vietnamese. As a soldier, Bao Ninh had joined the party. But the party expelled him, accusing him of slandering the people's army. He soon published a full-length novel under the title The Fate of Love, which was published abroad in English translation as The Sorrow of War. In 1995 he was living in a small mildewed apartment in a Hanoi suburb and credited his wife, a schoolteacher, for having supported him for many years. 499 The question was beginning to be asked by such writers whether the expulsion of the American aggressors and the reunification of Vietnam could not have been achieved at far less sacrifice. The question was a naive one, for it overlooked the fact that the war had been fought not simply to reunify the country but to reunify it in such a way that all opposition to the party had been destroyed. Nevertheless, the party had to tread warily in its explanation of history, for Americans flocked to Vietnam and appeared friendly enough, while the party itself cultivated American business and investment in Vietnam.

Another disaffected veteran was Bui Tin, who was deputy editor of Nhan Dan and as an army officer had written reports on quite a number of historical events he had witnessed, some of which have been drawn on in this book. He decided to remain in France in 1990 and published an unflattering memoir raising many of the same basic questions about the wisdom of the party leaders' decision-making and conduct as Bao Ninh. In his view, in Ho Chi Minh's day the party was clean and the people had a high sense of self-respect. But when greed ran riot, and the whole system became rotten from top to bottom, morality became non-existent. The concept of the party as "the necessary and appropriate prerequisite" became the source of chaos and social degeneration. 500 Since the economic reforms had started in 1986, according to documents compiled by the ministry of interior and obtained by a Japanese newspaper, more than 130 domestic opposition groups trying to create social turmoil had sprung up. Of these, 85 had been disbanded by the security organizations. After the liberation of the South in 1975, counter-revolutionism was annihilated but subversive organizations had re-assembled.<sup>501</sup> In June 1996, the Eighth Party Congress did little to improve the party's public standing.

After the death of secretary-general Le Duan in July 1986, reforms were enacted in Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia with a view toward putting the economies of these countries, which had been seriously distorted by their large military expenditures, on a sounder footing. The details of these reforms have been extensively discussed elsewhere and need not detain us here. The point I would make in this connection, however, is that in each instance the party has sought to take advantage of the change in order to benefit itself primarily.

Up to then, the party had been adept at appropriating the spoils of its victory over the South, confiscating property, selling authorizations for the most trivial privileges (the right to which had been taken for granted in the past), and generally reducing everyone to a uniform poverty level. From bottom to top, the party levied its share of benefits. Ordinary cadres collected tolls along the roads and extorted tea money for calling the river ferry so passengers could cross. At a higher level, the benefits extended further; Giap was aghast when he was told a nice piano had been found for him and preparations were being made to ship it north. The Communists had seized intact the gold reserve of the former regime in the vaults of the national bank because the squabbling leaders in the final days were unable to agree to ship it abroad. When asked later what the gold had been spent on, an SRV spokesperson said it had gone to cover various emergencies. The pogrom to which the Viet Hoa were subjected further enriched the party. When the exodus of boat people began, the party found that it could extort a few ounces of gold from each prospective passenger in return for looking the other way; it was a way of selling these destitute and unwanted people. Some people became stuck in camps in Hong Kong and elsewhere without prospect of moving on to countries of permanent settlement; the party exacted a price from international donors to take them back again, in effect selling them twice. Exporting contract labor, euphemistically called "guest workers," to Eastern Europe and heavily taxing remittances<sup>502</sup> directed funds to party coffers until the early 1990s. When the Orderly Departure Program began, the party appropriated the houses of the departees in return for issuing exit visas; moreover, such people found that they actually had to bribe the responsible agents to come punctually on the day of departure to certify their house was in proper condition so they would not forfeit their precious seat on the plane. 503 In 1979, the SRV signed a 25-year lease on the Cam Ranh naval base, something no Southern government had done, with the Soviet Union.

After reforms were enacted, the party began to find ways of filling its coffers from its newfound relations with the West. An adroitly cultivated publicity campaign in Asia, Europe, and the United States created the idea that Vietnam was a big market that was just opening up, thanks to privatization of the economy and establishment of a functioning legal system that would make investment profitable and safe. A whole new sector of the economy opened up by renting villas and other property expropriated by the party to the influx of representatives of the capitalist world's industry and commerce. The ways of making money from fees, not to mention bribes, rose too, sometimes with great ingenuity. In Vietnam and Laos, the regimes mobilized the non-governmental

organizations, which were at the forefront of spending money allocated by foreign governments and organizations for aid programs, into actual lobbies for favorable trade and economic concessions. The business lobby in the United States, eager to get a piece of the Vietnam action, supposedly before it all went to the Japanese, South Koreans, and others, was particularly vocal in pressuring the administration to lift the trade embargo that had been in effect since the war and to normalize diplomatic relations with Hanoi. The latter step was presented as something that was completely "normal." Americans were "going back to Vietnam." William Sullivan showed up in Hanoi at the head of a delegation of American corporate executives who had come in search of contracts. As Americans took advantage of cheap labor to invest in low-capital-output-ratio consumer industries, it emerged that the state sector in the economy, rather than atrophying, was actually growing. For state enterprises also became adept at garnering foreign investment, which gave them a new lease on life while their debts became irrecoverable and saddled the banking sector with a huge burden. By the 1990s, party members with money in their pockets were able to afford large cars and nice houses at home and send their children to American universities for their education.

The party's corrupt practices resulted in a serious outbreak of trouble in the northern province of Thai Binh in 1997. Thai Binh is a largely rural coastal province of 2 million people who enjoyed none of the appurtenances of modernity that the regime was bringing to Hanoi and Saigon and certainly was unable to afford them. Yet, proportionally, the party's exactions were extremely heavy, given the fact that they fell on mainly poor peasants. The trouble began in May when a crowd of some 3,000 people, exasperated by the habit of local cadres of collecting taxes officially intended for road construction and other improvements, which they actually pocketed for themselves and falsified records to boot, organized a procession to the provincial capital. The procession was orderly, with children and old people at the head, followed by war wounded and widows, retired cadres, and, lastly, young people. They carried banners praising the party and Ho Chi Minh. Subsequent investigations revealed that the peasants, with an annual per capita income of \$62.50, had to pay no less than 30 types of supplemental taxes, in specie or in kind. At harvest time, they had to deliver 40 kilograms of paddy for each buffalo they owned, which reduced many households to 70 kilograms per person per year. Moreover, the tax collection was always swift and conducted with arrogance and brutality. The arrest of two complainers who had invited party and government representatives to come and meet with them added to the tension. The protest covered a wide area of the province. The tense situation did not return to normal until September. In September it was reported that 30 party section chiefs, presidents of people's committees, and cooperative heads had been charged with misconduct.

The SRV's foreign policy remained pragmatic. In late 1992, the party central committee redefined the SRV's foreign relations in a secret resolution categorizing country priorities. In the first category were China, Cuba, and North Korea, as they were considered Marxist-Leninist states, together with Cambo-

dia and Laos, although Vietnam's "special relations" were downplayed after 1993. Second came the countries of Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union because they were considered to have the capability to revert to communism. India, too, was included in this last category. Third came Vietnam's neighbors in ASEAN. Next were the third-world countries of Egypt, Iran, Iraq, and Algeria. Also in this category were the countries of Western Europe, Australia, and Japan. Fifth and last came the United States, which was still regarded as Vietnam's long-term enemy. 504

Nowhere was the SRV's character as a regime of mendicity and mendacity more clearly revealed than in its postwar relations with the United States. The orthodox party line was that the Vietnamese people under the leadership of the Communist Party had defeated the American imperialists. This thesis was predicated on the denial of everything and everybody relating to the South between 1954 and 1975 except the "liberation struggle," similar in many respects to De Gaulle's deconstruction of the Vichy years in order to create a new and largely mythological history of wartime France. Thus the legitimacy of the regime was based on a gigantic propaganda lie. During the visit of the congressional delegation to Camp Davis in February 1975 an unexpected shouting match ensued when the Congressmen grew frustrated at the Communist delegates' refusal to provide information about individual missing in action cases about which the Congressmen had been asked by their constituents. From that time on, the Communists treated the MIA issue gingerly. Although they were no longer demanding the payment of war reparations in exchange for their agreement to provide information about MIAs, they exploited the issue, which was one that provided them with the perfect tool to exert leverage over the United States to gain political and economic concessions, since they had 100 percent control over it. Information and remains could only be provided by Vietnam. The SRV's propaganda concentrated on the theme that the Americans "highly valued" Vietnam's cooperation on the issue. Even equipped with information about specific cases, the Americans had to secure Vietnamese cooperation, and in so doing they revealed to the latter exactly how much they knew and didn't know, giving the Vietnamese again an advantage. Moreover, as the United States was paying for all the labor, transport, and other costs involved in searches, the party was able to mine this source of revenue, which flowed to the account of its external affairs section from the U.S. Navy Regional Contracting Office in Singapore through the Bank of America.

The renewal of diplomatic relations passed off in a low key. On the strength of certifications to the Congress about the SRV's cooperation on the MIA issue, the Clinton administration removed its objection to the resumption of multilateral lending to Vietnam in July 1993 and lifted the trade embargo in February 1994. Liaison offices in the two capitals were opened on February 8, 1995, with the hoisting of the American flag in Hanoi for the first time since 1955. De jure American recognition of the SRV followed on July 11, 1995. As usual, the normalization was presented to the Vietnamese as evidence of the party's "correct and consistent external relations policy." Secretary of State Warren M. Christopher opened the embassy in August. It was located in a modern office building; the old consulate was judged too decrepit to repair and was torn down. In 1998, the former embassy building in Ho Chi Minh City was razed, and a new consulate opened on the site in September 1999. The first American ambassador to the SRV, Pete Peterson, one of the POWs ransomed by Nixon and Kissinger, saw it as part of his job of improving relations to act as a sort of unofficial spokesman for the regime with American audiences. He and his deputy traveled around the United States speaking to expatriate communities urging them to forget the past and cooperate with the regime in building a better Vietnam.

By 1997, however, post-embargo euphoria began to give way to doubt and pessimism. Several warning signs pointed to a serious economic downturn. Foreign investors began pulling out. Foreign investment went down. Foreign investors blamed the situation on changing rules and the maze of regulations, inconsistent policies, an arcane and corrupt bureaucracy, erratic currency rules, and an accounting system at odds with international norms.

President Clinton visited Vietnam for four days in November 2000. He gave a speech in the National Assembly hall to an audience of students from Hanoi University, keeping to general statements about the benefits of free markets and emphasizing the pain that the past had inflicted on both Americans and Vietnamese. He was applauded only once. More spontaneous was the welcome he received from the large friendly street crowds that turned out wherever he went; his presence, indeed, elicited some frank comments to foreign reporters from onlookers. Clinton did manage to have "a nice little debate" in a private meeting with the party's secretary general, Le Kha Phieu. The officially published account of the meeting quoted Phieu as saying: "For us, the past was the root, the foundation, the strength of the present and future. The result of our anti-aggression resistance was that we gained independence, reunified our country and brought our country to socialism. Therefore, for us, the past was not a dark, sorrowful and unhappy past." Discussing his debate in an interview with CNN's John King, Clinton said: "We had never had any imperialist designs here. The conflict here was over what self-determination for the Vietnamese people really meant and what freedom and independence really meant."505

Clinton did not meet any Buddhist leaders. But at his initiative he found ten minutes in his tight schedule at a reception organized by American businessmen at the city hall to talk with the archbishop of Ho Chi Minh City, Monsignor J.-B. Pham Minh Mân, who reportedly described for the president the situation of various religions in Vietnam. <sup>506</sup> Clinton had no opportunity to address veterans, who would have understood his message of the pain of war better than the students. His hosts, having taken cognizance publicly of his stance in avoiding the draft, would have had difficulty in cutting short such an encounter by a president with a gift for speaking extemporaneously to crowds. Clinton's advisers, however, dared not bestow any token of recognition on the defeated ARVN regulars, relegated in the party's lexicon to non-persons, and rejected the idea when it was advanced in planning for the trip. <sup>507</sup> The moral influence of the United States in Vietnam had been reduced to sermonizing

about free markets and human rights, which left the regime a free hand to go on refusing the reconciliation that common sense demands. A historic opportunity was missed.

The social evils, which had been excoriated in Communist propaganda against the Saigon regime, reappeared. The closed bars, brothels, dance halls, opium dens, massage parlors, and other places "for American-type activities" reopened under the Communist regime, sometimes with its protection. Prostitution, AIDS infection, and rackets of all kinds flourished in the new free-market atmosphere.

Similar trends were visible in the LPDR, where the new money and its accompanying culture came from Thailand. The party wanted to sell the nice villa in Vientiane where the widow of Sithon Kommadan had been living (one of four on the intersection near the main market) to a Thai bank, which was offering to pay \$100,000. The party told the widow to move out and offered to pay her a pittance. But she said she would move only if she received half the purchase price. Eventually, after some negotiating, an agreement was reached allowing the sale. Sisana Sisane, a high party functionary who had been put in a seminar camp from 1983 to 1986 for having criticized the Soviet Union (along with Sanan Soutthichak), asked for some funds to go to Thailand for medical treatment; the party refused. He gave instructions that no one from the ungrateful party was to come to his funeral, which was to be an ordinary affair, with private burial.

The saga of the Hmong refugees in camps in Thailand continued. The last chapter in the saga of those at the Ban Napho camp, the last one, was apparently closed in 1997. As a result of a visit to Thailand in August 1996 by Jane Hamilton-Merritt, aided by an old friend in the embassy in Bangkok, John Crowell, the Thai agreed to re-interview the refugees. It turned out, as Hamilton-Merritt maintained all along (and as the State Department denied), that most of them were former soldiers and therefore eligible for resettlement in third countries. The LPDR had taken the position that if the royal Thai government re-interviewed any of the Napho refugees, the LPDR would refuse to take back any of them. This was a strong disincentive to the Thai, who did not want to be stuck with caring for several thousand derelicts for the rest of their lives. Also, refugees who had taken shelter at a Buddhist temple were "rescued." A small number were accepted for resettlement in New Zealand. 508 In the United States, resettled Hmong, with the aid of humanitarian volunteers, continued to struggle for legislation that would waive the English-language requirement for obtaining citizenship.

## **Looking Ahead**

It is to be hoped that one day the peoples of Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia will recover, by the non-violent means that have been the tradition of the nationalists, the sovereignty that has been stolen from them by the party. Perhaps they will thus achieve the concord and reconciliation that have been denied them

and be able to build monuments to honorable men such as Generals Nam and Hung, as they did in former times to Phan Thanh Gian.

This is something they must do for themselves, however, for any foreign intervention risks precipitating another war, and the small clique at the head of the party have made it plain they would not hesitate to destroy the country if they judged it necessary to preserve their monopoly of power from an armed challenge. The party may also try to use the powerful weapons of international diplomacy that its newfound respectability makes available to it. Should such a situation arise, it is therefore also to be hoped that the United States will not become an accomplice to thwarting the will of the people under the guise of "peace-keeping."

# **Epilogue**

In 1975, senior officers who went home to the United States from the embassies in Saigon, Phnom Penh, and Vientiane found that their Foreign Service colleagues in Washington avoided talking about Indochina; junior officers received even a colder shoulder.¹ Many left government service, demoralized. Repatriated employees of the Agency for International Development, younger for the most part, were sent off to francophone Africa and to Central America, where I met some of them in the course of my travels in the late 1970s. It was hoped that there they could put to use the skills they had learned of working with poor and often desperate people, showing them how to grow the new varieties of "miracle rice" on their farms and bringing clean drinking water to their refugee camps. It was hoped, above all, that the contagion they bore would not infect Washington, for these were individuals who felt deeply about what they perceived to be the sacrifice of the Indochinese to the Communists.

Washington in 1975 was certainly no longer the Washington of 1940, 1950, or 1960. The old values of the era of Eleanor Roosevelt and John F. Kennedy had largely disappeared from sight in the capital. The moral underpinnings of American foreign policy had to a large extent evaporated. By the 1990s, the American Establishment was mainly ruled by money and greed. Even genocide in 1994 was accepted with hardly a ripple in the bureaucratic routine, of interest only to some activist clergymen and human rights activists, more and more on the fringes of American society. Respect for laws was increasingly replaced by the rule of the strongest, as displayed by the media, including some of the most staid journals of American life, which fudged the boundary between fact and fiction, deepening a credibility gap that was already wide. The Soviet Union's disastrous intervention in Afghanistan, which left that country in ruins and led to the collapse of the Soviet empire, was some consolation that America was not alone in the pursuit of folly. The colossal might of American armed force ruled the world, but the rhetoric had a hollow ring as the country turned inward, focusing on its own proliferation of problems. A question raised with increasing frequency was: What did the United States really stand for?

The environment in which Americans lived also changed for the worse. The unsightly concrete barriers erected around the White House and other

public monuments and the cordoning off of streets belied a siege mentality, as if a piece of wartime Saigon and Phnom Penh had been imported. In his April 30, 1970, speech, President Nixon had made the prophetic remark "We live in an age of anarchy." Now the statue of Thomas Jefferson needed to be bunkered against a mad bomber. A team of social scientists at the Fordham Institute for Innovation in Social Policy has tracked the state of well-being in the United States since 1970 by means of a composite index constituted by 16 statistical indicators measuring such phenomena as child abuse, teen suicide, alcoholism, homicide, and income inequality. From a high of 76.9 in 1973, this index had sunk to a low of 37.5 in 1991 and had virtually leveled off in the remainder of the 1990s.<sup>2</sup> The spread of disrespect for the law in public life, violence that in the view of the American Medical Association had reached epidemic proportions, the resurgence of old phenomena such as racism, the rise of hate groups, the domination of urban neighborhoods by gang warfare, the growing costs of crime, a seemingly endless war on drug trafficking, and a White House and Congress awash in corporate funds all made it seem that the nation had lost its moral moorings and was drifting, like a great ship, rudderless and powerless.

The part that its involvement in Indochina played in such phenomena at the close of the American century cannot be measured precisely. But the circumstantial evidence is there. Americans were genuinely shocked by the overthrow of constitutional governments and the assassination of presidents; the killing of civilians; the sacrifice of loved ones in a war that many perceived to be a lost cause; the embrace by their government of colonialism in its dealings with the leaders of South Vietnam and Cambodia, whose people had an intimate knowledge of colonialism; and, finally, the manner in which their government washed its hands of not only the cause but also the people. The connection was there, but was only dimly perceived. The French people, certainly, had taken no pride in their government's colonial war in Indochina and the turning over to the enemy of Hanoi and half of Vietnam; barely four years later, in the midst of another colonial war, the institutions of their Fourth Republic were swept away in a military adventure. For Americans, amid the embrace of an agreement for "peace" and the relief brought by the end of the war, shame and guilt were emotions not easily put into words, but they run deep even today. The lesson to be drawn seems to be that a great power should be judged less by the number of its victories on the battlefield than by the way it treats its allies.

### **Notes**

#### 1. The Arrival of the French (1625–1893)

- 1. Nicolas Regaud and Christian Lechervy, Les Guerres d'Indochine du Xe au XXe Siècle (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1996), p. 24.
  - 2. Alexandre de Rhodes, Histoire du Royaume du Tonkin (Paris: Editions Kimé, 1999).
- 3. Text of treaty in Georges Taboulet, *La Geste Française en Indochine*, vol. I (Paris: Adrien-Maisonneuve, 1955), pp. 186–188.
  - 4. Text in ibid., I, pp. 233-234.
  - 5. Ibid., I, pp. 407 et seq.
  - 6. Ibid., I, pp. 408–409.
  - 7. Ibid., I, pp. 416–417.
- 8. Message from Admiral Genouilly to the minister of the navy, General Quarters Tourane, January 29, 1859, ibid., II, pp. 438–440.
  - 9. Text in ibid., II, pp. 474-476.
- 10. Milton E. Osborne, The French Presence in Cochinchina and Cambodia: Rule and Response (1859–1905) (Ithaca, N. Y.: Cornell University Press, 1969).
- 11. Memorandum of conversation, Phan Thanh Gian and Commandant Auguste Léonard Ansart, My Tho, November 18, 1866, in Taboulet, *La Geste Française* II, pp. 509–512.
  - 12. Text in ibid., II, pp. 518-519.
  - 13. Text in ibid., II, pp. 624-627.
  - 14. Osborne, French Presence in Cochinchina and Cambodia, p. 185.
  - 15. Text in Taboulet, La Geste Française, II, pp. 654–655.
  - 16. Text in ibid., II, pp. 743-747.
- 17. Letter from Captain Rivière to the chief of justice, Hanoi, April 29, 1882, ibid., II, pp. 777–778.
  - 18. Text in ibid., II, pp. 805-806.
  - 19. Text in ibid., II, pp. 807–809.
  - 20. Docteur Hocquard, Une Campagne au Tonkin (Paris: Arléa, 1999), p. 185.
  - 21. Text in Taboulet, La Geste Française, II, pp. 825-826.
  - 22. Text in ibid., II, pp. 809-812.
- 23. Nguyên The Anh, Monarchie et Fait Colonial au Viêt-Nam (1875-1925) (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1992), pp. 81-82.
  - 24. Hocquard, Une Campagne au Tonkin, p. 500.
- 25. Peking Despatch No. 28, June 20, 1885, cited in Robert Hopkins Miller, *The United States and Vietnam 1787–1941* (Washington, D.C.: National Defense University Press, 1990), p. 136.
- 26. Paris Legation to State, Despatch No. 29, June 24, 1885, in U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1885* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1886), pp. 370–371 (hereafter *FRUS*). The text of the treaty is an enclosure to this despatch, ibid., pp. 371–372.

- 27. P. Blanck, "Le Trane-Nigne à l'Ouest du Tong-King," Bulletin de la Société de Géographie de Paris, 7è série, Tome 5 (1884).
  - 28. M. L. Manich Jumsai, History of Laos, 2nd ed. (Bangkok: Chalermnit, 1971), p. 186.
- 29. Katay D. Sasorith, "Présence Historique du Laos," France-Asie (Saigon) XII, nos. 118-119-120 (March-April-May 1956), pp. 721-722.
  - 30. Paul Le Boulanger, Histoire du Laos Français (Paris: Plon, 1931), p. 269.
- 31. Auguste Pavie, Mission Pavie, Indochine 1879–1895. VII: Journal de Marche, 1888–1889. Evénements du Siam, 1891–1893 (Paris: Leroux, 1919), pp. 338–350.
- 32. Texts of diplomatic exchanges, French ultimatum of July 20, 1893, and the Franco-Siamese treaty of October 3, 1893, in Bangkok Legation to State, Despatches 67–79, July 17 to October 23, 1893. In U.S. Department of State, *FRUS*, 1893 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1894), pp. 549–558.
  - 33. Jumsai, History of Laos, pp. 211–212.
- 34. Bernard Gay, "La Frontière Vietnamo-Lao de 1893 à Nos Jours," in *Les Frontières du Vietnam: Histoire des Frontières de la Péninsule Indochinoise,* ed. Pierre-Bernard Lafont (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1989), p. 206.

#### 2. Dealing with the French (1893-Aug. 30, 1945)

- 1. Robert Marle, "La Pacification du Tonkin (1891–1896)," Bulletin de la Société des Etudes Indochinoises (Saigon), XLVII (1972), pp. 37–80.
- 2. Paul Doumer, *Indochine Française: Souvenirs*, 2nd ed. (Paris: Vuibert and Nony, 1930), p. 401. This work was first published in 1905.
- 3. As analyzed in Pierre Brocheux and Daniel Héméry, *Indochine: La Colonisation Ambiguë (1858–1954)* (Paris: Editions La Découverte, 1995), p. 78.
- 4. As analyzed by Alain Forest, *Le Cambodge et la Colonisation Française: Histoire d'une Colonisation Sans Heurts (1897–1920)* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1980) and Osborne, *French Presence in Cochinchina and Cambodia.* 
  - 5. Etienne Aymonier, Le Cambodge. 3 vols. (Paris: 1900–1903), I, p. 56.
- 6. Milton E. Osborne, "King-Making in Cambodia: From Sisowath to Sihanouk," *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* IV, no. 2 (September 1973): 169–185, based on an examination of the French archives. Also "Genealogical Table of the Cambodian Royal Family," Phnom Penh Embassy to State, Foreign Service Despatch 269, February 15, 1956, Record Group 59, in National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland (hereafter RG 59, NARA). This despatch is by Martin F. Herz, an embassy officer.
- 7. Gerald Cannon Hickey, Sons of the Mountains: Ethnohistory of the Vietnamese Central Highlands to 1954 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982), pp. 167–168.
- 8. Pierre Bitard, "Carte Ethno-Linguistique de la Région de Voeunsai (Cambodge)," *Bulletin de la Société des Etudes Indochinoises* (Saigon) XXVII, no. 1 (1952): 5–7.
  - 9. Editorial, "La Peur des Mots," La Tribune Indigène, March 23, 1919, p. 1.
  - 10. Editorial, "L'Etat Indochinois," La Tribune Indigène, April 19, 1921, p. 1.
- 11. On Nguyên Van Vinh's career, see Neil L. Jamieson, *Understanding Vietnam* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), pp. 71–80.
- 12. Best known in connection with Indochina for his book *La Route Mandarine*, published in 1925.
- 13. Tiao Oun, "Réponse à M. Pham Quynh: A Propos de Vientiane la Poussièreuse," *France-Indochine* no. 3,404 (March 7, 1931): 1.
- 14. "La Question Laotienne: Opinions du Prince Phetsarath," *France-Indochine* no. 3,416 (March 21, 1931): 1.
- 15. Martin J. Murray, *The Development of Capitalism in Colonial Indochina (1870–1940)* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), Table 3-1, p. 110, quoting Charles Robequain, *The Economic Development of French Indochina*, trans. Isabel Ward (London and New

York: Oxford University Press, 1944), p. 161. For a survey of French economic development projects in Laos, many of which were never carried out, see Martin Stuart-Fox, "The French in Laos, 1887–1945," *Modern Asian Studies* 29, no. 1 (1995): 111–139.

- 16. Murray, Development of Capitalism in Colonial Indochina, pp. 168–177.
- 17. Ibid.
- 18. Georges Boudarel and Nguyên Van Ky, Hanoi 1936–1996: Du Drapeau Rouge au Billet Vert (Paris: Autrement, 1997), p. 60.
  - 19. Murray, Development of Capitalism in Colonial Indochina, pp. 184-185.
  - 20. Ibid., p. 102.
  - 21. Ibid., Table 4-1, p. 180.
  - 22. Ibid., p. 179.
  - 23. Ibid., p. 193.
- 24. Daniel Héméry, "Capitalisme Colonial et Développement," Chapter 3 in Brocheux and Héméry, *Indochine: La Colonisation Ambiguë*, p. 167.
  - 25. Hickey, Sons of the Mountains, pp. 157–160.
- 26. As late as 1935 it was estimated that 16,000 Mnong lived in an area of 10,000 square kilometers. Albert-Marie Maurice, *Les Mnong des Hauts Plateaux (Centre-Vietnam)* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1993), p. 97.
- 27. A good description of French exploration of the highlands is in Hickey, *Sons of the Mountains*, Chapter 7.
- 28. Although the term "moi" continued to be in vogue with French popular writers right up to the 1940s.
- 29. An excellent overview of the work of the Ecole Française d'Extrême-Orient is Solange Thierry, "L'Oeuvre Culturelle de la France en Indochine: L'Ecole Française d'Extrême-Orient," in *Indochine: Alerte à l'Histoire* (Paris: Académie des Sciences d'Outre-Mer, 1985), pp. 187–196.
- 30. Nguyên Van Ky, La Société Vietnamienne Face à la Modernité: Le Tonkin de la Fin du XIXème Siècle à la Seconde Guerre Mondiale (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1995), pp. 53–54.
- 31. Nguyên Van Ky, *La Société Vietnamienne*, p. 139. In an interesting contrast, a French attempt to romanize the Cambodian alphabet in the 1940s was sharply resisted and eventually failed (see below).
  - 32. Ibid., pp. 110–111.
- 33. Boudarel and Ky, Hanoi 1936–1996, p. 53; Nguyen Van Ky, La Société Vietnamienne, p. 101.
  - 34. Ibid., pp. 107–108.
- 35. John C. Schafer and The Uyen, "The Novel Emerges in Cochinchina," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 52, no. 4 (November 1993): 854–884.
- 36. Gerald Cannon Hickey, *Village in Vietnam* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1964), pp. 59 and 218.
- 37. Report of Governor Pagès of Cochinchina to the Governor General, December 14, 1934, cited in Jayne Susan Werner, *Peasant Politics and Religious Sectarianism: Peasant and Priest in the Cao Dai in Viet Nam* (New Haven: Yale University Southeast Asian Studies, Monograph Series No. 23, 1981), p. 4.
  - 38. Werner, Peasant Politics and Religious Sectarianism, p. 24.
  - 39. Ibid., p. 29.
- 40. Patrice Morlat, Les Affaires Politiques de l'Indochine (1895–1923) (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1995), p. 147, citing French archives. Cf. William J. Duiker, The Rise of Nationalism in Vietnam, 1900–1941 (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1976), pp. 69–70.
  - 41. Morlat, Les Affaires Politiques de l'Indochine, pp. 265–266.
  - 42. Ibid., pp. 275–278.
- 43. Ibid., pp. 235–240. Marty was to remain a civil servant in Indochina until 1942; he was repatriated to France in 1946.
  - 44. Quoted in Anh, Monarchie et Fait Colonial au Viêt-Nam, p. 273.
  - 45. Bao Dai, Le Dragon d'Annam (Paris: Plon, 1980), p. 35.

- 46. According to Devillers, at the beginning of 1929, the VNQDD had 120 cells and 1,500 adherents in Tonkin. Philippe Devillers, *Histoire du Viêt-Nam de 1940 à 1952* (Paris: Seuil, 1952), p. 56. Devillers (Philippe Mullender) arrived in Saigon with the French Expeditionary Corps in November 1945 and was allowed by its former director under Decoux, F. Moresco, to consult the Cochinchina Sûreté's voluminous files on Vietnamese political groups.
  - 47. Morlat, Les Affaires Politiques de l'Indochine, pp. 125-128.
- 48. Thus it is not correct to say, as Duiker says, that Vietnamese nationalists such as the Constitutionalists "were anxious to make common cause with the French." Duiker, *Rise of Nationalism*, p. 166.
- 49. The title page of this work is reproduced in Yevgeny Kobelev, *Ho Chi Minh* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1989). The word *Cach* is spelled *Kach*.
- 50. Hue-Tam Ho Tai, Radicalism and the Origins of the Vietnamese Revolution (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992), pp. 180–181.
- 51. Ho Chi Minh, "Le Chemin Qui M'a Conduit au Léninisme," in *Ecrits (1920–1969)* (Hanoi: Editions en Langues Etrangères, 1971), pp. 255–256.
  - 52. Kobelev, Ho Chi Minh, p. 59.
- 53. Mieczysław Maneli, *War of the Vanquished*. Trans. Maria de Görgey. (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), p. 154.
- 54. Le Duan, "Under the Glorious Party Banner, for Independence, Freedom, and Socialism, Let Us Advance and Achieve New Victories," *Nhan Dan*, Feb. 14, 1970; translated in Joint U.S. Public Affairs Office (JUSPAO) (Saigon), Viet-Nam Documents and Research Notes No. 77, April 1970, p. 2. The quotation from Ho is in *Selected Works* (Hanoi: Su That Publishing House, 1960), p. 162.
  - 55. Morlat, Les Affaires Politiques de l'Indochine, p. 129.
- 56. Huynh Kim Khanh, *Vietnamese Communism 1925–1945* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1982), pp. 119–129. This is the standard work on the Vietnamese Communist Party. Tran Phu's biography is on pp. 122–123, fn. 64.
  - 57. Quoted in ibid., p. 128.
  - 58. La Tribune Indochinoise, June 18, 1930.
- 59. The best readily available treatment of the Nghe-Tinh soviets is Duiker, *Rise of Nationalism*, Chapter 12, written on the basis of the author's examination of the French colonial archives and Vietnamese sources. Duiker has published a fuller treatment in "The Red Soviets of Nghe-Tinh: An Early Communist Rebellion in Vietnam," *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 4 (September 1973). As Duiker points out, the Communists later treated the soviets as a glorious episode and claimed a large share of the credit on behalf of the party.
  - 60. Nguyên Van Ky, La Société Vietnamienne Face à la Modernité, p. 102.
- 61. Trinh Dinh Khai, Décolonisation du Viêt Nam: Un Avocat Témoigne (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1994), pp. 99–102; Bao Dai, Le Dragon d'Annam, pp. 33–62.
- 62. "Historique du Mouvement de Révolution Nationale" (Saigon: about January 1956, typewritten); *Cach Mang Quoc Gia* (Saigon), reprinted in United States Operations Mission (USOM), "Saigon Daily News Round-Up," January 23, 1956, p. 3, both cited in Robert G. Scigliano, "Political Parties in South Vietnam under the Republic," *Pacific Affairs*, XXXIII, 4 (December 1960): 327–346.
- 63. Louis Marty conversation with Charles S. Reed II reported in Hanoi Consulate to State, Dispatch 2, October 3, 1939, in U.S. Department of State, *FRUS*, 1939, vol. III, *The Far East* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1955), pp. 272–275.
- 64. "Record of Discussions between Vice-Minister Tani and Ambassador Henry Concerning the Shipping of Military Supplies through French Indochina," June 19, 1940, in the library of the Defense Agency's Institute for Defense Studies, Tokyo, cited in Minami Yoshizawa, "The Nishihara Mission in Hanoi, July 1940," in *Indochina in the 1940's and 1950's*, ed. Takashi Shiraishi and Motoo Furuta (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Southeast Asia Program, 1992), p. 21.

- 65. Imperial Headquarters Army Department document, June 25, 1940, cited by Yoshizawa, "The Nishihara Mission in Hanoi," p. 21.
- 66. Claude Hesse d'Alzon, "L'Armée Française d'Indochine Pendant la Seconde Guerre Mondiale, 1939–1945," in *l'Indochine Française 1940–1945*, ed. Paul Isoart (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1982), pp. 75–130.
- 67. Georges Catroux, *Deux Actes du Drame Indochinois* (Paris: Plon, 1959); Amiral Decoux, *A la Barre de l'Indochine: Histoire de Mon Gouvernement Général, 1940–1945* (Paris: Plon, 1949).
  - 68. Catroux, Deux Actes du Drame Indochinois, p. 73.
- 69. Philippe de Gaulle, Mémoires Accessoires, 1921–1946 (Paris: Plon, 1997), pp. 244–245.
- 70. Conversation of Laval and Murphy reported in Vichy Embassy to State, telegram 1109, December 9, 1940, in U.S. Department of State, *FRUS*, *1940*, vol. II, *General and Europe* (Washington, D.C. Government Printing Office, 1957) pp. 414–417.
  - 71. Yoshizawa, "The Nishihara Mission in Hanoi," p. 25.
- 72. Telegram from the Nishihara mission, July 6, 1940, in the archives of the Foreign Ministry, Tokyo, cited in ibid., pp. 27–28.
- 73. "Outline of the Agreement between Japan and French Indochina," July 12, 1940, in the archives of the Foreign Ministry, Tokyo, cited in ibid., p. 32. On the Catroux-Nishihara negotiations, see also James William Morley, ed., *The Fateful Choice: Japan's Advance into Southeast Asia*, 1939–1941 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980), pp. 160–166.
  - 74. Catroux, Deux Actes du Drame Indochinois, pp. 87-88.
  - 75. Texts in Morley, The Fateful Choice, pp. 301–302.
- 76. Decoux conversation with Reed reported in Hanoi Consulate to State, unnumbered telegram, August 31, 1940, in U.S. Department of State, *FRUS*, 1940, vol. IV, *The Far East* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1955), p. 92.
  - 77. State to Hanoi Consulate, September 18, 1940, ibid., pp. 125–126.
  - 78. Decoux, A la Barre de l'Indochine, p. 421.
- 79. Judith A. Stowe, Siam Becomes Thailand: A Story of Intrigue (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1991), Chapter 8.
- 80. U.S. Department of State, *Peace and War: United States Foreign Policy, 1931–1941* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1943), Document 220, Memorandum by the Acting Secretary of State (Welles), July 24, 1941, pp. 699–703.
- 81. Text in Allan B. Cole, ed., Conflict in Indo-China and International Repercussions: A Documentary History, 1945–1955 (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1956), p. 4.
  - 82. Morley, The Fateful Choice, p. 240.
- 83. Saigon Consulate General to Foreign Minister Toyoda, July 21, 1941, in archives of the Foreign Ministry, Tokyo, cited in Yoshizawa, "The Nishihara Mission in Hanoi," p. 49. In his footnoted reference, Yoshizawa mistakenly identifies Minoda as consul general in Hanoi.
- 84. Dmitri Volkogonov, *Autopsy for an Empire: The Seven Leaders Who Built the Soviet Regime* (New York: The Free Press, 1998), p. 14.
  - 85. Indochine, No. 16, December 26, 1940, p. 15.
- 86. A photograph of the five was published in the Hanoi weekly *Thong Tin* on June 10, 1945.
- 87. AOM Indochine NF 1179 containing the following documents: Telegram No. 1,001 from Minister of Colonies Platon, Vichy, to Governor General Decoux, Hanoi, March 8, 1941; Telegram No. 1,597 from Minister of Colonies Platon, Vichy, to Governor General Decoux, Hanoi, April 4, 1941; "Note relative à la désignation du prince Sihanouk pour succéder au trône du Cambodge," April 9, 1941 (unsigned); Telegram No. 2,108 from Governor General Decoux, Hanoi, to Minister of Colonies Platon, Vichy, April 24, 1941; and Telegram No. 2,195 from Governor General Decoux, Hanoi, to Minister of Colonies Platon, Vichy, April 29, 1941.

- 88. Decoux, A la Barre de l'Indochine, p. 287.
- 89. This road later formed part of the Ho Chi Minh Trail. See Chapter 7.
- 90. "Four Years of Public Works in Indochina," *Indochine*, July 20, 1944, pp. 10–17.
- 91. Office of Intelligence Research, Department of State, "Political Alignments of Vietnamese Nationalists," OIR Report No. 3708, October 1, 1949, p. 94, RG 59, NARA. The Vietnam Democratic Party was essentially northern and is not to be confused with the Democratic Party in Cochinchina.
- 92. Geoffrey C. Gunn, Political Struggles in Laos (1930–1954): Vietnamese Communist Power and the Lao Struggle for National Independence (Bangkok: Editions Duang Kamol, 1988), p. 102.
  - 93. The memorandum of their conversation is in the French diplomatic archives.
- 94. Claude de Boisanger, On Pouvait Eviter la Guerre d'Indochine (Paris: Adrien Maisonneuve, 1977), p. 18.
- 95. Jacques Valette, *Indochine 1940–1945: Français Contre Japonais* (Paris: SEDES, 1983), citing French archives.
  - 96. Devillers, Histoire du Viêt-Nam, p. 93.
- 97. A copy of the message was sent to the French Embassy in Washington, where it was read (and preserved) by U.S. military intelligence. It is now in the National Archives.
- 98. U.S. War Department, Office of the Assistant Chief of Staff, G-2, "'Magic'—Diplomatic Summary" No. 1034, 23 January 1945, in records of the National Security Agency/Central Security Service, RG 457, NARA, Washington, D.C. Hereafter cited as "Magic." This source consists of summaries of Japanese messages exchanged with Indochina and is particularly precious for the period after March 9, 1945, when contemporary French sources are lacking.
- 99. For a good description of these raids, see David G. Marr, *Vietnam 1945: The Quest for Power* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), pp. 272–274.
- 100. Report of M. Vallat, cited in *l'Indochine Française 1940–1945*, ed. Paul Isoart (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1982), p. 36.
  - 101. The instructions bore the reference number 687/Cab.
- 102. "Témoignage du gouverneur général de Langlade," in Le Général de Gaulle et l'Indochine 1940–1946, ed. Gilbert Pilleul (Paris: Plon, 1982), p. 96.
  - 103. Text in Boisanger, On Pouvait Eviter la Guerre d'Indochine, pp. 132-135.
  - 104. Jacques de Folin, Indochine 1940–1955: La Fin d'un Rêve (Paris: Perrin, 1993), p. 48.
- 105. Ibid., pp. 49–50. Langlade was never penalized for his unauthorized action and in fact became de Gaulle's chief adviser on Indochina.
- 106. "Magic" No. 1016, 5 January 1945. This text gives an account of a December 13, 1944, conversation between Decoux and Matsumoto, in which Decoux was at pains to stress to the Japanese the "provisional" nature of de Gaulle's government.
  - 107. "Magic" No. 1044, 2 February 1945, p. 4.
  - 108. "Magic" No. 1044, 2 February 1945, p. 4.
  - 109. "Magic" No. 1048, 6 February 1945, pp. 7-8.
  - 110. "Magic" No. 1034, 23 January 1945, p. 11.
- 111. Hesse d'Alzon, "L'Armée Française d'Indochine," in *l'Indochine Française 1940–1945*, ed. Paul Isoart (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1982), pp. 111–112. Mordant also mentions, somewhat cursorily, hypotheses A and B in his memoirs, written entirely from memory: *Au Service de la France en Indochine, 1941–1945* (Saigon: Imprimerie Française d'Outre-Mer, 1950), pp. 132–134.
- 112. "Plan A," No. 835.3/OPS, in archives of the Service Historique de l'Armée de Terre, Vincennes.
- 113. "Directive au Sujet du Plan de Défense de l'Indochine," No. 243/DN/3/P/S dated January 26, 1945, in archives of the Service Historique de l'Armée de Terre, Vincennes.
- 114. It has been pointed out that these parachute drops were cited in the post-facto Japanese justification for the *Meigo* action. Ralph B. Smith, "The Japanese Period in Indochina and the Coup of 9 March 1945," *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* IX, no. 2

(September 1978): 280. Smith's article is based on his study of the Japanese Foreign Ministry archives in Tokyo.

- 115. Bradley F. Smith, *The Shadow Warriors* (New York: Basic Books, 1983), p. 92, citing Hornbeck Papers, Hoover Institution.
- 116. Ibid., p. 131. S.I. stands for Secret Intelligence Branch and S.O. for Special Operations Branch.
- 117. Marr, Vietnam 1945, pp. 167–173, gives a good description of the founding of the Viet Minh.
  - 118. Devillers, Histoire du Viêt Nam, pp. 103–109.
- 119. Philippe Devillers, the foremost French historian of post-1940 Vietnam, has found the report, titled "Subversive Activities in Indochina," in the French archives. It was apparently hand-carried out of Indochina to the French mission in Kunming by one of Decoux's agents. See Devillers, *Paris Saigon Hanoi: Les Archives de la Guerre 1944–1947* (Paris: Gallimard/Julliard, 1988), p. 60.
  - 120. "Magic" No. 1038, 27 January 1945.
  - 121. "Magic" No. 1044, 2 February 1945.
  - 122. "Magic" No. 1033, 22 January 1945.
- 123. "Digest of 26 January Report from Ambassador Matsumoto in French Indo-China," "Magic" No. 1044, 2 February 1945, pp. A1–A5. De Gaulle had signed a pact with the Soviet Union in November 1944.
- 124. Studied notably by Masaya Shiraishi and Motoo Furuta, "Two Features of Japan's Indochina Policy during the Pacific War," in *Indochina in the 1940's and 1950's*, ed. Takashi Shiraishi and Motoo Furuta (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Southeast Asia Program, 1992), pp. 55–85. This paper was originally published in Japanese in 1976.
- 125. Memorandum by President Roosevelt for the Secretary of State, January 1, 1945, in U.S. Department of State, FRUS, 1945, vol. VI, The British Commonwealth. The Far East (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1969), p. 293.
- 126. Admiral William D. Leahy to Vice-Admiral Raymond Fénard, chief of the French Naval Mission in Washington, French Foreign Ministry Telegram 1468 to London, March 14, 1945, File E. 166.4, cited in de Folin, *Indochine 1940–1955*, p. 84.
- 127. "Suggested Reexamination of American Policy with Respect to Indochina," Far East Bureau memo containing comments by Stanton addressed to Dunn, April 21, 1945, Microfilm Series LM-70, reel 1, frames 73–81, RG 59, NARA. Any such plans would have been known to General Clyde C. Edelman, who was General MacArthur's planning officer. (Author's interview of John Deaver, who was later stationed in Taiwan and knew Edelman personally, Bethesda, Maryland, May 1997.)
  - 128. Shiraishi and Furuta, "Two Features of Japan's Indochina Policy," p. 78.
- 129. Gunn, *Political Struggles in Laos*, pp. 109–110, citing Sako Masanori, Japanese commander at Vientiane.
  - 130. Shiraishi and Furuta, "Two Features of Japan's Indochina Policy," pp. 80–82.
- 131. "Japanese Ambassador Matsumoto's Account of the Events Occurring in Saigon on the Evening of 9 March," "Magic" No. 1088, 18 March 1945, pp. A1–A5. An account of the conversation is in Decoux, *A la Barre de l'Indochine*. A rather more abbreviated account, but one containing useful details, is in Boisanger, *On Pouvait Eviter la Guerre d'Indochine*, pp. 98–100.
  - 132. See Matsumoto's cabled account in "Magic" No. 1088, 18 March 1945.
- 133. The episode has been reconstructed by Marr, *Vietnam 1945*, p. 203, from documents in the French archives and the Communist version in a history published in Hanoi in 1960.
- 134. According to Pham Quynh's statement to a fellow Vietnamese at the end of March 1945.
- 135. There was another pretender to the throne, the former emperor Duy Tan, living in exile in Réunion since 1916. De Gaulle gave encouragement to Duy Tan in 1945, but he was killed in an air crash in December 1945.

- 136. Tran My Van, "Japan and Vietnam's Caodaists: A Wartime Relationship (1939–45)," *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* (Singapore) 27, no. 1 (March 1996): 179–193.
- 137. English translation from the French text in Allan W. Cameron, ed., *Viet-Nam Crisis: A Documentary History*, vol. I, 1940–1956 (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1969), pp. 31–32. This is the text disseminated in Vietnam. The text broadcast by Radio Tokyo and published in Japanese newspapers, in keeping with practice at the time, uses the term Annam instead of Vietnam. For a discussion of usage of names, see Stein Tønnesson, *The Vietnamese Revolution of 1945: Roosevelt, Ho Chi Minh and de Gaulle in a World at War* (London: Sage Publications, 1991), pp. 288–289.
- 138. Vu Ngu Chieu, "The Other Side of the 1945 Vietnamese Revolution: The Empire of Viet-Nam (March-August 1945)," *Journal of Asian Studies* XLV, no. 2 (February 1986): 296.
  - 139. "Magic" No. 1100, 30 March 1945, p. 4.
- 140. Sources, including Kim's memoir and Hayashi's diary (a translation of which has been found in the French archives) and subsequent interviews with Japanese and Vietnamese involved, differ on exactly what happened. See Tønnesson, *The Vietnamese Revolution of 1945*, pp. 284–285, and relevant footnotes. From the Japanese side, the most comprehensive treatment is Masaya Shiraishi, "The Background to the Formation of the Tran Trong Kim Cabinet in April 1945: Japanese Plans for Governing Vietnam," in *Indochina in the 1940's and 1950's*, ed. Takashi Shiraishi and Motoo Furuta (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Southeast Asia Program, 1992), pp. 113–141, originally published in Japanese in 1984.
- 141. Souverains et Notabilités d'Indochine (Hanoi: Editions du Gouvernement Général de l'Indochine, 1943), p. 43.
- 142. Text in Nguyên Ky Nam, *Hoi Ky, 1925–1964* [Memoirs, 1925–1964], vol. 2, 1945–1954 (Saigon: Dan Chu Moi, 1964), pp. 206–208.
  - 143. In Vietnamese, the term bo suggests less separateness than ky.
  - 144. Trinh Dinh Khai, Décolonisation du Viêt Nam, pp. 61-64.
  - 145. See below, Chapter 3, "Looking Back."
- 146. Joseph Buttinger, *Vietnam: A Dragon Embattled*, vol. 1 (New York: Praeger, 1967), p. 602, fn. 89, citing a personal friend who was close to Bao Dai.
  - 147. Vu Ngu Chieu, "Other Side," p. 308.
  - 148. "Magic" No. 1107, 6 April 1945, p. 4.
  - 149. "Magic" No. 1214, 22 July 1945, p. 10.
  - 150. "Magic" No. 1214, 22 July 1945, pp. B3-B4.
  - 151. Tønnesson, The Vietnamese Revolution of 1945, p. 284, fn. 19.
  - 152. Marr, Vietnam 1945, pp. 133-134.
  - 153. Ibid., p. 133, citing Tran Trong Kim, memoirs, pp. 78–81.
  - 154. "Magic" No. 1214, 22 July 1945, p. B4. See above, Chapter 1.
- 155. Marr, *Vietnam 1945*, p. 357. Marr provides an account of the opening of this conference on pages 383–384.
  - 156. Norodom Sihanouk, Souvenirs Doux et Amers (Paris: Hachette, 1981), pp. 99-103.
- 157. Manuscript chronicle of Sihanouk's reign, covering the years 1941–1949, microfilmed by Centre for East Asian Studies, Tokyo, p. 399, cited in David P. Chandler, *A History of Cambodia*, 2nd. ed. (Boulder: Westview Press, 1992), p. 170.
  - 158. Sihanouk, Souvenirs, pp. 104-105.
  - 159. "Magic" No. 1214, 22 July 1945, p. B5.
- 160. David Chandler, *The Tragedy of Cambodian History: Politics, War, and Revolution since 1945* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), pp. 22–23. Sihanouk, *Souvenirs*, pp. 112–113.
- 161. Michel Caply, "Le Japon et l'Indépendance du Laos (1945)," Revue d'Histoire de la Deuxième Guerre Mondiale (Paris), (c. 1971): 70.
  - 162. Caply, "Le Japon et l'Indépendance du Laos (1945)," p. 72.

- 163. Jane Hamilton-Merritt, *Tragic Mountains: The Hmong, the Americans, and the Secret Wars for Laos, 1942–1992* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), p. 32.
- 164. For the attitude of the OSS toward the Free French guerrilla leaders in Laos, see Arthur J. Dommen and George W. Dalley, "The OSS in Laos: The 1945 Raven Mission and American Policy," *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 22, no. 2 (September 1991): 327–346. For Vu Huu Binh, see Christopher E. Goscha, *Thailand and the Southeast Asian Networks of the Vietnamese Revolution*, 1885–1954 (Richmond, Surrey: Curzon Press, 1999), pp. 146–155.
- 165. Marr, Vietnam 1945, p. 169, fn. 58, citing an official party history published in Hanoi.
  - 166. "Magic" No. 1207, 15 July 1945, pp. 16-18.
- 167. Tønnesson, *The Vietnamese Revolution of 1945*, pp. 310–311, citing propaganda tracts sent by the Indochina Independence League to U.S. officials.
  - 168. See above, "Nationalists and Communists in Southern China."
- 169. See, for example, "French Indochina Intelligence Reports, G.B.T. Group," "Allied Raid Saigon," February 7, February 9, 1945; POW Plans for Saigon, February 9, 1945; and "Pleiku Project," February 18, 1945, Kunming SI, entry 140, Box 40, Folder 314, RG 226, NARA.
- 170. Charles Fenn, *Ho Chi Minh: A Biographical Introduction* (New York: Scribner's, 1973), pp. 76–77. Fenn recalls this period in a BBC television production, "Uncle Ho and Uncle Sam," made in 1995.
  - 171. Fenn, Ho Chi Minh, pp. 78-79.
- 172. Patti describes his meeting in his book, Why Viet Nam? Prelude to America's Albatross (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), pp. 61–63, 67–71, 82–88.
- 173. Interview of Major René J. Défourneaux by the author, Indianapolis, August 3, 1998. Défourneaux was a member of the Deer Team.
  - 174. Saigon Embassy to State, Airgram A-454, January 30, 1964, RG 59, NARA.
- 175. State to Chungking Embassy, telegram 843, June 2, 1945, FRUS 1945, vol. VI, p. 312.
- 176. René J. Défourneaux, *The Winking Fox: Twenty-Two Years in Military Intelligence* (Indianapolis: Indiana Creative Arts, 1997), p. 138.
- 177. U.S. Congress, Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, Causes, Origins, and Lessons of the Vietnam War (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1973).
  - 178. Défourneaux, The Winking Fox, pp. 134-202.
  - 179. U.S. Congress, Causes, Origins, p. 246.
- 180. One of Thomas's reports submitted after the mission's return to Kunming bore the significant title "The Viet Minh Party or League." (U.S. Congress, *Causes, Origins*, p. 266.)
  - 181. Défourneaux, The Winking Fox, p. 173.
  - 182. Défourneaux interview cited above.
- 183. Sainteny was aware in early August of this desire of Ho's. (Message of August 6, 1945, cited in Tønnesson, *The Vietnamese Revolution of 1945*, p. 398, fn. 34.)
- 184. Le Duan, "Under the Glorious Party Banner, for Independence, Freedom, and Socialism, Let Us Advance and Achieve New Victories," *Nhan Dan*, Feb. 14, 1970; translated in JUSPAO (Saigon), Viet-Nam Documents and Research Notes No. 77, April 1970, p. 17.
- 185. Robert Shaplen, "The Enigma of Ho Chi Minh," *The Reporter,* January 27, 1955, pp. 11–19.
  - 186. Fenn, Ho Chi Minh, p. 79, and interview of Fenn in BBC television documentary.
  - 187. Interview of Patti, "Vietnam: A Television History" (1983), transcript 101, p. 14.
  - 188. Marr, Vietnam 1945, p. 370.
  - 189. Défourneaux, The Winking Fox, p. 168.
- 190. U.S. Congress, *Causes, Origins*, p. 243. Records in the National Archives show that in September 1945 Patti's mission, too, repeatedly violated its orders from OSS

Kunming, in spite of radioed reminders of the contents of these orders. See below, Chapter 3.

191. Ibid., p. 245.

192. Bernard B. Fall, "The Viet-Minh Regime," Southeast Asia Program Data Paper No. 14, Cornell University, April 1954, p. 2. A balanced analysis of the Viet Minh view of the Japanese and the Japanese view of the Viet Minh is Buttinger, *Vietnam: A Dragon Embattled*, I, pp. 298–299.

193. Marr, Vietnam 1945, pp. 366-367.

194. U.S. Congress, Causes, Origins, p. 271.

195. Ibid., p. 259.

196. Ibid., pp. 261–263. Défourneaux also provides an amusing account of this famous "siege." (Défourneaux, *The Winking Fox*, pp. 185–196.)

197. Défourneaux interview cited above.

198. Helliwell to 109, Davis and Coughlin, message 21897, undated, Microfilm Series LM-70, reel 1, frame 230, RG 59, NARA.

199. "Weapons in Hands of Annamites," memorandum from Moffat to Bonbright, Washington, August 29, 1945, Microfilm Series LM-70, reel 1, frame 232, RG 59, NARA. 200. Marr, *Vietnam 1945*, p. 367.

201. Ibid., p. 362 and p. 371. Text of anthem in Cole, *Conflict in Indo-China and International Repercussions*, pp. 39–40. The National People's Congress that met in Vientiane on December 1, 1975, was slightly more representative: its delegates had been elected on the basis of candidacies put forward secretly by the party. (See below, Chapter 10, "The Lao Communists Surface.")

202. Marr, Vietnam 1945, p. 349, quoting memoirs of those involved.

203. Foreign Broadcast Intelligence Service (FBIS), 20 August 1945, RG 262, NARA. Also quoted in Kenneth E. Colton, "The Failure of the Independent Political Movement in Vietnam, 1945–1946" (Ph.D. diss., The American University, 1969), p. 212.

204. Text in Françoise Martin, *Heures Tragiques au Tonkin*, 9 mars 1945–18 mars 1946 (Paris: Berger-Levraut, 1948), p. 121.

205. FBIS, August 21, 1945; Colton, "Failure of the Independent Political Movement in Vietnam," p. 208.

206. Devillers, Histoire du Viêt-Nam, pp. 140–141.

207. Colton, "Failure of the Independent Political Movement in Vietnam," p. 211. 208. Decoux, A la Barre de l'Indochine, pp. 339–341, 349; Boisanger, On Pouvait Eviter la Guerre d'Indochine, pp. 108–109; Martin, Heures Tragiques au Tonkin.

209. Bui Tin, Following Ho Chi Minh: Memoirs of a North Vietnamese Colonel (London: Hurst and Company, 1995), p. 1.

210. Marr, Vietnam 1945, pp. 382–383. Marr gives the membership of this committee in fn. 120, p. 376.

211. The events in Hanoi on August 17–19, reconstructed from materials in the French archives and other sources, have been well described in ibid., pp. 382–401.

212. Ibid., p. 390.

213. Ibid., pp. 390–391.

214. Interview of Dang Duc Khoi by the author, Saigon, 1960.

215. "Magic" No. 1248, 23 August 1945, p. 6.

216. Marr, Vietnam 1945, pp. 438-439, quoting text in the French archives.

217. Ngô Van, Việt-Nam 1920–1945 (Paris: L'Insomniaque, 1995), p. 328.

218. Tønnesson, The Vietnamese Revolution of 1945, p. 387.

219. Ibid., p. 388.

220. Text in Cameron, *Viet-Nam Crisis*, pp. 48–49. The original source of this text is the Hue newspaper *Viêt-Nam Tan Bao*, August 20, 1945.

221. Memorandum of conversation, Chuong and McClintock, Washington, August 13, 1954, in U.S. Department of State, *FRUS 1952–1954*, vol. XIII, Part 2, *Indochina* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1982), pp. 1941–1942.

- 222. Marr, Vietnam 1945, p. 439, citing the text in the French archives.
- 223. Ibid., pp. 439–440, citing text in the Saigon newspaper *Hung Viet*, No. 21, August 24, 1945.
  - 224. Ibid., p. 441.
  - 225. Ibid., p. 440.
  - 226. Ibid., p. 439, fn. 114.
  - 227. Ibid., p. 442.
  - 228. Ibid., p. 442, fn. 125.
  - 229. Ibid., pp. 442–443.
- 230. Text in Devillers, *Histoire du Viêt-Nam*, p. 137. English translation in Colton, "Failure of the Independent Political Movement in Vietnam," p. 196.
  - 231. Bao Dai, Le Dragon d'Annam, pp. 117-119.
  - 232. Marr, Vietnam 1945, p. 445, citing a document in the French archives.
- 233. Ibid., pp. 443–444, citing Kim's 1969 memoir. Bui Diem confirms Kim's written account from later conversations with his uncle. (Interview of Bui Diem by the author, Rockville, Maryland, November 4, 1997.)
  - 234. Marr, Vietnam 1945, p. 446.
  - 235. Text in Cameron, Viet-Nam Crisis, pp. 49-50.
- 236. Tran Huy Lieu, "The Emperor's Golden Sword," Microfilm Series LM-70, reel 1, frames 566–570, RG 59, NARA.
- 237. According to his nephew, Bui Diem. Bui Diem with David Chanoff, In the Jaws of History (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987), p. 35.
  - 238. Tønnesson, The Vietnamese Revolution of 1945, p. 387.
- 239. Bernard B. Fall, *The Two Viet-Nams* (New York: Praeger, rev. ed., 1964), p. 61. Fall, generally a careful writer, was in Vietnam in 1952–1953 undertaking historical research. In this period, Bao Dai was head of state.
  - 240. Marr, Vietnam 1945, pp. 448-452.
  - 241. Ibid., p. 449.
  - 242. Devillers, Histoire du Viêt-Nam, p. 138.
  - 243. Ibid., p. 139.
- 244. And which Devillers discussed in an extremely interesting paper he presented at Euroviet II conference in Aix-en-Provence, May 3–5, 1995, "La Genèse d'une *Histoire du Viet-Nam de 1940–1952.*"
- 245. Ellen J. Hammer, *The Struggle for Indochina* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1954), pp. 103–104, citing Tran Huy Lieu, "Emperor's Golden Sword."
  - 246. Tønnesson, The Vietnamese Revolution of 1945, p. 389.
- 247. Le Thanh Khoi, *Le Vîêt-Nam: Histoire et Civilisation* (Paris: Les Editions de Minuit, 1955), p. 465.
- 248. Huynh Kim Khanh, "The Vietnamese August Revolution Reinterpreted," *Journal of Asian Studies* XXX, no. 4 (August 1971): 778.
- 249. Nguyên Tuong Bach, Viet-Nam Mot The-Ky Qua: Hoi-Ky Cuon Mot 1916–1946 (Vietnam During the Last Century: Memoirs, vol. I, 1916–1946) (Santa Ana, California: Mekong Printing, 1998), p. 171.
- 250. Bruce McFarland Lockhart, *The End of the Vietnamese Monarchy* (New Haven: Yale Center for International and Area Studies, Lac Viet Series No. 15, 1993), p. 152, citing Tran Trong Kim, pp. 196–198. Emphasis added.
  - 251. Marr, Vietnam 1945, pp. 373-374.
- 252. As is evident from Bao Dai's memoirs (see Chapter 3). Hoe's memoirs, published in Hanoi in 1983, and an edition of *Cuu Quoc* published on August 27, cited by Marr, constitute the only documentary evidence to the contrary. Both must be suspect on grounds of partisanship.
- 253. Letter from Ho Chi Minh to Byrnes, October 22, 1945, Microfilm Series LM-70, reel 1, frames 603–604, RG 59, NARA.

# 3. THE RISE OF NATIONALIST FEELING AND THE SUPPRESSION OF THE NATIONALISTS (Aug. 30, 1945–Dec. 1946)

- 1. David G. Marr, "Vietnam 1945: Some Questions," paper presented at the annual meeting of the Association for Asian Studies, Washington, D.C., March 23–25, 1984, p. 40, fn. 54.
- 2. Ibid., p. 358. See the names of four French priests murdered or disappeared in August and September in a letter from General Alessandri to General Gallagher, Hanoi, September 25, 1945, in Papers of General Philip E. Gallagher, U.S. Army Center of Military History, Washington, D.C (hereafter cited as Gallagher Papers).
- 3. Sainteny interview with Michael Charlton, Paris, 1977, cited in Charlton and Anthony Moncrieff, *Many Reasons Why: The American Involvement in Vietnam* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1978), p. 5.
- 4. In an interview years later, Sainteny expressed his contempt for the nationalist parties and their leaders. See ibid., p. 30.
- 5. On August 9 the Chinese government announced the terms of the Potsdam agreement under which Chinese troops would occupy northern Indochina.
- 6. Sainteny in Kunming to Roos in Calcutta, Telegram No. 352, August 13, 1945, in French archives, cited in Devillers, *Paris Saigon Hanoi*, p. 65.
  - 7. Ibid., pp. 65–67, citing French archives.
- 8. There is a report, which I have been unable to confirm, that a Viet Minh death squad also assassinated a second Japanese, a Communist, who had acted as a mole inside Japanese headquarters and who had become inconvenient to the Viet Minh after the surrender.
- 9. Cameron, *Viet-Nam Crisis*, p. 54. Note the shift in party line regarding independence in the 10 short days since the August 23 telegram to Bao Dai of the Northern Region Revolutionary People's Committee, which had spoken of "consolidating" the independence of Vietnam.
- 10. Vu Ngu Chieu, "Political and Social Change in Viet-Nam Between 1940 and 1946" (Ph.D. diss., University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1984), p. 448. Devillers, the foremost historian of this period, suspected as much when he wrote in 1952: "The Revolution—let us call it the change of regime—had taken place with amazing ease." (Devillers, *Histoire du Viêt-Nam*, p. 177.)
- 11. Truong Chinh, "Cach Mang hay Dao Chinh?" ("Revolution or Coup de Force?"), *Co Giai Phong* (Hanoi), No. 16, September 12, 1945. For a discussion of this issue, see Tønnesson, *The Vietnamese Revolution of 1945*, pp. 2–6.
- 12. Richard Pipes, *The Russian Revolution, 1899–1919* (New York: Vintage Books, 1991), p. 493.
- 13. Vu Dinh Huynh, "Uncle Ho from Tan Trao to Hanoi. Memories," *Van* (Letters) (Ho Chi Minh City), 8 (March 1990): 6–25, cited in Boudarel and Ky, *Hanoi 1936–1996*, pp. 99–100.
  - 14. Devillers, Histoire du Viêt-Nam, pp. 177-178.
  - 15. A rather similar situation was to occur after 1986 in the period of reforms.
  - 16. Vu Dinh Huynh, "Uncle Ho," pp. 94-95 and p. 99.
- 17. A listing of the August 29 cabinet appears in Fall, "Viet-Minh Regime," p. 18. fn. 9.
  - 18. Marr, "Vietnam 1945: Some Questions," pp. 504–506.
  - 19. Ibid., p. 32.
  - 20. Radio Hanoi, September 9, 1990.
  - 21. Bao Dai, Le Dragon d'Annam, pp. 127-129.
  - 22. Ibid., pp. 129–130.
  - 23. Marr, Vietnam 1945, p. 452.
  - 24. According to the previously cited list in Fall, "Viet Minh Regime," p. 18, fn. 9.

- 25. Bao Dai, *Le Dragon d'Annam*, pp. 132–133. Pham Khac Hoe relates a slightly different version in a memoir published in Hanoi in 1983. See Marr, *Vietnam 1945*, p. 448 and p. 451. One is reminded that stories commonly become embellished in the retelling, often innocently enough.
  - 26. From an account by one of the Vietnamese in the party.
- 27. Interview of René Defourneaux by Larry Engelmann, in archives of SEASIA-L, March 26, 1996, http://list.msu.edu/archives/seasia-l.html (hereafter archives of SEASIA-L).
  - 28. Marr, Vietnam 1945, pp. 234-237.
  - 29. Bao Dai, Le Dragon d'Annam, p. 134.
  - 30. Marr, Vietnam 1945, pp. 434–435.
  - 31. Ibid., p. 519.
  - 32. Ibid., p. 453, fn. 158.
  - 33. As Devillers suggests, Histoire du Viêt-Nam, p. 181, fn. 3.
- 34. Orlando Figes, A People's Tragedy: A History of the Russian Revolution (New York: Viking, 1996), p. 630.
- 35. Instructions from Headquarters United States Forces India Burma Theater to Commanding Officer, OSS, India Burma Theater, May 1945, draft, RG 59, NARA.
  - 36. Patti, Why Viet Nam?, p. 141.
- 37. This attitude was inherited by the director of the OSS's successor, the CIA, in the 1950s, Allen Dulles.
- 38. Byrnes to Bishop, American Embassy New Delhi, August 30, 1945, RG 59, NARA.
- 39. Memorandum of conversation by Assistant Secretary of State James Clement Dunn, August 29, 1945, in U. S. Department of State, *FRUS*, 1945, vol. VII, *The Far East. China* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1969), pp. 540–541.
- 40. Jean Lacouture, *De Gaulle*, vol. 2, *Le Politique 1944–1959* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1985), p. 110.
  - 41. Patti, Why Viet Nam?, pp. 158–160.
- 42. Radio message from Helliwell to Nordlinger, September 7, 1945, File 091, IndoChina, RG 226, NARA.
- 43. Radio message from Kunming to Patti, August 30, 1945, ibid., reporting "In spite of orders to contrary, Deer is reported within 1 hour of Hanoi." Thomas makes no mention of violating orders in his report.
- 44. Radio message from Patti to Kunming, August 30, 1945, File 091, IndoChina, RG 226, NARA. Bank mentions his investigation of Japanese war crimes in his memoir, *From OSS to Green Berets* (Novato, California: Presidio, 1986), p. 104. Bank's accusation is doubly ironic in view of the record of the Decoux administration in refusing to hand over American flyers who had bailed out over Indochina to the Japanese.
- 45. Radio message from Patti to Kunming, August 28, 1945, File 091, IndoChina, RG 59, NARA.
  - 46. Marr, Vietnam 1945, pp. 499-500.
- 47. Radio message from Patti to Kunming, September 11, 1945, File 091, Indo-China, RG 59, NARA. Bao Dai, of course, was careful not to suggest this possibility himself, particularly in the hearing of Ho or the other Viet Minh leaders. See the OSS report, dated September 19, of an interview with Bao Dai, Ho, and Prince Souphanouvong, printed in U.S. Congress, *Causes, Origins*, p. 304.
  - 48. Patti, Why Viet Nam?, pp. 394 and 397.
- 49. Telegram from Leclerc to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, September 27, 1945, in Gilbert Bodinier, ed., *La Guerre d'Indochine 1945–1954*, vol. 1, *Le Retour de la France en Indochine 1945–1946* (Vincennes: Service Historique de l'Armée de Terre, 1987), p. 193.
  - 50. The New York Times, October 5, 1945.
- 51. Giau appears to have had an obsession with mass demonstrations to give the Viet Minh seizure of power the appearance of a popular insurrection. See his statements

in an interview years later with Tønnesson, in Tønnesson, *The Vietnamese Revolution of 1945*, p. 388.

- 52. The authoritative source for these events is Devillers, who arrived in the van of Leclerc's headquarters and had many excellent sources of information in the city, including among the Viet Minh. See especially *Histoire du Viêt-Nam*, pp. 153–176.
- 53. Interview of Ho Van Dong, who was in Saigon at the time, by the author, Arlington, Virginia, September 5, 1997.
- 54. Interview of General Maunsell by Peter M. Dunn, April 20, 1977, cited in Dunn, *The First Vietnam War* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1985), p. 154.
- 55. SEAC JPS Force Plan 1, "Occupation of French Indo-China," August 31, 1945, cited in ibid., p. 142. Dunn discusses the question of Gracey's orders on pp. 140–147.
- 56. King Chen, "China and the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (1945–54)" (Ph.D. diss., Pennsylvania State University, 1962), pp. 75–83. This work is based on a study of Chinese documents.
  - 57. Ngô Van, Việt-Nam 1920-1945, p. 345.
  - 58. Dunn, The First Vietnam War, Chapter 8.
- 59. It is unfair to single out Gracey for blame for the fiasco of the British occupation of Saigon in 1945. The following facts, recorded verbatim in Mountbatten's report (Vice-Admiral the Earl Mountbatten of Burma, Post Surrender Tasks: Section E of the Report to the Combined Chiefs of Staff by the Supreme Allied Commander South East Asia 1943-1945 [London: HMSO, 1969]), attest to the incoherence of Allied actions with respect to Indochina south of the 16th parallel on the surrender of the Japanese. At Potsdam, Mountbatten had been promised (by whom he does not make clear, a key point in view of the fact that de Gaulle's government was not represented at Potsdam) that adequate French forces would be available to him (p. 286). Mountbatten's superiors kept reminding him that his authority, responsibility, and activities in French Indochina were strictly limited and temporary (p. 286). Mountbatten was told that French forces, with civil officials, would be responsible for administration of the country (p. 286). Leclerc declared himself unwilling to reaffirm Gracey's proclamation of September 20 in the name of the French Republic until he had sufficient French forces on hand (p. 288). The British and French governments had agreed that the French would reassert their sovereignty over Indochina (p. 286), yet Mountbatten was informed by a British minister on September 28 that it was the British government's policy not to interfere in the internal affairs of French Indochina (p. 288). At a meeting with representatives of the Viet Minh party on October 1 in which Viet Minh agreement to a cease-fire order was received, Gracey's political adviser undertook to ensure French compliance (p. 288). North of the 16th parallel, the situation was hardly less confused, as evident in the fact that the U.S. 14th Air Force reportedly shot down two, possibly three, B-24 Liberator bombers bearing Royal Air Force markings engaged in parachuting supplies to Free French resistance forces in northern Tonkin (Marr, Vietnam 1945, p. 277), illustrating the conflict over theater jurisdiction between the U.S. and Mountbatten, which later became the subject of exchanges of angry memoranda.
- 60. Germaine Krull, "Diary of Saigon Following the Allied Occupation in September 1945," typescript, p. 15, RG 59, NARA.
- 61. Affidavit of Captain Herbert J. Bluechel, October 13, 1945, printed in U.S. Congress, *Causes, Origins*, pp. 286–291. This is a factual account of the events, without any attribution of responsibility. The number of Vietnamese killed comes from material in RG 226, NARA, cited below.
  - 62. Patti, Why Viet Nam?, p. 321.
- 63. Affidavit of Captain Frank M. White, Jr., October 13, 1945, printed in U.S. Congress, *Causes, Origins*, pp. 292–295.
  - 64. "Memorandum for the Record," September 29, 1945, in Gallagher Papers.
  - 65. Van, "Japan and Vietnam's Caodaists," p. 190.

- 66. Général Yves Gras, *Histoire de la Guerre d'Indochine* (Paris: Denoël, 1992), p. 417. See below, Chapter 4, "The Military Struggle Intensifies."
- 67. Memorandum of conversation, Abbot Low Moffat, Lauriston Sharp, and Lieutenant J. R. Withrow, OSS, Washington, December 19, 1945, Microfilm Series LM-70, reel 1, frames 902–905, RG 59, NARA, cited in Dunn, *The First Vietnam War*, p. 214, fn. 7.
- 68. Thach's letter and other materials are in Entry 190, Box 588, Folder 472, RG 226, NARA. For a news report and obituary material, see *Chicago Herald American*, September 27, 1945.
  - 69. Text in Cameron, Viet-Nam Crisis, pp. 33-35.
- 70. Virginia Thompson, "The Vietnamese Community in France," *Pacific Affairs* 25, no. 1 (March 1952): 49–51. Devillers, *Histoire du Viêt-Nam*, p. 145.
- 71. Marr, Vietnam 1945, p. 342; Tønnesson, The Vietnamese Revolution of 1945, pp. 368–369.
- 72. Nguyên Quoc Dinh and Nguyên Dac Khe, Le Futur Statut de l'Indochine (Commentaire de la Déclaration Gouvernementale du 24 Mars 1945) (Paris: Dalloz, 1945), p. 47.
- 73. Note from Ambassador Jefferson Caffery to Foreign Minister Georges Bidault, in archives of the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, cited by de Folin, *Indochine* 1940–1955, p. 96.
- 74. Embassy of France, Washington, Aide-Mémoire No. 643, August 28, 1945, and Department of State, Aide-Mémoire, August 30, 1945, both in RG 59, NARA.
- 75. See above, Chapter 2. The text of Bao Dai's appeal, taken from the radio broadcast, had been telegraphed to Paris from Kunming by General Alessandri. Devillers, *Paris Saigon Hanoi*, p. 72, citing French archives. See also related archival materials published in Bodinier, ed., *La Guerre d'Indochine 1945–1954*, vol. 1, pp. 158–159.
  - 76. Dunn, The First Vietnam War, p. 177.
- 77. Report of General Leclerc, September 25, 1945, in Bodinier, ed., *La Guerre d'Indochine 1945–1954*, vol. 1, p. 187.
  - 78. De Folin, *Indochine 1940–1955*, p. 97.
- 79. The failure of regular French units to arrive in Indochina prior to the beginning of October was not due to any obstruction put up by the Americans to keep the "colonialists" out, as some writers have alleged, but purely to the inability of the French military staffs to put de Gaulle's famous expeditionary corps on an operational footing, as the official French military history makes clear. See Bodinier, ed., *La Guerre d'Indochine* 1945–1954, vol. 1, Chapter 1.
- 80. Harold R. Isaacs, *No Peace for Asia* (reprint, Cambridge, Massachusetts: The M.I.T. Press, 1967), pp. 161 and 164.
  - 81. Marr, Vietnam 1945, pp. 480-481.
  - 82. Devillers, Paris Saigon Hanoi, p. 73.
- 83. Admiral Thierry d'Argenlieu, *Chronique d'Indochine 1945–1947* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1985), p. 31.
  - 84. Ibid., pp. 59–60.
- 85. Georgette Elgey, Histoire de la IVè République. La République des Illusions (1945–1951), rev. ed. (Paris: Fayard, 1993), p. 33.
- 86. Pignon to D'Argenlieu, October 28, 1945, cited in Devillers, *Paris Saigon Hanoi*, pp. 105–108.
  - 87. Devillers, Histoire du Viêt-Nam, p. 232, fn. 3.
- 88. Viet-Nam Dan-Quoc Cong-Bao (Hanoi), No. 1, September 29, 1945, p. 7, cited in R. B. Smith, "The Work of the Provisional Government of Vietnam, August-December 1945," Modern Asian Studies 12, no. 4 (1978): 575. Smith describes the Viet-Nam Dan Quoc Cong-Bao as the decree book or official gazette of the provisional government. He consulted copies in the National Library, Saigon.
- 89. Cong-Bao, No. 1, September 29, 1945, p. 12, cited in Smith, "Work of the Provisional Government of Vietnam," pp. 575–576.
  - 90. Cong-Bao, No. 3, October 13, 1945, cited in ibid., p. 576.

- 91. Cong-Bao, No. 16, December 29, 1945, cited in ibid.
- 92. See map in Fall, "Viet-Minh Regime," p. 7.
- 93. Text in Cameron, *Viet-Nam Crisis*, pp. 66–67, citing the text published in a contemporary Hanoi newspaper.
- 94. This will be an area of particular interest to historians once the party archives become available.
  - 95. See above, Chapter 2, "Nationalists and Communists in Southern China."
- 96. Cong-Bao, no. 1, September 29, 1945, p. 11; and no. 2, October 6, 1945. Cited in Smith, "Work of the Provisional Government of Vietnam," p. 582.
  - 97. Interview of Cuong Hung Nguyên by the author, Fairfax, Virginia, June 4, 1997.
- 98. "Instructions of the General Committee of the Viet Minh," April 16, 1945, especially Section V, "Guidance Given to Liberation Committees." In Gareth Porter, ed., Vietnam: The Definitive Documentation of Human Decisions, vol. 1 (Stanfordville, N.Y.: Earl M. Coleman, 1979), pp. 27–29, citing Breaking Our Chains, Documents of the Vietnamese Revolution of August 1945 (Hanoi: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1960), pp. 46–51.
  - 99. Smith, "Work of the Provisional Government of Vietnam," pp. 577–580.
- 100. George Ginsburgs, "Local Government and Administration in North Vietnam, 1945–1954," *The China Quarterly* 10 (April-June 1962): 174–204.
  - 101. Smith, "Work of the Provisional Government of Vietnam," pp. 580–581.
- 102. Interview of Nguyên Thanh Son by Ben Kiernan, Ho Chi Minh City, October 28, 1980, in Ben Kiernan, *How Pol Pot Came to Power: A History of Communism in Kampuchea*, 1930–1975 (London: Verso, 1985), p. 51.
- 103. David Chandler, "The Kingdom of Kampuchea, March-October 1945: Japanese-sponsored Independence in Cambodia in World War II," *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 17, no. 1 (March 1986): 90.
- 104. Recorded in a contemporary journal, cited by Chandler, "The Kingdom of Kampuchea," p. 90.
- 105. Archives d'Outre-Mer, Indochine, Haut Commissaire, carton 176, dossier 530, Aix-en-Provence.
- 106. Gunn, *Political Struggles in Laos*, pp. 119–120, citing the contemporaneous report of a Lao official in the French archives.
- 107. MacAlister Brown and Joseph J. Zasloff, Apprentice Revolutionaries: The Communist Movement in Laos, 1930–1985 (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1986), p. 16.
  - 108. Brown and Zasloff, Apprentice Revolutionaries, pp. 13-17.
  - 109. Goscha, Thailand and the Southeast Asian Networks, p. 130.
- 110. Jean Deuve, *Le Laos 1945–1949: Contribution à l'Histoire du Mouvement Lao Issala* (Montpellier: Université Paul Valéry, 1992), p. 26.
  - 111. Deuve, Le Laos 1945–1949, p. 27; Gunn, Political Struggles in Laos, p. 140.
- 112. Bank, personal communication to the author, June 29, 1990, cited in Dommen and Dalley, "The OSS in Laos," p. 330, fn. 9.
  - 113. Ibid., p. 331; Deuve, Le Laos 1945-1949, p. 292-293.
  - 114. Dommen and Dalley, "The OSS in Laos," pp. 334–335.
  - 115. Not to be confused with a son of Sisavang Vong of the same name.
  - 116. Deuve, Le Laos 1945-1949, pp. 134-135.
- 117. Tran Van Dinh, "The Birth of the Pathet Lao Army," in Laos: War and Revolution, ed. Nina Adams and Alfred McCoy (New York: Harper and Row, 1970), p. 429.
  - 118. Deuve, Le Laos 1945-1949, pp. 290-291.
  - 119. Ibid., pp. 91-92.
- 120. Interview of Tham Sayasithsena by Paul F. Langer, Vientiane, May 4, 1967, made available to the author.
  - 121. Deuve, Le Laos 1945-1949, pp. 311-314.
- 122. Memorandum of conversation, Prince Boun Oum and Dallas M. Coors, Saigon, May 18, 1948, RG 59, NARA.
  - 123. Letter from State to Bangkok Legation, April 23, 1946, RG 59, NARA.

- 124. Gunn, Political Struggles in Laos, p. 171.
- 125. Hanoi Consulate to State, telegram 18, May 18, 1946, RG 59, NARA.
- 126. Saigon Consulate General to State, telegram 196, May 24, 1946, RG 59, NARA.
- 127. Tran Van Dinh, personal communication to the author, Bethesda, Maryland, December 6, 1992.
  - 128. Radio Vientiane, November 25, 1992.
  - 129. Cited in Devillers, Paris Saigon Hanoi, p. 111.
  - 130. Cited from French archival sources in ibid., pp. 110–111.
- 131. Le Duan, "Under the Glorious Party Banner, for Independence, Freedom, and Socialism, Let Us Advance and Achieve New Victories," *Nhan Dan*, Feb. 14, 1970; translated in JUSPAO (Saigon), Viet-Nam Documents and Research Notes No. 77, April 1970, p. 17.
- 132. Interview of Diem by Ellen Hammer, in Hammer, *The Struggle for Indochina*, pp. 149–150.
- 133. "Programme du Gouvernement Annamite Etabli Selon les Directives de l'Ex-Empereur Duy-Tan du 14 Décembre 1945," in Henri Azeau, *Ho Chi Minh, Dernière Chance* (Paris: Flammarion, 1968), Annex III, pp. 269–271.
  - 134. Hammer, The Struggle for Indochina, p. 149.
  - 135. Devillers, Histoire du Viêt-Nam, p. 201.
- 136. Interview of Bao Dai by Devillers, Paris, February 6 and 7, 1948, cited in Devillers, *Paris Saigon Hanoi*, p. 143. See also Devillers, *Histoire du Viêt-Nam*, pp. 216–217. In relating this episode in his memoirs, Bao Dai says he consulted Tran Trong Kim, who was living as a private citizen in Hanoi, and not the Americans or Chinese.
  - 137. Devillers, Histoire du Viêt-Nam, pp. 220–221; Fall, "Viet-Minh Regime," pp. 11–12.
- 138. Texts in Cameron, *Viet-Nam Crisis*, pp. 77–79. In a footnote, Cameron explains a number of discrepancies in the different published versions of these texts.
  - 139. Devillers, Paris, Saigon, Hanoi, pp. 165-168.
  - 140. Quoted in ibid., pp. 140-142.
- 141. "Political Turning Point in Indochina," memorandum by D'Argenlieu, April 26, 1946, cited in ibid., p. 185.
- 142. In much the same manner the ambiguities built into the 1954 Geneva accords, especially with respect to the elections foreseen in the Final Declaration, provided the DRV with a weapon against the South, forcing the latter to constantly deny that it was responsible for violating the accords.
- 143. Telegram from Ho to Attlee, March 18, 1946, in Cameron, Viet-Nam Crisis, pp. 79–80.
  - 144. Figes, A People's Tragedy, p. 547.
- 145. Text in Devillers, *Histoire du Viêt-Nam*, pp. 228–230, based on a translation of a contemporary newspaper text.
- 146. "Voluntary Report by Charles S. Millet, F.S.O.," Shanghai, November 6, 1945, in Microfilm Series LM-70, reel 1, frames 867–874, RG 59, NARA.
- 147. Saigon Consulate to State, telegram 20, March 7, 1946, contains a summary of the preliminary convention; Saigon Consulate to State, telegram 21, March 8, 1946, contains the text of the preliminary convention. Microfilm Series LM-70, reel 1, frames 994 and 995, RG 59, NARA.
  - 148. Devillers, Histoire du Viêt-Nam, p. 272.
- 149. Hanoi Consulate to State, telegram 63, July 1, 1946, Microfilm Series LM-70, reel 2, RG 59, NARA.
- 150. Hanoi Consulate to State, telegram 69, July 26, 1946, Microfilm Series LM-70, reel 2, frame 237, RG 59, NARA.
- 151. "Transmittal of Historical and Political Memorandum Addressed by the Dai-Viet Party to Minister Heath," Saigon Legation to State, Foreign Service Despatch 130, September 5, 1951, p. 21, RG 59, NARA. This memorandum was presented by Dr.

Nguyên Ton Hoan, member for South Vietnam of the Dai Viet executive committee, according to Edmund A. Gullion, who wrote the background.

- 152. Devillers, Paris Saigon Hanoi, pp. 335-336.
- 153. Devillers, *Histoire du Viêt-Nam*, p. 258, fn. 3.
- 154. Gras, Histoire de la Guerre d'Indochine, p. 110.
- 155. Interview of Giau by Christopher E. Goscha, Ho Chi Minh City, April 3, 1989, cited in Goscha, *Thailand and the Southeast Asian Networks*, p. 159.
- 156. "Instructions for Thailand Operations," draft memorandum from Headquarters, United States Forces India Burma Theater, to Commanding Officer, OSS, India Burma Theater, May 1945, RG 59, NARA.
- 157. Bangkok Embassy to State, "Fortnightly Summary of Political Events in Siam for the Period August 1–August 15, 1947," August 26, 1947, 892.00/1–1045—892.00/12–3146, Box 7250, RG 59, NARA. Also Bangkok Embassy to State, telegram 607, August 9, 1947, 892.00/8–947, Box 7250, RG 59, NARA.
- 158. Chana Samudavanija, personal communication to Ben Kiernan, Bangkok, August 19, 1981.
  - 159. Devillers, Histoire du Viêt-Nam, pp. 252-253.
- 160. Hanoi Vice Consulate to State, telegram 37, June 5, 1946, in U.S. Department of State, *FRUS*, 1946, vol. VIII, *The Far East* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1971), p. 46.
  - 161. D'Argenlieu, Chronique d'Indochine 1945-1947, pp. 268-272.
  - 162. See above, Chapter 2, "Under Dual Leadership."
- 163. Jean Barale, *La Constitution de la IVème République à l'Epreuve de la Guerre* (Paris: Librairie Générale de Droit et de Jurisprudence, 1963), p. 93. See below, Chapter 5.
  - 164. Devillers, Histoire du Viêt-Nam, pp. 269–271.
  - 165. See above, Chapter 2, "Internal Repression."
  - 166. Cameron, Viet-Nam Crisis, p. 83.
  - 167. Cited in Devillers, Paris Saigon Hanoi, p. 203.
  - 168. Barale, La Constitution de la IVème République, p. 97.
- 169. Stein Tønnesson, 1946: Déclenchement de la Guerre d'Indochine (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1987), pp. 50–51, citing archival sources.
- 170. Barale, *La Constitution de la IVème République*, p. 96. See below, Chapter 4, "The Birth of the State of Vietnam."
- 171. Saigon Consulate General to State, Despatch 114, October 24, 1946, Microfilm Series LM-70, reel 2, frame 423, RG 59, NARA.
  - 172. The agenda of the conference is in Devillers, Paris Saigon Hanoi, p. 195.
  - 173. Jean Sainteny, Histoire d'une Paix Manquée (Paris: Amiot Dumont, 1953), p. 221.
- 174. Hanoi Consulate to State, telegram 57, June 25, 1946, Microfilm Series LM-70, reel 2, frame 191, RG 59, NARA.
  - 175. Devillers, Histoire du Viêt-Nam, p. 305.
- 176. Text of modus vivendi in Paris Embassy to State, Despatch 6202, September 20, 1946, enclosure, Microfilm Series LM-70, reel 2, RG 59, NARA.
  - 177. Cao Bang, October 5, 1946, cited in Devillers, Paris Saigon Hanoi, p. 230.
  - 178. Devillers, Paris Saigon Hanoi, p. 236.
  - 179. Cuu Quoc, November 1, 1946, cited in Fall, "Viet-Minh Regime," p. 13.
  - 180. Fall, "Viet-Minh Regime," p. 13. Text in Cameron, Viet-Nam Crisis, pp. 89–99.
  - 181. Cao Bang, April 13, 1946.
  - 182. Saigon Consulate General to State, telegram 292, July 18, 1946, RG 59, NARA.
- 183. The complete text of this modus vivendi is in Intelligence Report, Military Attaché, Bangkok Embassy to State, Jan. 13, 1947, RG 59, NARA.
  - 184. Paris Embassy to State, telegram 4860, September 18, 1946, RG 59, NARA.
- 185. Hanoi Consulate to State, telegram 144, December 18, 1946, Microfilm Series LM-70, reel 2, frame 594, RG 59, NARA.

186. Hanoi Consulate to State, Despatch No. 9, November 23, 1946, RG 59, NARA.

187. Gras, Histoire de la Guerre d'Indochine, p. 155.

188. Saigon Consulate General to State, telegram 479, December 15, 1946, RG 59, NARA.

189. See above, "The French."

190. Sainteny interview by O'Sullivan, in Hanoi Consulate to State, telegram 133, December 5, 1946, RG 59, NARA.

191. Hanoi Consulate to State, telegram 149, December 20, 1946, Microfilm Series LM-70, reel 2, frame 612, RG 59, NARA.

192. Tønnesson, 1946: Déclenchement, p. 198.

193. In comparison, the Bolsheviks had 10,000 members nationwide at the beginning of 1917, of whom 3,000 were in Petrograd. Figes, *A People's Tragedy*, p. 301.

194. A comparison suggested, for example, by Marr, "Vietnam 1945: Some Questions," p. 11.

195. Figes, A People's Tragedy, pp. 392–393.

196. In a book published by the Commission for the Study of the History of the Party to coincide with the party's 50th anniversary in 1980, the assistance of the OSS in 1945 is not mentioned at all and the Tran Trong Kim government is said to have "sought the assistance of the American, British and French imperialists." 50 Years of Activities of the Communist Party of Vietnam (Hanoi: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1980), p. 75. Even allowing for the well-known liberties taken by Communist historiography, this would seem to set a new record for twisting the facts. Of course, this book was published when the party was celebrating its recent victory over the American imperialists in the South.

197. Letter from Grew to Donovan, July 14, 1945, and Donovan's reply, July 24, 1945, Microfilm Series LM-70, reel 1, frames 195–196 and 204, RG 59, NARA.

198. D'Argenlieu, Chronique d'Indochine 1945–1947, p. 79.

199. Cited in Devillers, Paris Saigon Hanoi, p. 99.

200. Azeau, Ho Chi Minh, pp. 88–91 and annexes, pp. 281–285.

201. The relevant exchanges of messages were published by a French journalist as early as 1965. See Georges Chaffard, "Le Commencement d'une Guerre: L'Ultimatum Valluy," in *Les Carnets Secrets de la Décolonisation* (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1965), pp. 61–96. Years later, Devillers found the texts in the French archives (Devillers, *Paris Saigon Hanoi*.) Tønnesson also subscribes to the thesis of a coup d'état (Tønnesson, 1946: Déclenchement).

202. See especially the reconstruction of events in Tønnesson, 1946: Déclenchement, pp. 206–218.

203. Report of Léon Pignon, December 17, 1946, in archives of the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, File E. 162.1/1, cited in de Folin, *Indochine 1940–1955*, p. 190.

204. Hammer, The Struggle for Indochina, p. 157.

205. See below, Chapter 5, "Cambodia and Laos Seek Neutrality."

## 4. The Growth of Foreign Intervention (December 19, 1946–July 20, 1954)

- 1. Paul Isoart, "Aux Origines d'une Guerre: L'Indochine Française (1940–45)," in *l'Indochine Française 1940–1945*, ed. Paul Isoart (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1982), pp. 1–74.
- 2. Telegram to Vincent Auriol and Paul Ramadier, February 4, 1947, cited in D'Argenlieu, *Chronique d'Indochine 1945–1947*, p. 391.
- 3. D'Argenlieu to General Valluy, letter no. 2949, October 29, 1946, cited in Valluy, "Indochine, octobre 1945 à mars 1947," *Revue des Deux Mondes*, December 1, 1967, p. 363, cited in Devillers, *Paris Saigon Hanoi*, p. 234.
  - 4. D'Argenlieu, Chronique d'Indochine 1945–1947, p. 382.

- 5. Haut-Commissariat de France pour l'Indochine (Conseiller Fédéral aux Affaires Politiques) [Pignon], "Note d'Orientation No. 9, 36/CP Cab.," January 4, 1947, in archives of the French Foreign Ministry, E 162/1.1; and Haut-Commissariat de France pour l'Indo-chine [D'Argenlieu], "Note Circulaire No. 215/CP Cab.," January 15, 1947, in French National Archives, Papers of Georges Bidault, Indochina, cartons 127 and 129, cited in Devillers, *Paris Saigon Hanoi*, pp. 331–337.
- 6. De Gaulle statement of January 13, 1947, cited in Claude Paillat, *Dossier Secret de l'Indochine* (Paris: Presses de la Cité, 1964), p. 116.
  - 7. D'Argenlieu, Chronique d'Indochine 1945–1947, pp. 398–399.
- 8. See above, Chapter 3, "The Vietnam Imbroglio." D'Argenlieu, *Chronique d'Indochine 1945–1947*, pp. 389–390. See also Philippe de Gaulle, *Mémoires Accessoires*, p. 392.
- 9. Journal Officiel de la République Française, Débats de l'assemblée Nationale, Séance du 21 janvier 1947, p. 29.
- 10. Gilbert Bodinier, ed., *La Guerre d'Indochine 1945–1954*, vol. 2, *Indochine 1947: Règlement Politique ou Solution Militaire?* (Vincennes: Service Historique de l'Armée de Terre, 1989), pp. 236–243.
  - 11. Decree 47–559, March 27, 1947, in Journal Officiel, March 28, 1947, p. 2879.
- 12. Barale, La Constitution de la IVème République, p. 95. See above, Chapter 3, "The French."
  - 13. Gras, Histoire de la Guerre d'Indochine, p. 126.
  - 14. Tønnesson, 1946: Déclenchement, p. 219.
  - 15. Ibid., pp. 225–227.
  - 16. Cited in Porter, ed., Vietnam: The Definitive Documentation, pp. 134-135.
  - 17. Hanoi Consulate to State, telegram 153, December 23, 1946, RG 59, NARA.
  - 18. Georgette Elgey, Histoire de la IVè République, pp. 244-247.
  - 19. Boudarel and Ky, Hanoi 1936-1996, p. 118.
  - 20. Smith, "Work of the Provisional Government of Vietnam," p. 581.
  - 21. Ibid., pp. 601–602, citing contemporaneous newspaper reports.
- 22. Report of January 8, 1947, Papers of General Leclerc, Service Historique de l'Armée de Terre, Vincennes.
  - 23. See above, Chapter 3, "Defiance of the Royal Authority in Laos."
- 24. Vientiane Legation to State, Foreign Service Despatch 20, October 13, 1954, RG 59, NARA.
- 25. Khaosan Pathet Lao (KPL), December 13, 1990, and Radio Vientiane, November 25, 1992.
  - 26. Interview of Tran Van Dinh by the author, Washington, D.C., 1997.
- 27. "Effects of Indochinese in Siam on Franco-Siamese Relations," Bangkok Embassy to State, Situation Report 3480.61, January 26, 1949, RG 59, NARA.
- 28. Memorandum of conversation, Soukan Vilaysane, James P. Murphy, and Peter J. Lydon, Vientiane, November 8, 1968, Vientiane Embassy to State, Airgram A-412, November 14, 1968, enclosure 1, RG 59, NARA. As a Lao Issara government commissioner Soukan accompanied Souphanouvong on his trip to Burma in early 1949 and witnessed his recruitment of the Chinese.
- 29. Bangkok Embassy to State, Foreign Service Despatch 261, August 4, 1949, RG 59, NARA.
  - 30. Pierre Rousset, Le Parti Communiste Vietnamien (Paris: Maspéro, 1975), p. 58.
- 31. Memorandum of conversation, Thompson and Bushner, Bangkok, August 12, 1949, RG 59, NARA.
- 32. The correspondence between Phetsarath and the Viet Minh has been studied by Christopher Goscha on the basis of documents in the French archives.
- 33. There is a photograph of the Latsavong detachment in Neo Lao Hakxat, *A Quarter Century of Grim and Victorious Struggle* (c. 1971), p. 39.
- 34. This correspondence has also been studied by Goscha, to whom I am grateful for sharing it with me.

- 35. Motoo Furuta, "The Indochina Communist Party's Division Into Three Parties: Vietnamese Communist Policy Toward Cambodia and Laos, 1948–1951," in *Indochina in the 1940's and 1950's*, ed. Takashi Shiraishi and Motoo Furuta (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Southeast Asia Program, 1992), p. 161, fn. 81.
  - 36. As perceived by Gras, Histoire de la Guerre d'Indochine, p. 171.
  - 37. Fall, Two Viet-Nams, p. 209.
  - 38. Azeau, Ho Chi Minh, p. 157.
  - 39. Bao Dai, Le Dragon d'Annam, p. 177.
  - 40. Ibid., p. 179.
- 41. Text in Cameron, *Viet-Nam Crisis*, pp. 113–114. I have made some minor changes in translation. The original French version is in Bao Dai, *Le Dragon d'Annam*, pp. 184–185, in addition to the sources cited by Cameron.
  - 42. Text in Cameron, Viet-Nam Crisis, pp. 115-116.
  - 43. Bao Dai, Le Dragon d'Annam, p. 177.
  - 44. Bodinier, La Guerre d'Indochine 1945–1954, vol. 2, p. 467.
  - 45. State to Saigon Consulate General, telegram 78, May 13, 1947, RG 59, NARA.
- 46. Hong Kong Consulate General to State, telegram 450, December 30, 1947, in U.S. Department of State, FRUS, 1947, vol. VI, The Far East (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1972), pp. 152–155.
- 47. Paris Embassy to State, telegram 1210, March 24, 1949, in U.S. Department of State, *FRUS*, 1949, vol. VII, pt. 1, *The Far East and Australasia* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1975), p. 17.
  - 48. Hammer, The Struggle for Indochina, pp. 221–222.
  - 49. Text in Cameron, Viet-Nam Crisis, p. 117.
- 50. State to Paris Embassy, telegram 3368, August 30, 1948, in U.S. Department of State, *FRUS*, 1948, vol. VI, *The Far East and Australasia* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1974), p. 40.
  - 51. Text in Cameron, Viet-Nam Crisis, pp. 120–126.
  - 52. Hammer, The Struggle for Indochina, pp. 242–243.
- 53. "Memorandum by the Department of State to the French Foreign Office," State to Paris Embassy, telegram 289, June 6, 1949, FRUS 1949, vol. VII, pt. 1, pp. 39–45. Although the drafter is not identified, this exceptionally lucid memorandum shows the hand of Edmund A. Gullion, who was serving in Washington in 1949.
  - 54. Acheson to Saigon Consulate General, telegram 70, May 2, 1949, ibid., pp. 21–22.
  - 55. Fall, Two Viet-Nams, p. 215.
- 56. Saigon Consulate General to State, telegram 193, June 14, 1949, FRUS 1949, vol. VIII, pt. 1, pp. 47–48.
  - 57. Paris Embassy to State, telegram 3322, August 10, 1949, ibid., pp. 71–73.
- 58. Saigon Consulate General to State, telegram 257, August 11, 1949, ibid., pp. 73–74.
  - 59. Letter from Bao Dai to President Truman, Saigon, August 31, 1949, ibid., p. 74.
- 60. "Form of Recognition of Viet Nam," memorandum, Washington, January 26, 1950, in U.S. Department of State, *FRUS 1950*, vol. VI, *East Asia and the Pacific* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1976), pp. 700–702.
  - 61. Paris Embassy to State, telegram 467, January 31, 1950, ibid., pp. 704-705.
- 62. State to Saigon Consulate General, telegram 59, February 4, 1950, containing draft letters from President Truman to Bao Dai, King Sisavang Vong, and King Norodom Sihanouk, ibid., pp. 720–721. See also *Department of State Bulletin*, February 20, 1950, pp. 291–292.
- 63. Memorandum of conversation by Acheson, Washington, February 3, 1950, FRUS 1950, VI, p. 719.
  - 64. Bui Diem, In the Jaws of History, p. 64.
  - 65. Cabinet list in Bao Dai, Le Dragon d'Annam, p. 238, fn. 1.

- 66. The payment of this subsidy makes the accusation of corruption against Bao Dai levied by many French writers ironic. See, for example, Gras, *Histoire de la Guerre d'Indochine*, p. 358.
- 67. Memorandum from Ogburn to Butterworth, Washington, March 21, 1950, FRUS 1950, VI, pp. 766–767.
- 68. Hanoi Consulate to State, telegram 810, June 6, 1953, Microfilm Series LM-71, reel 8, RG 59, NARA.
  - 69. Fall, "Viet Minh Regime," pp. 62-64.
  - 70. See above, Chapter 2, "Internal Repression."
- 71. Tran Quang Vinh, "The History of the Cao Dai Religion in the Phuc Quoc Period" (Saigon: Self-published, 1967), pp. 74–77, cited in Werner, *Peasant Politics and Religious Sectarianism*, p. 43.
  - 72. Bodinier, *La Guerre d'Indochine 1945–1954*, vol. 2, pp. 459–462.
- 73. Nguyên Ho, former party member, memoir titled "Quan Diem va Cuoc Song." Also interview of Nguyên Ngoc Bich by the author, Washington, D.C., August 2, 1997.
  - 74. The New York Times, May 6, 1954.
- 75. The French intelligence officer Savani gives a figure of 65,000 troops in 1954, which is probably exaggerated. Cited in Werner, *Peasant Politics and Religious Sectarianism*, p. 44.
  - 76. Ibid., p. 46, citing Tac's sermons in 1948.
  - 77. Bodinier, La Guerre d'Indochine 1945-1954, vol. 2, pp. 463-466.
- 78. The best sources on the sects are, not surprisingly, French writings. A. M. Savani produced what appears to have been intended as a manual for French military officers under the title *Visage et Images du Sud Viet-Nam* (Saigon: 1953), which contains much information. See also Buttinger, *Vietnam: A Dragon Embattled* and Fall, "Viet Minh Regime" and *Two Viet Nams*.
  - 79. Bodinier, La Guerre d'Indochine 1945-1954, vol. 2, pp. 469-471.
- 80. Paris Embassy to State, telegram 3037, July 24, 1949, FRUS 1949, vol. VII, pt. 1, pp. 69–70.
  - 81. Gras, Histoire de la Guerre d'Indochine, p. 357.
  - 82. Bao Dai, Le Dragon d'Annam, pp. 250-253.
- 83. Memorandum from Philip W. Bonsal to Walter S. Robertson, December 8, 1953, in U.S. Department of State, *FRUS*, *1952–54*, vol. XIII, pt. 1. *Indochina* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1982), p. 908.
  - 84. Sihanouk, Souvenirs, p. 140.
- 85. See above, Chapter 3, "Son Ngoc Thanh and Pan-Indochina Nationalism in Cambodia."
- 86. Memorandum of conversation, Stanton, Thompson, Pra Phiset, and others, Bangkok, February 12, 1951, RG 59, NARA.
- 87. Letter from Sihanouk to Pignon in Archives d'Outre-Mer, Indochine, Conseiller Politique, 303, Aix-en-Provence.
- 88. Department of State Policy Statement on Indochina, September 27, 1948, RG 59. NARA.
- 89. Interview of Chao Somsanith by Joseph J. Zasloff, Vientiane, June 16, 1967, kindly made available to the author.
- 90. Saigon Embassy to State, Foreign Service Despatch 112, August 28, 1950, RG 59, NARA.
- 91. His title is based on G. W. Pabst's German film of 1925, *Die Freundlose Gasse*, which made an international star of Greta Garbo. See Gras, *Histoire de la Guerre d'Indochine*, p. 260 et seq.
- 92. Chen Jian, "China and the First Indochina War, 1950–1954," *The China Quaterly* (January-March 1993). The author of this article has relied on the Chinese archives and other documentation. The latter include Hoang Van Hoan's memoir, published in

China, A Drop in the Ocean: Hoang Van Hoan's Revolutionary Reminiscences (Beijing: People's Liberation Army Press, 1987).

- 93. See above, Chapter 2, "OSS and Viet Minh."
- 94. Gras, Histoire de la Guerre d'Indochine, p. 315.
- 95. The attack was foreseen, however, in a staff study directed by the American assistant secretary of state for Far Eastern affairs, Dean Rusk. In a memorandum dated September 11, Rusk wrote "All indications point to a probable communist offensive against Indochina in late September or early October. . . . While the Viet Minh's capability has been increased during the past four months by the cooperation of Communist China, where an estimated 30,000 Viet Minh troops are now in training, there has not been a comparable increase in the ability of the anti-communist forces in Indochina to withstand a possible attack." *FRUS 1950*, VI, p. 878.
  - 96. Gras, Histoire de la Guerre d'Indochine, pp. 323-354.
- 97. The Vietnamese Communists may have had the psychological shock of their success in the 1950 Border Campaign in mind when they planned the Tet Offensive in 1968.
  - 98. Gras, Histoire de la Guerre d'Indochine, p. 361.
  - 99. Ibid., pp. 367-370 and p. 427.
  - 100. Interview of Gullion by the author, Winchester, Massachusetts, July 30, 1997.
- 101. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 1761, November 8, 1954, FRUS 1952–1954, vol. XIII, pt. 2, pp. 2224–2225.
- 102. U.S. Congress, *Indochina: Report on a Study Mission to the Associated States of Indochina, Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos,* U.S. 83rd Congress, 1st Session, Staff Report (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1953).
- 103. Texts of party documents adopted at the congress in Cameron, *Viet-Nam Crisis*, pp. 158–175.
- 104. "Remarks on the Official Appearance of the Vietnamese Workers Party." A photocopy translation into English is in manuscript 407, Box 20, Folder 3, Southeast Asia Collection, Archives and Special Collections, University of Massachusetts Library, Amherst, Massachusetts.
- 105. Furuta, "The Indochina Communist Party's Division into Three Parties," p. 162, fn. 85.
  - 106. See below, Chapter 5, "Two Competing Conceptions of Sovereignty."
  - 107. Cited in Porter, ed., Vietnam: The Definitive Documentation, pp. 345–347.
  - 108. Cameron, Viet-Nam Crisis, pp. 175-182.
  - 109. Saigon Legation to State, telegram 892, October 22, 1951, RG 59, NARA.
  - 110. Lucien Bodard, L'Humiliation (Paris: Gallimard, 1965), pp. 286–291.
- 111. "Rapport du Général V.M. Nguyên Binh sur le Front Cambodgien," August 11, 1951, in the archives of the Service Historique de l'Armée de Terre, Vincennes, kindly made available to the author by Christopher Goscha.
  - 112. Bodard, *L'Humiliation*, pp. 291–292.
- 113. U.S. Department of State, *Working Paper*, Appendix Item No. 211, cited in William J. Duiker, *The Communist Road to Power in Vietnam*, 2nd ed. (Boulder: Westview Press, 1996), p. 392, fn. 19.
  - 114. Cameron, Viet-Nam Crisis, p. 172.
- 115. Decree 239-B/TTg cited in Bertrand de Hartingh, "D'un But et de Moyens: La Réforme Agraire au Nord-Vietnam," paper presented to the Euroviet III Conference, Amsterdam, July 1997, p. 3.
- 116. Ibid., pp. 3–4, citing records of the National Assembly in Center No. 3 of the National Archives in Hanoi.
  - 117. See below, Chapter 5, "Cambodia and Laos Seek Neutrality."
- 118. Vientiane Legation to State, Foreign Service Despatch No., March 29, 1953, RG 59, NARA.
- 119. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 831, November 11, 1953, FRUS 1952–1954, vol. XIII, pt. 1, pp. 860–861.

- 120. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 1998, April 24, 1953, ibid., p. 492.
- 121. State to Paris Embassy, telegram 5522, May 6, 1953, ibid., pp. 550-551.
- 122. Army attaché Saigon to Army Chief of Staff Washington, telegram 39-54, February 3, 1954, RG 59, NARA.
- 123. Howard R. Simpson, *Tiger in the Barbed Wire: An American in Vietnam 1952–1991* (Washington, D.C.: Brassey's, 1992), p. 101.
- 124. A detailed discussion of this, much of it based on Communist documents and interviews, is in Kiernan, *How Pol Pot Came to Power*, Chapter 3, "Contending Nationalisms: 1949–1952," pp. 65–116.
  - 125. "Rapport du Général V. M. Nguyên Binh," pp. 40-41.
- 126. Sihanouk, *Souvenirs*, pp. 179–180. Also Phnom Penh Legation to State, Foreign Service Despatch 29, January 5, 1953, RG 59, NARA.
- 127. Milton Osborne, Sihanouk: Prince of Light, Prince of Darkness (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1994), pp. 69–70.
- 128. Memorandum of conversation, Sihanouk and Heath, April 20, 1953, *FRUS* 1952–1954, vol. XIII, pt. 1, pp. 475–477.
  - 129. The New York Times, April 19, 1953.
- 130. Communiqué of May 9, 1953, in *L'Année Politique 1953* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1954), p. 576.
- 131. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 43, July 6, 1952, FRUS 1952–1954, vol. XIII, pt. 1, pp. 215–219.
  - 132. Sihanouk, Souvenirs, pp. 203-204.
- 133. Texts in Royaume du Cambodge, Ministère des Affaires Etrangères et des Conférences, Accords, Protocoles, Conventions et Echanges de Lettres Relatifs au Transfert de Toutes les Compétences par le Gouvernement de la République Française au Gouvernement Royal du Cambodge (Phnom Penh: Imprimerie Albert Portail, 1954), pp. 5–37.
- 134. Saigon Legation to State, telegram 831, November 11, 1953, FRUS 1952–1954, vol. XIII, pt. 1, pp. 860–861.
  - 135. Sihanouk, Souvenirs, p. 205.
  - 136. Ibid., p. 206.
- 137. Paris Émbassy to State, telegram 30, July 2, 1953, FRUS 1952–1954, vol. XIII, pt. 1, pp. 631–632.
  - 138. Paris Embassy to State, telegram 6512, June 17, 1953, ibid., pp. 610-612.
- 139. Remark to Defense Minister Phan Huy Quat, quoted in Hanoi Consulate to State, telegram 784, May 29, 1953, ibid., pp. 586–588.
- 140. Paris Embassy to State, telegram 52, July 3, 1953, ibid., pp. 634–635. An English version slightly different from the embassy's "free translation" is given in Cameron, *Viet-Nam Crisis*, pp. 199–200. French text in *L'Année Politique 1953*, pp. 578–579.
- 141. Marie-Thérèse Blanchet, *La Naissance de l'Etat Associé du Viet-Nam* (Paris: Editions M.-Th. Genin, 1954), pp. 90–91. This book is an exhaustive study of the legal basis for the State of Vietnam. The author was a member of the legal staff of the French Army High Command in Indochina.
- 142. Journal Officiel de la République Française, October 28, 1946, pp. 9166–9175, cited in Cole, Conflict in Indo-China and International Repercussions, pp. 12–15.
- 143. "Restrictions on the Independence of the Associated States of Indochina" memorandum dated February 2, 1953, Microfilm Series LM-71, reel 7, RG 59, NARA.
- 144. Paris Embassy to State, telegram 22, July 2, 1953, *FRUS 1952–1954*, vol. XIII, pt. 1, pp. 630–631.
  - 145. Paris Embassy to State, telegram 69, July 6, 1953, ibid., pp. 635–637.
  - 146. Paris Embassy to State, telegram 146, July 10, 1953, ibid., p. 653.
  - 147. Paris Embassy to State, telegram 106, July 8, 1953, ibid., p. 644.
  - 148. Statement of July 17, 1953, in L'Année Politique 1953, p. 580.
  - 149. Statement of July 12, 1953, ibid., pp. 579-580.

- 150. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 40, July 6, 1953, Microfilm Series LM-71, reel 8, RG 59, NARA. Statement of July 12, 1953, ibid., p. 579.
- 151. Following is the list of the 35 foreign governments recognizing the State of Vietnam and the dates of their recognition: France (Feb. 2, 1950); United States and United Kingdom (Feb. 7, 1950); Australia, Belgium, Luxembourg (Feb. 8, 1950); New Zealand (Feb. 9, 1950); Greece (Feb. 12, 1950); Italy (Feb. 18, 1950); Jordan (Feb. 20, 1950); Honduras (Feb. 25, 1950); Brazil (Feb. 27, 1950); Thailand (Feb. 28, 1950); South Korea, Spain (Mar. 3, 1950); Ecuador, Peru (Mar. 10, 1950); The Vatican, Union of South Africa, Venezuela (Mar. 13, 1950); Bolivia, Costa Rica (Mar. 15, 1950); Cuba (Mar. 16, 1950); The Netherlands, Paraguay (April 12, 1950); Colombia (April 29, 1950); Argentina (May 4, 1950); Liberia (May 23, 1950); Chile (June 1, 1950); El Salvador (June 2, 1950); Haiti, Nicaragua (June 22, 1950); Panama (Sept. 15, 1950); Canada (Dec. 5, 1952); Turkey (Mar. 9, 1953).
  - 152. The New York Times, July 17, 1953.
- 153. "Indochina—French Position," position paper prepared in the Department of State, July 9, 1953, *FRUS 1952–1954*, vol. XIII, pt. 1, pp. 644–647.
  - 154. State to Saigon Embassy, telegram 84, July 13, 1953, ibid., pp. 673-674.
  - 155. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 91, July 15, 1953, ibid., pp. 679–680.
- 156. Paris Embassy to State, telegram 430, August 3, 1953, Microfilm Series LM-71, reel 8, RG 59, NARA.
- 157. Statement, June 21, 1949, in *Department of State Bulletin* XXI (July 18, 1949); reprinted in Cameron, *Viet-Nam Crisis*, p. 129.
- 158. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 1890, April 4, 1953, Microfilm Series LM-71, reel 7, RG 59, NARA.
- 159. Memorandum of conversation, Bao Dai and Stevenson, Saigon, April 2, 1953, FRUS 1952–1954, vol. XIII, pt. 1, pp. 453–455.
- 160. Paris Embassy to State, telegram 774, August 26, 1953, Microfilm Series LM-71, reel 9, RG 59, NARA.
  - 161. Bao Dai, Le Dragon d'Annam, pp. 314-315.
- 162. Paris Embassy to State, telegram 864, September 1, 1953, Microfilm Series LM-71, reel 9, RG 59, NARA.
  - 163. Hammer, The Struggle for Indochina, p. 304.
  - 164. The New York Times, September 5 and 19, 1953.
- 165. Memorandum of discussion by S. Everett Gleason, February 4, 1954, FRUS 1952–1954, vol. XIII, pt. 1, p. 1014.
- 166. In April 1954, Bao Dai was reported to have made peace with the Cao Dai and the Hoa Hao, with whom he been at odds. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 1916, April 6, 1954, Microfilm Series LM-71, reel 11, RG 59, NARA.
  - 167. Bao Dai, Le Dragon d'Annam, pp. 314-315.
  - 168. Texts in *L'Année Politique 1953*, pp. 581–582.
  - 169. Fall, Two Viet-Nams, p. 221.
- 170. Bui Diem, *In the Jaws of History*, pp. 78–80. He was himself a delegate to the congress.
- 171. Paris Embassy to State, telegram 1517, October 17, 1953, FRUS 1952–1954, vol. XIII, pt. 1, pp. 833–834.
  - 172. Text in Cole, Conflict in Indo-China and International Repercussions, p. 170.
  - 173. Le Monde, October 15, 1953.
- 174. Paris Embassy to State, telegram 1536, October 19, 1953, FRUS 1952–1954, vol. XIII, pt. 1, p. 838, fn. 3.
  - 175. Bao Dai, Le Dragon d'Annam, pp. 316-317.
- 176. Paris Embassy to State, telegram 1574, October 22, 1953, Microfilm Series LM-71, reel 9, RG 59, NARA.
- 177. Paris Embassy to State, telegram 1575, October 22, 1953, FRUS 1952–1954, vol. XIII, pt. 1, pp. 840–842.

178. Text in *L'Année Politique 1953*, pp. 582–586.

179. Quoted in Vientiane Legation to State, Foreign Service Despatch 59, January 21, 1955, RG 59, NARA.

180. Paris Embassy to State, telegram 1666, October 28, 1953, Microfilm Series LM-71, reel 9, RG 59, NARA.

181. Saigon Embassy to State, Despatch 181, November 2, 1953, *FRUS 1952–1954*, vol. XIII, pt. 1, pp. 855–856.

182. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 804, November 6, 1953, ibid., pp. 857–859.

183. The New York Times, November 5, 1953.

184. Memorandum of discussion, December 23, 1953, in *FRUS 1952–1954*, vol. XIII, pt. 1, pp. 929–931.

185. See, for example, the text of the proposed statement by Dulles, initially drafted by the Paris Embassy, in Paris Embassy to State, telegram 1575, October 22, 1953, ibid., pp. 840–842, and State to Paris Embassy, telegram 1556, October 23, 1953, ibid., pp. 844–845. The French government had approached the Americans and asked for a statement of support for its stand on the French Union issue in order to defend its policy in the National Assembly debate.

186. Journal Officiel de la République Française, Débats Parlementaires, Assemblée Nationale, Sessions of October 27 and 28, 1953, pp. 4560–4587 and 4594–4617, extract translated in Cameron, Viet-Nam Crisis, p. 210. Text also in L'Année Politique 1953, pp. 586–593.

187. Text in *L'Année Politique 1953*, p. 593. Translation in Paris Embassy to State, telegram 1662, October 28, 1953, *FRUS 1952–1954*, vol. XIII, pt. 1, pp. 853–854, fn. 1.

188. Memorandum of conversation, Laniel and MacArthur, Paris, December 4, 1953, ibid., pp. 897–898. Ho had indicated in a series of questions and answers published on November 29 by the Swedish newspaper *Expressen* that the Viet Minh would be willing to negotiate an armistice with the French.

189. Secretary Dulles to State, telegram Secto 24, December 7, 1953, FRUS 1952–1954, vol. XIII, pt. 1, pp. 901–902.

190. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 987, December 9, 1953, ibid., p. 915.

191. Paris Embassy to State, telegram 3048, February 24, 1954, Microfilm Series LM-71, reel 10, RG 59, NARA.

192. In the words of the Saigon Embassy, Dejean "thought it wise to inform both Bao Dai and Buu Loc" of the proposal for a conference on Indochina. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 1428, February 11, 1954, FRUS 1952–1954, vol. XIII, pt. 1, pp. 1039–1040. The chargé at Saigon, McClintock, reported flatly that "it is important to note that none of the Associated States was consulted prior to decisions either to establish Dien Bien Phu or to hold a Geneva conference." (Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 2887, June 24, 1954, ibid., pp. 1734–1741.)

193. Henri Navarre, *Agonie de l'Indochine (1953–1954)* (Paris: Plon, 1956), p. 255. The American military attaché in Saigon, however, reported: "Best estimate is that Navarre has been directed by Paris to conduct a minimum casualty holding action in IC [Indochina], improving his position where feasible, with a view to eventual negotiation." Army attaché to Army Chief of Staff, telegram MC 39–54, February 3, 1954, RG 59, NARA.

194. Paris Embassy to State, telegram 3050, February 24, 1954, Microfilm Series LM-71, reel 10, RG 59, NARA.

195. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 1546, February 26, 1954, *FRUS 1952–1954*, vol. XIII, pt. 1, pp. 1077–1078.

196. Journal Officiel de la République Française, Débats Parlementaires, Assemblée Nationale, Session of March 5, 1954, pp. 714–715, cited in Cameron, Viet-Nam Crisis, p. 219. fn. 6.

197. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 1597, March 4, 1954, FRUS 1952–1954, vol. XVI, The Geneva Conference (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1981), p. 432.

- 198. Paris Embassy to State, telegram 3256, March 8, 1954, Microfilm Series LM-71, reel 10, RG 59, NARA.
- 199. Journal Officiel de la République Française, Débats Parlementaires, Assemblé Nationale, Session of March 5, 1954, p. 764, cited in Cameron, Viet-Nam Crisis, p. 231.
- 200. Paris Embassy to State, telegram 3285, March 10, 1954, Microfilm Series LM-71, reel 10, RG 59, NARA.
- 201. Paris Embassy to State, telegram 4499, May 22, 1954, FRUS 1952–1954, vol. XIII, pt. 2, pp. 1601–1602.
  - 202. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 1781, March 24, 1954, ibid., pp. 1152–1155.
  - 203. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 1778, March 24, 1954, ibid., pp. 1155–1156. 204. Memorandum from Gullion to Robert R. Bowie and Charles C. Stelle, Wash-
- 204. Memorandum from Gullion to Robert R. Bowie and Charles C. Stelle, Washington, March 29, 1954, ibid., p. 1156, fn. 4.
  - 205. Paris Embassy to State, telegram 3675, April 2, 1954, ibid., pp. 1212–1214.
  - 206. Paris Embassy to State, telegram 3799, April 8, 1954, ibid., p. 1214, fn. 5.
  - 207. Congressional Record—Senate, April 6, 1954, pp. 4672–4681.
  - 208. Interview of Sorensen by the author, Washington, D.C., March 14, 1989.
- 209. State to Paris Embassy, telegram 3575, April 9, 1954, FRUS 1952–1954, vol. XIII, pt. 1, pp. 1298–1299.
- 210. Paris Embassy to State, telegram 3857, April 12, 1954, Microfilm Series LM-71, reel 11, RG 59, NARA.
- 211. Memorandum of conversation, Laniel and Dulles, Paris, April 14, 1954, FRUS 1952–1954, vol. XIII, pt. 1, pp. 1337–1338.
- 212. Paris Embassy to State, telegram 3927, April 17, 1954, quoting Duong Hong Chuong, chargé d'affaires at the Vietnamese High Commission in Paris, Microfilm Series LM-71, reel 11, RG 59, NARA.
- 213. Memorandum of conversation, Tran Van Kha, Nong Kimny, Ourot Souvannavong, and Robertson, Washington, April 15, 1954, *FRUS 1952–1954*, vol. XIII, pt. 1, pp. 1338–1340. Dulles sent Bao Dai a friendly message, to which Bao Dai responded in kind. Paris Embassy to State, telegram 3929, April 17, 1954, Microfilm Series LM-71, reel 11, RG 59, NARA.
- 214. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 2022, April 16, 1954, FRUS 1952–1954, vol. XIII, pt. 1, pp. 1341–1342.
- 215. Paris Embassy to State, telegram 3927, April 17, 1954, Microfilm Series LM-71, reel 11, RG 59, NARA.
  - 216. Paris Embassy to State, telegram 3985, April 21, 1954, ibid.
- 217. Paris Embassy to State, telegram 3972, April 21, 1954, FRUS 1952–1954, vol. XIII, pt. 1, pp. 1352–1354. This was the position announced by Jacquet's own political party, the Gaullist Union des Républicains d'Action Sociale (URAS), in a communiqué April 22. Paris Embassy to State, telegram 4027, April 23, 1954, Microfilm Series LM-71, reel 11, RG 59, NARA.
- 218. As Jacquet told the Americans on April 21. Paris Embassy to State, telegram 3972, April 21, 1954, FRUS 1952–1954, vol. XIII, pt. 1, pp. 1352–1354.
- 219. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 2136, April 27, Microfilm Series LM-71, reel 11, RG 59, NARA.
- 220. Paris Embassy to State, telegram 4215, May 5, 1954, Microfilm Series LM-71, reel 12, RG 59, NARA.
- 221. "United States Minutes of a Tripartite Foreign Ministers Meeting," Paris, April 22, 1954, in U.S. Department of State, *FRUS 1952–1954*, vol. XVI, pp. 544–548.
- 222. Memorandum of conversation, Bao Dai and Dulles, Paris, April 24, 1954, FRUS 1952–1954, vol. XIII, pt. 1, pp. 1384–1385. See also Bao Dai, Le Dragon d'Annam, p. 322.
- 223. Paris Embassy to State, telegram 4103, April 27, 1954, FRUS 1952–1954, vol. XIII, pt. 2, pp. 1424–1425.

- 224. Secretary Dulles to State, telegram Secto 47, April 30, 1954, FRUS 1952–1954, vol. XVI, pp. 603–604.
- 225. Paris Embassy to State, Foreign Service Despatch 2757, April 29, 1954, Microfilm Series LM-71, reel 11, RG 59, NARA. The French text was transmitted and translated by First Secretary G. McMurtrie Godley. The English version in Cameron, *Viet-Nam Crisis*, pp. 241–243, is from the Press and Information Service of the Embassy of the State of Vietnam, Washington, D.C., and gives "consented" for "accepted."
- 226. "Had he [Bao Dai] insisted he would have met with a flat refusal." Memorandum of conversation, Bao Dai and Dulles, Paris, April 24, 1954, *FRUS 1952–1954*, vol. XIII, pt. 1, pp. 1384–1385.
- 227. James Cable, *The Geneva Conference of 1954 on Indochina* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1986), p. 82.
- 228. Secretary Dulles to State, telegram Secto 16, April 27, 1954, FRUS 1952–1954, vol. XVI, p. 590.
- 229. See the report of Defense Minister René Pleven's conversation with Heath in Paris Embassy to State, telegram 4003, April 21, 1954, FRUS 1952–1954, vol. XIII, pt. 1, p. 1358.
  - 230. The New York Times, May 2, 1954.
- 231. Paris Embassy to State, telegram 4072, April 26, 1954, Microfilm Series LM-71, reel 10, RG 59, NARA.
- 232. Memorandum of conversation, Roux and Heath, Geneva, April 27, 1954, FRUS 1952–1954, vol. XVI, pp. 584–586.
- 233. Paris Embassy to State, telegram 4103, April 27, 1954, FRUS 1952–1954, vol. XIII, pt. 2, pp. 1424–1425.
- 234. Memorandum of conversation, Roux and Heath, Geneva, April 27, 1954, FRUS 1952–1954, vol. XVI, pp. 584–586.
- 235. Secretary Dulles to State, telegram Dulte 16, April 27, 1954, ibid., pp. 591–592. 236. Memorandum of conversation, Bidault, Dulles, and Eden, Paris, April 22, 1954, ibid., pp. 544–548.
  - 237. Secretary Dulles to State, telegram Secto 30, April 28, 1954, ibid., p. 603.
- 238. Paris Embassy to State, telegram 4119, April 28, 1954, Microfilm Series LM-71, reel 11, RG 59, NARA. Bao Dai's "proposal" may not have been completely farfetched. See Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 2354, May 12, 1954, FRUS 1952–1954, vol. XIII, pt. 2, pp. 1544–1545; and Smith to State, telegram Dulte 195, June 18, 1954, FRUS 1952–1954, vol. XVI, pp. 1176–1178.
- 239. Text in Cameron, Viet-Nam Crisis, p. 245. See also The New York Times, April 29, 1954.
  - 240. Bao Dai, Le Dragon d'Annam, p. 322.
- 241. Paris Embassy to State, telegram 4137, April 29, 1954, FRUS 1952–1954, vol. XVI, pp. 613–614.
- 242. Geneva to State, telegram Secto 47, April 30, 1954, ibid., pp. 603–604. The demand for an invitation from the three foreign ministers had originally been made by Bao Dai in his meeting on April 21 with Laniel and Bidault. (See Bao Dai, *Le Dragon d'Annam*, p. 322.) To add insult to injury, Heath was received into Bao Dai's presence ahead of Bidault's *chef de cabinet*, Pierre Falaize, who had flown on the same plane from Paris.
- 243. Secretary Dulles to State, telegram Secto 35, April 29, 1954, *FRUS 1952–1954*, vol. XVI, pp. 608–609.
  - 244. The New York Times, May 1, 1954.
- 245. Memorandum of conversation, Bidault, Dulles, and Eden, Geneva, May 1, 1954, FRUS 1952–1954, vol. XVI, pp. 641–644.
- 246. Paris Embassy to State, Foreign Service Despatch 2788, May 3, 1954, Microfilm Series LM-71, reel 11, RG 59, NARA. French text transmitted and translated by First Secretary G. McMurtrie Godley.

- 247. Memorandum of conversation, Chauvel and Dulles, Geneva, May 2, 1954, FRUS 1952–1954, vol. XVI, pp. 667–668.
- 248. Bao Dai, *Le Dragon d'Annam*, p. 323. (Translation by the author.) Bidault's qualification of "international vocation" is worth noting.
- 249. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 2180, May 3, 1954, Microfilm Series LM-71, reel 12, RG 59, NARA.
  - 250. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 2212, May 4, 1954, ibid.
- 251. Bernard B. Fall, *Hell in a Very Small Place: The Siege of Dien Bien Phu* (New York: Da Capo Press, reprint of 1966 edition), p. 410. Dien Bien Phu fell, but it did not capitulate, some academic writing notwithstanding. "The battle itself did not begin in earnest until March 1954, and culminated in the surrender of the entire garrison on 8 May." David G. Marr, review of John R. Nordell, Jr., *The Undetected Enemy*, in *The Journal of Asian Studies* 56, no. 3 (August 1997): 865.
  - 252. Georgette Elgey, Histoire de la IVè République, vol. 2, p. 629.
- 253. Hanoi Consulate to State, telegram 512, March 24, 1954, FRUS 1952–1954, vol. XIII, pt. 1, pp. 1149–1150.
- 254. The question of responsibility for the French strategy leading to the defeat at Dien Bien Phu continues to be actively debated to this day. It is a question beyond the scope of this book. The standard work on the battle remains Fall, *Hell in a Very Small Place*. For a work critical of Navarre, see Jules Roy, *La Bataille de Dien Bien Phu* (Paris: Julliard, 1963). In "La Fin d'une Guerre: L'Affaire Navarre," in *Les Carnets Secrets*, pp. 145–198, Georges Chaffard presents a view favorable of Navarre. A balanced treatment is Gras, *Histoire de la Guerre d'Indochine*, pp. 519–561.
  - 255. Fall, Hell in a Very Small Place, Appendix A, p. 481.
- 256. "Rapport Concernant la Conduite des Opérations en Indochine sous la Direction du Général Navarre," in Elgey, *Histoire de la IVè République*, vol. 2, annex 1, pp. 641–722.
- 257. Secretary Dulles to Paris Embassy, telegram 3979, May 7, 1954, FRUS 1952–1954, vol. XVI, p. 716.
- 258. Memorandum of conversation, Bidault, Dulles and Eden, Geneva, April 28, 1954, ibid., pp. 593–594.
  - 259. Fall, Hell in a Very Small Place, p. 409.
  - 260. See above, Chapter 1, "The Tonkin 'Affair."
- 261. The constitutional position of the delegations was all too confusing for Americans. Historian Barbara W. Tuchman, who had navigated through the 1914 Balkans fairly easily, showed some confusion when it came to identifying the delegations at the 1954 Geneva Conference on Indochina. Tuchman, *The March of Folly: From Troy to Vietnam* (New York: Knopf, 1984), p. 266.
- 262. Documents Relating to the Discussion of Korea and Indo-China at the Geneva Conference, April 27–June 15, 1954 (London: HMSO, Cmd. 9186, Miscellaneous No. 16 [1954], June 1954), pp. 107–111.
- 263. Geneva to State, telegram Secto 163, May 10, 1954, FRUS 1952–1954, vol. XVI, pp. 749–751.
- 264. Cameron, *Viet-Nam Crisis*, pp. 261–264. Texts with slightly different wordings in places are given also in Geneva to State, telegram Secto 162, May 10, 1954, *FRUS 1952–1954*, vol. XVI, pp. 753–755; in *Documents Relating to the Discussion of Korea and Indo-China*, pp. 116–118; and in *The New York Times*, May 11, 1954.
  - 265. Documents Relating to the Discussion of Korea and Indo-China, pp. 118–121.
  - 266. Vientiane Legation to State, telegram 34, May 13, 1954, RG 59, NARA.
- 267. Documents Relating to the Discussion of Korea and Indo-China, pp. 123–124. Text also in The New York Times, May 13, 1954.
  - 268. The New York Times, May 13, 1954.
  - 269. Documents Relating to the Discussion of Korea and Indo-China, pp. 133–134.

270. State to Paris Embassy, telegram 4023, May 11, 1954, FRUS 1952–1954, vol. XIII, pt. 2, pp. 1534–1536. Dulles drafted this telegram himself, and it was approved by President Eisenhower.

271. Paris Embassy to State, telegram 4332, May 12, 1954, FRUS 1952–1954, vol. XIII, pt. 2, p. 1536, fn. 4.

272. Paris Embassy to State, telegram 4258, May 7, ibid., pp. 1502–1503.

273. Paris Embassy to State, telegram 4343, May 13, 1954, ibid., pp. 1545–1546.

274. Dulles to Paris Embassy, telegram 4064, May 13, 1954, ibid., p. 1554.

275. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 2419, May 17, 1954, ibid., pp. 1576–1577.

276. William Conrad Gibbons, *The U.S. Government and the Vietnam War: Executive and Legislative Roles and Relationships*, pt. 1, 1945–1961 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1984), p. 260.

277. Memorandum of conversation, Luyen and Smith, Geneva, May 18, 1954, FRUS 1952–1954, vol. XVI, pp. 843–846.

278. Bao Dai, Le Dragon d'Annam, p. 319.

279. Paris Embassy to State, telegram 4521, May 24, 1954, FRUS 1952–1954, vol. XIII, pt. 2, pp. 1608–1609.

280. Bao Dai, Le Dragon d'Annam, pp. 328-329.

281. Time, February 27, 1956, p. 36.

282. Interview of Bui Diem by the author, Bethesda, March 1989.

283. See above, Chapter 2, "Bao Dai's Abdication."

284. Major Policy Speeches of President Ngô Dinh Diem (Saigon: Ministry of Information, 1958), pp. 5–6.

285. Memorandum of conversation, Bao Dai and Heath, Cannes, June 28, 1954, FRUS 1952–1954, vol. XIII, pt. 2, pp. 1759–1761.

286. Paris Embassy to State, telegram 4514, May 24, 1954, ibid., pp. 1604–1605.

287. Geneva to State, telegram Dulte 109, May 25, 1954, ibid., pt. 2, p. 1605, fn. 1.

288. Geneva to State, telegram Secto 298, May 25, 1954, FRUS 1952–1954, vol. XVI, pp. 914–916.

289. State to Paris Embassy, telegram 4272, May 26, 1954, FRUS 1952–1954, vol. XIII, pt. 2, pp. 1618–1620. According to one published source, Dulles held "a very highlevel secret dinner meeting at his home to discuss the [Indochina] situation and to plan U.S. strategy" on the evening of Sunday, May 16. Among those attending were Vice President Nixon and Dean Rusk, former assistant secretary of state for the Far East and then president of the Rockefeller Foundation. Gibbons, *The U.S. Government and the Vietnam War*, Part 1, p. 233.

290. Paris Embassy to State, telegram 4562, May 27, 1954, FRUS 1952–1954, vol. XIII, pt. 2, p. 1620, fn. 3.

291. Paris Embassy to State, telegram 4561, May 27, 1954, Microfilm Series LM-71, reel 13, RG 59, NARA.

292. Paris Embassy to State, telegram 4521, May 24, 1954, FRUS 1952–1954, vol. XIII, pt. 2, pp. 1608–1609.

293. Paris Embassy to State, telegram 4723, June 5, 1954, Microfilm Series LM-71, reel 13, RG 59, NARA. The texts of the treaties are in Cameron, *Viet-Nam Crisis*, pp. 268–271. See also *The New York Times*, June 5, 1954.

294. Most writers elude the question. Randle, with exemplary fairness, gives both the case for the Vietnamese refusing and the case for the French refusing. Robert F. Randle, *Geneva 1954: The Settlement of the Indochinese War* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1969), pp. 244–245.

295. The Chinese took press speculation about plans for American intervention in Indochina seriously, and this seems to have influenced Chou En-lai's behavior at Geneva. See especially the account of Chou's meeting with Bidault on June 1 in François Joyaux, *La Chine et le Règlement du Premier Conflit d'Indochine: Genève 1954* (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 1979), p. 200.

- 296. Geneva to State, telegram Secto 302, May 26, 1954, FRUS 1952–1954, vol. XVI, pp. 920–925.
  - 297. Geneva to State, telegram Secto 326, May 27, 1954, ibid., pp. 947–948.
  - 298. Geneva to State, telegram Secto 143, May 8, 1954, ibid., pp. 730–731.
  - 299. Geneva to State, telegram Secto 162, May 10, 1954, ibid., pp. 753–755.
  - 300. Geneva to State, telegram Secto 325, May 27, 1954, ibid., pp. 945–947.
  - 301. Joyaux, La Chine et le Règlement du Premier Conflit d'Indochine, p. 189.
- 302. Geneva to State, telegram Secto 347, May 29, 1954, FRUS 1952–1954, vol. XVI, pp. 975–976.
  - 303. Geneva to State, telegram Secto 349, May 29, 1954, ibid., pp. 970–974.
- 304. Geneva to State, telegram Secto 356, May 31, 1954, ibid., pp. 983–988. An unfortunate spelling error occurs in this reporting cable. General Delteil's name is spelled "Deltiel." This error is later repeated in the signatures to the cease-fire agreements. (See below, Chapter 5, "Evaluation of the 1954 Armistice Terms").
- 305. Geneva to Department of Defense, Army message Gento 47, June 3, 1954, RG 59, NARA. See also Philippe Devillers and Jean Lacouture, *Viet Nam: De la Guerre Française à la Guerre Américaine* (Paris: Seuil, 1969), p. 248, and Randle, *Geneva 1954*, p. 237.
- 306. Geneva to Department of Defense, Army messages Gento 48, 50, 51, 52, 53, and 54, June 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, and 10, 1954, RG 59, NARA.
- 307. The U.S. delegation Defense representative's report of the June 9 meeting says the "Viet Minh representative presented description areas in North Vietnam over which Viet Minh claims military superiority." Geneva to Department of Defense, Army message Gento 54, June 10, 1954, FRUS 1952–1954, vol. XVI, pp. 1105–1106.
  - 308. Devillers and Lacouture, *Viet Nam*, pp. 248–249.
- 309. Ibid., pp. 249–250. See also Randle, *Geneva 1954*, pp. 274–275, and de Folin, *Indochine 1940–1955*, p. 278, citing De Brébisson's report in the papers of Georges Bidault. 310. *The New York Times*, June 5, 1954.
- 311. Geneva to Department of Defense, Army messages Gento 57, 58, 61, 62, and 64, June 11, 16, 17, 18, and 19, 1954, RG 59, NARA.
- 312. Journal Officiel de la République Française, Débats Parlementaires, Assemblée Nationale, Session of June 10, 1954, p. 2851.
- 313. Alexander Werth, *France 1940–1955* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1966), p. 674. Devillers and Lacouture, admirers of Mendès-France, concede it was "not the best speech he ever made." Devillers and Lacouture, *Viet Nam*, p. 244.
- 314. This information allowed the American delegation to compile what is certainly the most complete and most accessible record of these negotiations in *FRUS* 1952–1954, vol. XVI, pp. 395–1568.
  - 315. Geneva to State, telegram Dulte 187, June 16, 1954, ibid., pp. 1154–1155.
  - 316. State to Geneva, telegram Tedul 212, June 17, 1954, ibid., p. 1172.
- 317. Geneva to State, telegram Dulte 50, May 4, 1954, ibid., pp. 666–667; and memorandum of conversation, Chauvel and Dulles, Geneva, May 2, 1954, ibid., pp. 667–669.
  - 318. Paul Ely, L'Indochine dans la Tourmente (Paris: Plon, 1964), p. 167.
- 319. Joyaux, *La Chine et le Règlement du Premier Conflit d'Indochine*, pp. 230–232, citing contemporaneous records of the discussions in the archives of the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
- 320. Geneva to State, telegram Dulte 195, June 18, 1954, FRUS 1952–1954, vol. XVI, pp. 1176–1178.
- 321. Interview of Mendès-France by Joyaux, July 3, 1975, cited in Joyaux, La Chine et le Règlement du Premier Conflit d'Indochine, p. 199, fn. 84.
- 322. Randle, *Geneva 1954*, p. 284. The text of Mendès-France's investiture speech before the National Assembly is in *Journal Official de la République Française, Débats Parlementaires, Assemblée Nationale*, Session of June 17, 1954, pp. 2992–2994.
  - 323. L'Année Politique 1954 (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1955), pp. 521–523.
  - 324. Joyaux, La Chine et le Règlement du Premier Conflit d'Indochine, p. 240.

- 325. Roger Pinto, "La France et les Etats d'Indochine Devant les Accords de Genève," Revue Française de Science Politique V, no. 1 (January-March 1955): 63–91.
- 326. Devillers and Lacouture give a rather detailed account of the meeting in *Viet Nam*, pp. 274–277. See also de Folin, *Indochine 1940–1955*, pp. 282–283.
  - 327. De Folin, Indochine 1940–1955, p. 280, citing Bidault Papers.
- 328. These are explored more fully below in Chapter 5, "Mendès-France's Two-Faced Policy and an American Commitment Received."
- 329. State to Paris Embassy, telegram 39, July 2, 1954, FRUS 1952–1954, vol. XVI, p. 1275.
- 330. Geneva to State, telegram Secto 584, July 10, 1954, ibid., p. 1329; Devillers and Lacouture, *Viet Nam*, p. 283.
  - 331. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 91, July 7, 1954, RG 59, NARA.
- 332. Geneva to State, telegram Secto 555, July 3, 1954, FRUS 1952–1954, vol. XVI, p. 1277.
  - 333. Geneva to State, telegram Secto 594, July 13, 1954, ibid., pp. 1343–1344.
- 334. Interview of Do by Nguyên Manh Hung, Paris; interview of Hung by the author, Fairfax, Virginia, December 28, 1998.
- 335. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 155, July 12, 1954, FRUS 1952–1954, vol. XIII, pt. 2, pp. 1817–1818.
  - 336. Ely, L'Indochine dans la Tourmente, p. 168.
- 337. Journal Officiel de la République Française, Débats de l'Assemblée Nationale, Séance du 20 décembre 1954, p. 6619.
  - 338. Ely, L'Indochine dans la Tourmente, pp. 207-208.
- 339. Interview of Do by Joyaux, January 23, 1976, cited in Joyaux, La Chine et le Règlement du Premier Conflit d'Indochine, p. 278.
- 340. Geneva to State, telegram Secto 596, July 13, 1954, FRUS 1952–1954, vol. XVI, p. 1347.
  - 341. The New York Times, July 14, 15 and 17, 1954.
  - 342. Randle, Geneva 1954, p. 311.
  - 343. Joyaux, La Chine et le Règlement du Premier Conflit d'Indochine, p. 282.
- 344. Geneva to State, telegram Secto 681, July 20, 1954, FRUS 1952–1954, vol. XVI, pp. 1472–1473.
  - 345. Geneva to State, telegram Secto 684, July 20, 1954, ibid., pp. 1474–1476.
  - 346. Geneva to State, telegram Secto 654, July 18, 1954, ibid., pp. 1431–1434.
- 347. Geneva to State, telegram Secto 669, July 19, 1954, FRUS 1952–1954, vol. XVI, pp. 1452–1453.
  - 348. Cameron, Viet-Nam Crisis, p. 287, fn. 3.
- 349. Geneva to State, telegram Secto 711, July 21, 1954, FRUS 1952–1954, vol. XVI, pp. 1500–1501.
  - 350. Geneva to State, telegram Secto 302, May 26, 1954, ibid., pp. 920–925.
  - 351. Geneva to State, telegram Secto 413, June 9, 1954, ibid., pp. 1087–1090.
  - 352. Text in Cameron, Viet-Nam Crisis, p. 309.
- 353. Geneva to State, telegram Secto 721, July 21, 1954, FRUS 1952–1954, XVI. pp. 1497–1499.
- 354. De Folin, *Indochine 1940–1955*, p. 289. De Folin was a member of the French delegation at Geneva. Also Geneva to State, telegram Secto 721, July 21, 1954, *FRUS 1952–1954*, vol. XVI, pp. 1497–1499.
- 355. Geneva to State, telegram Secto 681, July 20, 1954, FRUS 1952–1954, vol. XVI, pp. 1472–1473.
- 356. Interview of Ngô Dinh Luyen by Joyaux, February 9, 1976, cited in Joyaux, La Chine et le Règlement du Premier Conflit d'Indochine, pp. 296–297.
- 357. Interview of Luyen by Nguyên Van Chau, Paris, 1970, cited in Nguyên Van Chau, "Ngô-Dinh-Diem en 1963: Une Autre Paix Manquée," (Ph.D. diss., University of Paris, 1982), p. 36.

- 358. Ely, L'Indochine dans la Tourmente, p. 209.
- 359. Joyaux, La Chine et le Règlement du Premier Conflit d'Indochine, pp. 262-165.
- 360. See below, Chapter 5, "An Orderly Exit."
- 361. Journal Officiel, Assemblée Nationale, 1954, Débats, July 8, 1954, pp. 3265–3267. For a summary, see Paris Embassy to State, telegram 82, July 7, 1954, RG 59, NARA.
  - 362. Gras, Histoire de la Guerre d'Indochine, pp. 578–579.
  - 363. Devillers and Lacouture, Viet Nam, p. 317.
  - 364. Joyaux, La Chine et le Règlement du Premier Conflit d'Indochine, pp. 246-254.
  - 365. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 2933, June 29, 1954, RG 59, NARA.
- 366. Memorandum by Charles C. Stelle, June 24, 1954, FRUS 1952–1954, vol. XIII, pt. 2, pp. 1741–1743.

## 5. THE CRUCIBLE OF NATIONALISM (JULY 20, 1954–1957)

- 1. The question of the putative 1956 election has assumed such importance in the modern history of Vietnam that it is discussed in a separate section at the end of this chapter.
  - 2. De Hartingh, "D'un But et de Moyens."
- 3. The text of the Agreement on the Cessation of Hostilities in Vietnam is in FRUS 1952–54, vol. XVI, pp. 1505–1520.
- 4. General Delteil's name is misspelled in the texts of the agreements he signed and in the list of the French delegates to the conference in ibid., pp. 408–409.
- 5. The best analysis of the terms of the armistice agreements is, again, in Randle, Geneva 1954.
- 6. The text of the Agreement on the Cessation of Hostilities in Cambodia is in *FRUS 1952–54*, vol. XVI, pp. 1531–1539.
- 7. The text of the Agreement on the Cessation of Hostilities in Laos is in ibid., pp. 1521–1530.
  - 8. Texts in ibid., pp. 1542–1544.
- 9. Handwritten note by Dulles to Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs Walter S. Robertson, June 18, 1954, RG 59, NARA.
  - 10. Gibbons, The U.S. Government and the Vietnam War, Part 1, pp. 251 and 253.
- 11. In the course of a two-hour conversation with an American diplomat two years before his death, Chou brought up the snub no fewer than three times. Charles W. Yost, *History and Memory* (New York: Norton, 1980), p. 234.
  - 12. Text in FRUS 1952–54, vol. XVI, pp. 1500–1501.
  - 13. Text of Final Declaration in ibid., pp. 1540-1542.
  - 14. Geneva to State, telegram Secto 437, June 14, 1954, ibid., pp. 1134–1136.
  - 15. Hanoi Consulate to State, telegram 677, January 18, 1955, RG 59, NARA.
- 16. "Claim of 'DRV' To Be Legal Government of Viet-Nam," memorandum from Conrad E. Snow to Hoey, January 20, 1955, RG 59, NARA.
  - 17. Text of French declaration in FRUS 1952-1954, vol. XVI, p. 1545.
- 18. Paris Embassy to State, telegram 1413, October 4, 1954, FRUS 1952–1954, vol. XIII, pt. 2, pp. 2115–2117.
  - 19. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 2807, June 17, 1954, ibid., pp. 1718–1720.
  - 20. Paris Embassy to State, telegram 4944, June 20, 1954, ibid., pp. 1725–1727.
  - 21. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 2756, June 13, 1954, ibid., pp. 1685–1687.
  - 22. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 249, July 19, 1954, ibid., p. 1855.
  - 23. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 274, July 21, 1954, ibid., pp. 1863–1864.
- 24. Memorandum of conversation, Dulles and La Chambre, Manila, September 6, 1954, ibid., pp. 2007–2010.
  - 25. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 2908, June 26, 1954, ibid., pp. 1751–1752.

- 26. Paris Embassy to State, telegram Secto 11, December 17, 1954, ibid., pp. 2385–2387.
- 27. Saigon Embassy to State, Foreign Service Despatch 564, June 8, 1953, Microfilm Series LM-71, reel 8, RG 59, NARA.
- 28. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 48, July 4, 1954, FRUS 1952–1954, vol. XIII, pt. 2, pp. 1782–1784.
- 29. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 1830, November 15, 1954, ibid., pp. 2250-2256.
- 30. Memorandum of conversation, Dulles and La Chambre, Manila, September 6, 1954, ibid., pp. 2007–2010.
  - 31. Buttinger, Vietnam: A Dragon Embattled, II, p. 1102, fn. 33.
- 32. Geneva to State, telegram Secto 596, July 13, 1954, FRUS 1952–1954, vol. XVI, p. 1347.
- 33. Memorandum from Young to Hoover, Washington, December 14, 1954, *FRUS* 1952–1954, vol. XIII, pt. 2, pp. 2369–2375.
  - 34. The New York Times, June 26, 1954.
  - 35. Buttinger, Vietnam: A Dragon Embattled, II, pp. 850-851.
- 36. "The Ngô Dinh Diem Government," Saigon Embassy to State, Foreign Service Despatch 17, July 16, 1954, RG 59, NARA. The reporter was A. C. Swezey.
  - 37. Pinto, "La France et les Etats d'Indochine."
  - 38. See above, Chapter 4, "The Debate Over the French Union."
- 39. State to Paris Embassy, telegram 84, July 8, 1954, FRUS 1952–1954, vol. XVI, p. 1309.
  - 40. Geneva to State, telegram 35, July 10, 1954, RG 59, NARA.
  - 41. Paris Embassy to State, telegram 131, July 11, 1954, RG 59, NARA.
- 42. Paris Embassy to State, telegram 133, July 11, 1954, FRUS 1952–1954, vol. XIII, pt. 2, pp. 1813–1814.
  - 43. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 124, July 10, 1954, RG 59, NARA.
  - 44. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 115, July 9, 1954, RG 59, NARA.
- 45. "France-United States Position Paper," memorandum of conversation by Dulles, Paris, July 14, 1954, *FRUS 1952–1954*, vol. XVI, pp. 1361–1364.
- 46. Letter from Dulles to Bedell Smith, Washington, July 16, 1954, ibid., pp. 1389–1391.
  - 47. Geneva to State, telegram Secto 648, July 18, 1954, ibid., pp. 1424–1425.
- 48. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 214, July 16, 1954, FRUS 1952–1954, vol. XIII, pt. 2, pp. 1842–1843.
- 49. Further Documents Relating to the Discussion of Indo-China at the Geneva Conference June 16–July 21, 1954 (Cmd. 9239. London: HMSO, August 1954), p. 7.
- 50. Republic of Vietnam, Ministry of Information, *The Problem of Reunification of Viet-Nam* (Saigon: 1958), p. 38.
- 51. "A Shadowy Foe in the Flesh: Vietminh Materialize for a Cease-Fire Conference with the French," *Life*, July 19, 1954, pp. 18–19.
  - 52. Hanoi Consulate to State, telegram 26, July 8, 1954, RG 59, NARA.
- 53. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 990, September 13, 1954, FRUS 1952–1954, vol. XIII, pt. 2, pp. 2021–2023.
- 54. Bernard B. Fall, "Communist POW Treatment in Indochina," *Military Review* XXXVIII, no. 9 (December 1958): 3–12.
  - 55. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 48, July 4, 1954, ibid., pp. 1782–1784.
- 56. Letter from Thomas A. Dooley to Agnes W. Dooley (mother), August 20, 1954, cited in James T. Fisher, *Dr. America: The Lives of Thomas A. Dooley, 1927–1961* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1997), pp. 37–38.
- 57. République du Viêt-Nam, Commissariat Général aux Réfugiés, "The Exodus of the Northern Vietnamese," mimeographed document, Saigon December 1956.

- 58. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 1611, October 27, 1954, quoting Frédéric-Dupont, FRUS 1952–1954, vol. XIII, pt. 2, pp. 2190–2191.
  - 59. Paris Embassy to State, telegram 366, July 27, 1954, ibid., pp. 1879–1881.
  - 60. Paris Embassy to State, telegram 438, July 30, 1954, ibid., pp. 1896–1898.
  - 61. State to Saigon Embassy, telegram 2112, November 24, 1954, ibid., pp. 2303–2306.
  - 62. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 405, July 30, 1954, ibid., pp. 1892–1893.
  - 63. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 248, July 19, 1954, ibid., pp. 1853–1855. 64. Texts in Paris Embassy to State, Foreign Service Despatch No. 377, August 14,
- 64. Texts in Paris Embassy to State, Foreign Service Despatch No. 377, August 14, 1954, Microfilm Series LM-171, reel 2, RG 59, NARA.
  - 65. See above, Chapter 3, "The French."
- 66. At least in the opinion of Tran Van Do (Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 589, August 14, 1954, RG 59, NARA). Ely thought La Chambre knew the Indochinese problems well (Ely, *L'Indochine dans la Tourmente*, p. 174).
- 67. Hanoi Consulate to State, telegram 141, August 12, 1954, Microfilm Series LM-171, reel 2, RG 59, NARA.
- 68. Georges Chaffard, Les Deux Guerres du Vietnam: De Valluy à Westmoreland (Paris: La Table Ronde, 1969), p. 173, fn. 1.
- 69. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 721, August 24, 1954, Frus 1952–1954, vol. XIII, pt. 2, pp. 1980–1984. Also Ely, L'Indochine dans la Tourmente, pp. 235–248.
- 70. Journal Officiel de la République Française, Débats de l'Assemblée Nationale, December 20, 1954, p. 6624.
- 71. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 759, August 27, 1954, FRUS 1952–1954, vol. XIII, pt. 2, pp. 1988–1990.
  - 72. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 1296, October 1, 1954, ibid., pp. 2105–2106.
  - 73. State to Paris Embassy, telegram 997, September 17, 1954, ibid., pp. 2034–2035.
  - 74. Paris Embassy to State, telegram 1171, September 18, 1954, ibid., p. 2035, fn. 6.
  - 75. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 48, July 4, 1954, ibid., pp. 1782–1784.
  - 76. See above, Chapter 4, "The Creation of National Armies."
- 77. Paris Embassy to State, telegram 366, July 27, 1954, FRUS 1952–1954, vol. XIII, pt. 2, pp. 1879–1881.
- 78. State to London Embassy, telegram Tosec 7, September 30, 1954, ibid., pp. 2098–2100.
  - 79. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 1270, September 29, 1954, ibid., pp. 2092–2093.
- 80. Memorandum of conversation, Pierre Millet of the French Embassy and Kenneth T. Young and Paul J. Sturm, Washington, October 25, 1954, ibid., pp. 2181–2182.
- 81. State to London Embassy, telegram Tosec 8, September 30, 1954, ibid., pp. 2100–2101.
- 82. State to London Embassy, telegram Tosec 7, September 30, 1954, ibid., pt. 2, pp. 2098–2100.
- 83. State to London Embassy, telegram Tosec 7, September 30, 1954, ibid., pp. 2098–2100.
- 84. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 981, September 13, 1954, ibid., pp. 2020–2021; and Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 1143, September 21, 1954, ibid., p. 2041.
  - 85. Gras, Histoire de la Guerre d'Indochine, p. 571.
- 86. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 1361, October 7, 1954, FRUS 1952–1954, vol. XIII, pt. 2, p. 2118.
- 87. Memorandum from Smith to President Eisenhower, Washington, September 23, 1954, ibid., pp. 2053–2054. State to Paris Embassy, telegram 610, August 18, 1954, ibid., pp. 1957–1959. Aide-mémoire, August 27, 1954, Microfilm Series C-0014, reel 11, RG 59, NARA.
- 88. Letter from President Eisenhower to President Diem, delivered October 23, 1954, ibid., pp. 2166–2167.
- 89. "Memorandum of Conversation With Mendès-France" by Dulles, London, October 3, 1954, ibid., p. 2115.

- 90. Paris Embassy to State, telegram 1718, October 24, 1954, ibid., pp. 2168–2169.
- 91. Bernard B. Fall, "Indochina since Geneva," Pacific Affairs, March 1955, p. 22.
- 92. State to Paris Embassy, telegram 1499, October 24, 1954, FRUS 1952–1954, vol. XIII, pt. 2, pp. 2171–2172.
- 93. Paris Embassy to State, telegram 2080, November 15, 1954, ibid., pp. 2246–2250, especially p. 2248, paragraph 5.
- 94. State to Bangkok Embassy, telegram Tosec 27, March 27, 1961, in U.S. Department of State, *FRUS*, *1961–1963*, vol. XXIV, *Laos Crisis* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1994), p. 101, fn. 2.
- 95. Hanoi Consulate to State, telegram 240, September 26, 1954, FRUS 1952–1954, vol. XIII, pt. 2, pp. 2074–2075.
- 96. Photograph of Hanoi street scene in Spencer C. Tucker, ed., *Encyclopedia of the Vietnam War*, vol. 1 (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 1998), p. 227.
  - 97. Simpson, Tiger in the Barbed Wire, Chapter 11, "Gray Dawn, Red Flags."
- 98. Hanoi Consulate to State, telegram 276, October 9, 1954, FRUS 1952–1954, vol. XIII, pt. 2, p. 2128, fn. 1.
  - 99. Hanoi Consulate to State, telegram 278, October 10, 1954, ibid., p. 2128, fn. 1.
  - 100. Hanoi Consulate to State, telegram 280, October 11, 1954, ibid., p. 2132.
  - 101. Paris Embassy to State, telegram 2080, November 15, 1954, ibid., pp. 2246–2250.
  - 102. State to Saigon Embassy, telegram 2070, November 22, 1954, ibid., pp. 2277–2279.
  - 103. State to Saigon Embassy, telegram 2113, November 24, 1954, RG 59, NARA.
- 104. Memorandum of conversation, Ambassador Tran Van Chuong and Robert Murphy, Washington, December 6, 1954, *FRUS 1952–1954*, vol. XIII, pt. 2, pp. 2346–2348.
  - 105. Paris Embassy to State, telegram 2795, January 3, 1955, RG 59, NARA.
- 106. Letter from President Eisenhower to General Collins, Washington, November 3, 1954, FRUS 1952–1954, vol. XIII, pt. 2, pp. 2205–2207.
  - 107. Cited in Devillers and Lacouture, Viet Nam, p. 373.
- 108. Translated text in attachment to memorandum of conversation, Pierre Millet and Kenneth T. Young, Jr., December 13, 1954, Microfilm Series LM-171, reel 2, frames 349–351, RG 59, NARA.
  - 109. Cited in Devillers and Lacouture, Viet Nam, p. 377, fn. 11.
- 110. Nhan Dan, December 18, 1954, cited in Hanoi Consulate to State, telegram 535, December 19, 1954, Microfilm Series LM-171, reel 2, RG 59, NARA.
- 111. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 2165, December 8, 1954, *FRUS 1952–1954*, vol. XIII, pt. 2, pp. 2352–2354.
  - 112. Hanoi Consulate to State, telegram 467, December 1, 1954, ibid., pp. 2322–2325.
  - 113. Hanoi Consulate to State, telegram 597, January 3, 1955, RG 59, NARA.
- 114. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 971, September 11, 1954, FRUS 1952–1954, vol. XIII, pt. 2, pp. 2018–2020.
- 115. State to Saigon Embassy, telegram 3961, March 12, 1955, C-0008, reel 2, RG 59, NARA.
- 116. Paris Embassy to State, telegram 3397, February 11, 1955, in U.S. Department of State, *FRUS*, 1955–1957, vol. I, *Vietnam* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1985), pp. 83–84.
  - 117. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 3343, February 11, 1955, ibid., pp. 84–86.
- 118. "Activities of Ba Cut and Other Sect Leaders," Saigon Embassy to State, Foreign Service Despatch 221, January 10, 1955, RG 59, NARA.
  - 119. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 3205, February 5, 1955, RG 59, NARA.
- 120. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 2164, April 30, 1954, FRUS 1952–1954, vol. XIII, pt. 2, p. 1450. The payment figure is in Denis Warner, The Last Confucian (New York: Macmillan, 1963), p. 79.
- 121. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 4194, March 30, 1955, FRUS 1955–1957, vol. I, pp. 159–163.
  - 122. Paris Embassy to State, telegram 4376, April 7, 1955, ibid., p. 212, fn. 4.

- 123. The friendship between Bao Dai and Bay Vien lasted for many years. When I met Bao Dai in Paris in 1968, I was introduced to a stocky man with a crewcut, Bay Vien.
- 124. John Ernst, Forging a Fateful Alliance: Michigan State University and the Vietnam War (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1998), p. 64.
  - 125. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 2562, January 4, 1955, RG 59, NARA.
  - 126. Ibid.
- 127. Interview of Colonel Do Cao Tri by the author, Saigon, December 26, 1970. Tri appears to have been mistaken about the identity of the general, for Carpentier was not in Vietnam then; he may have been referring to General Jacquot or General Gambiez.
- 128. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 4194, March 30, 1955, FRUS 1955–1957, vol. I, pp. 159–163.
  - 129. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 4230, March 30, 1955, ibid., pp. 164–167.
  - 130. State to Saigon Embassy, telegram 4260, March 31, 1955, ibid., p. 168.
  - 131. "Editorial Note," ibid., pp. 323-324.
  - 132. Memorandum from Wisner to Robertson, undated, ibid., pp. 203–205.
  - 133. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 4230, March 30, 1955, ibid., pp. 164–167.
- 134. Joseph Buttinger, "Memorandum on Indochina (Vietnam)," attached to memorandum from Young to Robertson, Sebald, and Baldwin, Washington, January 6, 1955, RG 59, NARA.
- 135. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 4382, April 7, 1955, *FRUS 1955–1957*, vol. I, pp. 215–218.
- 136. It is a historical error to interpret the decisions of Ely and Collins as independent. This is done by Gibbons, *The U.S. Government and the Vietnam War*, pt. 1, p. 294, written prior to publication of the relevant documents.
- 137. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 4399, April 7, 1955, FRUS 1955–1957, vol. I, pp. 218–221.
- 138. Memorandum of conversation, Mansfield and Young, Washington, April 8, 1955, ibid., pp. 221–222.
  - 139. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 4448, April 9, 1955, ibid., pp. 222-229.
  - 140. State to Saigon Embassy, telegram 4438, April 9, 1955, ibid., pp. 229–231.
  - 141. State to Saigon Embassy, telegram 4466, April 11, 1955, ibid., pp. 239–241.
  - 142. Paris Embassy to State, telegram 4503, April 17, 1955, ibid., pp. 251–254.
- 143. Letter from Bao Dai to President Eisenhower, Cannes, March 5, 1955, attached to Paris Embassy to State, Foreign Service Despatch 1876, March 8, 1955, RG 59, NARA.
- 144. Paris Embassy to State, telegram 4396, April 9, 1955, FRUS 1955–1957, vol. I, p. 243, fn. 4.
- 145. State to Saigon Embassy, telegram 4515, April 13, 1955, quoting International News Service dispatch from Paris, RG 59, NARA.
- 146. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 4663, April 19, 1955, FRUS 1955–1957, vol. I, pp. 268–270.
- 147. Edward Geary Lansdale, *In the Midst of Wars: An American's Mission to Southeast Asia* (New York: Harper and Row, 1972), p. 277.
  - 148. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 4781, April 24, 1955, RG 59, NARA.
  - 149. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 4844, April 27, 1955, ibid.
- 150. Paris Embassy to State, telegram 4746, April 30, 1955, FRUS 1955–1957, vol. I, pp. 332–336.
  - 151. Memorandum for the record by Mansfield, April 21, 1955, ibid., p. 277.
  - 152. Chaffard, Deux Guerres, p. 192, fn. 1.
- 153. Memorandum from Frank Valeo to Mansfield, April 25, 1955, FRUS 1955–1957, vol. I, pp. 288–289.
- 154. Memorandum of conversation between Fishel and Young, April 26, 1955, C0008, reel 3, RG 59, NARA. See also Lansdale, *In the Midst of Wars*, p. 279.
  - 155. Lansdale, In the Midst of Wars, pp. 283–284.

156. Memorandum from Hoover to Dulles, April 23, 1955, C0008, reel 3, RG 59, NARA; and "South Vietnam—General Joe Collins' Comments," memorandum for the record by Dillon Anderson, April 22, 1955, in Dwight D. Eisenhower Library.

157. Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States, Dwight David Eisenhower, 1955 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1959), news conference, April 27, 1955, p. 436.

158. "Report on Collins Visit and Viet-Nam Situation," memorandum from Young to Robertson, April 30, 1955, *FRUS 1955–1957*, vol. I, pp. 337–339.

159. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 4882, April 28, 1955, ibid., pp. 303–305.

160. Lansdale, In the Midst of Wars, p. 288.

161. Ibid., p. 292.

162. "Editorial Note," FRUS 1955-1957, vol. I, pp. 301-303.

163. Buttinger, Vietnam: A Dragon Embattled, pp. 881–883.

164. Paris Embassy to State, telegram 4746, April 30, 1955, *FRUS 1955–1957*, vol. I, pp. 332–336.

165. See above, Chapter 4, "The Military Struggle Intensifies."

166. Lansdale, In the Midst of Wars, pp. 308-309.

167. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 4882, April 28, 1955, *FRUS 1955–1957*, vol. I, pp. 303–305.

168. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 4956, April 30, 1955, ibid., pp. 328-331.

169. Memorandum of conversation between Collins and Ely, Saigon, May 4, 1955, ibid., pp. 360–362.

170. Buttinger, Vietnam: A Dragon Embattled, p. 985.

171. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 4952, April 30, 1955, FRUS 1955–1957, vol. I, pp. 325–326.

172. Kidder, unpublished manuscript, cited in ibid., p. 325, fn. 2.

173. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 5030, May 3, 1955, ibid., pp. 352–353.

174. State to Saigon Embassy, telegram 4822, April 30, 1955, ibid., p. 344, fn. 7.

175. The New York Times, April 30, 1955; Congressional Record, May 2, 1955, pp. 5288–5291.

176. Letter from President Diem to Senator Mansfield, May 4, 1955, in Papers of Mike Mansfield, Mansfield Library, Missoula, Montana, Series XXII, Box 95, Folder 5, quoted in Gregory A. Olson, *Mansfield and Vietnam: A Study in Rhetorical Adaptation* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1995), p. 61.

177. "Report on Collins Visit and Viet-Nam Situation," memorandum from Young to Robertson, April 30, 1955, *FRUS 1955–1957*, vol. I, pp. 337–339.

178. State to Paris Embassy, telegram 3849, April 28, 1955, ibid., pp. 312-314.

179. Paris Embassy to State, telegram 4745, April 30, 1955, ibid., pp. 334–335, fn. 6.

180. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 5429, May 23, 1955, RG 59, NARA.

181. "General Nguyên Van Thanh Sentenced to Death," Saigon Embassy to State, Foreign Service Despatch 73, August 22, 1957, ibid.

182. State to Saigon Embassy, telegram 4831, May 1, 1955, FRUS 1955–1957, vol. I, pp. 344–345.

183. State to Saigon Embassy, telegram 4907, May 5, 1955, ibid., pp. 368–369.

184. Memorandum of conversation, President Diem and Collins, Saigon, May 4, 1955, ibid., pp. 356–357.

185. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 4781, April 24, 1955, RG 59, NARA.

186. Memorandum of conversation, Collins and Ely, Saigon, May 4, 1955, FRUS 1955–1957, vol. I, pp. 360–362.

187. Saigon Embassy to State, Weeka 1, January 8, 1955, RG 59, NARA.

188. As when he met his friend Senator Mansfield on August 18, 1955, cited in Olson, *Mansfield and Vietnam*, p. 64.

189. Vietnam Press (English edition), October 3, 1959 (morning issue), p. II, cited in Scigliano, "Political Parties in South Vietnam," p. 331, fn. 11.

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- 191. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 4985, May 1, 1955, FRUS 1955–1957, vol. I, p. 353, fn. 2.
  - 192. State to Saigon Embassy, telegram 8, July 1, 1955, ibid., vol. I, p. 474.
- 193. Saigon Embassy to State, telegrams 879 and 891, August 22 and 23, 1955, RG 59, NARA.
  - 194. See below, "The Question of Elections to Reunify Vietnam."
- 195. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 2261, December 14, 1954, FRUS 1952–1954, vol. XIII, pt. 2, pp. 2366–2368.
  - 196. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 3522, May 25, 1957, RG 59, NARA.
  - 197. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 3777, June 28, 1957, ibid.
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  - 199. Lansdale, In the Midst of Wars, pp. 235–237.
  - 200. Ibid., pp. 241-242.
- 201. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 2700, June 8, 1954, FRUS 1952–1954, vol. XIII, pt. 2, pp. 1666–1667.
  - 202. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 3974, March 18, 1955, RG 59, NARA.
- 203. "The Diem-Bao Dai Referendum," Saigon Embassy to State, Foreign Service Despatch 146, November 29, 1955, FRUS 1955–1957, vol. I, pp. 589–594.
- 204. "Vietnamese Elections: Returns and Results," Saigon Embassy to State, Foreign Service Despatch 332, April 9, 1956, RG 59, NARA.
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- 206. "Integration of Sect Forces into the Vietnamese National Army," Foreign Service Despatch 101, October 1, 1955, RG 59, NARA.
- 207. Saigon Embassy to State, Army message 050555Z, November 4, 1955, RG 59, NARA.
  - 208. Saigon Embassy to State, Foreign Service Despatch 65, August 17, 1960, ibid.
- 209. "Vietnamese-Cambodian Relations and Their Effect on U.S. Policy in Southeast Asia," Saigon Embassy to State, Foreign Service Despatch 105, September 26, 1956, ibid., presents a comprehensive survey of these problems and their impact on American actions.
  - 210. Times of Vietnam (Saigon), November 11, 1957.
- 211. D. R. ŠarDesai, *Indian Foreign Policy in Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam 1947–1964* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968), p. 110.
- 212. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 173, July 24, 1957, RG 59, NARA; and telegram 191, July 26, 1957, FRUS 1955–1957, vol. I, pp. 829–831.
- 213. "Review and Current Assessment of the Internal Situation in Free Vietnam (January 1955–January 1956)," Embassy to State, Foreign Service Despatch 246, February 6, 1956, RG 59, NARA.
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  - 217. Hue Consulate to State, Despatch 3, August 30, 1957, RG 59, NARA.
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- 221. Gibbons, The U.S. Government and the Vietnam War, pt. 1, pp. 303-305.
- 222. "Memorandum from the Vietnamese Government Concerning American Aid," Saigon Embassy to State, Foreign Service Despatch 464, June 24, 1955, RG 59, NARA.
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- 224. Memorandum from Lampert to Williams, Saigon, May 9, 1959, ibid., pp. 193–194.
- 225. Memorandum from Lansdale to McGarr, Washington, August 11, 1960, ibid., pp. 528–536.
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  - 230. Ely, L'Indochine dans la Tourmente, p. 171.
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  - 232. Vientiane Legation to State, telegram 49, October 3, 1954, ibid.
  - 233. Vientiane Legation to State, Foreign Service Despatch 14, August 25, 1954, ibid.
  - 234. Vientiane Legation to State, telegram 2, July 6, 1954, ibid.
  - 235. Vientiane Legation to State, telegram 49, June 29, 1954, ibid.
  - 236. Bangkok Embassy to State, Foreign Service Despatch No. 51, July 28, 1954, ibid.
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  - 238. Vientiane Legation to State, telegram 49, October 3, 1954, RG 59, NARA.
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- 240. Vientiane Legation to State, Foreign Service Despatch 52, January 14, 1955, RG 59, NARA.
- 241. Bangkok Embassy to State, Foreign Service Despatch No. 284, November 30, 1954, ibid.
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- 248. Memorandum from Heath to Smith, Geneva, June 4, 1954, FRUS 1952–1954, vol. XVI, pp. 1029–1030; telegram Secto 390 from Geneva to State, June 5, 1954, ibid., vol. XVI, pp. 1045–1046; and memorandum of conversation between Ourot Souvannavong and Day and Hoey, Washington, July 7, 1954, RG 59, NARA.
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- 251. First Interim Report, Appendix I, p. 76.
- 252. Second Interim Report, paragraph 42, p. 13.
- 253. "Dong Duong la Mot Chien Truong (Suu Tap Lai Lieu ve Quan He Ba Nuoc Dong Duong trong Su Nghiep Chong My Cuu Nuoc)" ("Indochina Is One Battlefield [A Documentary Collection Concerning the Relationship among the Three Countries of Indochina during the National Struggle against the Americans]") (Hanoi: Thu Vien Quan Doi Nhan Dan [People's Army Library], 1981), p. 53, cited in Thomas Engelbert and Christopher E. Goscha, *Falling Out of Touch* (Clayton, Australia: Monash University, 1995), p. 49.
  - 254. See above, Chapter 4, "The Official Reappearance of the Party."
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  - 256. Radio Vientiane, November 25, 1992.
- 257. E.g., Prince Souphanouvong's statement to Rolland H. Bushner, second secretary of the Bangkok embassy, that Pham Van Dong was a liberal socialist, not a Communist, in memorandum of conversation, Souphanouvong and Bushner, Bangkok, August 8, 1949, RG 59, NARA; and Phoumi Vongvichit's statement to the Thai minister in Vientiane, Samai, that the Pathet Lao were not receiving any assistance from the DRV, in Vientiane Legation to State, telegram 553, April 19, 1955, ibid.
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  - 262. Vientiane Legation to State, telegram 406, March 11, 1955, ibid.
- 263. Vientiane Legation to State, Foreign Service Despatch 37, December 10, 1954, ibid.
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  - 265. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 648, May 7, 1955, RG 59, NARA.
  - 266. Saigon Embassy to State, Weeka 1, January 8, 1955, ibid.
- 267. Vientiane Legation to State, Foreign Service Despatch 17, September 28, 1954, ibid.
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  - 270. "Dong Duong la Mot Chien Truong," p. 51.
  - 271. FRUS 1952-1954, vol. XIII, pt. 2, p. 2114.
  - 272. Sihanouk, Souvenirs, pp. 216–217.
  - 273. Réalités Cambodgiennes, March 29, 1958, p. 15, RG 59, NARA.
  - 274. Sihanouk, Souvenirs, pp. 241–244.
- 275. Phnom Penh Embassy to State, telegram 1195, June 13, 1955, in U.S. Department of State, *FRUS*, 1955–1957, vol. XXI, *East Asian Security: Cambodia; Laos* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1990), pp. 451–453.
  - 276. Phnom Penh Embassy to State, telegram 88, July 22, 1955, ibid., p. 473.
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- 278. Prince Vakrivan was killed in the explosion of a bomb in the royal palace on August 31, 1959. See below, Chapter 6, "Sihanouk's Growing Authoritarianism."
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  - 281. Hong Kong Consulate General to State, telegram 1629, February 21, 1956, ibid.
- 282. Martin Herz, A Short History of Cambodia (New York: Praeger, 1958). Herz, an officer of the embassy, was one of the best-informed Americans on Cambodian politics.
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  - 284. Phnom Penh Embassy to State, telegram 1228, June 17, 1955, ibid., pp. 453–455. 285. Phnom Penh Embassy to State, Foreign Service Despatch 349, April 26, 1956,
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- 286. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 158, December 3, 1954, FRUS 1952–1954, vol. XIII, pt. 2, pp. 2336–2337.
- 287. Memorandum of conversation between Ourot Souvannavong and Robert E. Hoey, Washington, December 6, 1954, RG 59, NARA.
  - 288. Vientiane Legation to State, telegram 342, September 23, 1955, ibid.
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  - 291. Second Interim Report, Paragraphs 24–26, pp. 9–10.
  - 292. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 211, August 24, 1955, RG 59, NARA.
  - 293. Randle, Geneva 1954, p. 505.
- 294. "Défense du Royaume du Laos," paper prepared by General Sounthone Pathammavong, FAR chief of staff, for Defense Minister Prince Souvanna Phouma, May 5, 1955, and enclosed in Vientiane Embassy to State, Foreign Service Despatch No. 98, May 10, 1955, RG 59, NARA.
  - 295. Text of the treaty of October 22, 1953, is in Lot Files, Box 1, RG 59, NARA.
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  - 297. Vientiane Legation to State, telegram 230, January 7, 1955, ibid.
- 298. CINCPAC document dated September 13, 1960, Joint Chiefs of Staff Central File 1960, Box 98, RG 218, NARA.
- 299. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 969, September 11, 1954, FRUS 1952–1954, vol. XIII, pt. 2, pp. 2017–2018.
  - 300. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 247, September 1955, RG 59, NARA.
  - 301. Memorandum from Robertson to Dulles, Washington, September 23, 1955, ibid.
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- 303. R. B. Smith, An International History of the Vietnam War, vol. I, Revolution Versus Containment, 1955–61 (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1983), pp. 62–66.
- 304. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram MC-136–55, December 27, 1955, RG 59, NARA.
  - 305. Jean Deuve, personal communication to the author, May 4, 1998.
  - 306. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 819, December 31, 1955, RG 59, NARA.
- 307. Third Interim Report of the International Commission for Supervision and Control in Laos (London: HMSO, December 1957), p. 53.
  - 308. Third Interim Report, annexure 3, pp. 47–49.
  - 309. Ibid., annexure 5, pp. 52–53.
  - 310. Memorandum from Yost to Young, Vientiane, May 28, 1956, RG 59, NARA.
- 311. Personal message from Dulles to Crown Prince Savang, in State to Vientiane Embassy, telegram 1260, June 8, 1956, *FRUS 1955–1957*, vol. XXI, pp. 773–774.
  - 312. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 1635, June 16, 1956, ibid., pp. 219–220.

- 313. Memorandum of conversation, White House, September 24, 1956, ibid., pp. 816–818.
- 314. Memorandum of conversation, Crown Prince Savang, Dulles, and others, Washington, September 24, 1956, ibid., pp. 818–823.
- 315. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegrams 1552, June 4, 1956; 1576, June 11, 1956; and 1611, June 18, 1956, all in RG 59, NARA.
  - 316. Third Interim Report, annexures 7 and 8, pp. 54–57.
  - 317. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 214, August 11, 1956, RG 59, NARA.
- 318. Bangkok Embassy to State, telegram 856, September 23, 1955, *FRUS 1955–1957*, vol. XXI, pp. 683–685.
- 319. Memorandum of conversation between Prince Souvanna Phouma and Admiral Radford at luncheon, Vientiane, July 28, 1956, by Seymour M. Finger, RG 59, NARA.
  - 320. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 275, August 18, 1956, ibid.
- 321. State to Vientiane Legation, telegram 18, August 26, 1954, in U.S. Department of State, *FRUS*, *1952–1954*, vol. XII, pt. 1 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1984), p. 802; and Vientiane Legation to State, telegram 22, August 31, 1954, ibid., p. 826.
- 322. State to Vientiane Embassy, telegram 426, October 16, 1956, FRUS 1955–1957, vol. XXI, pp. 826–827.
- 323. Memorandum from Young to Robertson and William J. Sebald, Washington, September 4, 1956, ibid., pp. 805–810.
  - 324. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 134, August 1, 1956, ibid., pp. 779–780.
  - 325. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 570, October 10, 1956, ibid., p. 827, fn. 6.
  - 326. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 301, August 23, 1956, ibid., pp. 800–803.
- 327. Vientiane Embassy to State, Foreign Service Despatch 160, May 23, 1956, RG 59, NARA.
- 328. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 136, August 1, 1956, *FRUS 1955–1957*, vol. XXI, pp. 780–781.
  - 329. Lao Presse, August 13, 1956.
  - 330. Third Interim Report, paragraphs 15–18, pp. 10–11.
  - 331. Ibid., paragraph 19, p. 12.
  - 332. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 788, November 19, 1956, RG 59, NARA.
- 333. Vientiane Embassy to State, Foreign Service Despatch No. 133, January 22, 1957, ibid.
- 334. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 706, November 3, 1956, ibid. In thus qualifying his concessions to the Pathet Lao, Souvanna Phouma was taking a leaf from Hanoi's book. The government of North Vietnam had told a visiting Lao delegation that the border dispute could not be resolved until North and South Vietnam were reunified. Work on negotiating conflicting claims, delimiting, mapping, setting boundary markers, and ratifying the border between Laos and Vietnam was not completed until September 19, 1986. The Taiwan problem has not been settled to this day.
- 335. Memorandum from Young to Robertson, November 7, 1956, *FRUS 1955–1957*, vol. XXI, pp. 834–835.
  - 336. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 773, November 15, 1956, RG 59, NARA.
  - 337. Vientiane Embassy to State, Foreign Service Despatch 137, January 28, 1957, ibid.
  - 338. State to Vientiane Embassy, telegram 973, February 6, 1957, ibid.
  - 339. Text of royal government note, February 22, 1957, ibid.
  - 340. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 1741, April 13, 1957, ibid.
  - 341. Letter from Parsons to Byrne, Vientiane, November 23, 1956, ibid.
  - 342. U.S. Reply to RLG February 22 Note, April 16, 1957, ibid.
  - 343. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 1778, April 20, 1957, ibid.
  - 344. Vientiane Embassy to State, Foreign Service Despatch 248, May 29, 1957, ibid.
  - 345. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 1936, May 17, 1957, ibid.

- 346. "Debate on the Pathet Lao Problem in the Lao National Assembly, May 27–29, 1957," by First Secretary John Gunther Dean, Vientiane Embassy to State, Foreign Service Despatch No. 251, June 4, 1957, enclosure 1, p. 9, ibid.
  - 347. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 2038, June 3, 1957, ibid.
- 348. Fourth Interim Report of the International Commission for Supervision and Control in Laos (London: HMSO, October 1958), pp. 37–51.
  - 349. Ibid., Letter No. 106/PL, printed in enclosure to annexure 53(A), pp. 131–145.
  - 350. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 1896, May 13, 1957, RG 59, NARA.
- 351. Memorandum of conversation, Prince Phetsarath and Parsons, Vientiane, May 29, 1957, ibid.
- 352. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 928, December 4, 1957, FRUS 1955–1957, vol. XXI, pp. 1051–1054.
- 353. Vientiane Embassy to State, Foreign Service Despatch No. 76, December 2, 1957, RG 59, NARA.
- 354. Joseph J. Zasloff, *The Pathet Lao: Leadership and Organization* (Lexington, Mass., Lexington Books 1973), p. 161.
- 355. Vientiane Embassy to State, Foreign Service Despatch No. 83, December 16, 1957, FRUS 1955–1957, vol. XXI, pp. 1054–1060.
- 356. Memorandum of conversation, Prince Phetsarath and Parsons, Vientiane, May 29, 1957; and Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 998, December 13, 1957, both in RG 59, NARA.
- 357. Memorandum of conversation, Phoui Sananikone, Robertson, and others, by Patricia Byrne, Washington, October 7, 1957, FRUS 1955–1957, vol. XXI, pp. 980–986.
- 358. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 740, November 6, 1957, ibid., pp. 1026–1029.
- 359. A visitor to Sam Neua in December 1957 recorded this impression: "No prosperity, no intellectual culture, and perhaps no religion." Vientiane Embassy to State, Foreign Service Despatch No. 82, December 13, 1957, RG 59, NARA.
  - 360. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 1552, June 4, 1956, ibid.
- 361. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 646, October 23, 1957, FRUS 1955–1957, vol. XXI, pp. 999–1000.
  - 362. State to Vientiane Embassy, telegram 422, October 23, 1957, ibid., pp. 996–998.
  - 363. Fourth Interim Report, annexures 14, 15, and 16, pp. 57–67.
  - 364. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 855, November 21, 1957, RG 59, NARA.
  - 365. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 714, November 2, 1957, FRUS 1955–
- 1957, vol. XXI, pp. 1017–1018; and telegram 870, November 24, 1957, RG 59, NARA.
- 366. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 849, November 20, 1957, FRUS 1955–1957, vol. XXI, pp. 1047–1048.
  - 367. State to Vientiane Embassy, telegram 571, November 21, 1957, ibid., p. 1049.
  - 368. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 871, November 24, 1957, RG 59, NARA.
- 369. State to Vientiane Embassy, telegram 571, November 21, 1957, FRUS 1955–1957, vol. XXI, p. 1049.
  - 370. Fourth Interim Report, pp. 69–71.
- 371. Vientiane Embassy to State, Foreign Service Despatch No. 82, December 13, 1957, RG 59, NARA.
  - 372. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 1270, January 31, 1958, ibid.
  - 373. Hanoi Consulate to State, telegram 746, February 4, 1955, ibid.
  - 374. See above, Chapter 4, "Land Reform and Its Political Uses."
  - 375. De Hartingh, "D'un But et de Moyens."
- 376. "Land Reform, Rectification of Errors and Intellectual Dissent in North Vietnam, 1954–56," Saigon Embassy to State, Airgram A-268, November 21, 1973, RG 59, NARA.
- 377. Hoang Van Chi, From Colonialism to Communism: A Case History of North Vietnam (New York: Praeger, 1964), pp. 195–196.

- 378. De Hartingh, "D'un But et de Moyens," p. 20, fn. 67.
- 379. Because Nghe An is a coastal province, eyewitnesses of this confrontation managed to escape by boat to South Vietnam, where they related their story. They were, in a sense, the precursors of the "boat people" of the 1980s.
- 380. Cuu Quoc (Hanoi), December 2, 1956, cited in Hoang Van Chi, From Colonialism to Communism, p. 223.
- 381. Gérard Tongas, J'ai Vécu l'Enfer Communiste au Nord-Vietnam (Paris: Nouvelles Editions Debresse, 1961). The information about the campaign to destroy this book is from the author's interview of Nguyên Ngoc Bich, Washington, March 20, 1998. Bich was a student of Tongas's in Saigon.
- 382. Gérard Tongas, "Indoctrination Replaces Education," chapter in *North Vietnam Today: Profile of a Communist Satellite*, ed. P. J. Honey (New York: Praeger, 1962), pp. 93–104.
- 383. "Current Intelligence Weekly," October 8, 1954, Microfilm Series LM-71, reel 15, RG 59, NARA.
- 384. Bo Quoc Phong, Vien Lich Su Quan Su Viet Nam, *Lich Su Quan Doi Nhan Dan Viet Nam* (Socialist Republic of Vietnam, Ministry of Defense, Vietnam Military History Institute, *History of the People's Army of Vietnam*, Vol. 2 (Hanoi: People's Army Publishing House, rev. ed., 1994)), p. 44 and p. 34. Generally, see Chapter 9 of this work, "Building the People's Army into a Regular, Modern, Armed Force." Unpublished translation by Merle L. Pribbenow, kindly made available to the author by Pribbenow. Hereafter cited as Vietnam Military History Institute.
- 385. State to Saigon Embassy, telegram 4061, March 19, 1955, FRUS 1955–1957, vol. I, pp. 134–135.
  - 386. Department of State Bulletin, August 9, 1954, pp. 212–213.
- 387. Thomas J. Corcoran, oral history interview with Charles Stuart Kennedy, June 21, 1988, Foreign Affairs Oral History Program, Lauinger Library, Georgetown University, Washington, D.C.
  - 388. See above, Chapter 4, "The Geneva Conference."
- 389. State to Paris Embassy, telegram 4853, June 28, 1954, FRUS 1952–1954, vol. XVI, pp. 1256–1257.
- 390. Memorandum of conversation by U. Alexis Johnson, Paris, July 13, 1954, ibid., pp. 1348–1355.
- 391. Both Vietnamese governments published compilations of their side of their correspondence on this issue. Democratic Republic of Vietnam, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Press and Information Department, *Documents Related to the Implementation of the Geneva Agreements Concerning Viet-Nam* (Hanoi: 1956), and Republic of Vietnam, Ministry of Information, *The Problem of Reunification of Viet-Nam* (Saigon: 1958). The actual documents on these exchanges were in the files of their respective foreign ministries, but the fate of those in Saigon after 1975 is unknown.
  - 392. See above, Chapter 4, "The Treaties Initialed."
  - 393. See above, Chapter 4, "The Die Is Cast for Partition."
- 394. Nehru statement at a press conference on July 19, 1955, quoted in SarDesai, *Indian Foreign Policy in Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam,* p. 280, fn. 87.
  - 395. Randle, Geneva 1954, p. 345.
  - 396. Cameron, Viet-Nam Crisis, pp. 383–384.
- 397. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 375, July 23, 1955, *FRUS 1955–1957*, vol. I, p. 497.
- 398. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 612, August 6, 1955, C0008, reel 5, RG 59, NARA.
  - 399. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 541, August 2, 1955, ibid.
  - 400. Paris Embassy to State, telegram 714, August 17, 1955, ibid.
- 401. Geneva to State, telegram Secto 669, July 19, 1954, FRUS 1952–1954, vol. XVI, pp. 1452–1453.
  - 402. Pinto, "La France et les Etats d'Indochine."

- 403. Cameron, Viet-Nam Crisis, pp. 373-374.
- 404. Ibid., Cameron, Viet-Nam Crisis, pp. 388-389.
- 405. Ibid., pp. 436–437.
- 406. Paris Embassy to State, telegram 378, July 26, 1955, C0008, reel 5, RG 59, NARA.
  - 407. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 612, August 6, 1955, ibid.
- 408. Journal Officiel de la République Française, Débats Parlementaires, Conseil de la République, session of February 23, 1956, pp. 197–198, translated in Cameron, Viet-Nam Crisis, pp. 418–422.
  - 409. SarDesai, Indian Foreign Policy in Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam, p. 95.
- 410. United Nations Mission to State, telegram Secto 5, June 17, 1955, FRUS 1955–1957, vol. I, pp. 459–460.
  - 411. Devillers and Lacouture, Viet Nam, p. 330.
- 412. Fourth Interim Report, paragraphs 44 and 45, pp. 16–18. The report states that the State of Vietnam adopted the position that it had not signed the Geneva agreement and was opposed to both the military armistice agreement and the Final Declaration. This statement is at variance with the facts as laid out above and is contradicted by the fact, reported in the same paragraphs, that in discussions with the government of the State of Vietnam the latter had given assurances that it would give full protection and practical cooperation to the ICC. It should be noted that the Canadian delegation took exception to these paragraphs and gave its views elsewhere in the report.
  - 413. Cited in Cameron, Viet-Nam Crisis, p. 262. Emphasis added.
  - 414. Cited in ibid., pp. 436–438.
- 415. Memorandum of conversation, Eisenhower, Dulles, Edgar Faure, Geneva, July 21, 1955, FRUS 1955–1957, vol. I, pp. 491–493.
- 416. A competent discussion of these issues is in Department of State, Bureau of Public Affairs, Historical Office, Historical Studies Division, "The Question of Nationwide Elections in Vietnam 1954–1960," Research Project No. 833, November 1966, in Executive Secretariat, Lot Files, RG 59, NARA.

## 6. THE DECLINE OF THE NATIONALISTS (1958–1960)

- 1. Phnom Penh Embassy to State, telegram 304, September 20, 1957, RG 59, NARA.
  - 2. Bangkok Embassy to State, telegram 843, September 19, 1957, ibid.
  - 3. State to Bangkok Embassy, telegram 789, September 23, 1957, ibid.
  - 4. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 433, September 19, 1957, ibid.
- 5. Memorandum of discussion, Washington, August 12, 1960, in U.S. Department of State, *FRUS*, *1958–1960*, vol. XVI, *East Asia-Pacific Region: Cambodia; Laos* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1992),pp. 787–798, fn. 2.
- 6. Bangkok Embassy to State, telegram 913, October 20, 1958, FRUS, 1958–1960, vol. XV, South and Southeast Asia (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1992), pp. 1043–1044.
- 7. "Restoration of Constitutional Government in Thailand," memorandum from Robertson to Herter, Washington, February 13, 1959, *FRUS 1958–1960, XV,* pp. 1068–1069. Drafted by Bushner.
- 8. National Security Council Report NSC 5809, April 2, 1958, FRUS 1958–1960, vol. XVI, pp. 26–38.
  - 9. Sihanouk, Souvenirs, p. 238.
  - 10. Bangkok Embassy to State, telegram 1995, February 17, 1955, RG 59, NARA.
- 11. Memorandum of conversation, Nong Kimny and Robertson, Washington, January 16, 1959, ibid.
- 12. Memorandum of conversation, Nong Kimny and Robertson, Washington, January 21, 1959, ibid.

- 13. Phnom Penh Embassy to State, telegram 869, January 25, 1959, ibid.
- 14. Memorandum of conversation, Nong Kimny and Robertson, Washington, January 26, 1959, FRUS 1958–1960, vol. XVI, pp. 274–275.
- 15. Norodom Sihanouk, *My Wars with the CIA (As Told to Wilfred Burchett)* (New York: Pantheon, 1973), pp. 104–109. This book, like all Sihanouk's memoirs, should be read with caution due to Sihanouk's habit of implicating his later enemies in earlier crimes. In the case of the Dap Chhuon affair, he has tried to implicate Lon Nol, who was army chief of staff at the time and who led the military operation to round up Chhuon's soldiers, but there is no evidence for this, so far as I am able to ascertain, and Sihanouk's suddenly enhanced appreciation of Lon Nol after the plot's collapse makes his involvement extremely unlikely.
- 16. See above, Chapter 4, "Competition for Leadership of the Independence Movement in Cambodia."
- 17. Phnom Penh Embassy to State, telegram 1122, February 26, 1959, FRUS 1958–1960, vol. XVI, p. 291, fn. 3.
  - 18. Sihanouk, Souvenirs, p. 237.
- 19. Memorandum from Lansdale to McGarr, Washington, August 11, 1960, FRUS 1958–1960, vol. I, pp. 528–536.
  - 20. Ibid., p. 272, fn. 2.
- 21. Phnom Penh Embassy to State, telegram 1163, March 3, 1959, FRUS 1958–1960, vol. XVI, pp. 295–297.
- 22. Phnom Penh Embassy to State, telegram 1036, February 16, 1959, ibid., pp. 276–277.
- 23. A good overall account of these events is Chandler, *Tragedy of Cambodian History*, pp. 99–107.
  - 24. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 1720, February 19, 1959, RG 59, NARA.
  - 25. See below, Chapter 10, "The May 1993 Elections and Coalition Government."
- 26. Memorandum of conversation between Nhu and Durbrow, Saigon, November 13, 1958, FRUS 1958–1960, vol. I, pp. 260–264.
- 27. Letter from Sihanouk to President Eisenhower, Phnom Penh Embassy to State, telegram 1088, February 23, 1959, FRUS 1958–1960, vol. XVI, pp. 282–285.
  - 28. State to Phnom Penh Embassy, telegram 758, February 26, 1959, ibid., p. 288, fn. 3.
  - 29. Memorandum from Robertson to Herter, March 27, 1959, ibid., pp. 300–301.
- 30. Letter from President Eisenhower to Sihanouk, State to Phnom Penh Embassy, telegram 844, March 28, 1959, ibid., pp. 303–305.
  - 31. Phnom Penh Embassy to State, telegram 1290, April 2, 1959, ibid., p. 302, fn. 7.
- 32. Statement, State to Phnom Penh Embassy, telegram 844, March 28, 1959, ibid., pp. 305–306.
  - 33. Ibid., p. 305, fn. 10.
- 34. Vientiane Embassy to State, Foreign Service Despatch 10, August 7, 1958; "New Element in Lao Politics—The Committee for the Defense of the National Interests," Department of State, Bureau of Intelligence and Research, Intelligence Report No. 7903, December 19, 1958, both RG 59, NARA.
  - 35. Author's personal notes, Saigon, 1960.
- 36. For the relations between Smith and Hecksher, see Charles A. Stevenson, *The End of Nowhere: American Policy toward Laos since 1954* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1972), pp. 61–63.
  - 37. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 235, August 3, 1958, RG 59, NARA.
- 38. State to Vientiane Embassy, telegram 168, August 2, 1958, FRUS 1958–1960, vol. XVI, Microfiche Supplement, Fiche 5, Document 79.
- 39. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 252, August 5, 1958, RG 59, NARA. The reference is to State to Vientiane Embassy, telegram 168, August 2, 1958, *FRUS 1958–1960*, vol. XVI, Microfiche Supplement, Fiche 5, Document 79.
  - 40. State to Vientiane Embassy, telegram 184, August 6, 1958, ibid., pp. 472–473.

- 41. "Significant Developments in Laos 1958–1960," document in the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library, Austin, Texas, p. 26. The author of the document is not identified, but the cover page bears the notation "Horace H. Smith, July 29, 1966." Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 1148, January 5, 1959, RG 59, NARA.
- 42. Letter from Holt to Christian G. Chapman, January 12, 1960, FRUS 1958–1960, vol. XVI, Microfiche Supplement, Fiche 15, Document 355.
  - 43. Phnom Penh Embassy to State, telegram 148, August 12, 1957, RG 59, NARA.
  - 44. Phnom Penh Embassy to State, telegram 960, March 18, 1958, ibid.
  - 45. Phnom Penh Embassy to State, telegram 996, March 24, 1958, ibid.
- 46. Norodom Sihanouk, "Le Communisme au Cambodge," *Réalités Cambodgiennes* (Phnom Penh), March 8, 15, 22, and 29, 1958, C0008, ibid. Translated by the author.
  - 47. Kiernan, How Pol Pot Came to Power, p. 178.
- 48. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 2590, February 22, 1957; and "Attempted Assassination of President Diem," Foreign Service Despatch 252, March 6, 1957, RG 59, NARA.
  - 49. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 2605, February 25, 1957, ibid.
- 50. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 3280, April 29, 1957, FRUS 1955–1957, vol. I, pp. 787–792; and memorandum of conversation, President Diem and Robertson, Washington, May 10, 1957, ibid., pp. 811–812.
- 51. Saigon Embassy to Phnom Penh Embassy, telegram 180, November 13, 1957, ibid., p. 861.
  - 52. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 2736, March 9, 1957, ibid., p. 789, fn. 3.
- 53. Memorandum from Cumming to Herter, June 25, 1958, *FRUS 1958–1960*, vol. XVI, p. 231.
  - 54. Memorandum from Robbins to Irwin, June 26, 1958, ibid., p. 231.
  - 55. Phnom Penh Embassy to State, telegram 30, July 7, 1958, ibid., pp. 233–235.
  - 56. Phnom Penh Embassy to State, telegram 127, July 25, 1958, ibid., pp. 240–243.
- 57. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 337, August 24, 1958, FRUS 1958–1960, vol. I, p. 250.
  - 58. Interview of Colonel Le Van Duc by the author, Saigon, August 9, 1960.
- 59. Memorandum of conversation, Sihanouk and Dulles, Washington, September 30, 1958, FRUS 1958–1960, vol. XVI, pp. 253–256.
  - 60. Phnom Penh Embassy to State, telegram 144, July 27, 1958, ibid., p. 257.
- 61. Phnom Penh Embassy to State, telegram 280, September 2, 1959, RG 59, NARA.
- 62. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 1363, October 18, 1959, FRUS 1958–1960, vol. I, p. 344.
  - 63. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 3095, May 3, 1960, ibid., pp. 433–437.
- 64. Norodom Sihanouk, "What the Leaders of People's China Told Me," *Réalités Cambodgiennes*, August 30, 1958, cited in "Sihanouk's Report on His Visit to Red China," Phnom Penh Embassy to State, Foreign Service Despatch 104, September 18, 1958, RG 59, NARA.
- 65. Phnom Penh Embassy to State, telegram 464, October 23, 1960, FRUS 1958–1960, vol. XVI, pp. 387–389.
- 66. One hundred twenty-nine of these princes, with their ranks and titles, are enumerated in "List of Members of the Royal Family of Cambodia," Phnom Penh to State, Airgram A-342, April 28, 1961, RG 59, NARA.
  - 67. Phnom Penh Embassy to State, telegram 1298, April 7, 1960, ibid.
  - 68. Phnom Penh Embassy to State, telegram 1323, April 13, 1960, ibid.
  - 69. Radio Phnom Penh, April 7, 1960, transcript in the author's notes.
  - 70. Phnom Penh Embassy to State, telegram 1292, April 6, 1960, RG 59, NARA.
  - 71. Phnom Penh Embassy to State, telegram 1329, April 14, 1960, ibid.
  - 72. Phnom Penh Embassy to State, telegram 1340, April 17, 1960, ibid.

- 73. Phnom Penh Embassy to State, telegram 1510, May 27, 1960; and Airgram A-425, June 15, 1960, both in ibid.
  - 74. Phnom Penh Embassy to State, telegram 1565, June 7, 1960, ibid.
  - 75. Phnom Penh Embassy to State, telegram 1593, June 11, 1960, ibid.
  - 76. Phnom Penh Embassy to State, telegram 1596, June 12, 1960, ibid.
  - 77. Phnom Penh Embassy to State, telegram 1627, June 16, 1960, ibid.
  - 78. Phnom Penh Embassy to State, telegram 1605, June 13, 1960, ibid.
  - 79. Phnom Penh Embassy to State, telegram 1606, June 13, 1960, ibid.
- 80. Phnom Penh Embassy to State, telegrams 1633 and 1653, June 17 and 21, 1960, ibid.
- 81. On these events, see Chandler, *Tragedy of Cambodian History*, pp. 115–117; Osborne, *Sihanouk: Prince of Light*, pp. 115–121; and Charles Meyer, *Derrière le Sourire Khmer* (Paris: Plon, 1971), pp. 147–148. For constitutional matters, I have relied on Claude-Gilles Gour, *Institutions Constitutionnelles et Politiques du Cambodge* (Paris: Librairie Dalloz, 1965), pp. 95–104.
- 82. Phnom Penh Embassy to State, Foreign Service Despatch 432, June 20, 1960, RG 59, NARA.
  - 83. Phnom Penh Embassy to State, Airgram G-130, June 30, 1960, ibid.
  - 84. Phnom Penh Embassy to State, telegram 1702, June 30, 1960, ibid.
  - 85. Phnom Penh Embassy to State, telegram 9, July 2, 1960, ibid.
  - 86. Phnom Penh Embassy to State, Airgram G-42, August 12, 1960, ibid.
- 87. "Sihanouk's Sons," Phnom Penh Embassy to State, Airgram A-24, July 12, 1962, ibid. For a listing with birth dates and parentage, see also Airgram G-91, October 13, 1960, ibid.
- 88. Osborne, "Sihanouk's Cambodia: Courts and Courtiers," Chapter 11 in Osborne, Sihanouk: Prince of Light.
- 89. Phnom Penh Embassy to State, telegram 1656, June 21, 1960, and Foreign Service Despatch 437, June 27, 1960, RG 59, NARA.
- 90. State to Phnom Penh Embassy, telegram 1147, June 24, 1960, FRUS 1958–1960, vol. XVI, p. 372, fn. 3.
  - 91. Phnom Penh Embassy to State, telegram 186, August 14, 1960, RG 59, NARA.
- 92. Letter from George A. Bowman, president of Kent State University, to Secretary Herter, Kent, Ohio, October 21, 1960, ibid.
- 93. Letter from Sihanouk to President Eisenhower, Cagnes, France, November 8, 1960, RG 59, NARA.
  - 94. Phnom Penh Embassy to State, telegram 771, December 30, 1960, ibid.
- 95. Memorandum from Robertson to Dulles, January 11, 1958, FRUS 1958–1960, vol. XVI, Microfiche Supplement, Fiche 1, Document 5.
- 96. Memorandum of conversation, Souvanna Phouma and Dulles, Washington, January 13, 1958, ibid., pp. 411–419.
  - 97. Ibid., p. 421.
- 98. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 1521, March 11, 1958, ibid., Microfiche Supplement, Fiche 1, Document 26.
  - 99. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 1718, April 12, 1958, RG 59, NARA.
- 100. Memorandum of conversation, Nhu and Durbrow, Saigon, January 30, 1958, FRUS 1958–1960, vol. I, pp. 5–9.
  - 101. Deuve, Le Laos 1945-1949, annex 14, pp. 300-301.
- 102. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 2149, June 16, 1958, FRUS 1958–1960, vol. XVI, Microfiche Supplement, Fiche 3, Document 64.
- 103. Vientiane Embassy to State, Foreign Service Despatch 178, June 19, 1958, ibid., Microfiche Supplement, Fiche 3, Document 66.
  - 104. State to Vientiane Embassy, telegram 1420, May 27, 1958, ibid., pp. 448–450.
- 105. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 1925, May 13, 1958, ibid., Microfiche Supplement, Fiche 3, Document 46.

- 106. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 2180, June 20, 1958, RG 59, NARA.
- 107. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 2016, May 27, 1958, FRUS 1958–1960, vol. XVI, Microfiche Supplement, Fiche 3, Document 54.
  - 108. Memorandum from Byrne to Maurer, January 29, 1958, RG 59, NARA.
  - 109. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 2156, June 17, 1958, ibid.
- 110. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 423, September 4, 1958, FRUS 1958–1960, vol. XVI, Microfiche Supplement, Fiche 6, Document 94.
  - 111. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 198, July 28, 1958, RG 59, NARA.
  - 112. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 219, August 1, 1958, ibid.
  - 113. Ibid.
  - 114. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 229, August 2, 1958, ibid.
- 115. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 248, August 5, 1958, FRUS 1958–1960, vol. XVI, Microfiche Supplement, Fiche 5, Document 82.
- 116. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 233, August 3, 1958, ibid., Microfiche Supplement, Fiche 5, Document 80.
  - 117. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 333, August 18, 1958, RG 59, NARA.
  - 118. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 363, August 24, 1958, ibid.
  - 119. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 620, October 6, 1958, ibid.
- 120. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 576, September 28, 1958, FRUS 1958–1960, vol. XVI, Microfiche Supplement, Fiche 6, Document 101.
  - 121. State to Vientiane Embassy, telegram 410, September 29, 1958, RG 59, NARA.
- 122. Army Attaché Vientiane to Department of the Army, Washington, D.C., message CX-04, January 8, 1959; and Vientiane Embassy to State, telegrams 1134, January 1, 1959, and 1226, January 13, 1959, all in ibid.
- 123. Vientiane Embassy to Foreign Office, London, FO 371/143969, DF 10396/1, January 2, 1959, and FO 371/143957, DF 1015/15, January 10, 1959, cited by Ang Cheng Guan, "The Huong Lap and Phu Loi Incidents, and the Decision to Resume Armed Struggle in South Vietnam (January-April 1959)," *South East Asia Research* 4, no. 1 (March 1996): p. 7, fins. 21 and 22.
  - 124. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram G-64, January 10, 1959, RG 59, NARA.
- 125. Text of the information note in *Lao Presse*, February 13, 1959, RG 59, NARA. For the text of the foreign ministry's note of protest, see Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 1242, January 15, 1959, ibid. The relevant portions of this map are reproduced in Arthur J. Dommen, *Conflict in Laos*, rev. ed. (New York: Praeger, 1971), p. 339. Deuve (*Le Laos 1945–1949*, p. 152, fn. 64) questions the accuracy of reports of the incursion, but this appears to be a rare error on his part; the American message cited above, CX-04, comments that the same information was reported by the military attaché of the French Embassy in Vientiane. For the communiqué and the joint statement referred to in the information note, see above, Chapter 5, "Two Competing Conceptions of Sovereignty."
- 126. State to Vientiane Embassy, telegram 919, January 30, 1959, FRUS 1958–1960, vol. XVI, Microfiche Supplement, Fiche 8, Document 131.
- 127. Letter from de La Mare to Heppel, Washington, January 23, 1959, Public Record Office, London.
- 128. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 1371, February 10, 1959, FRUS 1958–1960, vol. XVI, Microfiche Supplement, Fiche 8, Document 136.
- 129. State to Vientiane Embassy, telegram 1030, February 20, 1959, RG 59, NARA. This telegram was cleared by Parsons, among others.
- 130. Savang Vatthana, memorandum of conversation by Horace H. Smith, Vientiane, March 24, 1959, ibid.
  - 131. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 1239, January 14, 1959, ibid.
  - 132. Ang Cheng Guan, "The Huong Lap and Phu Loi Incidents," p. 14.
- 133. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 1205, January 9, 1959, FRUS 1958–1960, vol. XVI, Microfiche Supplement, Fiche 7, Document 125.

- 134. Army attaché Vientiane to Department of the Army, telegram CX-56, May 13, 1959, RG 59, NARA.
- 135. Army attaché Vientiane to Department of the Army, telegram CX-58, May 15, 1959, ibid.
  - 136. Deuve, Le Laos 1945-1949, pp. 123-126.
  - 137. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 333, August 18, 1958, RG 59, NARA.
- 138. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 1302, January 27, 1959, FRUS 1958–1960, vol. XVI, Microfiche Supplement, Fiche 7, Document 130.
- 139. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 301, August 12, 1959, ibid., Microfiche Supplement, Fiche 10, Document 211.
- 140. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 535, September 4, 1959, ibid., Microfiche Supplement, Fiche 11, Document 243.
  - 141. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 1075, October 14, 1959, RG 59, NARA.
- 142. Interview of Captain Boun Nam by Joseph J. Zasloff, Vientiane, April 19, 1967, kindly made available to the author.
- 143. Interview of Lieutenant Colonel Phim Somphou by Joseph J. Zasloff, Vientiane, 1967, kindly made available to the author.
- 144. War Experiences Recapitulation Committee of the High-Level Military Institute, Cuoc Khang Chien Chong My Cuu Nuoc 1954–1975: Nhung Su Kien Quan Su (The Anti-U.S. Resistance War for National Salvation 1954–1975: Military Events) (Hanoi: People's Army Publishing House, 1980) (in Vietnamese), pp. 54–55.
- 145. Memorandum from Durbrow to Anderson, August 9, 1959, FRUS 1958–1960, vol. XVI, Microfiche Supplement, Fiche 10, Document 203; and Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 282, August 10, 1959, RG 59, NARA.
- 146. Memorandum of conversation between Phoumi Nosavan and Smith, Vientiane, March 3, 1959, RG 59, NARA.
  - 147. Army Attaché to State, message PEO 937-59, June 3, 1959, ibid.
- 148. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 1037, October 10, 1959, FRUS 1958–1960, vol. XVI, Microfiche Supplement, Fiche 12, Document 283.
  - 149. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 1863, December 31, 1959, RG 59, NARA.
- 150. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 2264, April 27, 1959, FRUS 1958–1960, vol. XVI, Microfiche Supplement, Fiche 8, Document 159.
- 151. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 1293, November 6, 1959, ibid., Microfiche Supplement, Fiche 13, Document 300.
- 152. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 1307, November 9, 1959, ibid., Microfiche Supplement, Fiche 13, Document 303.
- 153. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 1712, December 20, 1959, ibid., Microfiche Supplement, Fiche 14, Document 323.
- 154. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 1578, December 8, 1959, ibid., Microfiche Supplement, Fiche 14, Document 320.
- 155. Vientiane Embassy to State, Foreign Service Despatch 500, June 21, 1960, RG 59, NARA. Also Deuve, *Le Laos 1945–1949*, p. 343.
  - 156. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 1664, December 16, 1959, RG 59, NARA.
  - 157. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 1674, December 17, 1959, ibid.
  - 158. State to Vientiane Embassy, telegram 1295, December 23, 1959, ibid.
  - 159. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 1784, December 24, 1959, ibid.
- 160. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 1882, December 31, 1959, ibid. The texts of Communiqués Nos. 1 to 12 are given in Deuve, *Le Laos 1945–1949*, annexes 27 and 28, pp. 319–324.
  - 161. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 1924, January 4, 1960, RG 59, NARA.
  - 162. Deuve, Le Laos 1945-1949, pp. 134-138.
  - 163. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 1866, December 30, 1959, RG 59, NARA.
- 164. State to Vientiane Embassy, telegram 1350, December 31, 1959, ibid. This telegram was approved by Parsons.

- 165. Paris Embassy to State, telegram 2953, December 31, 1959, ibid.
- 166. State to Vientiane Embassy, telegram 1362, January 3, 1960, ibid.
- 167. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 1918, January 4, 1959, FRUS 1958–1960, vol. XVI, Microfiche Supplement, Fiche 15, Document 350. Also Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 1923, January 4, 1960, and telegram 1936, January 5, 1960, both RG 59, NARA.
- 168. "Audience of Western Chiefs of Mission with His Majesty Sri Savang Vatthana, Royal Residence, January 4, 1960," Vientiane Embassy to State, Foreign Service Despatch 239, January 8, 1960, FRUS 1958–1960, vol. XVI, Microfiche Supplement, Fiche 15, Document 353. This despatch was drafted by Françoise G. Queneau, who acted as interpreter.
- 169. Text of communiqué from the royal palace, January 6, 1960, in Deuve, *Le Laos 1945–1949*, annex 29, pp. 324–325.
  - 170. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 1969, January 9, 1960, RG 59, NARA.
- 171. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 2030, January 16, 1960, FRUS 1958–1960, vol. XVI, Microfiche Supplement, Fiche 15, Document 356.
- 172. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 2101, January 28, 1960, ibid., Microfiche Supplement, Fiche 15, Document 358.
  - 173. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram G-105, February 5, 1960, RG 59, NARA.
- 174. "The 1960 General Election in Laos," Vientiane Embassy to State, Foreign Service Despatch 10, July 13, 1960, ibid.
- 175. Memorandum of telephone conversation, April 27, 1960, between Barthélémy (French Embassy) and Christian A. Chapman, *FRUS 1958–1960*, vol. XVI, Microfiche Supplement, Fiche 16, Document 377.
  - 176. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 2927, May 18, 1960, RG 59, NARA.
  - 177. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 3000, May 24, 1960, ibid.
  - 178. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 69, July 11, 1960, ibid.
- 179. Memorandum of conversation, Hammarskjöld and Ambassador-designate Brown, United Nations, July 5, 1960, FRUS 1958–1960, vol. XVI, Microfiche Supplement, Fiche 17, Document 412.
- 180. "NLHX Goals, Plan, Tactics and Organization ('The Rebellion') in Laos," Vientiane Embassy to State, Foreign Service Despatch 31, July 26, 1960, RG 59, NARA.
- 181. Memorandum of conversation, Parsons and Manac'h, Washington, June 2, 1960, FRUS 1958–1960, vol. XVI, Microfiche Supplement, Fiche 17, Document 404.
- 182. Memorandum of conversation, Alphand and Herter, Washington, June 30, 1960, RG 59, NARA.
- 183. Paris Embassy to State, telegram 179, July 12, 1960, FRUS 1958–1960, vol. XVI, Microfiche Supplement, Fiche 17, Document 414.
  - 184. State to Vientiane Embassy, telegram 82, July 23, 1960, RG 59, NARA.
- 185. Winthrop G. Brown, recorded interview by Larry J. Hackman, February 1, 1968, p. 3, John F. Kennedy Library Oral History Program, Boston, Massachusetts.
  - 186. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram G-24, August 3, 1960, RG 59, NARA.
- 187. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 230, August 9, 1960, ibid. Falaize had been responsible for French dealings with Bao Dai in May 1954. See above, Chapter 4, "The Geneva Conference."
- 188. Texts in Vientiane Embassy to State, telegrams 237 and 244, August 9, 1960, FRUS 1958–1960, vol. XVI, Microfiche Supplement, Fiche 17, Documents 418 and 425.
- 189. Letter from Estelle Holt to T. D. Allman, London, September 10, 1976, in Papers of T. D. Allman, Box 1, Folder 15, Amherst College Archives and Special Collections, Amherst, Massachusetts.
- 190. Bangkok Embassy to State, telegram 265, August 15, 1960, FRUS 1958–1960, vol. XVI, Microfiche Supplement, Fiche 18, Document 452.

- 191. CIA Information Report IN37238, August 12, 1960, Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, White House Office Files, Staff Secretary Records, International Series, Laos Situation Reports, Abilene, Kansas..
  - 192. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 247, August 10, 1960, RG 59, NARA.
  - 193. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 240, August 9, 1960, RG 49, NARA.
  - 194. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 242, August 10, 1960, ibid.
  - 195. Heintges to CINCPAC, telegram PEO 1518, June 18, 1960, RG 59, NARA.
  - 196. State to Vientiane Embassy, telegram 134, August 8, 1960, ibid.
- 197. Bangkok Embassy to State, telegram 210, August 9, 1960, ibid. The telegram is mistakenly dated August 8.
- 198. Bangkok Embassy to State, telegram 219, August 10, 1960, FRUS 1958–1960, vol. XVI, Microfiche Supplement, Fiche 17, Document 429.
- 199. Bangkok Embassy to State, telegram 215, August 10, 1960, ibid., Microfiche Supplement, Fiche 18, Document 424.
  - 200. Army attaché to State, telegram CX-105, August 10, 1960, RG 59, NARA.
- 201. Défourneaux, *The Winking Fox*, p. 340. Also interview of Défourneaux by the author, Indianapolis, August 11, 1999.
- 202. Unsigned note to Prime Minister, August 26, 1960, PREM 11/2961, in Public Records Office, London.
- 203. Memorandum of conversation, Ambassador Brown and Ambassador Falaize, Vientiane, March 19, 1962, in Vientiane Embassy to State, Foreign Service Despatch 189, April 4, 1962, enclosure 6, RG 59, NARA. This despatch reported information provided by Jean Deuve, a French intelligence officer.
- 204. Vientiane Embassy to State, memorandum of conversation, Phoui and Françoise G. Queneau, Vientiane, June 1, 1960, RG 59, NARA. According to Queneau, Phoui's account of his audience with the king on May 30 was detailed and he checked with notes he had made of the conversation in Lao.
  - 205. Deuve, Le Laos 1945-1949, p. 155.
- 206. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 247, August 10, 1960, FRUS 1958–1960, vol. XVI, Microfiche Supplement, Fiche 17, Document 428.
- 207. French Embassy, Vientiane, to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, telegram 608, June 2, 1960, in archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Paris, CLV, Laos, vol. 24.
  - 208. Author's personal notes, Vientiane, August 1960.
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  - 210. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 256, August 11, 1960, RG 59, NARA.
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- 212. State to Vientiane Embassy, telegram 141, August 9, 1960, ibid., Microfiche Supplement, Fiche 17, Document 422.
  - 213. State to Vientiane Embassy, telegram 155, August 11, 1960, ibid., p. 786.
  - 214. CIA Information Report IN37507, August 13, 1960, Eisenhower Library.
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  - 216. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 284, August 14, 1960, RG 59, NARA.
- 217. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 288, August 15, 1960, *FRUS 1958–1960*, vol. XVI, Microfiche Supplement, Fiche 18, Document 451. Also CIA Information Report IN38179, August 15, 1960, Eisenhower Library.
- 218. CIA Information Report 38179, August 15, 1960, FRUS 1958–1960, vol. XVI, Microfiche Supplement, Fiche 18, Document 453.
  - 219. CIA Information Report IN40152, August 17, 1960, Eisenhower Library.
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- 221. Bangkok Embassy to State, telegram 265, August 15, 1960, ibid., Microfiche Supplement, Fiche 18, Document 452.
- 222. "The Joint Chiefs of Staff agreed that the United States should support General Phoumi." Rear Admiral F. J. Blouin, "Note to Control Division," August 17, 1960, RG 59, NARA.
- 223. Rear Admiral F. J. Blouin, "Note to Control Division," August 19, 1960, RG 59, NARA.
- 224. Memorandum for Gates, August 12, 1960, FRUS 1958–1960, vol. XVI, Microfiche Supplement, Fiche 17, Document 437.
- 225. CHPEO Laos to CINCPAC, Message PEO-OPT 2309, August 18, 1960, RG 59, NARA.
  - 226. Bangkok Embassy to State, Foreign Service Despatch 107, August 25, 1960, ibid. 227. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 407, August 28, 1960, ibid.
- 228. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 254, August 11, 1960, FRUS 1958–1960, vol. XVI, Microfiche Supplement, Fiche 17, Document 431.
  - 229. CIA Information Report IN42184, August 23, 1960, Eisenhower Library.
  - 230. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 415, August 29, 1960, RG 59, NARA.
- 231. CIA Information Reports IN45326 and IN45399, August 30, 1960, Eisenhower Library.
- 232. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 446, August 31, 1960, and CHPEO to CINCPAC, PEO-OPT 2425, September 1, 1960, both RG 59, NARA.
- 233. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 439, August 31, 1960, ibid. Also CIA Information Report IN45886, August 31, 1960, Eisenhower Library.
- 234. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 462, September 4, 1960, FRUS 1958–1960, vol. XVI, Microfiche Supplement, Fiche 19, Document 509.
  - 235. The New York Times, October 10, 1961.
  - 236. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 661, October 2, 1960, RG 59, NARA.
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  - 238. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 797, October 20, 1960, RG 59, NARA.
- 239. Bangkok Embassy to State, telegram 778, November 1, 1960, FRUS 1958–1960, vol. XVI, Microfiche Supplement, Fiche 22, Document 604.
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- 241. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 835, October 27, 1960, FRUS 1958–1960, vol. XVI, pp. 930–933.
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- 243. Memorandum of conversation, Falaize and John B. Holt, Vientiane, October 4, 1960, RG 59, NARA.
- 244. Memorandum of conversation, Gibson and Holt, Vientiane, October 4, 1960, ibid.
  - 245. Memorandum from Usher to Parsons, September 13, 1960, ibid.
- 246. Bangkok Embassy to State, telegram 591, October 2, 1960, FRUS 1958–1960, vol. XVI, Microfiche Supplement, Fiche 21, Document 548.
  - 247. CIA Information Report IN42738, August 24, 1960, Eisenhower Library.
  - 248. CIA Information Report IN47587, September 3, 1960, Eisenhower Library.
  - 249. CIA Information Report IN22369, October 4, 1960, Eisenhower Library.
- 250. Interview of Phaibin Phonphachan by Joseph J. Zasloff, Sayaboury, June 8, 1967, kindly made available to the author.
- 251. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 502, September 10, 1960, FRUS 1958–1960, vol. XVI, pp. 836–838. Also Vientiane Embassy to State, Foreign Service Despatch

- 86, September 27, 1960, ibid., Microfiche Supplement, Fiche 20, Document 541. For Somsanith's offer of guarantees, CIA Information Report IN10158, September 9, 1960, Eisenhower Library.
- 252. State to Vientiane Embassy, telegram 320, September 18, 1960, FRUS 1958–1960, vol. XVI, pp. 851–853.
- 253. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegrams 593, September 22, 1960, and 683, October 6, 1960, ibid., pp. 860–861 and 883–886. See also CIA Information Report IN23981, October 7, 1960, Eisenhower Library.
- 254. Interview of J. Graham Parsons by Dennis O'Brien, August 22, 1969, p. 14, John F. Kennedy Library, Oral History Program, Boston, Massachusetts.
- 255. State to Vientiane Embassy, telegram 384, October 7, 1960, FRUS 1958–1960, vol. XVI, pp. 886–888. The date of the above telegram is given in the published volume as October 8, but it appears the editor has confused this meeting in Gates's office with one the following day in Dillon's office. The original copy of telegram 384 bears a draft date of October 7. The announcement of establishment of diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union was made on October 7.
- 256. State to Vientiane Embassy, telegram 389, October 8, 1960, FRUS 1958–1960, vol. XVI, Microfiche Supplement, Fiche 21, Document 558.
  - 257. CIA Information Report, IN24832, October 9, 1960, Eisenhower Library.
  - 258. CIA Information Report IN26926, October 13, 1960, Eisenhower Library.
- 259. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 729, October 11, 1960, FRUS 1958–1960, vol. XVI, pp. 895–897.
- 260. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 742, October 14, 1960, ibid., Microfiche Supplement, Fiche 21, Document 568. Also Vientiane Embassy to State, "Assistant Secretary Parsons' and RLG Prime Minister H.H. Souvanna Phouma's Conversation of October 12, 1960," Foreign Service Despatch 101, October 18, 1960, RG 59, NARA.
- 261. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 765, October 17, 1960, FRUS 1958–1960, vol. XVI, Microfiche Supplement, Fiche 21, Document 576.
- 262. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 787, October 19, 1960, ibid., Microfiche Supplement, Fiche 22, Document 583.
  - 263. CIA Information Report IN28497, October 16, 1960, Eisenhower Library.
- 264. Radio Vientiane, October 15, 1960, cited in CIA Information Report IN28497, October 16, 1960, Eisenhower Library.
  - 265. Deuve, Le Laos 1945–1949, pp. 167–168.
- 266. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 737, October 13, 1960, FRUS 1958–1960, vol. XVI, pp. 899–902.
- 267. Bangkok Embassy to State, telegram 668, October 15, 1960, ibid., pp. 904–908. 268. Memorandum from Steeves to Under Secretary Dillon, October 16, 1960, ibid., Microfiche Supplement, Fiche 21, Document 574.
- 269. State to Vientiane Embassy, telegram 420, October 17, 1960, ibid., Microfiche Supplement, Fiche 21, Document 577. What Steeves expected Brown to do with this information remains a mystery. The unreality of American attempts to deal with a skilled manipulator who outwitted his American friends shows through clearly in all the exchanges during this episode.
- 270. Bangkok Embassy to State, telegram 676, October 16, 1960, ibid., Microfiche Supplement, Fiche 21, Document 573.
- 271. Memorandum from Lemnitzer to Gates, Washington, October 14, 1960, FRUS 1958–1960, vol. XVI, Microfiche Supplement, Fiche 21, Document 567.
  - 272. JCS to CINCPAC, telegram JCS984377, October 14, 1960, RG 59, NARA.
- 273. Bangkok Embassy to State, telegram 686, October 18, 1960, ibid., Microfiche Supplement, Fiche 21, Document 578.
  - 274. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 883, November 8, 1960, ibid., p. 940.
- 275. Bangkok Embassy to State, telegrams 735 and 746, October 25 and 26, 1960, ibid., Microfiche Supplement, Fiche 22, Documents 591 and 598.

276. Interview of Parsons by Dennis O'Brien, p. 16.

277. U.S. Congress, Executive Sessions of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee (Historical Series), Vol. XIII, Part 1, 87th Congress, First Session, 1961 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1984), p. 14.

278. Bangkok Embassy to State, telegram 727, October 23, 1960, FRUS 1958–1960, vol. XVI, Microfiche Supplement, Fiche 22, Document 588.

279. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 932, November 16, 1960, RG 59, NARA.

280. Bangkok Embassy to State, telegram 854, November 13, 1960, FRUS 1958–1960, vol. XVI, Microfiche Supplement, Fiche 23, Document 625.

281. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 917, November 13, 1960, ibid., Microfiche Supplement, Fiche 23, Document 628. Also the memorandum from Steeves to Under Secretary Livingston T. Merchant, October 24, 1960, which expresses fear that the prime minister might discover troop payments about which Brown had not been consulted. (Ibid., Microfiche Supplement, Fiche 22, Document 590.)

282. Phnom Penh Embassy to State, telegram 851, January 14, 1961, RG 59, NARA.

283. State to Vientiane Embassy, telegram 399, October 10, 1960, FRUS 1958–1960, vol. XVI, Microfiche Supplement, Fiche 21, Document 562.

284. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 1143, December 13, 1960, ibid., Microfiche Supplement, Fiche 24, Document 672; also Bangkok Embassy to State, telegram 1101, December 23, 1960, ibid., Microfiche Supplement, Fiche 25, Document 689.

285. Letter from Major General John M. Willems to Hugh S. Cumming, Jr., Washington, December 8, 1960, RG 59, NARA.

286. "Editorial Note," FRUS 1958-1960, vol. XVI, pp. 933-934.

287. State to Vientiane Embassy, telegram 502, November 10, 1960, ibid., Microfiche Supplement, Fiche 23, Document 620.

288. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 1081, December 7, 1960, ibid., pp. 991–993.

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291. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 1113, December 10, 1960, ibid.

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293. Bangkok Embassy to State, telegram 1033, December 17, 1960, FRUS 1958–1960, vol. XVI, Microfiche Supplement, Fiche 25, Document 678.

294. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 1179, December 16, 1960, RG 59, NARA.

295. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram No. 1238, January 2, 1961, quoting Dommen interview, RG 59, NARA.

296. Phnom Penh Embassy to State, telegram No. 814, January 8, 1961, ibid.

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298. Quoted in Duiker, Communist Road to Power in Vietnam, p. 200.

299. Ibid., p. 202.

300. See above, "The End of the Coalition."

301. Saigon Embassy to State, Foreign Service Despatch 463, June 27, 1960, RG 59, NARA.

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304. Saigon Embassy to State, telegrams 1923 and 2042, December 12 and 30, 1959, RG 59, NARA.

305. Political Parties in the National Assembly, Saigon Embassy to State, Airgram A-353, January 3, 1963, ibid.

306. "The Can Lao," Saigon Embassy to State, Foreign Service Despatch 279, March 2, 1959, *FRUS 1958–1960*, vol. I, pp. 144–170. The drafter was Chalmers B. Wood.

- 307. Author's personal notes, Saigon, 1960.
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- 309. Text in Saigon Embassy to State, Foreign Service Despatch 358, April 22, 1960, RG 59, NARA.
- 310. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 2981, April 19, 1960, FRUS 1958–1960, vol. I, pp. 404–406.
- 311. Saigon Embassy to State, Foreign Service Despatch 191, December 5, 1957, FRUS 1955–1957, vol. I, pp. 869–884.
- 312. State to Saigon Émbassy, telegram 2069, May 13, 1960, FRUS 1958–1960, vol. I, p. 459, fn. 4.
  - 313. Memorandum of conversation, Washington, May 13, 1960, ibid., pp. 457–459.
- 314. Memorandum from Lansdale to Kent, Washington, August 10, 1960, ibid., pp. 526–528.
  - 315. State to Saigon Embassy, telegram 1780, May 8, 1959, ibid., p. 194, fn. 2.
  - 316. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 2408, May 14, 1959, ibid., pp. 194–195.
- 317. "Short-Term Trends in South Vietnam," Special National Intelligence Estimate SNIE 63.1–60, August 23, 1960, ibid., pp. 536–541.
- 318. "Peasant Attitudes toward the Government of Viet Nam," Hue Consulate to State, Foreign Service Despatch 21, June 16, 1960, RG 59, NARA.
- 319. See the photograph of a Michigan State University professor's residence in Saigon in Ernst, *Forging a Fateful Alliance*, between pp. 72 and 73.
- 320. Saigon Embassy to State. telegram 624, September 16, 1960, FRUS 1958–1960, vol. I, pp. 575–579. Emphasis added.
- 321. Memorandum of conversation, Diem and Williams, Saigon, October 13, 1957, FRUS 1955–1957, vol. I, pp. 851–853.
- 322. Saigon Embassy to State, telegrams 802 and 805, October 15, 1960, ibid., pp. 595–597; and "Approach to President Diem on Suggested Political Actions," Foreign Service Despatch 157, October 15, 1960, enclosure 1, ibid., pp. 598–602.
- 323. Saigon Embassy to State, Foreign Service Despatch 157, enclosure 2, October 15, 1960, ibid., pp. 603–604.
  - 324. State to Saigon Embassy, telegram 581, October 7, 1960, ibid., pp. 591–594.
- 325. These are indicated by Wood's marginal notes on the text of Durbrow's démarche.
- 326. Memorandum from Herter to President Eisenhower, October 20, 1960, FRUS 1958–1960, vol. I, pp. 609–611.
  - 327. Paris Embassy to State, telegram 6027, May 25, 1957, RG 59, NARA.
- 328. State to Vientiane Embassy, telegram 2005, May 8, 1960, FRUS 1958–1960, vol. XVI, p. 766.
- 329. Paris Embassy to State, telegram 179, July 12, 1960, ibid., Microfiche Supplement, Fiche 17, Document 414.
- 330. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 3342, June 1, 1960, FRUS 1958–1960, vol. I, p. 483, fn. 2.
- 331. Memorandum of conversation, Manac'h and Parsons, Washington, June 2, 1960, ibid., pp. 483–485.
  - 332. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 463, August 31, 1960, ibid., p. 543, fn. 3.
- 333. State to Vientiane Embassy, telegram 1997, May 6, 1960, FRUS 1958–1960, vol. XVI, pp. 759–761.
- 334. Paris Embassy to State, telegram 723, August 23, 1960, FRUS 1958–1960, vol. I, p. 541, fn. 2.
  - 335. State to Vientiane Embassy, telegram 260, August 31, 1960, RG 59, NARA.
  - 336. State to Vientiane Embassy, telegram 272, September 2, 1960, ibid.

- 337. Paris Embassy to State, telegrams 1015 and 1016, September 9, 1960, ibid.
- 338. Memorandum of conversation between Manac'h and John M. Steeves, Paris, December 6, 1960, ibid.
  - 339. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 1185, December 27, 1960, ibid.
  - 340. Chaffard, Deux Guerres, pp. 195-196.
- 341. "Franco-Vietnamese Independence Treaty," Paris Embassy to State, Foreign Service Despatch 480, October 1, 1959, RG 59, NARA.
- 342. Memorandum from Lansdale to O'Donnell, Washington, September 20, 1960, FRUS 1958–1960, vol. I, pp. 579–585.
  - 343. Paris Embassy to State, telegram G-683, November 6, 1960, RG 59, NARA.
- 344. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 757, October 7, 1960, FRUS 1958–1960, vol. I, p. 687, fn. 4.
- 345. Chaffard's anti-American bias is shown by his statement comparing the "barbarous" conduct of Diem's troops toward the Hre, an ethnic minority of Quang Ngai Province, to "that of the Americans against the American Indians in the 19th century." (*Deux Guerres*, p. 227.) The Hre had a particularly violent history of shifting alliances with the French and the Viet Minh after 1945, which created the grounds for reprisals.
- 346. Memorandum of conversation, Tran Van Chuong, Parsons, and Wood, Washington, November 18, 1960; State to Paris Embassy, telegram 2149, November 21, 1960; memorandum of conversation, Chuong and Wood, Washington, November 22, 1960; memorandum of conversation, Barthélémy and Wood, Washington, November 22, 1960; Paris Embassy to State, telegram 2100, November 23, 1960, all in RG 59, NARA.
  - 347. Author's personal notes, Saigon, 1959–1961.
- 348. Interview of Pham Van Lieu by the author, Cedar Park, Texas, November 27, 1998. Lieu was one of the coup leaders.
- 349. Interview of Colonel Nguyên Huy Loi by the author, Germantown, Maryland, April 18, 1998. "Viet Cong Attacks in Kontum Area," Saigon Embassy to State, Foreign Service Despatch 301, January 14, 1961, RG 59, NARA.
- 350. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 466, August 25, 1960, FRUS 1958–1960, vol. I, pp. 541–544.
  - 351. Paris Embassy to State, telegram G-434, September 27, 1960, RG 59, NARA.
- 352. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 1129, November 26, 1960, FRUS 1958–1960, vol. I, pp. 688–691.
- 353. "Curriculum Vitae, Dr. Phan Quang Dan," Saigon Embassy to State, Airgram A-411, November 28, 1964, RG 59, NARA.
  - 354. "Editorial Note," FRUS 1958-1960, vol. I, pp. 660-663.
  - 355. Paris Embassy to State, Airgram A-2980, May 23, 1963, RG 59, NARA.
- 356. Letter from Colonel Nguyên Chanh Thi to Nguyên Manh Quang, July 7, 1996, in *Nhin Lai Bien Co 11/11/60 (Looking Back at the Event of November 11, 1960)*, ed. Chinh Dao (Houston: Van Hoa Publishing and Distribution Company, 1997), p. 104. This information was confirmed by Colonel Nguyên Huy Loi, interview by the author, Virginia Beach, Virginia, December 12, 1998.
- 357. Memorandum from McGarr to Durbrow, Saigon, November 17, 1960, *FRUS 1958–1960*, vol. I, pp. 676–679. This memorandum bears a number of marginal notes in Mendenhall's handwriting disparaging of Diem.
  - 358. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 1093, November 17, 1960, ibid., p. 670, fn. 2.
  - 359. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 1103, November 18, 1960, ibid., pp. 682-683.
  - 360. Scigliano, "Political Parties in South Vietnam,"
- 361. Frank C. Child, "Vietnam—The Eleventh Hour," New Republic 145 (December 4, 1961): 14–16.
- 362. "Future of MSUG in Vietnam," memorandum from Fox to Hendry, Saigon, February 19, 1962, in U.S. Department of State, *FRUS*, 1961–1963, vol. II, *Vietnam* 1962 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1990), pp. 152–155.

- 363. Letter from Scigliano to President Kennedy, East Lansing, July 13, 1963, RG 59, NARA.
- 364. Truong Nhu Tang, "The Birth of the NLF," chapter in Tang, A Vietcong Memoir: An Inside Account of the Vietnam War and Its Aftermath (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1985), pp. 63–80.
  - 365. Radio Hanoi, January 29, 1961.
- 366. Douglas Pike, Viet Cong: The Organization and Techniques of the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The M.I.T. Press, 1966), Appendix D, "Biographical Notes," pp. 421–436.
  - 367. See below, Chapter 10, "The Reorganization of Sovereignty in Indochina."
- 368. For example, an article by historian and theoretician Minh Tranh broadcast on Radio Hanoi on October 19, 1960. Cited in "DRV Sequence in Struggle Re South Viet Nam," Saigon Embassy to State, Airgram A-271, April 12, 1962, RG 59, NARA.
  - 369. Vietnam Military History Institute, pp. 94–95.
- 370. Letter from Parsons to U. Alexis Johnson, February 25, 1960, FRUS 1958–1960, vol. XVI, Microfiche Supplement, Fiche 15, Document 362.
- 371. Memorandum of conversation between Chuong and Parsons, Washington, November 18, 1960, FRUS 1958–1960, vol. I, pp. 679–681.
- 372. Memorandum from Lansdale to Douglas, Washington, November 15, 1960, ibid., pp. 667–668.
  - 373. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 1105, November 18, 1960, ibid., pp. 683-685.

## 7. THE NATIONALISTS STRUGGLE AGAINST GREAT ODDS (1961–1963)

- 1. Text in *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: John F. Kennedy, 1961* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1962), pp. 1–3.
  - 2. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 1755, March 24, 1961, RG 59, NARA.
- 3. Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., *Robert Kennedy and His Times* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1978), p. 495. For Kennedy's own words, see, for instance, his Special Message to the Congress on Urgent National Needs, May 25, 1961, printed in *Public Papers of the Presidents: John F. Kennedy*, 1961, pp. 397–398.
- 4. The significance of the rise of Le Duan is analyzed in Smith, *An International History*, pp. 212–213.
- 5. Letter from President Kennedy to Chairman Khrushchev, November 16, 1961, in U.S. Department of State, *FRUS*, 1961–1963, vol. I, *Vietnam 1961* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1988), p. 637. Large extracts from Le Duan's political report to the congress are printed in Department of State, *A Threat to the Peace: North Viet-Nam's Effort To Conquer South Viet-Nam. Part II—The Appendices* (Washington, D.C.: 1961), pp. 4–5.
  - 6. Smith, An International History, pp. 224-225.
- 7. DRV Sequence in Struggle Re South Viet Nam, Saigon Embassy to State, Airgram A-271, April 12, 1962, RG 59, NARA.
  - 8. Telephone interview of Dean Rusk by author, April 8, 1989.
- 9. Memorandum from Rostow to Kennedy, May 26, 1961, FRUS 1961–1963, vol. I, pp. 157–158.
- 10. Memorandum of conversation, President Kennedy and Chairman Khrushchev, Residence of the American Ambassador, Vienna, June 3, 1961, drafted by Alexander Akalovsky, John F. Kennedy Library.
  - 11. Jackie: Behind the Myth, film (1999).
- 12. This argument was enunciated most explicitly by Rostow in his memoranda to Kennedy of March 29 and June 17, 1961. Kennedy Library, National Security File (hereafter NSF), Boxes 65 and 192.
  - 13. Rusk, telephone interview.

- 14. David Halberstam, *The Best and the Brightest* (New York: Random House, 1972), pp. 75–76. See also Reston's original report on this matter in his column in *The New York Times*, Jan. 18, 1966; and his later comments in his column in *The New York Times*, June 10, 1979.
  - 15. Charlton and Moncrieff, Many Reasons Why, p. 68.
  - 16. Kong Le, personal communication, Paris, March 21, 1974.
- 17. War Experiences Recapitulation Committee, "Cuoc Khang Chien Chong My Cuu Nuoc 1954–1975," translation in JPRS 80968, June 3, 1982, p. 47.
- 18. Interview of Lieutenant General Andrew J. Boyle by Lieutenant Colonel F. G. Walton, March 27, 1971, Section 3, p. 15, Senior Officers Oral History Program, U.S. Army Military History Institute, Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania.
- 19. War Experiences Recapitulation Committee, "Cuoc Khang Chien Chong My Cuu Nuoc 1954–1975," p. 77.
- 20. Interview of Lieutenant Kham Tong by Paul F. Langer, Savannakhet, May 1, 1967, kindly made available to the author.
- 21. Headquarters 13th Air Force, Clark Air Base, Philippines, to State, telegram 131DC, August 19, 1962, RG 59, NARA. This telegram reports the debriefing of Ballenger and other released prisoners.
- 22. Interview of Second Lieutenant Bounlai Xainhachit by Paul F. Langer, Sayaboury, June 16, 1967, kindly made available to the author.
- 23. Interview of Lieutenant General John A. Heintges by Major Jack A. Pellicci, 1974, pp. 592–595, Senior Officers Oral History Program, U.S. Army Military History Institute, Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania.
- 24. Memoranda from Jorgensen to Brown, May 1, 1961, Box 527, Harriman Papers, Library of Congress.
- 25. Interviews of Lair by Roger Warner, cited in Warner, Back Fire: The CLA's Secret War in Laos and Its Link to the War in Vietnam (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1995), pp. 35–48.
- 26. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 1197, December 29, 1960, FRUS 1958–1960, vol. XVI, Microfiche Supplement, Fiche 25, Document 698.
- 27. Memorandum of conference, White House, December 31, 1960, ibid., pp. 1024–1029.
- 28. Text of motion in Vientiane Embassy to State, Foreign Service Despatch 254, April 4, 1961, enclosure 2, p. 2, RG 59, NARA.
- 29. Texts of the two royal ordinances in Vientiane Embassy to State, Foreign Service Despatch 145, December 27, 1960, ibid.
- 30. Text in Vientiane Embassy to State, Foreign Service Despatch No. 254, April 4, 1961, ibid.
  - 31. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 1189, December 28, 1960, ibid.
- 32. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 1337, January 14, 1961, ibid. The case for the Boun Oum government's legality is made in State Circular telegram 1004, January 11, 1961, ibid.
  - 33. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 1256, January 4, 1961, ibid.
  - 34. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 1275, January 6, 1961, ibid.
- 35. Paris Embassy to State, telegram Secto 26, December 18, 1960, FRUS 1958–1960, vol. XVI, Microfiche Supplement, Fiche 25, Document 683.
  - 36. Paris Embassy to State, telegram 2664, January 2, 1961, RG 59, NARA.
  - 37. Bangkok Embassy to State, telegram 1101, December 23, 1960, ibid.
- 38. "LTM [Livingston T. Merchant] Notes on a Meeting with the President," January 2, 1961, Eisenhower Library.
- 39. Bangkok Embassy to State, telegram 1079, December 21, 1960, FRUS 1958–1960, vol. XVI, Microfiche Supplement, Fiche 25, Document 685.
  - 40. UN Mission to State, telegram 1866, December 30, 1960, RG 59, NARA.

- 41. Memorandum of conversation, Herter, Lord Home, and Couve de Murville, Paris, December 15, 1960, *FRUS 1958–1960*, vol. XVI, Microfiche Supplement, Fiche 25, Document 676.
- 42. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegrams 1211 and 1214, December 31, 1960, RG 59, NARA.
  - 43. Phnom Penh Embassy to State, telegram 772, December 30, 1960, ibid.
- 44. Phnom Penh Embassy to State, Foreign Service Despatch 205, January 9, 1961, ibid.
- 45. Phnom Penh Embassy to State, telegram 1007, February 9, 1961, Papers of McGeorge Bundy, John F. Kennedy Library, Boston, Massachusetts.
  - 46. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 1285, January 7, 1961, RG 59, NARA.
  - 47. Executive Sessions of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, XIII, 1961, pp. 49–89.
  - 48. Brown, recorded interview by Larry J. Hackman, pp. 14–15.
- 49. William Conrad Gibbons, *The U.S. Government and the Vietnam War: Executive and Legislative Roles and Relationships*, pt. II, *1961–1964* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1984), p. 10.
- 50. Memorandum from Mansfield to Kennedy, January 21, 1961, Papers of Mike Mansfield, Missoula, Montana.
  - 51. Brown, recorded interview by Larry J. Hackman, p. 19.
- 52. Parsons memorandum to Walt Rostow, April 27, 1961, Bundy Papers, Kennedy Library.
  - 53. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 1716, March 17, 1961, RG 59, NARA.
  - 54. Bangkok Embassy to State, telegram 1683, March 19, 1961, ibid.
  - 55. State to New Delhi Embassy, telegram 2547, March 18, 1961, ibid.
- 56. Diaries of Prince Souvanna Phouma, entry for March 22, 1961, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress.
- 57. Memorandum for the record by Harriman, August 29, 1961, Harriman Papers, Library of Congress.
  - 58. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 1755, March 24, 1961, RG 59, NARA.
  - 59. Public Papers of the Presidents: John F. Kennedy, 1961, p. 214.
- 60. Vientiane Embassy to State, Foreign Service Despatch 295, May 23, 1961, enclosure 1, p. 7, RG 59, NARA. The author was George B. Roberts.
  - 61. State to Moscow Embassy, telegram 2148, June 8, 1961, ibid.
  - 62. Vietnam News Agency (Hanoi), April 28, 1961.
  - 63. Phnom Penh Embassy to State, telegram 1367, May 3, 1961, RG 59, NARA.
  - 64. Phnom Penh Embassy to State, telegram 1390, May 9, 1961, ibid.
  - 65. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 1979, May 2, 1961, ibid.
  - 66. Bangkok Embassy to State, telegram 1946, April 29, 1961, ibid.
- 67. "Ambassador Harriman's Audience with King Savang and Talks with General Phoumi and Prince Boun Oum," Vientiane Embassy to State, Foreign Service Despatch 284, May 4, 1961, ibid.
- 68. Memorandum of conversation, Boun Oum, Phoumi, Harriman, and Brown, Luang Prabang, April 30, 1961, ibid. In the telegram reporting this conversation, sent some days later, the phrase "negotiate with Souvanna Phouma" has been changed to "compromise with Souvanna Phouma." Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 2009, May 2, 1961, ibid.
  - 69. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 1659, May 3, 1961, ibid.
  - 70. Phnom Penh Embassy to State, telegram 1369, May 4, 1961, ibid.
  - 71. Bangkok Embassy to State, telegram 1979, May 5, 1961, ibid.
- 72. Phnom Penh Embassy to State, telegram 1366, May 3, 1961, in U.S. Department of State, *FRUS*, *1961–1963*, vol. XXIII, *Southeast Asia* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1994), pp. 147–149.
  - 73. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 1976, April 29, 1961, RG 59, NARA.

- 74. Memorandum of conversation, Nguyên Dinh Thuan and President Kennedy, Washington, June 14, 1961, *FRUS 1961–1963*, vol. I, pp. 172–174.
- 75. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 2083, May 15, 1961; and Foreign Service Despatch 306, June 13, 1961, RG 59, NARA.
  - 76. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegrams 2071 and 2082, May 14 and 15, 1961, ibid.
  - 77. Geneva to State, telegram Secto 83, May 12, 1961, ibid.
  - 78. State to Geneva, telegram Tosec 120, May 15, 1961, ibid.
- 79. State to Geneva, telegram Tosec 101, May 14, 1961, FRUS 1961–1963, vol. XXIV, pp. 195–196.
  - 80. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 2092, May 17, 1961, RG 59, NARA.
- 81. Keith Quincy, *Harvesting Pa Chay's Wheat* (Spokane: Eastern Washington University Press, 2000), p. 199.
  - 82. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 2156, May 26, 1961, ibid.
  - 83. Vientiane Embassy to State, Foreign Service Despatch 318, June 27, 1961, ibid.
  - 84. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 2325, June 26, 1961, ibid.
  - 85. Vientiane Embassy to State, Foreign Service Despatch 13, July 25, 1961, ibid.
  - 86. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 5, July 3, 1961, ibid.
  - 87. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 587, October 13, 1961, ibid.
  - 88. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 599, October 18, 1961, ibid.
  - 89. The French in Indochina called their house servants un boy or une boyesse.
- 90. Nice Consulate to State, telegram 57, June 11, 1961, RG 59, NARA. This message of General Phoumi's for Hasey refers to reimbursement in Vientiane. The consulate in Nice had arranged for the delivery of large amounts of cash to General Phoumi at the Hotel Negresco. Presumably, these came from the CIA's unvouchered funds rather than appropriated funds. Interview of Frederick Z. Brown by the author.
  - 91. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 92, July 18, 1961, RG 59, NARA.
- 92. Memorandum of conversation, General Phoumi and Rusk, Washington, June 29, 1961, FRUS 1961–1963, vol. XXIV, pp. 276–282.
- 93. Memorandum, Anderson to McConaughy, June 29, 1961, NSF Country Files, Laos, John F. Kennedy Library, Boston, Massachusetts.
  - 94. Geneva to State, telegram Confe 469, August 1, 1961, RG 59, NARA.
  - 95. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 600, October 18, 1961, ibid.
  - 96. At their meeting in Luang Prabang on April 30, 1961. See above.
  - 97. FRUS 1961-1963, vol. XXIV, pp. 142-143.
  - 98. Ibid., pp. 148–149.
- 99. The siege and battle of Nam Tha, complete with quoted extracts from writings of DRV soldiers, is described in Dommen, *Conflict in Laos*, pp. 214–219.
- 100. "Comments by Prime Minister Sarit," memorandum, Bangkok, February 26, 1962, FRUS 1961–1963, vol. XXIII, pp. 915–917.
- 101. U. Alexis Johnson, *The Right Hand of Power: The Memoirs of an American* Diplomat (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1984), pp. 305–306.
  - 102. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 630, October 26, 1961, RG 59, NARA.
- 103. State to Vientiane Embassy, telegram 669, January 27, 1962, FRUS 1961–1963, vol. XXIV, pp. 597–598.
  - 104. State to Vientiane Embassy, telegram 684, January 31, 1962, ibid., p. 609.
  - 105. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 1415, April 11, 1962, RG 59, NARA.
  - 106. Bangkok Embassy to State, telegram 1441, March 20, 1962, ibid.
- 107. "Governor Harriman's Conversations in Nong Khai and Vientiane, March 24–25, 1962," Vientiane Embassy to State, Foreign Service Despatch 184, March 30, 1962, ibid. The recorder was G. B. Roberts. Ambassador Brown was not present at the meeting.
  - 108. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 1338, March 26, 1962, ibid.
  - 109. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 1375, March 31, 1962, ibid.

- 110. Memorandum of conversation, Norris P. Smith and René Weill, Luang Prabang, June 4, 1962, Vientiane Embassy to State, Foreign Service Despatch 239, enclosure 5, ibid.
  - 111. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 1513, May 8, 1962, ibid.
  - 112. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 1467, May 1, 1962, RG 59, NARA.
  - 113. Vietnam Military History Institute, pp. 144–145.
  - 114. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 1425, April 17, 1962, ibid.
- 115. Memorandum from Colonel Burris to Vice President Johnson, Washington,
- April 17, 1962, Vice Presidential File, Lyndon Baines Johnson Library.
  - 116. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 1409, May 4, 1962, RG 59, NARA.
  - 117. Bangkok Embassy to State, Airgram A-361, May 5, 1962, ibid.
  - 118. Bangkok Embassy to State, telegram 1844, May 24, 1962, RG 59, NARA.
- 119. Memorandum of conversation, Prince Khampan and Harriman, Washington, May 29, 1962, ibid.
  - 120. State to Vientiane Embassy, telegram 1014, May 16, 1962, RG 59, NARA.
  - 121. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 1543, May 11, 1962, ibid.
  - 122. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 1546, May 12, 1962, ibid.
  - 123. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 1580, May 18, 1962, ibid.
  - 124. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 1652, June 2, 1962, ibid.
  - 125. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 1658, June 4, 1962, ibid.
- 126. "Plaine des Jarres Agreement of June 12, 1962," Vientiane Embassy to State, Foreign Service Despatch 235, June 18, 1962, ibid.
- 127. Memorandum of conversation, Souvanna Phouma and President Kennedy, Washington, July 27, 1962, ibid.
  - 128. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 1794, June 23, 1962, ibid.
- 129. "Royal Ordinances Establishing the New Lao Coalition Government," Vientiane Embassy to State, Airgram A-8, July 14, 1962, ibid. Whether the explicit reference to Royal Ordinance 218 accepting the resignation of Boun Oum's government made in the royal ordinance appointing the PGNU constituted an implicit recognition that the former government had been legal, as the American embassy's analysis (cited above) contended, or whether its was just one more example of Souvanna Phouma's goodwill remains debatable.
  - 130. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 1796, June 24, 1962, RG 59, NARA.
- 131. "Last Crucial Days in Formation Souvanna Phouma Government," Vientiane Embassy to State, Airgram A-122, June 27, 1962, ibid.
  - 132. Geneva to State, telegram Confe 1158, June 28, 1962, ibid.
  - 133. Paris Embassy to State, telegram 19, July 2, 1962, ibid.
  - 134. Geneva to State, telegram Confe 1167, July 2, 1962, ibid.
  - 135. Geneva to State, telegram Confe 1205, July 9, 1962, ibid.
  - 136. Bangkok Embassy to State, telegram 2023, June 19, 1962, ibid.
  - 137. Paris Embassy to State, telegram 6344, June 30, 1962, ibid.
  - 138. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 9, July 3, 1962, ibid.
- 139. Text in Declaration and Protocol on the Neutrality of Laos, Geneva, July 23, 1962 (London: HMSO, May 1963, Cmnd. 2025).
- 140. Text of Statement by the President of the United States on the Occasion of the Signing of the Laos Agreements, July 23, 1962, Box 530, Papers of W. Averell Harriman, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress.
- 141. Executive Sessions of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee (Historical Series), vol. XIV, 1962 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1986), p. 190.
- 142. Letter from Laird to Rusk, July 24, 1962, RG 59, NARA. Cf. Gibbons, *The U.S. Government and the Vietnam War,* pt. II, pp. 117–119.
  - 143. Letter from Harriman to Laird, August 10, 1962, RG 59, NARA.
  - 144. Memorandum from L. D. Battle to McConaughy, May 26, 1961, ibid.
  - 145. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 83, July 19, 1962, ibid.
  - 146. See above, Chapters 5 and 6.

- 147. Geneva to State, telegram Confe 711, October 12, 1961, RG 59, NARA.
- 148. Harriman, "Comments on Other Delegations to the International Conference on the Settlement of the Laotian Question and Secret Memoranda and Other Classified Papers Relating to the Conference," October 19, 1962, Tab H, "History of Article 14 on Voting," in ibid.
  - 149. See above, Chapter 5, "Diem's First Government."
- 150. Notes of telephone conversation, Washington, November 1, 1961, FRUS 1961–1963, vol. XXIV, p. 489.
- 151. State to Geneva delegation, telegram Fecon 554, November 1, 1961, RG 59, NARA.
- 152. Geneva delegation to State, telegrams Confe 809 and Confe 810, November 2, 1961, FRUS 1961–1963, vol. XXIV, pp. 495–497.
- 153. U.S. delegation memorandum of conversation by Fromer, Geneva, September 6, 1961, RG 59, NARA.
- 154. Harriman, "Comments on Other Delegations to the International Conference," Tab D, "Memorandum on the meaning of the phrase 'with the concurrence of the Royal Government of Laos' in Article 9, Para. 1, Article 11, Para. 2, Article 15, Para. 1, Article 16, Para. 2 of the Protocol."
  - 155. Geneva to State, telegram Confe 1212, July 11, 1962, RG 59, NARA.
  - 156. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 1748, June 18, 1962, ibid.
  - 157. Memorandum from Ball to President Kennedy, June 28, 1962, ibid.
  - 158. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 271, August 21, 1962, ibid.
- 159. Rome Embassy to State, telegram 882, September 13, 1961, *FRUS 1961–1963*, vol. XXIV, pp. 411–412.
- 160. Harriman, "Comments on Other Delegations to the International Conference," Tab G, "History of Article 8 on the Co-Chairmen."
- 161. Geneva to State, telegram 1212, July 11, 1962, RG 59, NARA. See also the section "Policing of the Geneva Accords" in Ball's memorandum of June 28, 1962, cited above.
- 162. Harriman letter to Brown, July 19, 1962, Box 530, Harriman Papers, Library of Congress.
- 163. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 373, September 18, 1961, FRUS 1961–1963, vol. I, pp. 301–304.
- 164. Memorandum from Hilsman to Harriman, April 24, 1962, Papers of Roger Hilsman, Kennedy Library.
  - 165. State to Athens Embassy, telegram Tosec 89, May 4, 1962, RG 59, NARA.
  - 166. State to Athens Embassy, telegram Tosec 97, May 6, 1962, ibid.
- 167. Memorandum for the files on a telephone conversation between Harriman and Kennedy, August 29, 1961, Box FCL12, Harriman Papers, Library of Congress.
  - 168. Paris Embassy to State, telegram 41, July 3, 1962, RG 59, NARA.
- 169. Geneva to State, telegram Confe 1177, July 3, 1962, FRUS 1961–1963, vol. XXIV. pp. 860–862.
  - 170. Geneva to State, telegram Confe 1193, July 8, 1962, RG 59, NARA.
  - 171. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegrams 6, July 2, 1962, and 14, July 4, 1962, ibid.
  - 172. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 447, October 7, 1962, ibid.
  - 173. Geneva to State, telegram Confe 1189, July 7, 1962, ibid.
  - 174. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 28, July 10, 1962, ibid.
- 175. Ibid. See also Marek Thee, *Notes of a Witness: Laos and the Second Indochinese War* (New York: Vintage Books, 1973), pp. 283–288.
  - 176. State to Saigon Embassy, telegram 20, July 5, 1962, RG 59, NARA.
  - 177. Geneva to State, telegram Confe 1196, July 9, 1962, ibid.
  - 178. Geneva to State, telegram Confe 1197, July 9, 1962, ibid.
  - 179. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 35, July 10, 1962, ibid.
  - 180. Geneva to State, telegram Confe 1177, July 3, 1962, ibid.

- 181. Memorandum from P. M. Byrne to Harriman, Geneva, August 2, 1961, Harriman Papers, Library of Congress.
- 182. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 491, October 14, 1961, with copy to the U.S. delegation at Geneva, RG 59, NARA.
- 183. Geneva to State, telegram Confe 782, October 25, 1961, Box FCL22, Harriman Papers, Library of Congress.
  - 184. Geneva to State, telegram 1205, July 9, 1962, RG 59, NARA.
- 185. "Appraisal of Conference Agreements from United States Standpoint," in "Official Report of the United States Delegation to the International Conference on the Settlement of the Laotian Question," submitted by Harriman to Secretary of State Dean Rusk on September 21, 1962, p. 44, ibid. The British must share the blame for overlooking this legal flaw in the wording, for Pushkin handed his draft text to the British co-chairman, Malcolm MacDonald.
- 186. Letter from Chayes to Harriman, July 27, 1962, Box 530, Harriman Papers, Library of Congress.
  - 187. Executive Sessions of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, vol. XIV, 1962, p. 644.
- 188. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegrams 214, August 14, 1962, and 249, August 18, 1962, RG 59, NARA.
  - 189. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 249, August 18, 1962, ibid.
  - 190. State to Moscow Embassy, telegram 362, August 18, 1962, ibid.
  - 191. State to Vientiane Embassy, telegram 210, August 20, 1962, ibid.
  - 192. Moscow Embassy to State, telegram 430, August 21, 1962, ibid.
  - 193. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 281, August 23, 1962, ibid.
  - 194. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 305, August 27, 1962, ibid.
  - 195. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 534, October 3, 1962, ibid.
  - 196. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 165, August 3, 1962, ibid.
  - 197. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 589, October 12, 1962, ibid.
  - 198. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 255, August 19, 1962, ibid.
  - 199. State to Vientiane Embassy, telegram 210, August 20, 1962, ibid.
  - 200. Warsaw Embassy to State, telegram 1750, May 9, 1963, ibid.
  - 201. Thee, Notes of a Witness, p. 143.
  - 202. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 295, August 24, 1962, RG 59, NARA.
  - 203. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 304, August 27, 1962, ibid.
  - 204. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 307, August 28, 1962, ibid.
  - 205. "The Tragic Misunderstanding Continues," Neak Cheat Niyum, May 28, 1960.
- 206. This correspondent, Ngô Dien, later became the DRV's ambassador to the Khmer People's Republic. See below, Chapter 10.
- 207. Norodom Sihanouk, "How Fares Communism in Cambodia," *Réalités Cambodgiennes*, August 3, 10, 17 and 24, 1962; Phnom Penh Embassy to State, Airgrams A-74, A-82, A-93 and A-111, August 6, 13, 23 and 30, 1962, RG 59, NARA.
- 208. Phnom Penh Embassy to State, Foreign Service Despatch 223, December 23, 1958, RG 59, NARA.
  - 209. Author's personal notes, Saigon, 1959–1961.
  - 210. FRUS 1961-1963, vol. XXIII, p. 198, fn. 1.
  - 211. Phnom Penh Embassy to State, telegram 155, August 23, 1962, RG 59, NARA.
- 212. Memorandum from Harriman to Rusk, Washington, January 23, 1963, FRUS 1961–1963, vol. XXIII, pp. 227–229.
  - 213. Phnom Penh Embassy to State, telegram 4, July 1, 1963, RG 59, NARA.
- 214. Actual negotiations by the DRV on Cambodia's borders would wait until the 1990s. See below, Chapter 10.
- 215. Phnom Penh Embassy to State, Airgram A-506, May 2, 1963, and telegram 916, June 3, 1963, RG 59, NARA.
  - 216. Vietnam Military History Institute, p. 74.

- 217. State to Saigon Embassy, telegram 1115, March 1, 1961, FRUS 1961–1963, vol. I, pp. 40–42.
- 218. Memorandum of conversation, Nguyên Dinh Thuan and Rusk, Washington, March 27, 1961, ibid., pp. 52–57.
- 219. Saigon Embassy to CINCPAC, telegram MAGCH-LO 670, May 6, 1961, ibid., pp. 89–91.
  - 220. See above, Chapter 4, "Party Activities in Laos and Cambodia."
- 221. Memorandum from Gilpatric to President Kennedy, May 3, 1961, FRUS 1961–1963, vol. I, pp. 92–115.
  - 222. State to Saigon Embassy, telegram 1423, May 20, 1961, ibid., pp. 140–143.
  - 223. State to Saigon Embassy, telegram 1457, May 26, 1961, ibid., pp. 160–162.
- 224. Saigon Embassy to CINCPAC, telegram MAGCH-LO 670, May 6, 1961, ibid., pp. 89–91.
  - 225. "Editorial Note," ibid., p. 128.
  - 226. State to Saigon Embassy, telegram 1390, May 13, 1961, RG 59, NARA.
- 227. Memorandum of conversation, Nguyên Dinh Thuan and President Kennedy, Washington, June 14, 1961, *FRUS 1961–1963*, vol. I, pp. 172–174.
  - 228. State to Saigon Embassy, telegram 8, July 3, 1961, ibid., vol. I, pp. 199–200.
  - 229. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 1594, April 11, 1961, RG 59, NARA.
  - 230. FRUS 1961-1963, vol. I, p. 164, fn. 6.
  - 231. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 70, July 14, 1961, ibid., pp. 216–220.
  - 232. State to Saigon Embassy, telegram 35, July 10, 1961, ibid., p. 205.
  - 233. Schlesinger, Robert Kennedy and His Times, p. 495.
- 234. Letter from President Kennedy to President Diem, August 5, 1961, FRUS 1961–1963, vol. I, pp. 263–267.
  - 235. State to Saigon Embassy, telegram 160, August 8, 1961, ibid., p. 273.
  - 236. Memorandum of discussion, Washington, July 28, 1961, ibid., pp. 252–256.
  - 237. Memorandum from Rostow to President Kennedy, July 29, 1961, ibid., pp. 256-257.
  - 238. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 387, September 21, 1961, RG 59, NARA.
- 239. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 421, October 1, 1961, FRUS 1961–1963, vol. I, pp. 316–317.
  - 240. Bangkok Embassy to State, telegram 2101, May 20, 1961, ibid., pp. 143–146.
  - 241. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 508, October 18, 1961, ibid., pp. 391–392.
  - 242. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 495, October 16, 1961, ibid., pp. 383–386.
  - 243. State to Saigon Embassy, telegram 368, October 1, 1961, ibid., p. 317, fn. 5.
  - 244. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 135, July 27, 1961, RG 59, NARA.
- 245. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 507, October 18, 1961, FRUS 1961–1963, vol. I, pp. 393–394.
- 246. "Further Evidence re VC's Murder of Col. Nam submitted to ICC," Saigon Embassy to State, Foreign Service Despatch 472, May 14, 1962, RG 59, NARA.
- 247. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 575, October 31, 1961, FRUS 1961–1963, vol. I, pp. 456–457.
  - 248. Memorandum by Gilpatric, October 11, 1961, ibid., pp. 343–344.
  - 249. Rostow, The Diffusion of Power, p. 272.
  - 250. Notes of a Meeting, November 11, 1961, FRUS 1961–1963, vol. I, pp. 577–578.
- 251. Memorandum of conversation, Rusk and Alphand, Washington, November 13, 1961, ibid., pp. 584–585.
  - 252. Letter from Nolting to President Diem, December 5, 1961, ibid., pp. 713–716.
  - 253. State to Saigon Embassy, telegram 727, December 5, 1961, ibid., p. 716.
- 254. Interview of Forrestal by Joseph Kraft, Washington, April 8, 1964, p. 38, transcript kindly made available to the author by Kai Bird.
- 255. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 704, November 25, 1961, FRUS 1961–1963, vol. I, pp. 665–666.

- 256. McGarr to Lemnitzer, telegram SGN 901, December 20, 1961, ibid., pp. 749–750.
- 257. Lemnitzer to McGarr, telegram JCS 2027–61, December 23, 1961, ibid., pp. 758–760.
- 258. Taylor to President Kennedy, telegram CAP 5416–61, December 7, 1961, ibid., pp. 724–725.
- 259. Taylor to President Kennedy, telegram CAP 5466-61, December 21, 1961, ibid., p. 754.
- 260. Rangoon Embassy to State, telegram 17, September 17, 1961, and Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 494, September 21, 1961, RG 59, NARA.
- 261. Memorandum from President Kennedy to Rusk and McNamara, November 14, 1961, FRUS 1961–1963, vol. I, pp. 603–604.
- 262. Letter from Chairman Khrushchev to President Kennedy, November 10, 1961, FRUS 1961–1963, vol. XXIV, Microfiche Supplement, Fiche 14, Document 238.
- 263. Letter from President Kennedy to Chairman Khrushchev, November 16, 1961, FRUS 1961–1963, vol. I, pp. 636–638.
- 264. International Commission for Supervision and Control in Vietnam, *Special Report to the Co-Chairmen of the Geneva Conference on Indo-China*, Saigon, June 2, 1962 (London: HMSO, June 1962), p. 7.
  - 265. Ibid., p. 10.
- 266. Ibid., pp. 21–22. For the provisions referred to in the report, see above, Chapter 5, "Evaluation of the 1954 Armistice Terms: Vietnam."
  - 267. Maneli, War of the Vanquished, pp. 52-58.
- 268. "GVN Letter to ICC re Special Report," Saigon Embassy to State, Airgram A-6, July 3, 1962, RG 59, NARA.
  - 269. Saigon Embassy to State, Airgram A-338, June 26, 1962, RG 59, NARA.
- 270. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 229, August 14, 1961, FRUS 1961–1963, vol. I, pp. 279–282.
  - 271. See below, Chapter 8, "Failed Attempts at Negotiation."
- 272. See above, Chapter 6, "The NLF: The Communists' Appeal to Southern Nationalism."
- 273. Robert K. Brigham, Guerrilla Diplomacy: The NLF's Foreign Relations and the Viet Nam War (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1999), p. 27. On Hieu's party membership, see ibid., p. 17.
- 274. "After Laos, South Vietnam," July 14, 1961, National Security Files, Regional Security, Southeast Asia, Box 231–54, Kennedy Library.
- 275. Rome Embassy to State, telegram 882, September 13, 1961, *FRUS 1961–1963*, vol. XXIV, pp. 411–412.
- 276. Memorandum of conversation, Harriman and Pushkin, Geneva, September 27, 1961, RG 59, NARA.
- 277. Geneva to State, telegram Confe 725, October 14, 1961, FRUS 1961–1963, vol. XXIV, Microfiche Supplement, Fiche 14, Document 229.
  - 278. Geneva to State, telegram Confe 753, October 19, 1961, RG 59, NARA.
- 279. Geneva to State, telegram Confe 878, November 23, 1961, Box FCL22, Harriman Papers, Library of Congress.
- 280. Memorandum of conversation, Harriman and Ung Van Khiem, Geneva, July 22, 1962, FRUS 1961–1963, vol. XIV, pp. 867–870.
  - 281. See above, Chapter 4, "The Geneva Conference."
  - 282. Saigon Embassy to State, Airgram A-6, July 3, 1962, RG 59, NARA.
  - 283. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 473, October 11, 1961, ibid.
- 284. Geneva Consulate General to State, telegram 369, October 13, 1961, FRUS 1961–1963, vol. I, pp. 363–364.
- 285. Geneva to State, telegram Confe 823, November 6, 1961, FRUS 1961–1963, vol. XXIV, Microfiche Supplement, Fiche 14, Document 237.

- 286. Geneva to State, telegram Confe 870, November 21, 1961, Box 529, Harriman Papers, Library of Congress.
  - 287. Geneva to State, telegram Confe 1233, July 13, 1962, RG 59, NARA.
- 288. Chaffard, *Deux Guerres*, p. 278. Again, this is based on Chaffard's contacts in the Vietnamese community, in this case with Nguyên Van Chi, the unofficial DRV representative in Paris.
- 289. An estimate of DRV troop strength and dispositions in Laos in January 1962, prepared at Brown's request by the MAAG, the army attaché, and the CIA, is given in Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 1047, January 26, 1962, RG 59, NARA.
  - 290. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 265, August 20, 1962, ibid.
  - 291. UPI dispatch from Moscow, October 4, 1962.
  - 292. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 555, October 7, 1962, RG 59, NARA.
- 293. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 1082, January 31, 1963, and Airgram A-409. May 15, 1963, both in ibid.
- 294. Letter from Souvanna Phoum to Ambassador Unger, Vientiane, October 26, 1962, Vientiane Embassy to State, Airgram A-155, November 25, 1962, ibid.
- 295. Vientiane Embassy to State, Airgram A-165, November 21, 1962, RG 59, NARA. This airgram contains the text of a letter dated November 9 from the high command of the armed forces of the NLHS to the tripartite Committee for Overseeing the Implementation of the Geneva Agreement.
  - 296. "Editorial Note," FRUS 1961-1963, vol. XXIII, p. 948.
- 297. "Meo Operations," memorandum from Richard M. Bissell, Jr., to Allen W. Dulles, August 10, 1961, *FRUS 1961–1963*, vol. XXIV, Microfiche Supplement, Fiche 12, Document 194.
  - 298. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 389, September 10, 1962, RG 59, NARA.
- 299. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegrams 258, August 20, 1962, and 504, September 28, 1962, ibid. The Requirements Office also satisfied U.S. legislative requirements regarding administration of the aid. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 574, October 10, 1962, ibid.
- 300. Letter from Souvanna Phouma to Ambassador Unger, Vientiane, November 20, 1962, Vientiane Embassy to State, Airgram A-171, November 28, 1962, ibid.
  - 301. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 1104, February 4, 1963, ibid.
  - 302. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 635, October 20, 1962, ibid.
- 303. Vientiane Embassy to State, Airgram A-76, September 26, 1962, ibid. The text of Unger's interim reply is in Vientiane Embassy to State, Airgram A-108, October 17, 1962, ibid. The text of Unger's formal affirmative reply is in Airgram A-143, November 11, 1962, ibid.
- 304. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegrams 321, September 1, 1962, and 504, September 28, 1962, ibid.
  - 305. Vientiane Embassy to State, Airgram A-75, September 26, 1962, ibid.
- 306. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegrams 521 and 522, October 1, 1962, and 530, October 3, 1962, ibid.
- 307. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegrams 531, October 3, 1962, and 628, October 19, 1962, ibid.
  - 308. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 521 and 522, October 1, 1962, ibid.
  - 309. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 540, October 4, 1962, ibid.
- 310. Memorandum from Czyzak to Hilsman, April 8, 1963, Box FCL13, Harriman Papers, Library of Congress.
  - 311. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 527, October 2, 1962, RG 59, NARA.
  - 312. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 560, October 8, 1962, ibid.
  - 313. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 584, October 12, 1962, ibid.
- 314. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegrams 676, November 1, 1962, and 685, November 3, 1962, ibid.
  - 315. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 483, September 24, 1962, ibid.

- 316. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 816, November 27, 1962, ibid. Text of the November 27, 1962, communiqué is in Airgram A-176, December 2, 1962, ibid.
  - 317. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 716, November 9, 1962, ibid.
  - 318. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 835, December 1, 1962, ibid.
  - 319. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 898, December 18, 1962, ibid.
- 320. "Conversation Between Ambassador Unger and Prince Souvanna Phouma," Vientiane Embassy to State, Airgram A-340, March 14, 1963; and "U.S. Assistance to Neutralist Forces," Airgram A-354, March 27, 1963, both in ibid.
- 321. State to Ottawa and New Delhi Embassies, copied to Vientiane Embassy, telegram 797, February 11, 1963, ibid.
  - 322. Vientiane Embassy to State, Airgram A-283, April 26, 1967, ibid.
- 323. "State Visit of King of Laos," Phnom Penh Embassy to State, Airgram A-454, March 28, 1963, ibid.
  - 324. Deuve, Le Royaume du Laos 1949-1965, p. 162.
  - 325. State to Moscow Embassy, telegram 1700, February 14, 1963, RG 59, NARA.
  - 326. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 727, November 12, 1962, ibid.
  - 327. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 928, December 27, 1962, ibid.
- 328. "Text of Confession of Foreign Minister Quinim Pholsena's Assassin," Vientiane Embassy to State, Airgram A-365, April 5, 1963, ibid.
  - 329. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 1477, April 19, 1963, ibid.
  - 330. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 1465, April 17, 1963, ibid.
  - 331. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 1454, April 14, 1963, ibid.
- 332. Summary Record of the 512th National Security Council Meeting, Washington, April 20, 1963, FRUS 1961–1963, vol. XXIV, pp. 976–980.
  - 333. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 1401, April 8, 1963, RG 59, NARA.
  - 334. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 1428, April 11, 1963, ibid.
  - 335. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 1381, April 5, 1963, ibid.
  - 336. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 1516, April 22, 1963, ibid.
- 337. "French Correspondent's Impressions of Sam Neua," Vientiane Embassy to State, Airgram A-269, February 1, 1963, ibid.
- 338. Army attaché Vientiane to Department of the Army, message CX-43, March 5, 1960, ibid.
  - 339. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 1392, April 6, 1963, ibid.
  - 340. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 1511, April 21, 1963, ibid.
  - 341. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 1417, April 10, 1963, ibid.
- 342. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 1511, April 21, 1963, ibid. The account is Ambassador Hopson's.
- 343. Text of Souvanna's letter of April 23, 1963, to the chairman of the ICC attached to Annex A, Message No. 22 of May 17, 1963 of the ICC to the Co-Chairmen, ibid.
  - 344. New Delhi Embassy to State, telegrams 4192 and 4213, April 29, 1963, ibid.
  - 345. Moscow Embassy to State, telegram 2517, April 6, 1963, ibid.
- 346. Memorandum of conversation, Harriman and Khrushchev, Moscow, April 26, 1963, FRUS 1961–1963, vol. XXIV, pp. 1000–1005.
- 347. State to Moscow Embassy, telegram 2273, April 23, 1963, in U.S. Department of State, *FRUS*, *1961–1963*, vol. VI, *Kennedy-Khrushchev Exchanges* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1996), p. 271.
  - 348. Moscow Embassy to State, telegram 2755, April 27, 1963, RG 59, NARA.
  - 349. Smith, An International History, pp. 122 et seq.
- 350. John Prados, presentation to the Vietnam Symposium, Lubbock, Texas, April 16, 1999.
  - 351. Smith, An International History, p. 126.
- 352. Harriman, "Comments on Other Delegations to the International Conference," Tab G, "History of Article 8 on the Co-Chairmen."

- 353. See, e.g., Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 719, November 10, 1962, RG 59, NARA.
  - 354. Vientiane Embassy to State, Airgram A-148, November 18, 1962, ibid.
  - 355. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 1440, April 13, 1963, ibid.
  - 356. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 384, September 15, 1963, ibid.
- 357. Annex B to Message No. 23 of May 17, 1963 from the ICC to the Co-Chairmen, ibid.
  - 358. Voice of the Lao Kingdom (Khang Khay), May 5, 1963.
- 359. Memorandum of conversation, Khampheng Boupha and William C. Hamilton, Vientiane, May 6, 1963, Vientiane Embassy to State, enclosure 1, Airgram A-398, RG 59, NARA.
  - 360. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 1646, May 9, 1963, ibid.
  - 361. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 1559, April 25, 1963, ibid.
  - 362. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 1561, April 25, 1963, ibid.
  - 363. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 1868, June 6, 1963, ibid.
- 364. The most striking example of which were the negotiations for the reunification of Vietnam in 1975. See below, Chapter 10, "Reunification of Vietnam."
  - 365. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 2020, June 30, 1963, RG 59, NARA.
  - 366. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 345, September 9, 1963, ibid.
  - 367. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 294, August 26, 1963, ibid.
  - 368. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 304, August 28, 1963, ibid.
  - 369. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 384, September 15, 1963, ibid.
  - 370. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 349, September 9, 1963, ibid.
  - 371. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 350, September 10, 1963, ibid.
  - 372. Hong Kong Consulate General to State, telegram 500, September 16, 1963, ibid.
  - 373. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 701, December 21, 1963, ibid.
  - 374. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 283, September 11, 1962, ibid.
- 375. "Viet-Nam's War—Turn of the Tide?," Saigon Embassy to State, Airgram A-261, November 16, 1962; telegram 537, November 21, 1962, both in ibid.
  - 376. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 170, August 3, 1963, ibid.
  - 377. State to Saigon Embassy, telegram 181, August 9, 1963, ibid.
- 378. Letter from Frederick E. Nolting, Jr. to Marguerite Higgins, July 1965, cited in Higgins, *Our Vietnam Nightmare* (New York: Harper & Row, 1965), pp. 161–162. Nolting accompanied Diem on many of these trips to the countryside and observed him at first hand.
- 379. Saigon Embassy to State, Foreign Service Despatch 122, October 15, 1959, RG 59. NARA.
  - 380. Saigon Embassy to State, Foreign Service Despatch 75, August 16, 1961, ibid.
- 381. Memorandum of conversation between Nguyên Dinh Thuan and Harriman, Washington, September 20, 1962, FRUS 1961–1963, vol. II, pp. 657–659.
- 382. Saigon Embassy to State, Foreign Service Despatch 233, December 11, 1961, RG 59, NARA.
- 383. Memorandum of conversation, Pinto and McConaughy, Washington, September 14, 1961, ibid.
- 384. Lucien E. Conein, Testimony before the Senate Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations with Respect to Intelligence Activities (known as the Church Committee), June 20, 1975, p. 16, RG 226, NARA. Also Zalin Grant, Facing the Phoenix (New York: Norton, 1991), pp. 197–198. A Vietnamese translation of Grant's book subsequently was published in Vietnam: Giap Mat Voi Phuong Hoang: CIA va that bai chinh tri cua Hoa Ky o Viet Nam (Nha Xuat Ban Thanh Pho Ho Chi Minh, 1993).
- 385. "A Plan for South Vietnam," November 3, 1961, FRUS 1961–1963, vol. I, pp. 474–476.
  - 386. Frederick Nolting, From Trust to Tragedy (New York: Praeger, 1988), p. 42.
- 387. Letter from Galbraith to President Kennedy, New Delhi, November 28, 1961, in John Kenneth Galbraith, *Ambassador's Journal* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1969), pp.

266–269. Galbraith's journal entries indicate he arrived in Saigon at noon on November 17 and departed on the morning of November 20.

388. Memorandum from Galbraith to President Kennedy, November 24, 1961, Box FCL10, Harriman Papers, Library of Congress.

389. Executive Sessions of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, vol. XIV, 1962, pp. 211–212.

390. Memorandum of conversation, President Kennedy and Harriman, Washington, April 6, 1962, FRUS 1961–1963, vol. II, pp. 309–310.

391. "Viet-Nam—Assessment and Recommendations," memorandum from Mendenhall to Rice, Washington, August 16, 1962, ibid., pp. 596–601.

392. Interview of Mendenhall by the author, Washington, D.C., December 2, 1998. 393. Saigon Embassy to Washington, telegram 283, September 11, 1962, RG 59, NARA.

394. Memorandum from Mecklin to Nolting, Saigon, November 27, 1962, FRUS 1961–1963, vol. II, pp. 743–749.

395. Hong Kong Consulate General to State, telegrams 630 and 738, October 4, 1963, and October 19, 1963, RG 59, NARA.

396. Memorandum from Hilsman and Forrestal to President Kennedy, Washington, January 25, 1963, in U.S. Department of State, FRUS, 1961–1963, vol. III, Vietnam January-August 1963 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1991), pp. 49–62.

397. Letter from Nolting to Harriman, February 27, 1963, FRUS 1961–1963, vol. III, pp. 126–128.

398. President Kennedy, dictated memoir on the coup, White House, November 4, 1963, cassette M, side 2, Kennedy Library.

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400. The New York Times, May 14, 1963.

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402. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 538, September 5, 1960, FRUS 1958–1960, vol. I, pp. 560–563.

403. Higgins, Our Vietnam Nightmare, pp. 88–103.

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405. Ellen J. Hammer, *A Death in November: America in Vietnam, 1963* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1988), pp. 103–119.

406. Nguyên Dinh Thuan, conversation with Ellen Hammer, Paris, December 1969, cited in Hammer, *A Death in November*, p. 110.

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408. Quoc Tue, The Struggle of Vietnamese Buddhism: From the Celebration of the Birthday of Buddha (Cong Cuoc Tranh Dau Cua Phat Giao Viet Nam: Tu Phat Dan Den Cach Mang) (Saigon: 1964). In archives of SEASIA-L, May 13, 1996.

409. Hue Consulate to State, telegram 4, May 9, 1963, FRUS 1961–1963, vol. III, pp. 277–278.

410. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 1005, May 9, 1963, FRUS 1961–1963, vol. III, p. 277, fn. 2.

411. See the letter by Ngô Dinh Luyen, The Economist (London), July 20, 1963.

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413. Higgins, Our Vietnam Nightmare, p. 97.

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- 415. Richard Critchfield, *The Long Charade: Political Subversion in the Vietnam War* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1968), pp. 64–68.
  - 416. Saigon Embassy to State, Airgram A-338, November 21, 1963, RG 59, NARA.
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  - 419. Hoa Binh (Saigon), March 31, 1970.
- 420. Luong Khai Minh and Cao The Dung, *Lam The Nao De Giet Mot Tong Thong (How to Kill a President)* (Saigon: 1970; reprinted by Dong Phuong Foundation, San Jose, California, 1983), pp. 370–373. In archives of SEASIA-L, May 13, 1996.
- 421. Minh and Dung, Lam The Nao De Giet Mot Tong Thong, pp. 342–345. In archives of SEASIA-L, May 13, 1996.
- 422. Conein, Testimony before the Senate Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations, p. 17 and p. 19.
- 423. Warren Unna, "Viet Leader Nhu Explains Anti-U.S. Attitude," Washington Post, May 13, 1963.
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  - 426. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 717, October 17, 1963, RG 59, NARA.
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- 428. Memorandum from Hilsman to Ball, August 6, 1963, *FRUS 1961–1963*, vol. III, pp. 554–555.
  - 429. Nolting, From Trust to Tragedy, p. 108.
- 430. Dô Tho, *Nhât Ky Dô Tho (The Diary of Dô Tho)* (Glendale, California: Co So Xuat Ban Dai Nam, no date), p. 107. This diary was originally published in 1970 in the Saigon newspaper *Hoa Binh*.
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  - 432. "Editorial Note," FRUS 1961–1963, vol. III, pp. 307–308.
- 433. Letter from Nolting to Hilsman, Saigon, May 23, 1963, and enclosure, ibid., pp. 316–324.
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- 435. Letter from Trueheart to Hilsman, Saigon, May 25, 1963, FRUS 1961–1963, vol. III, pp. 327–330.
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- 437. Memorandum from Heavner to Hilsman, Washington, May 15, 1963, FRUS 1961–1963, vol. III, pp. 303–306.
- 438. Malcolm W. Browne, *Muddy Boots and Red Socks: A Reporter's Life* (New York: Times Books, 1993), pp. 10–11.
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- 440. Max Frankel, "U.S. May Call Home Envoy If Saigon Refuses Reforms," *The New York Times*, December 1, 1961; Max Frankel, "Viet-nam Reform Is Sought by U.S.," *The New York Times*, April 5, 1963.
- 441. Max Frankel, "U.S. Warns South Viet-Nam on Demands of Buddhists," *The New York Times*, June 14, 1963.
- 442. Daniel C. Hallin, *The "Uncensored War": The Media and Vietnam* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), p. 45.

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  - 449. Truong Vinh Le, Vietnam, Oú Est la Vérité? (Paris: Lavauzelle, 1989), p. 317.
- 450. Message from President Kennedy to Prince Sihanouk, June 20, 1963, FRUS 1961–1963, vol. III, p. 404.
- 451. "Areas of Discrimination in South Viet-Nam," Saigon Embassy to State, Airgram A-91, July 29, 1963, RG 59, NARA.
- 452. "Provincial Reporting: Treatment of Cambodian Minority in Ba Xuyen and Vinh Binh Provinces," Saigon Embassy to State, Airgram A-294, October 28, 1963, ibid.
- 453. State to Saigon Embassy, telegram 1247, June 19, 1963, *FRUS 1961–1963*, vol. III, pp. 402–404.
  - 454. See below, "Attempts at Negotiation."
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  - 456. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 163, August 2, 1963, RG 59, NARA.
- 457. Interview of Rusk by Francis X. Winters, February 26, 1988, cited in Winters, *The Year of the Hare*, p. 37.
- 458. Rusk letter to Anne Blair, August 1990, cited in Blair, *Lodge in Vietnam: A Patriot Abroad* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), pp. 12–13.
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  - 460. State to Saigon Embassy, telegram 1219, June 14, 1963, ibid., pp. 394–395.
  - 461. State to Saigon Embassy, telegram 10, July 2, 1963, ibid. vol. III, pp. 443–444.
- 462. Saigon Embassy to State, telegrams 24 and 26, July 3 and 4, 1963, and letter from Trueheart to President Diem, Saigon, July 3, 1963, ibid. pp. 445–450.
- 463. Conein, Testimony before the Senate Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations, p. 20. In this source, Conein cites no authority for his meeting with Don. It was most likely the plotters in Washington, although I have been unable to locate any such message.
- 464. Memorandum of conversation, Washington, July 4, 1963, *FRUS 1961–1963*, vol. III, pp. 451–453.
  - 465. Memorandum of conversation, Washington, July 4, 1963, RG 59, NARA.
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- 467. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 1195, June 16, 1963, *FRUS 1961–1963*, vol. III, pp. 398–399.
  - 468. Cited in Prochnau, Once Upon a Distant War, p. 324.
- 469. Memorandum of conversation, President Kennedy and others, the White House, July 4, 1963, FRUS 1961–1963, vol. III, pp. 451–453.
- 470. Interview of Le Viet (pseudonym of Duong The Tu) by the author, San Jose, California, June 26, 1999.

- 471. Saigon Embassy to State, telegrams 53, 54, 63, 68, 72, 82, July 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 1963, RG 59, NARA.
- 472. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 98, July 17, 1963, FRUS 1961–1963, vol. III, pp. 494–496.
  - 473. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 107, July 19, 1963, RG 59, NARA.
- 474. Memorandum from Kattenburg to Hilsman, Washington, July 24, 1963, FRUS 1961–1963, vol. III, pp. 527–528.
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  - 476. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 161, August 1, 1963, ibid.
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- 478. Memorandum from Hilsman to Ball, Washington, August 6, 1963, FRUS 1961–1963, vol. III, pp. 554–555.
- 479. Central Intelligence Agency Information Report TDCS-3/552,770, July 8, 1963, ibid., pp. 473–478.
  - 480. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 299, August 21, 1963, ibid., pp. 595–597.
- 481. Interview of General Tran Thien Khiem by Marguerite Higgins, Saigon, cited in Higgins, Our Vietnam Nightmare, pp. 191–192; and scene at Xa Loi described, ibid., p. 181.
- 482. Interview of General Don cited in telegram 0265 from the CIA Station in Saigon to the Agency, August 24, 1963, FRUS 1961–1963, vol. III, pp. 614–620. Tran Van Don, Our Endless War (San Rafael, Calif.: Presidio, 1978), pp. 90–91. Hammer, A Death in November, pp. 166–168. Also Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 539, September 18, 1963, RG 59, NARA.
  - 483. Telegram 0265, cited above.
- 484. Memorandum of conversation, Cox, Rice, Kattenburg, and others, Washington, October 14, 1963, RG 59, NARA.
- 485. UN Mission to State, telegram 926, September 21, 1963, ibid. Also Hammer, *A Death in November*, pp. 253–260.
  - 486. UN Mission to State, telegram Secto 3, September 22, 1963, RG 59, NARA.
- 487. Voice of the Armed Forces, Saigon, August 21, 1963, in Foreign Broadcast Intelligence Service, August 22, 1963, RG 226, NARA.
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  - 491. Saigon Embassy to State, Airgram A-338, November 21, 1963, RG 59, NARA.
- 492. Letter from Tri Quang to President Kennedy and Ambassador Lodge, October 6, 1963, cited in Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 669, October 9, 1963, ibid.
  - 493. The New York Times, August 28, 1963.
- 494. "Luncheon Meeting with Mr. Reston of *The New York Times*-DCI Residence-26 September 1963," memorandum for the record by McCone, cited in Harold P. Ford, CIA and the Vietnam Policymakers: Three Episodes 1962–1968 (CIA, History Staff: 1998), pp. 35–36.
- 495. State to Saigon Embassy, telegram 243, August 24, 1963, FRUS 1961–1963, vol. III, pp. 628–629.
- 496. The way in which the plotters accomplished this is detailed in Hammer, *A Death in November,* pp. 179–180.
- 497. President Kennedy, dictated memoir on the coup, White House, November 4, 1963, cassette M, side 2, Kennedy Library.
- 498. John A. McKesson, Deputy Executive Secretary, "Deptel 243 to Saigon," memorandum for the record, September 24, 1963, Box 519, Harriman Papers, Library of Congress.
  - 499. Telegram 0265, cited above.
  - 500. New Delhi Embassy to State, telegram 860, August 30, 1963, RG 59, NARA.
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- 502. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 342, September 8, 1963, ibid.
- 503. FRUS 1961-1963, vol. IV, p. 415, fn. 2.
- 504. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 610, September 28, 1963, RG 59, NARA.
- 505. Saigon Embassy to State, Airgram A-249, October 7, 1963, enclosure 1, ibid.
- 506. Saigon Embassy to State, Airgram A-249, October 7, 1963, enclosures 2 and 3, ibid.
- 507. Saigon Embassy to State, Airgram A-249, October 7, 1963, enclosure 8, ibid. The summary portion of this airgram is in U.S. Department of State, *FRUS*, 1961–1963, vol. IV, *Vietnam August-December 1963* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1991), pp. 303–305.
  - 508. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 749, October 19, 1963, RG 59, NARA.
  - 509. Saigon Embassy to State, Airgram A-268, October 17, 1963, ibid.
- 510. Letter from Fishel to President Diem, April 30, 1960, FRUS 1958–1960, vol. I, pp. 426–433; Nolting, From Trust to Tragedy, p. 99.
  - 511. Interview of Major Pham Ngoc Thiep by the author, Reston, Va., May 23, 1998.
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  - 513. Interview of Nguyên Dinh Thuan by the author, Paris, July 5, 1997.
- 514. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 804, October 28, 1963, *FRUS 1961–1963*, vol. IV, pp. 441–442.
- 515. Minutes of a meeting, Washington, May 23, 1963, FRUS 1961–1963, vol. III, pp. 315–316.
- 516. Memorandum from Forrestal to President Kennedy, Washington, July 3, 1963, ibid., pp. 447–449.
- 517. Harkins to Krulak, telegram MAC 1675, September 12, 1963, FRUS 1961–1963, vol. IV, pp. 194–195.
  - 518. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 749, October 19, 1963, RG 59, NARA.
  - 519. Hammer, A Death in November, p. 278.
- 520. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 841, November 1, 1963, FRUS 1961–1963, vol. IV, pp. 516–517.
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244. Interview of Khanh by the author, Fremont, California, October 19, 1997, where Khanh stated the amount was 1 million piasters carried by an aide. See also letter from Lodge to Rusk, Saigon, May 26, 1964, *FRUS 1964–1968*, vol. I, p. 381, where the amount was 1 million dollars in a briefcase in Diem's hand.

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277. State to Saigon Embassy, telegram 1320, December 21, 1964, FRUS 1964–1968, vol. I, pp. 1025–1026.

278. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 1915, December 23, 1964, ibid., vol. I, pp. 1029–1031.

279. Ibid., p. 1036, fn. 3.

280. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 1896, December 22, 1964, RG 59, NARA.

281. "Khanh Assails Gen. Taylor," New York Herald-Tribune, December 23, 1964.

282. Taylor to President Johnson, telegram 1826, December 23, 1964, FRUS 1964–1968, vol. I, pp. 1031–1032.

283. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 2169, January 16, 1965, RG 59, NARA.

284. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 2244, January 23, 1965, ibid.

285. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 2282, January 25, 1965, ibid.

286. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 2322, January 27, 1965, in U.S. Department of State, *FRUS*, 1964–1968, vol. II, *Vietnam January–June 1965* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1996), pp. 93–95.

287. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 2339, January 29, 1965, RG 59, NARA.

288. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 2349, January 30, 1965, ibid.

289. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 2620, February 16, 1965, ibid.

290. See below, "Unrest among the Highlanders."

291. Memorandum of conversation, Hoang Co Thuy and Robert H. Miller, Saigon, October 29, 1964, Saigon Embassy to State, Airgram A-340, enclosure 3, November 2, 1964, RG 59, NARA.

292. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 2357, January 31, 1965, ibid.

293. Letter from Huynh Tan Phat to General Khanh, South Vietnam, January 28, 1965, in the possession of Khanh and kindly made available to the author.

294. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 2382, February 3, 1965, FRUS 1964–1968, vol. II, pp. 124–126.

295. Memorandum by U. Alexis Johnson, Washington, July 23, 1966, in U.S. Department of State, *FRUS*, 1964–1968, vol. IV, *Vietnam 1966* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1998), pp. 518–522.

296. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 4366, June 24, 1965, RG 59, NARA.

297. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 44, July 6, 1965, ibid.

298. Brigham, *Guerrilla Diplomacy*. In interviews with former NLF members after the war, Brigham records their retrospective views of policy differences with the party center over many issues, but these obviously exerted little or no effect at the time.

299. Memorandum for the record by Ú. Alexis Johnson, New York, July 17, 1966, FRUS 1964–1968, vol. IV, pp. 497–502; and Paris Embassy to State, telegram 1522, July 30, 1966, ibid., pp. 540–542.

300. Memorandum for the record, Saigon, January 28, 1965, FRUS 1964–1968, vol. II, pp. 101–103.

301. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 2817, March 2, 1965, ibid., pp. 393–394.

302. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 2991, March 17, 1965, ibid., pp. 451-452.

303. Memorandum of conversation, Thao and Frederick W. Flott, Saigon, November 5, 1963, RG 59, NARA.

304. Saigon Embassy to State, telegrams 3727 and 3989, May 11 and June 1, 1965, FRUS 1964–1968, vol. II, pp. 632–634 and 701–703.

305. Vietnam Military History Institute, pp. 186–187.

306. "Infiltration Study," Saigon, October 31, 1964, FRUS 1964–1968, vol. I, pp. 864–872.

307. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 2720, February 23, 1965, FRUS 1964–1968, vol. II, pp. 349–350.

308. Pham Gia Duc, *The 325th Division* (Hanoi: People's Army Publishing House, 1986), vol. II, pp. 39–45. Published in Vietnamese and translated by Merle L. Pribbenow for the author.

- 309. FRUS 1964–1968, vol. I, p. 879.
- 310. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 2247, January 23, 1965, FRUS 1964–1968, vol. II, pp. 75–77.
  - 311. "A Policy of Sustained Reprisal," ibid., pp. 181–185.
- 312. Telephone interview of Khanh by the author, Sacramento, California, April 28, 1999.
  - 313. Diem, In the Jaws of History, p. 130.
- 314. Andrew F. Krepinevich, Jr., *The Army and Vietnam* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), pp. 194–195.
- 315. Memorandum of conversation, Thieu, Rusk, Lodge, and others, Saigon, January 15, 1966, FRUS 1964–1968, vol. IV, pp. 65–69.
- 316. Executive Sessions of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee (Historical Series), vol. XVII, 1965 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1990), p. 274.
  - 317. Diem, *In the Jaws of History*, pp. 131–132.
- 318. Saigon Embassy to Joint Chiefs of Staff, telegram 473, February 22, 1965, FRUS 1964–1968, vol. II, pp. 347–349.
  - 319. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 9, July 1, 1965, RG 59, NARA.
  - 320. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 2326, December 30, 1965, ibid.
- 321. Memorandum of conversation, Thich Tri Quang and David A. Engel, Saigon, July 9, 1965, Saigon Embassy to State, Airgram A-21, enclosure 1, July 10, 1965, RG 59, NARA.
  - 322. "Editorial Note," FRUS 1964-1968, vol. II, pp. 543-545.
- 323. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 2235, January 22, 1965, ibid., pp. 71–75, and Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 2495, February 11, 1965, ibid., pp. 232–234.
- 324. Note from Bundy to Taylor, Washington, April 3, 1965, ibid., pp. 525–527, especially paragraph 5. On control over negotiations: "The U.S. would seek to control any negotiations and would oppose any independent South Vietnamese efforts to negotiate." "Draft Position Paper on Southeast Asia," November 29, 1964, in Neil Sheehan, et al., *The Pentagon Papers: As Published by the New York Times* (New York: Bantam Books, 1971), pp. 374–375. An editorial comment on this document notes that the above quoted statement was dropped in the final version of the paper. Bundy is identified as the responsible official.
- 325. Memorandum from William Bundy to Rusk, Washington, March 19, 1965, FRUS 1964–1968, vol. II, pp. 460–465.
- 326. "Government of Vietnam's 4–Point Basis for a Vietnam Settlement," State to all diplomatic and consular posts, Airgram CA-196, July 7, 1965, RG 59, NARA.
- 327. State to Saigon Embassy, telegram 1355, December 25, 1964, FRUS 1964–1968, vol. I, pp. 1044–1046.
  - 328. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 4326, June 22, 1965, RG 59, NARA.
  - 329. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 4286, June 19, 1965, ibid.
- 330. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 4336, June 22, 1965, FRUS 1964–1968, vol. III, pp. 34–35.
  - 331. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 4369, June 24, 1965, RG 59, NARA.
  - 332. Critchfield, The Long Charade, p. 83.
  - 333. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 1269, October 13, 1965, RG 59, NARA.
- 334. Saigon Embassy to State, telegrams 737 and 867, September 3 and 13, 1965, RG 59, NARA.
  - 335. Saigon Embassy to State, Airgram A-393, December 17, 1965, ibid.
- 336. Paper prepared by Ball, Washington, May 13, 1965, FRUS 1964–1968, vol. II, pp. 652–660.
- 337. Memorandum from Ball to President Johnson, Washington, June 18, 1965, FRUS 1964–1968, vol. III, pp. 16–21.
- 338. Ball, "A Compromise Solution for South Viet-Nam," Washington, undated, ibid., pp. 106–113.

- 339. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 222, July 21, 1965, RG 59, NARA.
- 340. State to Saigon Embassy, telegram 237, July 26, 1965, FRUS 1964–1968, vol. III, pp. 249–253.
- 341. Memorandum from McGeorge Bundy to President Johnson, Washington, July 27, 1965, ibid., pp. 259–260.
- 342. Public Papers of the Presidents: Lyndon B. Johnson, 1965, Book II (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1966), p. 803.
  - 343. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 402, August 7, 1965, RG 59, NARA.
  - 344. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 2488, February 10, 1965, ibid.
  - 345. See above, Chapter 5.
  - 346. Interview of Gullion by the author, Winchester, Massachusetts, July 30, 1997.
- 347. See above, Chapter 7, "The Growing American Presence Poses a Dilemma for Diem, Opportunities for Hanoi."
- 348. The text of Gullion's four points is in George C. Herring, ed., *The Secret Diplomacy of the Vietnam War: The Negotiating Volumes of the Pentagon Papers* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1983), p. 97.
- 349. Paris Embassy to State, telegram 718, August 6, 1965, *FRUS 1964–1968*, vol. III, pp. 314–316.
- 350. Paris Embassy to State, unnumbered telegram, August 13, 1965, ibid., pp. 328–332.
- 351. Memorandum of conversation, Devillers, Chester Cooper, and M. Lyall Breckon, Washington, May 21, 1965, RG 59, NARA.
  - 352. Paris Embassy to State, telegram 839, August 13, 1965, ibid.
- 353. Paris Embassy to State, unnumbered telegram, September 1, 1965, FRUS 1964–1968, vol. III, pp. 367–371.
  - 354. Brigham, Guerrilla Diplomacy, p. 50.
- 355. Notes of a telephone conversation between President Johnson and Harriman, Washington, December 28, 1965, FRUS 1964–1968, vol. III, pp. 719–721.
- 356. Warsaw Embassy to State, telegrams 1060, 1066, and especially 1073, December 29 and 30, 1965, ibid., pp. 737–753.
  - 357. State to Paris Embassy, telegram 2959, December 30, 1965, RG 59, NARA.
- 358. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 2343, January 1, 1966, FRUS, 1964–1968, vol. IV, pp. 1–4.
  - 359. State to Saigon Embassy, telegram 1855, December 31, 1965, RG 59, NARA.
  - 360. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 701, December 31, 1965, ibid.
  - 361. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 2322, December 30, 1965, ibid.
- 362. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 5840, June 29, 1966, FRUS 1964–1968, vol. IV, pp. 467–470. An exegesis of the diplomatic correspondence connected with this "peace" initiative is to be found in Herring, ed., Secret Diplomacy of the Vietnam War, chapter heading "Marigold," pp. 209–370.
  - 363. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 604, July 9, 1966, RG 59, NARA.
- 364. Lewandowski, Hanoi, to Jerzy Michalowski, Warsaw, ciphergram No. 15023, November 25, 1966, in archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Poland, Warsaw, Poland.
- 365. Lewandowski to Michalowski, ciphergram No. 15133, November 28, 1966, in archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Poland.
- 366. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 12247, December 1, 1966, FRUS 1964–1968, vol. IV, pp. 890–894.
  - 367. State to Saigon Embassy, telegram 104673, December 17, 1966, RG 59, NARA.
  - 368. State to Saigon Embassy, telegram 114277, January 6, 1967, ibid.
  - 369. State to Saigon Embassy, telegram 131715, February 4, 1967, ibid.
  - 370. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 17482, February 7, 1967, ibid.
- 371. "Conversations in Hanoi," memorandum by Henry A. Kissinger, August 1, 1967, ibid.

- 372. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 937, September 24, 1964, FRUS 1964–1968, vol. I, pp. 785–786.
  - 373. Hickey, Free in the Forest, pp. 98–109 and 188–191.
  - 374. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 2219, December 21, 1965.
- 375. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 3698, April 4, 1966, FRUS 1964–1968, vol. IV, pp. 318–319.
  - 376. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 3321, March 13, 1966, ibid., pp. 283–285.
- 377. Memorandum from Rusk to President Johnson, Washington, April 2, 1966, ibid., pp. 314–316.
  - 378. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 2985, February 16, 1966, ibid., pp. 223–227.
  - 379. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 3589, March 30, 1966, ibid., pp. 306–309.
  - 380. State to Certain Posts, telegram 2014, April 14, 1966, ibid., pp. 349–350.
  - 381. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 3260, March 9, 1966, ibid., pp. 277–279.
  - 382. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 3530, April 26, 1965, RG 59, NARA.
- 383. Memorandum from Taylor to President Johnson, Washington, April 12, 1966, FRUS 1964–1968, vol. IV, pp. 340–344.
- 384. An eyewitness account, showing the viciousness of this street fighting, is in Critchfield, *The Long Charade*.
- 385. CIA Intelligence Information Report IN26424, February 26, 1964, Lyndon Baines Johnson Library. This report is based on a conversation with Michelet.
- 386. Paris Embassy to State, telegrams 4615 and 4621, April 2 and 3, 1964, FRUS 1964–1968, vol. I, pp. 216–221.
- 387. Memorandum from Charles E. Bohlen to Secretary Rusk, Washington, April 23, 1968, RG 59, NARA.
  - 388. Serge de Guinzbourg, Agence France-Presse dispatch, Paris, September 1, 1966.
  - 389. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 4660, February 23, 1968, RG 59, NARA.
  - 390. Vientiane Embassy to State, Airgram A-230, April 10, 1968, ibid.
  - 391. Author's personal notes, Saigon, May 1965.
- 392. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 5684, June 22, 1966, FRUS 1964–1968, vol. IV, pp. 444–448.
  - 393. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 1631, July 22, 1966, ibid., pp. 511–513.
  - 394. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 5970, September 14, 1966, ibid., pp. 623–628.
- 395. Text of constitution of April 1, 1967, in U.S. Senate, Committee on Foreign Relations, *Background Information Relating to Southeast Asia and Vietnam*, 7th rev. ed. (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, December 1974), pp. 581–597.
  - 396. Critchfield, The Long Charade, pp. 300-301.
- 397. Ambassador Ellsworth Bunker's weekly report to President Johnson of September 6, 1967, RG 59, NARA.
  - 398. Critchfield, The Long Charade, p. 344. Critchfield was present.
- 399. Saigon Embassy to State, Airgram A-131, August 13, 1971, enclosure 2, RG 59, NARA.
  - 400. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 10084, October 31, 1967, RG 59, NARA.
- 401. Hubert H. Humphrey, *The Education of a Public Man* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), p. 260.
  - 402. U.S. UN Mission to State, telegram 7131, October 16, 1968, RG 59, NARA.
  - 403. The New York Times, January 5, 1967.
- 404. Harrison E. Salisbury, *Behind the Lines—Hanoi* (New York: Harper & Row, 1967), p. 169.
- 405. "North Vietnamese Comments on the Situation in Vietnam," CIA Intelligence Information Report IN99294, April 19, 1966, Lyndon Baines Johnson Library.
  - 406. Tang, A Vietcong Memoir, p. 236.
- 407. Colonel Hoang Ngoc Lung, *The General Offensives of 1968–69* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Army Center of Military History, 1981), p. 21; James J. Wirtz, *The Tet Offensive: Intelligence Failure in War* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1991), p. 69.

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- 409. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 12606, December 4, 1967, ibid.
- 410. Saigon Embassy to State, telegrams 16713 and 16852, January 23 and 24, 1968, both ibid.
  - 411. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 3579, January 1, 1968, ibid.
- 412. Memorandum of conversation, Harriman and Macovescu, Washington, January 5, 1968, Box FCL 16, Harriman Papers, Library of Congress.
  - 413. Herring, The Secret Diplomacy of the Vietnam War, pp. 802–815.
- 414. A summary of Giap's article is in State to diplomatic posts, Airgram CA-3541, November 13, 1967, RG 59, NARA.
- 415. The basic Vietnamese sources on the Tet offensive are on the DRV side Vietnam Military History Institute, Chapter 11, Section 3; and on the South Vietnamese side Lieutenant Colonel Pham Van Son, *The Viet Cong "Tet" Offensive (1968)* (Saigon: Printing and Publications Center, [A.G./Joint General Staff] RVNAF, July 1969), translated by J5/JGS Translation Board with the help of Colonel Robert J. Parr and Lieutenant Colonels Karl H. Borcheller, Gordon H. Francis, and George J. Hamilton, Jr., reprinted by Dalley Book Service; and Lung, *The General Offensives of 1968–69*.
- 416. Memorandum of conversation, Richard J. Barnet and Harriman, Washington, November 19, 1969, Harriman Papers, Library of Congress.
- 417. Political Program of South Vietnam National Liberation Front, reprinted by the American Friends Service Committee, 1968, with minor stylistic changes and some Americanization of spelling, from the text of the English-language edition published by the Front's Permanent Representation in Moscow, p. 14.
  - 418. Lung, The General Offensives of 1968-69, passim.
  - 419. Ibid., p. 134.
- 420. Ibid., p. 135. See also Ambassador Ellsworth Bunker's weekly report to President Johnson of February 29, 1968, section titled "Mood of the People—Political Reactions," RG 59, NARA.
- 421. "Situation Appraisal: Analysis of Vietnamese Attitudes in Wake of Viet Cong Attack on Saigon," CIA Intelligence Information Cable IN44515, February 6, 1968, Lyndon Baines Johnson Library. Also "Rumors of American Complicity in the Viet Cong Tet Offensive," Saigon Embassy to State, Airgram A-449, March 7, 1968, Vietnam Information Group Files, Ford Library.
- 422. "Initial Assessment of Popular Reactions in the Provinces to the Viet Cong Tet Offensive," CIA Intelligence Information Report IN45439, February 7, 1968, Lyndon Baines Johnson Library.
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- 425. General Tran Van Tra, "Tet: The 1968 General Offensive and General Uprising," published originally in Vietnamese in February and April 1988, in Jayne S. Werner and Luu Doan Huynh, eds., *The Vietnam War: Vietnamese and American Perspectives* (Armonk: M. E. Sharpe, 1993), pp. 37–65.
- 426. Photograph by Harlam, in Owen Andrews, C. Douglas Elliott and Laurence L. Levin, eds., *Vietnam: Images from Combat Photographers* (Washington, D.C.: Starwood Publishing, 1991), p. 74.
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  - 428. Van Nghe (Alexandria, Virginia), July 24, 1998.
- 429. Interview of General Singkapo by Timothy N. Castle and Karl E. Wycoff, Vientiane, August 21, 1990, in Castle, *One Day Too Long: Top Secret Site 85 and the Bombing of North Vietnam* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), p. 196. Wycoff, an

official of the American Embassy in Vientiane, was a Lao speaker. Interview of Castle by the author, Bethesda, Maryland, June 17, 1999.

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431. Interview of Donald Kirk by the author, Bethesda, Maryland, June 4, 1999. Kirk was a correspondent for the *Washington Star* at the time.

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433. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 23939, April 4, 1968, ibid.

434. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 24061, April 5, 1968, ibid.

435. Paris Embassy to State, telegram 13252, April 29, 1968, ibid.

436. Herring, The Secret Diplomacy of the Vietnam War, p. 809.

437. Paris Embassy to State, telegram 14030, May 14, 1968, RG 59, NARA.

438. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 27490, May 16, 1968, ibid.

439. State to Saigon Embassy, telegram 161611, May 10, 1968, ibid.

440. State to Saigon Embassy, telegram 161453, May 8, 1968, ibid.

441. Paris Embassy to State, telegram 16568, June 19, 1968, ibid.

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- 471. Etienne M. Manac'h, *Mémoires d'Extrême Asie*, vol. I (Paris: Fayard, 1977), pp. 1–200, passim.
- 472. "Rapport de Jean Sainteny," in Claude Dulong, *La Dernière Pagode* (Paris: Grasset, 1989), pp. 271–273.
  - 473. Devillers, Histoire du Viêt-Nam, pp. 325-326.
  - 474. Author's personal notes, Paris, 1968–1969.
  - 475. Paris Embassy to State, telegram 17468, July 4, 1968, RG 59, NARA.
- 476. "Excerpt of Harriman's Remarks at US/NVN Meeting," Paris, June 12, 1968, Box 494, Harriman Papers, Library of Congress.
- 477. Letter from Harriman to Shaplen, Washington, November 13, 1967; and letter from Shaplen to Harriman, Phnom Penh, November 15, 1967, both in records of Frank A. Sieverts, Box 7, Folder 1, RG 46, NARA. Sieverts was special assistant to the under secretary of state for prisoner of war matters.
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  - 479. State to Paris Embassy, telegram 217725, August 8, 1968, ibid.
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  - 483. Paris Embassy to State, telegram 19577, August 18, 1968, ibid.
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  - 492. Paris Embassy to State, telegram 22253, October 11, 1968, RG 59, NARA.
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- 495. Paris Embassy to State, telegram 22466, October 16, 1968, Lyndon Baines Johnson Library.
  - 496. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 40703, October 19, 1968, ibid.
  - 497. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 40714, October 20, 1968, ibid.
  - 498. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 40790, October 21, 1968, ibid.
  - 499. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 40789, October 21, 1968, ibid.
  - 500. Paris Embassy to State, telegram 23123, October 29, 1968, ibid.
- 501. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 41543, October 30, 1968, Lyndon Baines Johnson Library.
  - 502. Paris Embassy to State, telegram 23202, October 31, 1968, ibid.
  - 503. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 40987, October 23, 1968, ibid.
  - 504. Paris Embassy to State, telegram 22776, October 22, 1968, ibid.
  - 505. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 40677, October 19, 1968, ibid.
  - 506. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 41357, October 28, 1968, ibid.
- 507. Paris Embassy to State, telegram 22652, October 18, 1968, Lyndon Baines Johnson Library.
  - 508. Paris Embassy to State, telegram 23126, October 30, 1968, ibid.

- 509. Paris Embassy to State, telegram 23197, October 30, 1968, ibid.
- 510. State to Saigon and Paris Embassies, telegram 263808, October 30, 1968, ibid.
- 511. State to Paris and Saigon Embassies, telegram 267320, November 5, 1968, RG 59. NARA.
- 512. Churches suffered greatly during the war between the North and the South. Barnet said he counted more than 10 bombed churches in his visit to the North in 1969. (Memorandum of conversation, Barnet and Harriman, Washington, November 19, 1969, Harriman Papers, Library of Congress.)
  - 513. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 41449, October 29, 1968, RG 59, NARA.
- 514. State to All American Diplomatic Posts, unnumbered telegram, November 1, 1968, RG 59, NARA.
  - 515. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 41684, November 1, 1968, ibid.
  - 516. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 41710, November 1, 1968, ibid.
- 517. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 41772, November 3, 1968, Lyndon Baines Johnson Library.
  - 518. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 41742, November 2, 1968, RG 59, NARA.
  - 519. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 41741, November 2, 1968, ibid.
- 520. State to Saigon Embassy, telegram Todel 1494, November 4, 1968; and memorandum from Benjamin H. Read to Bromley Smith, November 5, 1968, both in ibid.
  - 521. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 42762, November 15, 1968, ibid.
  - 522. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 43018, November 19, 1968, ibid.
  - 523. Paris Embassy to State, telegram 23307, November 1, 1968, RG 59, NARA.
  - 524. Los Angeles Times, November 3, 1968.
  - 525. Paris Embassy to State, telegram 23322, November 2, 1968, ibid.
  - 526. Author's personal notes, Paris, November 1968.
  - 527. Los Angeles Times, November 3, 1968.
- 528. Interview of Nguyên Huy Loi by the author, Virginia Beach, Virginia, July 10, 1999.
  - 529. Author's personal notes, Paris, 1968–1969.

## 9. The End of the Non-Communist Nationalists (1969-1973)

- 1. See below, "Sihanouk Turns against the Communists."
- 2. The New York Times, May 9, 1969. See also Henry Kissinger, White House Years (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1979), p. 252.
- 3. State to Vientiane Embassy, telegrams 27113 and 28056, February 24 and 25, 1970, RG 59, NARA.
- 4. The New York Times, April 23, 1970. Kissinger, White House Years, pp. 494–495. The published account was based on State to Phnom Penh Embassy, telegram 57061. The signed statements are in Nixon Presidential Materials (NPM), NARA.
  - 5. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 1834, March 23, 1969, RG 59, NARA.
  - 6. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 3879, June 13, 1969, ibid.
  - 7. State to Vientiane Embassy, telegram 97598, June 14, 1969, ibid.
- 8. State to Vientiane Embassy, telegram 167146, October 1, 1969; memorandum of conversation, Souvanna Phouma and Mark S. Pratt, New York, October 4, 1969; Paris Embassy to State, telegram 15390, October 8, 1969, all in ibid.
  - 9. Paris Embassy to State, telegram 16169, October 20, 1969, ibid.
  - 10. State to Vientiane Embassy, telegram 173084, October 10, 1969, ibid.
  - 11. The New York Times, September 18, 1969.
  - 12. Congressional Record, Vol. 115, No. 150, September 18, 1969.
  - 13. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 6526, September 24, 1969, RG 59, NARA.
- 14. Letter from T. D. Allman to Prime Minister Souvanna Phouma, Vientiane, November 11, 1969, Papers of T. D. Allman, Box 2, Amherst College Archives and Special Collections, Amherst, Massachusetts.

- 15. Author's personal notes, Vientiane, 1970.
- 16. Remarks at the Newseum, Arlington, Virginia, October 21, 1998.
- 17. John Hohenberg, *The Pulitzer Diaries: Inside America's Greatest Prize* (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 1997), p. 216.
- 18. David Halberstam, Making of a Quagmire; Robert Sam Anson, War News: A Young Reporter in Indochina (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1989).
  - 19. Symington hearings, p. 397.
  - 20. Ibid., p. 392.
  - 21. Ibid., p. 404.
  - 22. Ibid., p. 562.
  - 23. Ibid., p. 447.
  - 24. Ibid., pp. 402-403.
- 25. Memorandum of conversation, Prince Souvanna Phouma and William P. Rogers, Washington, October 7, 1969, RG 59, NARA.
  - 26. Symington hearings, p. 392.
  - 27. Ibid., p. 506.
  - 28. Ibid., p. 507.
  - 29. Ibid., p. 401.
  - 30. Ibid., pp. 429-430.
  - 31. See above, Chapter 7.
- 32. Interview of Walter Pincus by Randall Bennett Woods, March 11, 1990, Washington, D.C., in Woods, *Fulbright: A Biography* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 526.
- 33. John Hart Ely, "The American War in Indochina, Part II: The Unconstitutionality of the War They Didn't Tell Us About," *Stanford Law Review* 42 (May 1990): 1093–1137.
  - 34. Symington hearings, p. 431.
  - 35. Vientiane Embassy to State, Airgram A-257, May 6, 1968, RG 59, NARA.
  - 36. Symington hearings, p. 408.
  - 37. Ibid., p. 599.
- 38. Stuart I. Rochester and Frederick Kiley, *Honor Bound: The History of American Prisoners of War in Southeast Asia, 1961–1973* (Washington, D.C.: Historical Office, Office of the Secretary of Defense, 1998), p. 282–283.
- 39. David Kraslow and Stuart H. Loory, *The Secret Search for Peace in Vietnam* (New York: Random House, 1968).
  - 40. See above, Chapter 8.
- 41. Public Papers of the Presidents: Richard Nixon, 1973 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1975), pp. 19–20.
  - 42. See above, Chapter 2.
  - 43. Le Monde, August 3, 1968.
  - 44. See above, Chapter 4.
- 45. Texts of the speeches of all four delegations in the 202 plenary sessions, as well as extracts from the press conferences held by the delegations following each plenary session, are to be found filed under the relevant dates in RG 59, NARA.
  - 46. William P. Bundy, letter to The New York Times, June 13, 1991.
  - 47. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 42762, November 15, 1968, RG 59, NARA.
- 48. CIA Intelligence Information Cable IN26988, November 4, 1968, Lyndon Baines Johnson Library.
- 49. Nguyên Tien Hung and Jerrold L. Schecter, *The Palace File* (New York: Harper and Row, 1986), pp. 21–29.
- 50. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 42560, November 13, 1968, Lyndon Baines Johnson Library.
  - 51. Texts in State to All Diplomatic Posts, telegram 278392, November 27, 1968, ibid.
- 52. Text of backgrounder in State to Paris Embassy, telegram 278420, November 27, 1968, ibid.

- 53. French Embassy, Washington, to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Paris, telegram 6512-19.-, November 27, 1968, Archives of the Foreign Ministry, Paris, Etats-Unis, Box 616.
  - 54. Author's personal notes, Paris, 1968.
- 55. Statement of the Foreign Ministry of the Republic of Viet-Nam, May 16, 1970, in the author's files.
  - 56. Manac'h, Mémoires d'Extrême Asie, I, p. 172.
- 57. Author's notes of a briefing by Lieutenant General Julian Ewell, Headquarters II Field Force, Long Binh, November 24, 1969.
  - 58. Author's personal notes, Saigon, 1969.
- 59. Saigon Embassy to State, telegrams 3427, 3484, 4034, 4268, and 4320, February 23 and 24, March 3 and 6, 1969, all RG 59, NARA.
  - 60. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 3498, February 24, 1969, ibid.
  - 61. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 3556, February 25, 1969, ibid.
  - 62. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 3429, February 23, 1969, ibid.
  - 63. State to Saigon Embassy, telegram 28475, February 24, 1969, ibid.
  - 64. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 3508, February 24, 1969, ibid.
  - 65. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 4320, March 6, 1969, ibid.
  - 66. Lung, *The General Offensives of 1968–69*, pp. 91–119.
  - 67. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 4170, March 5, 1969, RG 59, NARA.
- 68. See the interviews in James W. Clinton, The Loyal Opposition: Americans in North Vietnam, 1965–1972 (Niwot, Colorado: University Press of Colorado, 1995).
- 69. "'People's Revolutionary Administrations': A Progress Report," JUSPAO (Saigon), Viet-Nam Documents and Research Notes, No. 47, December 1968.
- 70. Liberation Radio, June 10, 1969, cited in JUSPAO (Saigon), Viet-Nam Documents and Research Notes, No. 60, June 1969. Additional information on the founding of the PRG is contained in ibid., Nos. 100 and 101, January 1972.
  - 71. See above, Chapter 3.
  - 72. Nhan Dan (Hanoi), February 25, 1971.
  - 73. Radio Hanoi, March 6, 1971.
  - 74. The Senate Staff Report on Drug Abuse in the Military (1971), p. 21.
- 75. Alfred W. McCoy, "Drugs and Drug Use," in Encyclopedia of the Vietnam War, ed. Stanley I. Kutler (New York: Macmillan Library Reference USA, 1996), pp. 178–182.
- 76. Interview of Michael T. Malloy by the author, Silver Spring, Maryland, February 2, 1973.
  - 77. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 2433, February 19, 1971, RG 59, NARA.
  - 78. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 4937, February 14, 1967, ibid.
  - 79. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 8383, August 12, 1968, ibid.
  - 80. Bangkok Embassy to State, telegram 19455, August 27, 1968, ibid.
  - 81. Hong Kong Consulate General to State, telegram 8894, September 26, 1968, ibid.
- 82. Statement by External Affairs Minister Sharp during a House of Commons special debate on Cambodia, Ottawa Embassy to State, telegram 594, May 2, 1970, ibid.
  - 83. Phnom Penh Embassy to State, Airgram A-64, November 6, 1969, ibid.
  - 84. Agence Khmère de Presse, April 18, 1969.
  - 85. Manac'h, Mémoires d'Extrême Asie, I, pp. 199–200.
- 86. CIA, Intelligence Information Cable No. 32460, August 28, 1969, RG 59, NARA.
  - 87. Phnom Penh Embassy to State, Airgram A-85, December 11, 1969, ibid.
  - 88. Phnom Penh Embassy to State, Airgram A-2, January 2, 1970, ibid.
  - 89. Phnom Penh Embassy to State, Airgram A-10, January 20, 1969, ibid.
- 90. Phnom Penh Embassy to State, telegram 258, December 17, 1969; and Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 24921, December 19, 1969, both in ibid.
  - 91. Phnom Penh Embassy to State, telegram 287, December 31, 1969, ibid.
  - 92. Phnom Penh Embassy to State, telegram 13, January 7, 1970, ibid.

- 93. Phnom Penh Embassy to State, telegram 288, December 31, 1969, ibid.
- 94. Le Sangkum, No. 14, September 1966.
- 95. Phnom Penh Embassy to State, telegram 141, February 20, 1970, RG 59, NARA.
- 96. Peter Scott, Lost Crusade: America's Secret Cambodian Mercenaries (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1998), pp. 138–142.
  - 97. Meyer, Derrière le Sourire Khmer, p. 309.
  - 98. Letter to the author from Lloyd M. Rives, Boston, October 11, 1999.
  - 99. Meyer, Derrière le Sourire Khmer, pp. 309-311.
  - 100. Phnom Penh Embassy to State, telegram 289, March 20, 1970, RG 59, NARA.
  - 101. Phnom Penh Embassy to State, telegram 245, March 13, 1970, ibid.
- 102. Chandler, *The Tragedy of Cambodian History*, p. 198, on the basis of his interview with one of the two army officers, a major. Chandler does not describe the content of the "paper," and calls it a "decree," although there was no question of a decree in Sihanouk's deposing by a vote of the National Assembly. It is probable that the "paper" represented some form of commitment by Lon Nol not to allow the army to interfere with the process that was to unfold later that day.
  - 103. State to foreign posts, telegram 39880, March 18, 1970, RG 59, NARA.
  - 104. Radio Phnom Penh, March 18, 1970.
- 105. Phnom Penh Embassy to State, Airgrams A-91, April 23, 1970; A-102, May 5, 1970; and A-126, June 9, 1970, all in RG 59, NARA.
- 106. Transcripts of this and other broadcasts are in "Sihanouk Overthrow—March 18," The Vietnam Archive, Texas Tech University, Douglas Pike Collection, Unit 15—Cambodia, Laos, and Thailand, Box 1, Folder 19, "March 16–March 18, 1970." I am grateful to Ronald B. Frankum, Jr., archivist, for making these available.
  - 107. See above, Chapter 6.
- 108. Communiqué of the royal government broadcast by Radio Phnom Penh, March 18, 1970.
  - 109. Meyer, Derrière le Sourire Khmer, p. 319.
  - 110. See above, Chapter 6.
- 111. Manac'h, *La Chine: Mémoires d'Extrême Asie* (Paris: Fayard, 1980), II, pp. 90–93. Hereafter cited as Manac'h, *Mémoires d'Extrême Asie*, II.
- 112. Sihanouk conversation with Manac'h, Peking, March 21, 1970, in Manac'h, *Mémoires d'Extrême Asie*, II, p. 97.
  - 113. Moscow Embassy to State, telegram 1293, March 17, 1970, RG 59, NARA.
  - 114. Moscow Embassy to State, telegram 1328, March 18, 1970, ibid.
  - 115. Manac'h, Mémoires d'Extrême Asie, II, p. 93–95.
  - 116. Agence France-Presse dispatch from Peking, March 20, 1970, RG 59, NARA.
  - 117. Manac'h, Mémoires d'Extrême Asie, II, p. 97.
  - 118. Ibid. pp. 99–100.
  - 119. Ibid., p. 603.
  - 120. Ibid., p. 101.
  - 121. Phnom Penh Embassy to State, telegram 297, March 21, 1970, RG 59, NARA.
  - 122. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 3216, May 6, 1970, ibid.
  - 123. Hong Kong Consulate General to State, telegram 1064, March 24, 1970, ibid.
  - 124. Manac'h, Mémoires d'Extrême Asie, II, p. 101.
- 125. Hong Kong Consulate General to State, telegram 1116, March 27, 1970, RG 59, NARA.
  - 126. Hong Kong Consulate General to State, telegram 1087, March 25, 1970, ibid.
  - 127. State to Paris Embassy, telegram 46548, March 31, 1970, ibid.
  - 128. AFP news report, Paris, April 10, 1970.
  - 129. State to Phnom Penh Embassy, telegram 51264, April 7, 1970, RG 59, NARA.
  - 130. Manac'h, Mémoires d'Extrême Asie, II, p. 99.
  - 131. Chandler, The Tragedy of Cambodian History, p. 200.

- 132. Hong Kong Consulate General to State, telegram 1133, March 30, 1970, RG 59, NARA.
  - 133. Hong Kong Consulate General to State, telegram 1261, April 8, 1970, ibid.
  - 134. Manac'h, Mémoires d'Extrême Asie, I, pp. 525–526.
  - 135. Phnom Penh Embassy to State, telegram 298, March 21, 1970, RG 59, NARA.
  - 136. Phnom Penh Embassy to State, telegram 356, March 26, 1970, ibid.
  - 137. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 2222, March 28, 1970, ibid.
  - 138. Phnom Penh Embassy to State, telegram 287, March 20, 1970, ibid.
- 139. Press conference statement, March 21, 1970, in *Public Papers of the Presidents: Richard Nixon, 1970* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1971), p. 292.
  - 140. State to Phnom Penh Embassy, telegram 45016, March 25, 1970, RG 59, NARA.
- 141. "Cambodia: A New Regime," Research Memorandum INRM-35, March 20, 1970, RG 59, NARA. The error in the title of the memorandum shows how ignorant the Department was about what was happening in Phnom Penh.
- 142. "Political/Diplomatic Considerations for Cambodia," attachment to memorandum from Theodore L. Eliot, Jr., to Kissinger, March 19, 1970, ibid.
  - 143. State to Phnom Penh Embassy, telegram 45016, March 25, 1970, ibid.
  - 144. State to Moscow Embassy, telegram 49049, April 3, 1970, ibid.
- 145. Jeffrey Kimball, Nixon's Vietnam War (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1998), pp. 196–212.
- 146. "The Cambodian Situation and U.S. Initiative," memorandum from Rogers to President Nixon, Washington, March 31, 1970, RG 59, NARA.
  - 147. State to Saigon Embassy, telegram 45730, March 27, 1970, ibid.
- 148. Saigon Embassy to State, telegrams 4622, 4653 and 4725, March 28, 29 and 30, 1970, all in ibid.
  - 149. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 4319, March 23, 1970, ibid.
- 150. Donald Kirk, *Tell It to the Dead: Stories of a War* (Armonk: M. E. Sharpe, 1996), pp. 155–158. Kirk's driver understood both Cambodian and Vietnamese and acted as translator and interpreter.
- 151. Loi and Vu, *Le Duc Tho–Kissinger Negotiations*, p. 175. Loi, an assistant to the DRV foreign minister, was a member of the delegation in Paris in 1972–1973. Both authors had been involved in the 1954 negotiations at Trung Gia, and Loi had also served on the military commission that established the DMZ. After signature of the 1973 agreement, Colonel Loi became deputy chief of the DRV's delegation to the Four Party Joint Military Commission.
  - 152. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 6326, April 25, 1970, RG 59, NARA.
  - 153. Phnom Penh Embassy to State, telegram 534, April 14, 1970, ibid.
  - 154. Phnom Penh Embassy to State, telegram 627, April 24, 1970, ibid.
  - 155. Congressional Record—Senate, April 2, 1970, p. 10053.
  - 156. Olson, Mansfield and Vietnam, p. 216.
  - 157. Manac'h, Mémoires d'Extrême Asie, II, p. 131.
- 158. Phnom Penh Embassy to State, telegram 606, April 22, 1970, and Airgram A-95, April 30, 1970, RG 59, NARA. Translation from the French by the author.
- 159. Personal communication to the author from Jodi L. Allison-Bunnell, Archivist, Maureen and Mike Mansfield Library, Missoula, Montana, August 31, 1999.
- 160. Jean Lacouture, "From the Vietnam War to an Indochina War," Foreign Affairs (July 1970): 617–628.
  - 161. Jean Lacouture, Enquête sur l'Auteur (Paris: Arléa, 1989), pp. 209–210.
- 162. Norodom Sihanouk, *Prisonnier des Khmers Rouges* (Paris: Hachette, 1986), pp. 414–415.
- 163. Telegrams of March 26, 1970, from General Earle Wheeler, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Washington, to Admiral John McCain, CINCPAC, Hawaii, and General Creighton Abrams, MACV, Saigon, Papers of General Abrams, U.S. Army

Military History Institute, Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania, cited by Ralph Smith, "Coup Questions," *Far Eastern Economic Review* (Hong Kong), January 13, 1994, pp. 30–31.

164. Phnom Penh Embassy to State, telegram 688, May 1, 1970, RG 59, NARA.

165. Henry Kamm, Cambodia: Report from a Stricken Land (New York: Arcade Publishing, 1998), pp. 71–72.

166. Tokyo Embassy to State, telegram 3126, May 2, 1970, RG 59, NARA.

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168. Phnom Penh Embassy to State, telegram 735, May 4, 1970, ibid.

169. Phnom Penh Embassy to State, telegram 749, May 5, 1970, ibid.

170. Phnom Penh Embassy to State, telegram 774, May 6, 1970, ibid.

171. Public Papers of the Presidents: Richard Nixon, 1970, pp. 405-410.

172. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 3092, May 1, 1970.

173. Stockholm Embassy to State, telegram 969, May 2, 1970, RG 59, NARA.

174. Text in Manac'h, Mémoires d'Extrême Asie, II, pp. 609–610.

175. Phnom Penh Embassy to State, telegram 776, May 6, 1970, RG 59, NARA.

176. State to Phnom Penh Embassy, telegram 51264, April 7, 1970, ibid.

177. Manac'h, Mémoires d'Extrême Asie, II, pp. 142-144.

178. President Nixon gave the figures in a report to the nation on June 30, 1970.

179. Interview of Lieutenant Colonel Billie R. Keeler by the author, Fort Walton Beach, Florida, December 7, 1999.

180. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 9704, June 19, 1970, RG 59, NARA.

181. First-hand description in Donald Kirk, Wider War: The Struggle for Cambodia, Thailand, and Laos (New York: Praeger, 1971), p. 125.

182. Meyer, Derrière le Sourire Khmer, p. 371.

183. Phnom Penh Embassy to State, telegram 297, March 21, 1970, RG 59, NARA.

184. Phnom Penh Embassy to State, telegram 1484, July 3, 1970, ibid.

185. Meyer, Derrière le Sourire Khmer, p. 329.

186. Richard Dudman, Forty Days with the Enemy (New York: Liveright, 1971), pp. 127–128.

187. See above, Chapter 5, "Initial Problems of the Armistice Implementation."

188. Sam Adams, *War of Numbers: An Intelligence Memoir* (South Royalton, Vermont: Steerforth Press, 1994), p. 194.

189. Serge Thion, "Journal de Marche dans le Maquis (1972)," in Serge Thion and Ben Kiernan, *Khmers Rouges!* (Paris: J.-E. Hallier/ Albin Michel, 1981), pp. 41–97.

190. Phnom Penh Embassy to State, telegram 656, April 28, 1970, RG 59, NARA.

191. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 6574, April 30, 1970, ibid.

192. Scott, Lost Crusade, pp. 167-168.

193. Phnom Penh Embassy to State, telegram 925, May 15, 1970, RG 59, NARA.

194. Interviews of National Security Council and Department of State officials, cited in William Shawcross, *Sideshow: Kissinger, Nixon and the Destruction of Cambodia* (New York; Simon & Schuster, 1979), p. 163.

195. Telephone conversation of the author with Rives, October 18, 1999.

196. Phnom Penh Embassy to State, telegram 1488, July 4, 1970, RG 59, NARA.

197. Phnom Penh Embassy to State, Airgram A-212, October 13, 1970, ibid.

198. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 2278, March 31, 1970, ibid.

199. Correspondence between William Bundy and Sullivan, October 1968, FRUS 1964–1968, vol. XXVIII, pp. 755–756.

200. Letter from Madame Ngô Dinh Nhu to President-elect and Mrs. Nixon, Paris, November 6, 1968, NPM, NARA.

201. Radio Saigon, April 21, 1975.

202. Letter from Kissinger to Lansdale, September 24, 1965, cited in Cecil B. Currey, Edward Lansdale: The Unquiet American (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1988), p. 301.

203. Interview of Leonard Unger by the author, Washington, D.C., March 21, 1997.

204. Memorandum of conversation, Harriman and Kissinger, Washington, August 2, 1966, FRUS 1964–1968, vol. IV, pp. 543–548.

205. Conversation between Kissinger and Sainteny, Paris, September 9, 1966, cited in Dulong, *La Dernière Pagode*, p. 171.

206. "Professor Kissinger's Visit to Saigon," Saigon Embassy to State, Airgram A-285, November 4, 1965, RG 59, NARA. This contains memoranda of conversations.

207. Diem, In the Jaws of History, p. 251.

208. Ibid., pp. 264–265.

209. State to Paris Embassy, telegram 272431, November 15, 1968, Lyndon Baines Johnson Library. This telegram was drafted by John P. Walsh and was addressed to Daniel I Davidson of the Paris delegation.

210. Conversation of Warren Nutter with Hung, Washington, November 18, 1972, cited in Hung and Schecter, *The Palace File*, p. 128.

211. An exception here was General Giap, who was celebrated in the United States in articles, books, and film. One journalist, overlooking Giap's repression of the nationalist parties in 1946, and throwing all restraint aside, lionized him as "the peer of Grant, Lee, Rommel and MacArthur in the pantheon of military leaders." *The New York Times Magazine*, June 24, 1990.

212. Henry Kissinger, Years of Upheaval (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1982), p. 42.

213. Ibid., p. 25.

214. Conversation between Kissinger and Sainteny, Paris, June 13, 1966, cited in Dulong, *La Dernière Pagode*, p. 147.

215. Daniel Ellsberg, Papers on the War (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1972), p. 261.

216. Memorandum from Roger Morris and Tony Lake to Kissinger, Washington, October 21, 1969, NPM, NARA.

217. Kissinger writes in his memoirs that the incoming administration was expected by its critics to square the circle. Kissinger, *Years Of Upheaval*, p. 308.

218. Attachment to memorandum, Kissinger to President-elect Nixon, January 2, 1969, NPM, NARA.

219. Loi and Vu, Le Duc Tho-Kissinger Negotiations, p. 90; and Kissinger, White House Years, pp. 267–268.

220. Bui Diem, In the Jaws of History, p. 256.

221. Interview of General Rosson by Lewis Sorley, March 31, 1997, cited in Sorley, A Better War: The Unexamined Victories and Final Tragedy of America's Last Years in Vietnam (New York: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1999), p. 423, footnote 37.

222. Conversation between Thieu and Hung, London, November 26, 1976, in Hung and Schecter, *The Palace File*, p. 34.

223. Hung and Schecter, The Palace File, pp. 30-35.

224. Kissinger, White House Years, pp. 272–273.

225. Ibid., p. 276.

226. Public Papers of the Presidents: Richard Nixon, 1969, pp. 901–909.

227. Interview of Thieu by Hung and Schecter, May 3, 1985, in Hung and Schecter, *The Palace Files*, p. 33.

228. Hung and Schecter, The Palace File, p. 40.

229. Kissinger, White House Years, pp. 278–282; Loi and Vu, Le Duc Tho-Kissinger Negotiations, pp. 98–104.

230. Memorandum of conversation, Xuan Thuy and Kissinger, August 4, 1969, p. 9, NPM, NARA.

231. See above, Chapter 8, "American Deceptions."

232. Sorley, *A Better War*, pp. 166–167, citing tape-recording of a meeting on November 22, 1969, in the Abrams Special Collection, U.S. Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania.

- 233. State to Saigon Embassy, telegram 205650, December 11, 1969, Saigon Embassy Files Kept by Ambassador Graham A. Martin, Gerald R. Ford Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.
- 234. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 24574, December 12, 1969, Martin Files, Ford Library.
  - 235. Kimball, Nixon's Vietnam War, p. 185.
  - 236. See above, Chapter 4.
  - 237. Kissinger, White House Years, p. 442.
  - 238. Loi and Vu, Le Duc Tho-Kissinger Negotiations, p. 115.
  - 239. Sorley, A Better War, p. 214.
- 240. For example, Kissinger to Bunker, telegram WHS2002, January 3, 1972, Martin Files, Ford Library.
- 241. Kissinger to Bunker, telegram WH51, September 10, 1970, Martin Files, Ford Library.
- 242. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 15282, September 20, 1970, Martin Files, Ford Library.
- 243. State to Saigon Embassy, telegram 149946, September 13, 1970, Martin Files, Ford Library.
- 244. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 15282, September 20, 1970, Martin Files, Ford Library.
- 245. State to Saigon Embassy, telegram 163468, October 4, 1970, Martin Files, Ford Library.
- 246. State to Saigon Embassy, telegrams 164346, October 6, 1970, and 164862, October 7, 1970, both in Martin Files, Ford Library.
- 247. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 16215, October 7, 1970, Martin Files, Ford Library.
- 248. State to Saigon Embassy, telegram 165448, October 7, 1970, Martin Files, Ford Library.
- 249. State to Saigon Embassy, telegram 164925, October 7, 1970, Martin Files, Ford Library.
- 250. "Statement of the Government of the Republic of Viet-Nam on a Negotiated Settlement of the War in Indochina," October 8, 1970, Martin Files, Ford Library.
  - 251. Loi and Vu, Le Duc Tho-Kissinger Negotiations, p. 152.
  - 252. Kimball, Nixon's Vietnam War, p. 182.
  - 253. Valentin M. Berezhkov, At Stalin's Side (New York: Birch Lane Press, 1994), p. 240.
  - 254. Memorandum from Kissinger to President Nixon, May 28, 1971, NPM, NARA.
- $255.\ \mathrm{Kissinger}$  to Bunker, telegram WHS1038, April 13, 1971, Martin Files, Ford Library.
  - 256. Bunker to Kissinger, telegram 270, April 17, 1971, Martin Files, Ford Library.
- 257. Kissinger to Bunker, telegram WHS1047, May 25, 1971, Martin Files, Ford Library.
- 258. "Paris Meeting with Yul, May 31, 1971," Saigon, May 27, 1971, Martin Files, Ford Library. "Yul" was the code name for Xuan Thuy used by Kissinger.
- 259. "Meeting with President Thieu, June 3, 1971," June 3, 1971, and Bunker to Kissinger, telegram 0144, June 3, 1971, both in Martin Files, Ford Library.
- 260. Kissinger to Bunker, telegram WHS1052, June 1, 1971, Martin Files, Ford Library.
- 261. Text in Kissinger, White House Years, pp. 1488–1489. See also Loi and Vu, Le Duc Tho-Kissinger Negotiations, pp. 168–173.
  - 262. See above, Chapter 7.
- 263. Saigon Embassy to State, telegrams 9301 and 10486, June 21 and July 15, 1972, both RG 59, NARA.
  - 264. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 3818, March 14, 1970, RG 59, NARA.
  - 265. Loi and Vu, Le Duc Tho-Kissinger Negotiations, pp. 165–166.

- 266. Ibid., p. 192.
- 267. Ibid., p. 241.
- 268. Kissinger, White House Years, p. 1034.
- 269. Interviews cited in Kimball, Nixon's Vietnam War, p. 266.
- 270. "General Haig's Talk with President Thieu," Memorandum from Kissinger to President Nixon, Washington, October 6, 1971, NPM, NARA.
  - 271. Loi and Vu, Le Duc Tho-Kissinger Negotiations, p. 174.
  - 272. Ibid., p. 191.
  - 273. Paris Embassy to State, telegram 15423, September 13, 1971, RG 59, NARA.
  - 274. "Memorandum," Saigon, January 14, 1972, Martin Files, Ford Library.
- 275. Kissinger to Bunker, telegram WHS2007, January 15, 1972, Martin Files, Ford Library.
- 276. "Meeting with President Thieu, January 17, 1972," Saigon, January 16, 1972, Martin Files, Ford Library.
- 277. Memorandum of conversation, Harriman, John Gunther Dean, and Jean Rafelli, Paris, December 3, 1966, RG 59, NARA.
  - 278. Vietnam News Agency, September 4, 1969.
- 279. Michael Maclear, *The Ten Thousand Day War: Vietnam: 1945–1975* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1981), p. 250.
- 280. Bui Tin, Following Ho Chi Minh: Memoirs of a North Vietnamese Colonel (London: Hurst & Company, 1995), pp. 65–68.
  - 281. Film Return with Honor (1999).
- 282. Saigon Embassy to State, Airgram A-255, September 19, 1970; results in Airgram A-267, October 2, 1970, both in RG 59, NARA.
- 283. Henry Kissinger, *Years of Renewal* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1999), p. 464 and p. 542. Kissinger's use of "Saigon structure" instead of "Saigon government" is revealing.
- 284. Memorandum of conversation, Xuan Thuy and Kissinger, Paris, August 4, 1969, NPM, NARA.
- 285. Paris Embassy to State, telegrams 15396 and 7754, September 12, 1971 and April 22, 1972, RG 59, NARA.
  - 286. Loi and Vu, Le Duc Tho-Kissinger Negotiations, pp. 254–259.
- 287. Bunker to Kissinger, telegram 831, April 2, 1970, Martin Files, Ford Library. Michael was Kissinger's code name for Le Duc Tho, Yul was his code name for Xuan Thuy, and Nestor was his code name for Mai Van Bo.
  - 288. Paris Embassy to State, telegram 781, January 22, 1970, RG 59, NARA.
  - 289. Bui Diem, In the Jaws of History, p. 281.
- 290. Paris Embassy to State, telegram 13085, September 26, 1970, Martin Files, Ford Library.
- 291. Paris Embassy to State, telegram 13155, September 29, 1970; State to Saigon Embassy, telegram 160676, September 29, 1970; Paris Embassy to State, telegram 13231, September 30, 1970; and "Vice President Nguyên Cao Ky's Current Thinking on Negotiations," memorandum from Theodore G. Shackley to Bunker, Saigon, October 4, 1970, all in Martin Files, Ford Library. Shackley was the CIA station chief in Saigon.
  - 292. Nguyên Phu Duc, Viet-Nam, p. 226.
  - 293. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 15207, September 18, 1970, RG 59, NARA.
- 294. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 16037, October 3, 1970, Martin Files, Ford Library.
- 295. State to Saigon Embassy, telegram 168955, October 13, 1970, Martin Files, Ford Library.
- 296. Kissinger to Bunker, telegram WHS1071, July 28, 1971, Martin Files, Ford Library.
- 297. Bunker to Kissinger, telegram 0241, September 21, 1971, and memorandum of meeting between President Thieu, General Haig, and Ambassador Bunker, Saigon,

September 23, 1971, both in Martin Files, Ford Library. Also Nguyên Phu Duc, Viet-Nam, p. 321.

298. Ibid.

299. Kissinger to Bunker, telegram WHS1109, October 2, 1971, Martin Files, Ford Library.

300. Bunker to Kissinger, telegram 0069, November 15, 1971, Martin Files, Ford Library.

301. Diem, In the Jaws of History, p. 249.

302. Frank Snepp, Decent Interval (New York: Random House, 1977), p. 14.

303. Sorley, *A Better War*, p. 234.

304. Vietnam Military History Institute, pp. 374 et seq.

305. Kissinger, White House Years, p. 989.

306. Vietnam Military History Institute, pp. 389–390.

307. Vietnam Military History Institute, pp. 362–363. The "K" may be related to the Vietnamese word for secret, *kinh*, but the "H" remains a mystery; it is tempting to relate these terms to "Kissinger" and "Harriman."

308. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 15497, September 23, 1970, RG 59, NARA.

309. "Presidential Elections," Saigon Embassy to State, Airgram A-39, March 31, 1971, ibid.

310. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 6169, April 23, 1971, RG 59, NARA.

311. Kissinger, White House Years, p. 1033.

312. Loi and Vu, Le Duc Tho-Kissinger Negotiations, p. 189.

313. Vernon Walters, *Silent Missions* (New York: Doubleday & Company, 1978), p. 516. The DRV's version of the exchange is in Loi and Vu, *Le Duc Tho–Kissinger Negotiations*, pp. 188–190 and p. 200.

314. Tape-recorded comment made at a Weekly Intelligence Estimate Update meeting at MACV headquarters in Saigon on March 20, 1971, and quoted in Sorley, *A Better War*, p. 237. Letter to the author from Sorley, Potomac, Maryland, April 25, 2000.

315. "Biographic Data on Duong Van Minh," Saigon Embassy to State, Airgram A-162, August 14, 1973, RG 59, NARA.

316. "The Vietnamese Presidential Elections," Saigon Embassy to State, Airgram A-59, May 12, 1971, ibid.

317. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 8688, June 3, 1971, ibid.

318. E.g., Peter Osnos in *The Washington Post*, July 15, 1971. Also, author's personal notes, Saigon, July-August 1971.

319. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 11291, July 17, 1971, RG 59, NARA.

320. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 10019, June 24, 1971; and "Presidential Election Law," Airgram A-92, June 30, 1971, ibid.

321. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 11080, July 14, 1971, ibid.

322. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 9290, June 12, 1971, ibid.

323. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 12598, August 7, 1971, ibid.

324. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 12095, July 30, 1971, ibid.

325. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 12888, August 12, 1971, ibid.

326. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 13024, August 15, 1971, ibid.

327. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 12663, August 9, 1971, ibid.

328. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 13157, August 17, 1971, ibid.

329. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 13186, August 17, 1971, ibid.

330. Memorandum, Kissinger to President Nixon, September 18, 1971, NPM, NARA. Kissinger, White House Years, pp. 1038–1039.

331. Snepp, Decent Interval, p. 11.

332. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 16783, October 20, 1971, RG 59, NARA.

333. Hung and Schecter, The Palace File, p. 481, fn. 11.

334. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 13400, August 20, 1971, RG 59, NARA.

- 335. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 13453, August 21, 1971, ibid.
- 336. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 13510, August 23, 1971, ibid.
- 337. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 13467, August 22, 1971, ibid.
- 338. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 13528, August 23, 1971, ibid.
- 339. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 13482, August 23, 1971, ibid.
- 340. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 13765, August 26, 1971, ibid.
- 341. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 14146, September 2, 1971, ibid.
- 342. Saigon Embassy to State, telegrams 15465 and 15518, September 27 and 28, 1971, ibid.
  - 343. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 16239, October 11, 1971, ibid.
  - 344. Kissinger, White House Years, p. 1035.
- 345. The Haldeman Diaries: Inside the White House, the Complete Multimedia Edition, entry for August 23, 1971, cited in Kimball, Nixon's Vietnam War, p. 277.
  - 346. Kissinger, White House Years, p. 1035.
  - 347. Loi and Vu, Le Duc Tho-Kissinger Negotiations, p. 205.
  - 348. Ibid., p. 207.
- 349. Interview of George McT. Kahin by James W. Clinton, Ithaca, New York, October 2, 1990, in Clinton, *The Loyal Opposition*, p. 224. The misquoting alleged by Kahin is in Joseph Kraft, "The Renewed Bombing," *The Washington Post*, September 28, 1971.
- 350. "Elucidation of the PRG's Seven Point Proposal of July 1, 1971," memorandum by George McT. Kahin, August 20, 1971, attached to letter from Kahin to Senator Fulbright, Bangkok, August 20, 1971, attached to letter from Carl Marcy to Ambassador William J. Porter, Washington, D.C., August 25, 1971, attached to memorandum from Walter L. Cutler to Marshall Green, Washington, D.C., August 27, 1971, RG 59, NARA. Emphasis in original.
  - 351. Paris Embassy to State, telegram 15395, September 12, 1971, RG59, NARA.
- 352. Memorandum from Kissinger to President Nixon, August 16, 1971,NPM, NARA.
- 353. Headquarters 902nd Intelligence Corps Group, "Debriefing Report of Orville R. Ballenger," September 2, 1962, Special Forces archive, Fort Bragg, North Carolina.
  - 354. Ronald G. Bliss, in the film Return with Honor (1999).
- 355. Public Papers of the Presidents: Richard Nixon, 1971 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1972), p. 952.
- 356. State to Saigon Embassy, telegrams 71460, November 18, 1967, and 152126, August 18, 1971, RG 59, NARA.
- 357. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 16678, January 23, 1968, and telegrams 16843 and 16849, January 24, 1968; and State to Saigon Embassy, telegram 103445, January 23, 1968, ibid.
- 358. Richard H. Schultz, Jr., *The Secret War against Hanoi: Kennedy's and Johnson's Use of Spies, Saboteurs, and Covert Warriors in North Vietnam* (New York: HarperCollins, 1999), pp. 114–117. "Geneva Convention Relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War of August 12, 1949," in *United States Treaties and Other International Agreements* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1956), vol. 6, pt. 3, pp. 3317–3513.
- 359. Richard M. Nixon, *The Memoirs of Richard Nixon* (New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1978), pp. 568–569.
- 360. Memorandum from Kissinger to President Nixon, Washington, September 18, 1971, NPM, NARA.
  - 361. Kissinger, White House Years, p. 1173.
- 362. Memorandum of conversation, President Thieu and Kissinger, Saigon, August 18, 1972, NPM, NARA.
  - 363. Telegram 910 from William Porter, Paris, to Kissinger, September 20, 1972, ibid.
  - 364. Haig to Kissinger, telegram TOHAK 48, October 19, 1972, ibid.
- 365. Memorandum of meeting between President Thieu, General Haig, and Ambassador Bunker, Saigon, September 23, 1971, Martin Files, Ford Library.

- 366. Bunker to Kissinger, telegram 0009, January 10, 1972, Martin Files, Ford Library.
- 367. "Meeting with President Thieu, January 10, 1972," Saigon, January 10, 1972, Martin Files, Ford Library.
- 368. Kissinger to Bunker, telegram WHS2007, January 15, 1972, Martin Files, Ford Library.
  - 369. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 1819, February 8, 1972, RG 59, NARA.
  - 370. Kissinger, White House Years, p. 1039.
  - 371. Loi and Vu, Le Duc Tho-Kissinger Negotiations, p. 210.
  - 372. Duiker, The Communist Road to Power in Vietnam, p. 319.
- 373. The text of Colonel Dinh's surrender message is in Colonel G. H. Turley, *The Easter Offensive: Vietnam, 1972* (Novato, California: Presidio Press, 1985), pp. 311–312.
- 374. "Increased Criticism of Thieu Administration's Leadership Following Fall of Quang Tri," Saigon Embassy to State, Airgram A-92, May 15, 1972, RG 59, NARA.
- 375. Lieutenant Colonel James H. Willbanks, *Thiet Giap! The Battle of An Loc, April* 1972 (Fort Leavenworth, Kansas: U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, 1993), p. 18.
  - 376. Cited in Hung and Schecter, The Palace File, p. 56.
  - 377. Loi and Vu, Le Duc Tho-Kissinger Negotiations, pp. 221–222.
- 378. H. R. Haldeman, *The Haldeman Diaries: Inside the Nixon White House* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1994), p. 450.
  - 379. Loi and Vu, Le Duc Tho-Kissinger Negotiations, pp. 227–232.
  - 380. Paris Embassy to State, telegram 12109, July 14, 1971, RG 59, NARA.
- 381. Saigon Embassy to State, telegrams 2295 and 2296, February 17, 1971, and 2432 and 2436, February 19, 1971, all in ibid.
  - 382. Paris Embassy to State, telegram 11631, June 16, 1972, ibid.
  - 383. Vietnam News Agency, July 8, 1972.
  - 384. United Nations Treaty Series, vol. 274, no. 972, p. 339.
  - 385. Radio Hanoi, July 13, 1972.
  - 386. Radio Hanoi, July 14, 1972.
  - 387. Radio Hanoi, July 17, 1972.
  - 388. Radio Hanoi, July 19 and August 22, 1972.
  - 389. Radio Hanoi, July 10, 1972.
  - 390. Radio Hanoi, July 23 and 26, 1972.
  - 391. Radio Hanoi, July 29, 1972.
- 392. For example, Senator Mansfield's amendment to a Selective Service bill adopted by the Senate on June 22, 1971, by a vote of 57–42.
  - 393. See above, Chapter 7.
  - 394. Loi and Vu, Le Duc Tho-Kissinger Negotiations, pp. 244–251.
- 395. Kissinger to Bunker, telegram WHS2088, July 21, 1972, Martin Files, Ford Library.
- 396. "Peace Proposal of the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam, August 1st, 1972," Martin Files. Ford Library.
  - 397. Loi and Vu, Le Duc Tho-Kissinger Negotiations, p. 255.
  - 398. See above, Chapter 8.
  - 399. Loi and Vu, Le Duc Tho-Kissinger Negotiations, p. 257.
  - 400. Kissinger, White House Years, p. 1315.
  - 401. Loi and Vu, Le Duc Tho-Kissinger Negotiations, pp. 259–265.
  - 402. Kissinger, White House Years, p. 1315.
  - 403. Loi and Vu, Le Duc Tho-Kissinger Negotiations, pp. 268–272.
  - 404. Ibid., pp. 272–282.
- 405. Vietnam Military History Institute, p. 417. The author owes this insight to Merle L. Pribbenow, the translator of this history.
- 406. "Meeting with President Thieu, August 14, 1972," Saigon, August 14, 1972, Martin Files, Ford Library.

- 407. "Memorandum [on] the Republic of Vietnam's Assessment on the Communist August 1, 72 10–Point Peace Proposal and Views on the Communist August 1, 72 Proposal on the Conduct of Negotiations," Saigon, August 17, 1972; and Kissinger to Bunker, telegram WHS2145, August 19, 1972, both in Martin Files, Ford Library.
- 408. Kissinger to Bunker, telegram WH2146, August 19, 1972; and "Notes on August 17–18, 1972 Meetings," Saigon, August 23, 1972, both in Martin Files, Ford Library.
  - 409. Which may be followed in relevant passages in Kissinger's memoirs.
- 410. Memorandum of conversation, President Thieu and Kissinger, Saigon, August 17, 1972, NPM, NARA.
- 411. "Talking Points for Meeting with President Thieu for Aug. 17–18 Meetings," p. 1, ibid.
  - 412. Hung and Schecter, The Palace File, p. 67.
  - 413. Hung and Schecter, The Palace File, pp. 68-69.
  - 414. Paris Embassy to State, telegram 17312, September 14, 1972, RG 59, NARA.
- 415. "Comments of the Republic of Vietnam on the Revised U.S. Peace Proposal and Procedures for Conduct of Negotiations, and the Counter-Proposals by the Republic of Vietnam," Saigon, September 9, 1972, Martin Files, Ford Library.
  - 416. See above, Chapter 7.
- 417. "Comments of the Republic of Viet Nam on the US Memorandum Dated September 11, 72 Concerning the US Peace Counter-Proposal," Saigon, September 13, 1972; and "Comments of the Republic of Vietnam on the US Memorandum Dated Sept. 11, 72 Concerning the US Counter-Proposal on the Procedures for the Conduct of Negotiations," Saigon, September 13, 1972, both in Martin Files, Ford Library.
- 418. Bunker to Kissinger, telegram 0155, September 13, 1972, Martin Files, Ford Library.
- 419. "D.R.V.N. Peace Proposals, September 15, 1972"; and "On the Conduct of Negotiations," September 15, 1972, both in Martin Files, Ford Library.
- 420. In his memoirs Kissinger attributes the suggestion of the October 15 deadline to Tho (White House Years, pp. 1332–1333), but I have followed the DRV account. For Kissinger's wish to finish prior to the election, see Kimball, Nixon's Vietnam War, passim.
  - 421. Loi and Vu, Le Duc Tho-Kissinger Negotiations, pp. 284-290.
- 422. "Vietnam," memorandum from Kissinger to President Nixon, Washington, September 18, 1971, NPM, NARA.
  - 423. Hung and Schecter, The Palace File, p. 375.
- 424. Letter from President Thieu to President Nixon, Saigon, September 16, 1972, Martin Files, Ford Library.
- 425. Saigon Embassy to State, telegrams Danang 213 and Saigon 13889, September 21, 1972, Martin Files, Ford Library.
- 426. Saigon Embassy to State, telegrams Danang 215 and Saigon 13998, September 23, 1972, Martin Files, Ford Library.
- 427. Kissinger to Bunker, telegram WHS2166, September 21, 1972, Martin Files, Ford Library.
- 428. "Responses to Questions," cited in Situation Room to General Haig, telegram TOHAIG 9, September 30, 1972, NPM, NARA. Much of this memorandum has been excised, including the author's name.
  - 429. Loi and Vu, Le Duc Tho-Kissinger Negotiations, pp. 290–292.
  - 430. Ibid., p. 302.
  - 431. Ibid., pp. 293-294.
  - 432. Ibid., p. 301.
  - 433. Snepp, Decent Interval, p. 53.
  - 434. Kissinger, White House Years, p. 1338.
- 435. Loi and Vu, *Le Duc Tho–Kissinger Negotiations*, p. 300. The author made a personal note in October 1972 that it seemed to him that the extreme urgency of the negotiations was due to Hanoi rather than to Washington.

- 436. Kissinger, White House Years, p. 1337.
- 437. Loi and Vu, Le Duc Tho-Kissinger Negotiations, p. 300.
- 438. Kissinger, White House Years, p. 1364, fn.
- 439. Loi and Vu, Le Duc Tho-Kissinger Negotiations, pp. 294–295.
- 440. Kissinger to Bunker, telegram WHS2171, September 27, 1972, NPM, NARA.
- 441. "Memorandum Re Communist Proposals and U.S. Memorandum of September 19, 72," Saigon, September 26, 1972, Martin Files, Ford Library. Also in Hung and Schecter, *The Palace File*, pp. 438–441. Emphasis in original. This memorandum refers also to a memorandum dated September 13, 1972.
- 442. Text of memorandum, Saigon, October 4, 1972, in Hung and Schecter, *The Palace File*, pp. 442–443.
- 443. In his memoirs, Kissinger relates how he and his staff drafted presidential messages for Nixon's signature and how Nixon himself took little interest in their details (White House Years, p. 1361). Kissinger's office archives contain the drafts of numerous presidential messages to Thieu in communications between Haig and Kissinger, and it is difficult to tell who originated them. Kissinger tells us that Nixon was in the habit of signing Kissinger's drafts without change (White House Years, p. 1459).
- 444. Personal message from President Nixon to President Thieu, October 6, 1972, cited in Hung and Schecter, *The Palace File*, pp. 73–74. Emphasis added.
- 445. Author's notes of a press conference in English by President Thieu, Saigon, July 19, 1971. Interviews of Thieu by Hung and Schecter, cited in Hung and Schecter, *The Palace File*, p. 77.
  - 446. Author's personal notes, Saigon, 1971.
  - 447. Loi and Vu, Le Duc Tho-Kissinger Negotiations, pp. 308-317.
  - 448. Ibid., p. 335.
- 449. Kissinger, White House Years, pp. 1341–1359; Loi and Vu, Le Duc Tho-Kissinger Negotiations, pp. 308–330.
  - 450. The Washington Post, October 24, 1972.
  - 451. Kissinger to Haig, telegram HAKTO 4, October 17, 1972, NPM, NARA.
  - 452. Kissinger, White House Years, p. 1341.
  - 453. Kissinger to Haig, telegram HAKTO 11, October 18, 1972, NPM, NARA.
  - 454. Godley to Scowcroft, telegram Vientiane 720, February 20, 1973, ibid.
  - 455. Kissinger to Godley, telegram WH30672, February 20, 1973, ibid.
  - 456. Kissinger, White House Years, p. 1358.
  - 457. Loi and Vu, Le Duc Tho-Kissinger Negotiations, pp. 336–339.
  - 458. Kissinger to Haig, telegram HAKTO 7, October 18, 1972, NPM, NARA.
  - 459. Kissinger to Haig, telegram HAKTO 5, October 18, 1972, ibid.
  - 460. Kissinger to Haig, telegram HAKTO 5, October 18, 1972, ibid.
  - 461. The Washington Post, October 22, 1972.
- 462. Interview of Thieu by Hung and Schecter, May 3, 1985, in *The Palace File*, pp. 83–84. Snepp claims the CIA also acquired the text independently from a reliable source in the delta. (Snepp, *Decent Interval*, p. 27)
  - 463. Reporting telegrams from Saigon Embassy, 1970–1972, RG 59, NARA.
- 464. Letter from President Nixon to President Thieu, October 16, 1972, text in Hung and Schecter, *The Palace File*, pp. 377–378.
  - 465. Kissinger, White House Years, p. 1365.
- 466. Memorandum from Haig to President Nixon, Washington, October 19, 1972, NPM, NARA.
  - 467. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 15101, October 19, 1972, RG 59, NARA.
- 468. The Vietnamese text of the October 20 draft agreement is in Box 2, Martin Files, Ford Library.
  - 469. Kissinger to Haig, telegram HAKTO 28, October 21, 1972, ibid.
  - 470. Kissinger, White House Years, p. 1034.
  - 471. Haig to Kissinger, telegram TOHAK 48, October 19, 1972, NPM, NARA.

- 472. Memorandum from Haig to President Nixon, Washington, October 20, 1972, ibid.
- 473. Loi and Vu, Le Duc Tho-Kissinger Negotiations, p. 342. The full text of the note is in ibid., pp. 470–474.
  - 474. Haig to Kissinger, telegram TOHAK 79, October 21, 1972, NPM, NARA.
  - 475. Haig to Kissinger, telegram TOHAK 59, October 20, 1972, ibid.
  - 476. Haig to Kissinger, telegram TOHAK 79, October 21, 1972, ibid.
  - 477. Bunker to Haig, telegram 220, October 22, 1972, Martin Files, Ford Library.
  - 478. Bunker to Haig, telegram 223, October 22, 1972, ibid.
  - 479. Bunker to Haig, telegram 232, October 23, 1972, ibid.
  - 480. Haig to Kissinger, telegram TOHAK 50, October 19, 1972, NPM, NARA.
  - 481. Kissinger to Haig, telegram HAKTO 52, October 23, 1972, ibid.
  - 482. Kissinger to Haig, telegram HAKTO 53, October 23, 1972, ibid.
- 483. Kissinger to Bunker, telegram WHS2295, October 24, 1972, Martin Files, Ford Library.
  - 484. Seymour M. Hersh, The Price of Power (New York: Summit Books, 1983), p. 593.
  - 485. Hung and Schecter, The Palace File, p. 89.
- 486. Kissinger to Bunker, telegram HAKTO 26, November 24, 1972, NPM, NARA. Both the October 20, 1972, draft and the final draft signed on January 27, 1973, are reproduced in Loi and Vu, Le Duc Tho-Kissinger Negotiations, pp. 475–557.
  - 487. Kissinger to Bunker, telegram HAKTO 26, November 24, 1972, NPM, NARA.
  - 488. Kissinger, White House Years, pp. 1339–1340.
  - 489. Haig to Kissinger, telegram TOHAK 97, October 23, 1972, NPM, NARA.
- 490. Memoranda of conversation, Prince Souvanna Phouma and Haig, Vientiane, January 18, 1973, and Field Marshal Thanom Kittikachorn and Haig, Bangkok, January 19, 1973, both in NPM, NARA.
  - 491. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 15224, October 24, 1972, RG 59, NARA.
  - 492. Saigon Embassy to State, telegrams 15220 and 15223, October 24, 1972, ibid.
  - 493. Haig to Kissinger, telegram TOHAK 70, October 21, 1972, NPM, NARA.
  - 494. Loi and Vu, Le Duc Tho-Kissinger Negotiations, pp. 344–345.
- 495. "Dr. Kissinger's Meeting with President Thieu, October 23, 1972," unsigned memorandum stamped "THE PRESIDENT HAS SEEN," October 23, 1972, NPM, NARA.
- 496. Saigon Embassy to State, telegrams 15235 and 15348, October 24, 1972, RG 59, NARA.
  - 497. Radio Hanoi, October 26, 1972.
  - 498. Text of press conference in The New York Times, October 27, 1972.
  - 499. The New York Times, October 28, 1972.
  - 500. Loi and Vu, Le Duc Tho-Kissinger Negotiations, p. 350.
  - 501. Paris Embassy to State, telegram 20448, October 26, 1972, RG 59, NARA.
  - 502. State to Saigon Embassy, telegram 194673, October 26, 1972, ibid.
- 503. Interview of Colby by Stephen B. Young; interview of Young by the author, St. Paul, July 29, 2000.
- 504. Kissinger to Bunker, telegram WHS2311, November 2, 1972, Martin Files, Ford Library, citing Robert C. Toth, "U.S. Insists Hanoi Pull Back Troops," Los Angeles Times, October 31, 1972, and Bernard Gwertzman, "U.S. Asking Hanoi for Reassurance of Troop Pullout," The New York Times, November 1, 1972.
- 505. Letter from Nha to Bunker, Saigon, November 24, 1972, Martin Files, Ford Library.
  - 506. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 15412, October 27, 1972, ibid.
  - 507. Bunker to Kissinger, telegram 239, October 28, 1972, Martin Files, Ford Library.
- 508. "Memorandum Re Radio Hanoi's Broadcast on October 26, 72 and Dr. Kissinger's Press Briefing on October 26, 72," Saigon, October 28, 1972, Martin Files, Ford Library.

- 509. Letter from President Nixon to President Thieu, Washington, October 29, 1972, in Hung and Schecter, *The Palace File*, pp. 379–380.
  - 510. See above, Chapter 5.
  - 511. Hung and Schecter, The Palace File, p. 136.
  - 512. Kissinger to Haig, telegram HAKTO 26, October 21, 1972, NPM, NARA.
- 513. Paris Embassy to State, telegram 20776, October 31, 1972, Martin Files, Ford Library.
  - 514. Kissinger to Bunker, telegram WHS2309, October 31, 1972, ibid.
- 515. Letter from President Nixon to President Thieu, Washington, November 18, 1972, text in Hung and Schecter, *The Palace File*, p. 389.
  - 516. Loi and Vu, Le Duc Tho-Kissinger Negotiations, p. 356.
  - 517. Ibid., p. 366.
  - 518. Ibid., p. 357.
  - 519. Ibid., p. 360.
  - 520. Ibid., p. 363.
  - 521. Kissinger, White House Years, p. 1417.
  - 522. Loi and Vu, Le Duc Tho-Kissinger Negotiations, p. 365.
  - 523. Ibid., p. 376.
  - 524. Ibid., p. 381.
  - 525. Ibid., pp. 357–386.
- 526. Conversations between Nguyên Van Thieu and Hung, London, November 25–27, 1976, March 4, 1978, and August 8, 1978, cited in Hung and Schecter, *The Palace File*, pp. 107–108. See also p. 123.
  - 527. Kissinger, White House Years, pp. 1415–1416.
  - 528. Kissinger to Bunker, telegram HAKTO 30, November 26, 1972, NPM, NARA.
  - 529. Haig to Kissinger, telegram TOHAK 65, October 21, 1972, ibid.
- 530. "Bilateral Deal," memorandum and attachment from Negroponte to Kissinger, November 28, 1972, ibid. The attachment was a redraft of a November 16 version.
- 531. Interview of Thieu by Hung and Schechter, June 13, 1985, cited in Hung and Schechter, *The Palace File*, p. 130. Also Nguyên Phu Duc, *Viet-Nam*, pp. 346–349.
- 532. Kissinger to Bunker, telegram WHS2260, November 30, 1972, Martin Files, Ford Library.
  - 533. Hung and Schecter, *The Palace File*, pp. 136–137.
- 534. Memorandum of conversation, Nguyên Phu Duc and Kissinger, Washington, December 1, 1972, NPM, NARA. Nguyên Phu Duc, *Viet-Nam*, pp. 350–361.
  - 535. Nguyên Phu Duc, Viet-Nam, p. 361.
  - 536. Kennedy to Kissinger, telegram TOHAK 124, December 9, 1972, NPM, NARA.
  - 537. Bunker to Kissinger, telegram TOHAK 135, December 11, 1972, ibid.
  - 538. Bunker to Kissinger, telegram 288, December 4, 1972, ibid.
  - 539. Haig to Kissinger, telegram TOHAK 132, December 10, 1972, ibid.
  - 540. Radio Saigon, December 12, 1972.
- 541. Memoranda from Haig to President Nixon, December 12 and 13, 1972, with telegrams HAKTO 42 and HAKTO 44, of same dates, attached, NPM, NARA.
- 542. Memorandum from Kissinger to Vice President Spiro Agnew, Washington, December 11, 1972, ibid.
  - 543. The New York Times, December 13, 1972.
  - 544. Haig to Kissinger, telegram TOHAK 82, October 22, 1972, NPM, NARA.
  - 545. Haig to Kissinger, telegram TOHAK 173, December 12, 1972, ibid.
  - 546. Kissinger, White House Years, pp. 1446–1450.
  - 547. Press conference statement, The New York Times, December 17, 1972.
  - 548. Congressional Record, Vol. 119, Part 1, January 15, 1973, pp. 1097–1098.
- 549. Bunker to Kissinger, telegram 295, December 13, 1972; memorandum from Haig to President Nixon, December 12, 1972, both NPM, NARA.
  - 550. Bunker to Kissinger, telegram 297, December 15, 1972, ibid.

- 551. The New York Times, December 13, 1972.
- 552. Memorandum of conversation, President Thieu and Haig, Saigon, December 19, 1972, NPM, NRA. Also Hung and Schecter, *The Palace File*, p. 140.
- 553. Tad Szulc, "Behind the Vietnam Cease-Fire Agreement," Foreign Policy, 15 (Summer 1974), p. 67.
  - 554. Kennedy to Kissinger, telegram TOHAK 124, December 9, 1972, NPM, NARA.
- 555. Bunker to Kissinger, telegram 297, December 15, 1972, Martin Files, Ford Library.
  - 556. Bunker to Kissinger, telegram 316, January 5, 1973, ibid.
- 557. Letter from President Nixon to President Thieu, January 5, 1973, text in Hung and Schecter, *The Palace File*, p. 392.
  - 558. Kissinger to Bunker, telegram HAKTO 2, January 8, 1973, NPM, NARA.
- 559. Kissinger, White House Years, pp. 1462–1464; Loi and Vu, Le Duc Tho-Kissinger Negotiations, pp. 424–426.
  - 560. Kissinger to Kennedy, telegram HAKTO 8, January 9, 1973, NPM, NARA.
  - 561. Loi and Vu, Le Duc Tho-Kissinger Negotiations, p. 376.
  - 562. Loi and Vu, Le Duc Tho-Kissinger Negotiations, pp. 429-430.
  - 563. Kissinger to Kennedy, telegram HAKTO 14, January 10, 1973, NPM, NARA.
  - 564. Kissinger to Bunker, telegram HAKTO 16, January 10, 1973, NPM, NARA.
  - 565. Loi and Vu, Le Duc Tho-Kissinger Negotiations, p. 419.
- 566. Kissinger to Bunker, telegram WHS2272, December 14, 1972, Martin Files, Ford Library.
- 567. Interview of Negroponte by Hung and Schecter, March 20, 1985; and telephone interview of Negroponte by the author, July 28, 1999.
  - 568. Kissinger, Years of Upheaval, pp. 335-369.
  - 569. Bunker to Kissinger, telegram TOHAK 130, January 13, 1973, NPM, NARA.
  - 570. Kissinger to Bunker, telegram HAKTO 32, January 13, 1973, ibid.
- 571. Letter from President Nixon to President Thieu, January 17, 1973, text in Hung and Schecter, *The Palace File*, pp. 393–395.
  - 572. See above, Chapter 5.
- 573. Interviews of Nha by Hung and Schecter, July 23, 1985, and January 19, 1986, cited in Hung and Schecter, *The Palace File*, p. 151.
- 574. Letter from President Nixon to President Thieu, January 20, 1973, text in ibid., pp. 396–397.
  - 575. Scowcroft to Kissinger, telegram TOHAK 19, January 22, 1973, NPM, NARA.
  - 576. Sullivan to Kissinger, telegram TOHAK 4, January 22, 1973, ibid.
- 577. Kissinger to Scowcroft, telegram HAKTO 8, January 23, 1973, ibid. The text of President Nixon's address is in *Public Papers of the Presidents: Nixon, 1973*, pp. 18–20.
  - 578. The New York Times, January 31, 1973.
- 579. The text of the 1973 Paris agreement is in Treaties and Other International Acts Series (TIAS), 7542, *Ending the War and Restoring Peace in Viet-Nam* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1973). See also *Department of State Bulletin*, February 12, 1973.
  - 580. Paris Embassy to State, telegram 1915, January 25, 1973, RG 59, NARA.
  - 581. The New York Times, January 28, 1973.
  - 582. Paris Embassy to State, telegram 2063, January 27, 1973, RG 59, NARA.
  - 583. Paris Embassy to State, telegram 10139, April 11, 1973, ibid.
- 584. "Memorandum of the Government of the Republic of Viet Nam on the Modalities for the Signing of the Peace Agreement," Saigon, January 12, 1973, Martin Files, Ford Library.
  - 585. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 1001, January 24, 1973, ibid.
- 586. Letter from President Thieu to President Nixon, Saigon, January 27, 1973, attachment to Bunker to Kissinger, telegram 358, January 27, 1973, ibid.

- 587. State to Saigon Embassy, telegram 2624, January 7, 1969, Lyndon Baines Johnson Library.
  - 588. Bangkok Embassy to State, telegram VIPTO 3, February 1, 1973, RG 59, NARA.
  - 589. Bangkok Embassy to State, telegram VIPTO 6, February 4, 1973, ibid.
- 590. "Draft Note to the GVN Regarding North Vietnamese Armed Forces in South Vietnam," and Bunker to Kissinger, telegram 347, January 21, 1973, Martin Files, Ford Library.
  - 591. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 4405, February 10, 1968, RG 59, NARA.
  - 592. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 6743, May 23, 1968, ibid.
  - 593. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 7552, July 1, 1968, ibid.
  - 594. Vientiane Embassy to State, Airgram A-171, January 17, 1968, ibid.
  - 595. Vientiane Embassy to State, Airgram A-75, June 1, 1970, ibid.
  - 596. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 7423, October 8, 1971, ibid.
  - 597. Vientiane Embassy to State, Airgram A-38, May 29, 1972, ibid.
  - 598. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 6673, September 10, 1971, ibid.
- 599. "King's Views on the Constitution," Vientiane Embassy to State, Airgram A-68, July 31, 1972, ibid.
  - 600. Godley to Kissinger, telegram Vientiane 693, February 12, 1973, NPM, NARA.
  - 601. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 6729, September 6, 1972, RG 59, NARA.
  - 602. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 6807, September 9, 1972, ibid.
  - 603. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 7356, September 29, 1972, ibid.
- 604. The embassy kept itself well informed of these negotiations, largely through the contacts with all parties undertaken by its deputy chief of mission, John Gunther Dean. Reports of the first 21 plenary meetings are in the following 1972–1973 telegrams to State: 7824, October 18; 7990, October 25; 8200, October 31; 8370, November 7; 8550, November 14; 8691, November 21; 8856, November 28; 9010, December 5; 9208, December 12; 9695, December 19; 9835, December 26; 24, January 2; 186, January 9; 366, January 16; 541, January 23; 706, January 30; 904, February 6; 1102, February 13; 1236, February 20; 1460, February 27; 1637, March 6, all in ibid.
  - 605. See above, Chapter 7, "Immediate Problems."
  - 606. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 8018, October 26, 1972, RG 59, NARA.
  - 607. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 781, February 1, 1973, ibid.
- 608. Memorandum of conversation, Prince Souvanna Phouma and General Haig, Vientiane, January 18, 1973, NPM, NARA.
  - 609. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 584, January 25, 1973, RG 59, NARA.
  - 610. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 1420. February 26, 1973. ibid.
  - 611. Kissinger to Scowcroft, telegram HAKTO 30, February 11, 1973, NPM, NARA.
- 612. Memorandum of conversation, Pham Van Dong and Kissinger, Hanoi, February 10, 1973, ibid.
  - 613. Paris Embassy to State, telegram 2857, February 5, 1973, RG 59, NARA.
  - 614. Guay to Scowcroft, telegram, February 12, 1973, NPM, NARA.
  - 615. Kissinger to Scowcroft, telegram HAKTO 33, February 12, 1973, ibid.
  - 616. Kissinger to Scowcroft, telegram HAKTO 33, February 11, 1973, ibid.
  - 617. Kissinger to Scowcroft, telegram HAKTO 59, February 14, 1973, ibid.
  - 618. Kissinger, Years of Upheaval, p. 41.
  - 619. Kissinger to Scowcroft, telegram HAKTO 33, February 12, 1973, NPM, NARA.
  - 620. Kissinger to Scowcroft, telegram HAKTO 47, February 13, 1973, ibid.
  - 621. Kissinger to Scowcroft, telegram HAKTO 59, February 14, 1973, ibid.
  - 622. Richard T. Kennedy to Scowcroft, telegram HAKTO 46, February 13, 1973, ibid.
  - 623. Kissinger to Scowcroft, telegram HAKTO 111, February 20, 1973, ibid.
  - 624. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 1264, February 21, 1973, RG 59, NARA.
  - 625. See above, Chapter 5, "Two Competing Conceptions of Sovereignty."
  - 626. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 8856, November 28, 1972, RG 59, NARA.
  - 627. See above, Chapter 7.

- 628. Maps showing comparative areas of control, 1962 and 1973, *The New York Times*, February 25, 1973.
- 629. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 1420, February 26, 1973, RG 59, NARA. This analysis was based on a translation of the official Lao text of the agreement made by the best qualified Lao language officers in the mission on February 22 and 23 and sent to State as telegram 1357 on February 23, 1973, ibid. Texts of the Vientiane agreement were also published in *The New York Times*, February 22, 1973, and in *The Washington Post*, February 23, 1973.
  - 630. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 1318, February 22, 1973, RG 59, NARA.
  - 631. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 1344, February 22, 1973, ibid.
  - 632. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 1639, March 6, 1973, ibid.
  - 633. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 1420, February 26, 1973, ibid.
  - 634. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 1353, February 23, 1973, ibid.
  - 635. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 1529, March 1, 1973, ibid.
- 636. Interview of Major Paul L. Miles by Walter Scott Dillard, November 1980, cited in Walter Scott Dillard, Sixty Days to Peace: Implementing the Paris Peace Accords, Vietnam 1973 (Washington, D.C.: National Defense University Press, 1982), p. 152.
  - 637. Ibid., p. 123.
  - 638. Ibid., p. 151.
- 639. Saigon Embassy to State, telegrams 1149, 1153, 1156 and 1158, January 28, 1973; Paris Embassy to State, telegram 2084, January 28, 1973; and Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 1251, January 30, 1973, all in RG 59, NARA. Also Dillard, *Sixty Days to Peace*, pp. 54–55.
- 640. Summaries of all meetings of the FPJMC were reported by the Saigon Embassy and are in RG 59, NARA.
  - 641. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 1476, February 1, 1973, ibid.
  - 642. Dillard, Sixty Days to Peace, pp. 160–161.
- 643. Office of the Chief of Staff, "Weekly Summary," April 11, 1973, U.S. Army Center of Military History, cited in Sorley, *A Better War*, p. 362.
- 644. Ibid., pp. 71–103. Also, Bunker to Kissinger, telegram 386, March 2, 1973, an update on the implementation of the agreement, RG 59, NARA.
  - 645. Dillard, Sixty Days to Peace, p. 99.
  - 646. The New York Times and The Washington Post, February 3, 1973.
- 647. Paris Embassy to State, telegram 2857, February 5, 1973, RG 59, NARA. Also *The New York Times*, February 6, 1973.
  - 648. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 1799, February 7, 1973, RG 59, NARA.
  - 649. Kissinger to Scowcroft, telegram HAKTO 39, February 12, 1973, NPM, NARA.
  - 650. Sullivan to Kissinger, telegram TOHAK 161, February 14, 1973, ibid.
  - 651. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 2295, February 15, 1973, RG 59, NARA.
  - 652. Phnom Penh Embassy to State, telegram 1415, February 16, 1973, ibid.
  - 653. Kissinger, Years of Upheaval, p. 531.
  - 654. Bangkok Embassy to State, telegram 2669, February 17, 1973, RG 59, NARA.
  - 655. Paris Embassy to State, telegram 4689, February 27, 1973, ibid.
  - 656. The New York Times, February 28, 1973. See below, Chapter 10.
  - 657. Kissinger, Years of Upheaval, pp. 304-305.
  - 658. The New York Times, March 3, 1973.
  - 659. Kissinger, Years of Renewal, pp. 464 and 542.
- 660. Here again my interpretation differs from that of Szulc, who states that the October 20, 1972, draft agreement resulted in part from pressure, "subtle or otherwise," that Moscow and Peking brought to bear on Hanoi. (Szulc, "Behind the Vietnam Cease-Fire Agreement," p. 67.)
  - 661. Saigon Embassy to State, Airgram A-188, September 6, 1973, RG59, NARA.

## 10. THE PARTY CENTER TRIUMPHANT (1973–2000)

- 1. JUSPAO (Saigon), Viet-Nam Documents and Research Notes, No. 108, November 1972.
  - 2. Tang, A Vietcong Memoir, pp. 219–220.
- 3. JUSPAO (Saigon), Viet-Nam Documents and Research Notes, No. 115, September 1973.
  - 4. Duiker, The Communist Road to Power in Vietnam, pp. 331–333.
  - 5. Radio Pathet Lao, March 14-16, 1973.
  - 6. Devillers, Histoire du Viêt-Nam, pp. 325-326.
  - 7. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 4666, March 21, 1973, RG 59, NARA.
  - 8. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 4666, March 21, 1973, ibid.
  - 9. Vientiane Embassy to State, Airgram A-40, April 13, 1973, ibid.
  - 10. "Meeting with President Thieu, February 28, 1973," Martin Files, Ford Library.
  - 11. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 3907, March 10, 1973, RG 59, NARA.
- 12. "High-Ranking RVN Military Discredit Cease-Fire," Bien Hoa Consulate General to State, telegram 24, March 20, 1973, ibid.
  - 13. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 4666, March 21, 1973, ibid.
  - 14. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 2346, February 15, 1973, ibid.
  - 15. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 3852, March 9, 1973, ibid.
  - 16. Nha Trang Consulate to State, Airgram A-73, June 24, 1973, ibid.
- 17. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 3845, March 9, 1973, and Paris Embassy to State, telegram 5947, March 9, 1973, ibid.
- 18. <sup>"</sup>Biodata on Nguyên Luu Vien, Deputy Prime Minister," Saigon Embassy to State, Airgram A-214, September 26, 1973, RG 59, NARA.
  - 19. The New York Times, March 27, 1973.
  - 20. Paris Embassy to State, telegram 7570, March 27, 1973, RG 59, NARA.
  - 21. Paris Embassy to State, telegram 6507, March 15, 1973, ibid.
  - 22. Loi and Vu, Le Duc Tho-Kissinger Negotiations, p. 439.
- 23. "Message from the President of the United States to the Prime Minister of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam," February 1, 1973, text in ibid., pp. 558–560.
  - 24. Paris Embassy to State, telegram 9345, April 3, 1973, RG 59, NARA.
  - 25. Paris Embassy to State, telegram 10319, April 12, 1973, ibid.
  - 26. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 6564, April 17, 1973, ibid.
  - 27. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 6765, April 19, 1973, ibid.
- 28. Saigon Embassy to State, telegrams 7194 and 7195, April 25, 1973; and Paris Embassy to State, telegrams 11449 and 11734, April 25 and 28, 1973, all in ibid.
  - 29. The New York Times, April 26, 1973.
  - 30. Paris Embassy to State, telegram 11449, April 25, 1973, RG 59, NARA.
  - 31. Paris Embassy to State, telegram 12280, May 4, 1973, ibid.
  - 32. Kissinger to Scowcroft, telegram HAKTO 111, February 20, 1973, NPM, NARA.
  - 33. Diem, In the Jaws of History, p. 318. Bui Diem was at San Clemente.
- 34. The New York Times, April 4, 1973. Text of joint communiqué in The Department of State Bulletin LXVII, no. 1766 (April 30, 1973): 511–512.
  - 35. See below.
- 36. Memorandum of conversation, President Thieu and Rush, Washington, April 6, 1973, RG 59, NARA.
- 37. Hung and Schecter, *The Palace File*, pp. 161–164, give a good description of this episode on the basis of their interviews with the Vietnamese principals involved.
  - 38. Diem, In the Jaws of History, p. 324.
  - 39. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 1703, February 6, 1973, RG 59, NARA.
  - 40. See above, Chapter 8.
  - 41. Vogt, oral history, cited in Hung and Schecter, The Palace File, p. 169.
  - 42. Snepp, Decent Interval, p. 53.

- 43. Interview of Vuong Van Bac by Hung and Schecter, August 22, 1985, cited in Hung and Schecter, *The Palace File*, p. 111.
  - 44. Kissinger, Years of Renewal, pp. 470–471.
- 45. "South Vietnam: Prepared for the Ceasefire?" Department of State, Intelligence Note, January 30, 1973, RG 59, NARA.
  - 46. Bien Hoa Consulate General to State, Airgram A-1, March 2, 1973, ibid.
- 47. "GVN Organizes Political Struggle Committees," Saigon Embassy to State, Airgram A-30, February 24, 1973, ibid.
  - 48. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 1997, February 10, 1973, ibid.
  - 49. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 2094, February 12, 1973, ibid.
  - 50. Saigon Embassy to State, Airgram A-122, June 28, 1973, ibid.
  - 51. Danang Consulate to State, Airgram A-1, January 9, 1973, ibid.
  - 52. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 8779, May 18, 1973, ibid.
- 53. Texts of eight understandings in Loi and Vu, Le Duc Tho-Kissinger Negotiations, pp. 555-557.
- 54. Letter from Nguyên Van Thong to Secretary Rogers, Saigon, April 7, 1973, RG 59, NARA.
- 55. Kissinger to Bunker, telegram WHS3152, February 27, 1973, Martin Files, Ford Library.
  - 56. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 3449, March 3, 1973, ibid.
  - 57. Danang Consulate General to State, Airgram A-18, May 3, 1973, ibid.
  - 58. Snepp, Decent Interval, p. 55.
- 59. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 4666, March 21, 1973, RG 59, NARA. See also Dillard, Sixty Days to Peace, pp. 147–148; and Colonel William E. Le Gro, Vietnam from Cease-Fire to Capitulation (Washington: U.S. Army Center of Military History, 1981), p. 40.
  - 60. Vietnam Military History Institute, p. 458.
  - 61. Paris Embassy to State, telegram 10510, April 16, 1973, RG 59, NARA.
  - 62. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 3096, April 23, 1973, ibid.
  - 63. Kissinger, Years of Upheaval, pp. 319-320.
  - 64. Kissinger to Scowcroft, telegram HAKTO 5, March 21, 1973, NPM, NARA.
- 65. Paris Embassy to State, telegram 11691, April 27, 1973, RG 59, NARA. Also Sullivan to Kissinger, unnumbered telegram, April 27, 1973, Martin Files, Ford Library.
- 66. Paris Embassy to State, telegram 11762, April 29, 1973, RG 59, NARA. Also Sullivan to Kissinger, unnumbered telegram, April 29, 1973, Martin Files, Ford Library.
  - 67. Paris Embassy to State, telegram 11783, April 30, 1973, RG 59, NARA.
- 68. Paris Embassy to State, telegram 11867, April 30, 1973, ibid. Also Sullivan to Kissinger, unnumbered telegram, April 30, 1973, Martin Files, Ford Library.
  - 69. Kissinger to Scowcroft, telegram HAKTO 8, May 17, 1973, NPM, NARA.
  - 70. Kissinger to Scowcroft, telegram HAKTO 18, May 18, 1973, NPM, NARA.
- 71. Memorandum from the Republic of Vietnam to American Embassy, Saigon, May 18, 1973, in Whitehouse to Kissinger, telegram TOHAK 69, May 18, 1973, ibid.
- 72. "Proposed Kissinger–Le Duc Tho Meeting," memorandum for the Government of the Republic of Vietnam, May 4, 1973, Martin Files, Ford Library.
  - 73. "Memorandum," Saigon, May 11, 1973, Martin Files, Ford Library.
- 74. Kissinger to Whitehouse, telegram WH31202, May 12, 1973, Martin Files, Ford Library. Le Duc Tho also had the habit of blaming others for his mistakes and shortcomings, according to one of his intimates. (Bui Tin, *Following Ho Chi Minh*, pp. 69–70.)
  - 75. Whitehouse to Kissinger, telegram TOHAK 164, May 22, 1973, RG 59, NARA.
- 76. Text of letter from President Nixon to President Thieu, Washington, May 21, 1973, in Hung and Schecter, *The Palace File*, pp. 399–400.
  - 77. Whitehouse to Kissinger, telegram TOHAK 164, May 22, 1973, NPM, NARA.
- 78. Text of letter from President Thieu to President Nixon, Saigon, May 22, 1973, in Whitehouse to Kissinger, telegram TOHAK 176, May 22, 1973, ibid.

- 79. Texts in Hung and Schecter, The Palace File, pp. 401–433.
- 80. Text of June 5 draft in ibid., pp. 406–412.
- 81. Letter from President Thieu to President Nixon, Saigon, June 9, 1973, in Whitehouse to Kissinger, telegram TOHAK 105, June 9, 1973, NPM, NARA.
- 82. Letter from President Thieu to President Nixon, Saigon, June 13, 1973, in Whitehouse to Kissinger, telegram TOHAK 31, June 13, 1973, ibid.
  - 83. Paris Embassy to State, telegram 17915, June 28, 1973, RG59, NARA.
- 84. Kissinger to Whitehouse, telegram WH31685, June 10, 1973, Martin Files, Ford Library.
  - 85. Paris Embassy to State, telegram 16330, June 13, 1973, RG 59, NARA.
  - 86. Kissinger, Years of Upheaval, pp. 333–335.
- 87. Text of communiqué in Paris Embassy to State, telegram 16185, June 13, 1973, RG 59, NARA.
- 88. Geneva Delegation to State, telegram Dulte 195, June 18, 1954, FRUS 1952–1954, vol. XVI, pp. 1176–1178.
- 89. Text of memorandum of understanding in Kissinger to Whitehouse, telegram HAKTO 16, May 18, 1973, NPM, NARA.
- 90. Kissinger to Martin, telegram WH31878, July 28, 1973, National Security Adviser: Backchannel Messages, Ford Library.
  - 91. Text in Loi and Vu, Le Duc Tho-Kissinger Negotiations, p. 556.
  - 92. Saigon Embassy to State, Airgram A-232, October 10, 1973, RG59, NARA.
- 93. Memorandum from Theodore L. Eliot, Jr., to Secretary Rogers, Washington, June 15, 1973, with attachments, RG 59, NARA.
- 94. Memorandum of conversation, Kissinger and Ambassador Tran Kim Phuong, Washington, [June?], 1973, NPM, NARA. This memorandum is misdated June 15, but the evidence shows that the conversation took place before the June 13 communiqué was signed.
  - 95. Scowcroft to Kissinger, telegram TOHAK 23, June 12, 1973, ibid.
- 96. "Quang Tin—A Province Where the Government is Winning, Very Slowly," Danang Consulate General to State, Airgram A-48, July 17, 1973, RG 59, NARA.
- 97. Kennedy quote from U.S. Congress, "Relief and Rehabilitation of War Victims in Indochina: One Year after the Ceasefire—A Study Mission Report Prepared for the Use of the Subcommittee to Investigate Problems Connected with Refugees and Escapees of the Committee on the Judiciary, United States Senate" (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, January 27, 1974); *The Washington Post*, June 29, 1973.
- 98. Letter from Prime Minister Thanom Kittikachorn to President Nixon, Bangkok, September 14, 1973, RG59, NARA.
  - 99. The New York Times, October 24, 1973.
  - 100. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 11302, June 23, 1973, RG 59, NARA.
- 101. A good account of the Joint Military Team's work is by Stuart A. Herrington, who was a member of the American delegation, in *Peace with Honor? An American Reports on Vietnam 1973*–75 (Novato, California: Presidio Press, 1983).
  - 102. Scowcroft to Rodman, telegram TOHAK 99, December 15, 1973, NPM, NARA.
  - 103. The New York Times, December 21, 1973.
- 104. Bangkok Embassy to State, telegram 1951, May 18, 1964, Lyndon Baines Johnson Library.
  - 105. Martin to Scowcroft, telegram TOHAK 93, December 15, 1973, NPM, NARA.
  - 106. The New York Times, May 14, 1974.
  - 107. The New York Times, June 12, 1974.
  - 108. The New York Times, June 24, 1974.
- 109. Saigon Embassy to State, telegram 14020, November 7, 1974; and Martin to Kissinger, telegram 643, November 12, 1974, National Security Adviser: Backchannel Messages, Ford Library.
  - 110. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 2454, April 2, 1973, RG 59, NARA.

- 111. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 1637, March 6, 1973, ibid.
- 112. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 1503, February 28, 1973, ibid.
- 113. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegrams 1294 and 1772, February 21 and March 10, 1973, both in ibid.
  - 114. State to Vientiane Embassy, telegram 19978, February 2, 1973, ibid.
- 115. Scowcroft to Guay, telegrams WHP472 and WHP479, March 13 and 20, 1973, both in NPM, NARA.
- 116. Ernest C. Brace, *A Code to Keep* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1988), p. 249. Brace, a pilot for Continental Air Services captured in 1965, was one of the nine Americans released at Gia Lam.
  - 117. Izvestia (Moscow), May 15, 1973.
  - 118. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 2898, April 16, 1973, RG 59, NARA.
- 119. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegrams 3576 and 4013, May 10 and 31, 1973, both in ibid.
  - 120. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 4473, June 19, 1973, ibid.
- 121. Jim Wolf (Reuters), "Laos Official Says Villagers May Have Killed US Airmen," *The Boston Globe*, April 25, 1992.
  - 122. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 1751, March 9, 1973, RG 59, NARA.
  - 123. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 1774, March 11, 1973, ibid.
  - 124. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 1780, March 12, 1973, ibid.
  - 125. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegram 1753, March 9, 1973, ibid.
- 126. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegrams 1639, 1901, 2013, and 2351, March 6, 15, 19, and 29, 1973, ibid.
  - 127. State to Vientiane Embassy, telegram 47712, March 15, 1973, ibid.
- 128. Vientiane Embassy to State, telegrams 1780 and 1938, March 12 and 16, 1973, both in ibid.
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