



# Indo-China, The Other Korea

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AGAINST the blue sky a pillar of smoke ascends like a charmed black snake from a basket of distant trees. Tiny as a hummingbird, the airplane that dropped the napalm circles around the black pillar with one wing down, peering at what it has done. The soft thud of the explosion arrives, already old. In the distance, across sunken rice fields crossed with dikes and cracked bridges, a quarrel breaks out between two machine guns.

The first prisoners come shuffling along the grassy path across the fifteen-foot levee. A few wear the funereal black of the Vietminh People's Liberation Army; others wear the brown tunics of peasant workers so that they might be mistaken for farmers by the bombing aircraft. They are all about eighteen years old, wiry and healthy, with spiky black hair and broad, impassive faces, remote even from each other.

From the top of the levee you can see the tactical chessboard of this land of rivers, this northern Vietnam, the main battlefield of Indo-China. Rising steeply from the delta floor are the mountains and limestone massifs where lurks the main body of the seven divisions of the Vietminh People's Liberation Army. It was there that they withdrew at the end of 1946 following the ambush of French and Eurasians in Hanoi. It was from these mountains that they sallied confidently to attack General de Lattre's shaken French forces in January, 1951. Even on the delta floor, the eight thousand-odd villages are always partly penetrated by the Vietminh underground. Most of them are quite flexible in their allegiance, often French by day and Vietminh by night.

Green islands of villages, lifted on generations of debris above the green sea of paddy, dot the whole horizon. Canals and levees cut the land. Far down one canal, anchored where it meets the million-armed Red River, you can see an American-built LCI flying the French tricolor.

The Vietminh dead lie sprawled by the potholes that were dug around the dry parapet of the village. When the battle was on, neither shelling nor mortaring could drive them out. Stubbornly they waited for the actual charge across the rice paddy.

They waited to kill the most important Frenchman in Indo-China, the second lieutenant. It was this young man, lying on his face in a dry paddy with machine-gun fire chewing the air over him, who eventually had to rise and lead the storming run of the Vietnamese, the Algerians, the Moroccans, the Tunisians, the Senegalese, and the Foreign Legionnaires. A white face is an easy target among brown and black ones.

## Seven Years' War

This war is seven years old, if you reckon it from the day when the Communist Vietminh swarmed out of the slums and up through the sewers of Hanoi and almost took the city. It is nearly seventy, if you reckon it by the fighting life of the strongest Communist leader, "Uncle" Ho Chi Minh, the oldest Leninist leader working in East Asia. But it is only a couple of years old if you calculate it by the effort of the non-Communist Vietnamese to rid themselves of the jungle police state and to earn freedom from France with their own lives.

France began with the error common to all western Europe in the

postwar period: trying to make a deal with a Communist. At that time France might have done well to turn the whole headache over to the United Nations. But France saw that Indonesia, thus tendered by the Dutch, was lost. The French held the line in Indo-China and kept the Chinese Communist supply line from penetrating into British Malaya.

France delayed, too, about trusting the native Vietnamese with weapons. The reason for caution was strong: The French thought they might be assassinated. At first they did not want Indo-Chinese officers; now they want them badly, but five years late.

The Vietnamese in 1946 were taking nine per cent of the total casualties. They are now taking fifty-two per cent, the rest being borne by the variegated army of Moroccans, Algerians, Tunisians, French, and Senegalese.



galese. Since war began, about thirty thousand members of the French Union forces have been killed, of whom perhaps one-quarter were French by blood.

### People of Indo-China

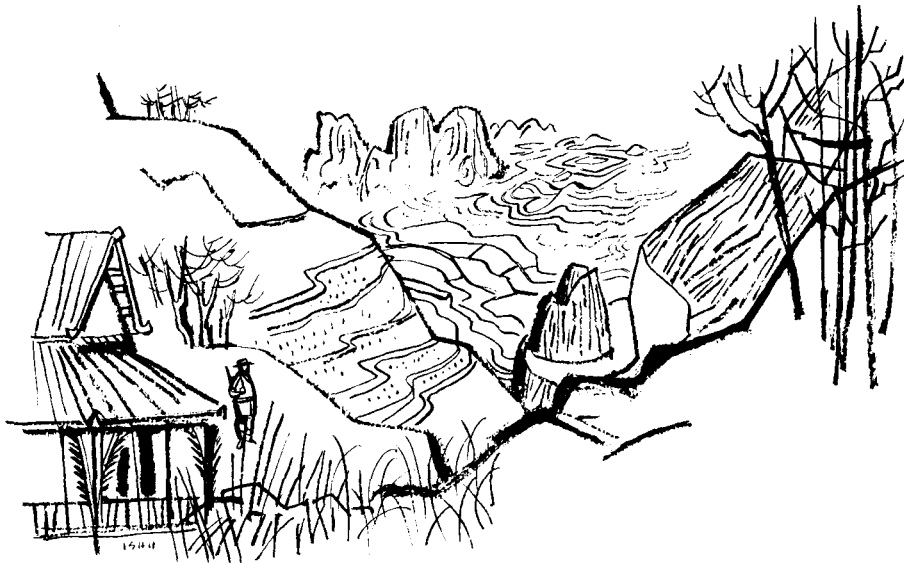
This shooting war, on which the American people will have bet more than a thousand million dollars by June of this year, is not the decisive battle for Indo-China. That battle is taking place deep in the minds of people, Vietnamese people like these:

*A versatile French-educated intellectual of forty, lying on a couch in his hut, smoking a little opium, listening with his radio to the competitive broadcasts of the Communists and the French-controlled Saigon station. He has been invited to take a post in the new government. But is a job enough? He cannot freely found a party, start a newspaper, or win applause in a Senate, since under French control such privileges are lacking.*

*A cadet officer of twenty, living in barracks in the cool mountain resort of Dalat, Vietnam's West Point, the residence of the Head of State, Bao Dai. He is sipping tea quietly in a little café when a girl enters, slim in long white trousers and floating tunic, and sits down with him. She is an agent of the Communist Dich Van, subversive organization of the Vietminh. He is big game: a trained infantry officer.*

*On the far side of the mountains in Communist territory an idealistic village schoolteacher, won to the Communists by their burning zeal for literacy and "expelling the foreign exploiter." The teacher lives poorly, but with dedication. The "people's court" hanged three landlords after a mock trial by mob and Communist clique, and he looked away. After all, just a little blood, he thought at first. But now he notices the arguments of the revolution changing, getting more alien and rigid. A new elite, partly trained in China, is moving into the leadership; and to make it more confusing, the Bao Dai government—the "enemy"—has now launched land reform too, and literacy goals. A man of ideals can't decide where to hang them.*

*A woman whose husband was taken away by the Vietminh to work*



*on the arms roads into China, abandoned with her fifteen-year-old son in a village where the rice paddy meets the mountains, neither firmly Vietnam nor Vietminh. What she calls the "French government" invites her: "Take your mats and your cooking pots and your clothing, and get into our truck. We are giving you a new home where you cannot be terrorized." But in the night, when the dogs are sleeping, a strange young woman dressed like a Vietminh soldier comes into her hut and tells her very politely: "The new settlements are really concentration camps. If you get inside, you can never come out. The French want to pen you up far from your ancestral tombs, where they can steal your son and put him in the puppet army."*

ON HOW these four people, and twenty-eight million like them, form their allegiance hangs the question whether the three Associated States—hustling Vietnam, slow Cambodia, and dreamy Laos—will hold against Communism or fall.

The question in all three, as elsewhere in the world, is "What are we fighting for?" And Cambodia and Laos, besides wanting protection from Chinese Communism, also want assurance that Vietnam will not swallow them.

While the United States has been talking "disengagement" and "let Asians fight Asians," the French have been cautiously putting this doctrine into practice.

After the war the French idea

was "pacification first, and then we'll talk independence." In those days Ho was the nationalist anti-Japanese leader of the maquis, treating on terms of cautious comradeship with the anti-Nazi maquis of France. Forgetful Vietnamese still call the Communists "*le maquis*" or "*la résistance*."

### Bao Dai

Even Bao Dai, young and already estranged from his Catholic empress, was in between. After the Vichy government capitulated to Japan, he threw in with the Japanese and declared the independence of Annam in March, 1945. When the Japanese surrendered five months later, "Uncle" Ho took him over. For eight months the heir to the ancient Empire of Annam was for all purposes a commissar, attached to the Vietminh government with the rank of "supreme counselor." Never acknowledging his imperial glory, the Communists called him—and still do—plain "Mr. Vinh Thuy." By the time he walked out in April, 1946, Bao Dai knew as much as Benes or Nagy about how a "Popular Front" operates.

The other Indo-Chinese have been slower to learn. When the Vietminh opened embassies in Peking and Moscow but snubbed Tito, a few caught on. When Vietminh began taking Chinese Communist arms and training, the nature of D.R.V., the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, became clearer.

In 1949, after three years of open

warfare, it dawned on the French government that it could not win by military means alone without political and economic reform. The biggest question was how to bring unity into Vietnam, which has twenty-three million of Indo-China's twenty-eight million people. To get a symbol, the French turned to Bao Dai. He managed to wring from the French a bigger slice of independence than they had offered three years earlier to Ho. He rescued Cochin China from colonial status while hanging onto his ancestral Tonkin and Annam. He insisted on choosing his own Prime Minister, at least *de jure*.

But Bao Dai had to throw overboard his first Prime Minister, the incautious Nguyen Phan Long, at French insistence. Long, dealing with the Griffin mission—first of the U.S. aid pioneers—wanted to utter his requirements directly in the Yankee ear, not through France. "I don't want to be told what I need by a government 12,000 kilometers away," he burst out. Soon afterwards the trapdoor opened and he dropped through. Later, however, Bao Dai's "fertile-earth" policy, devised with American advice, offered an answer to Ho's "scorched-earth" dogma.

**T**HE FRENCH were slow in giving arms to the Vietnamese, especially to the home-grown "irregulars," partly because they feared the arms would be passed along to the Communists. And they were slow to concede political rights because "the natives are agitated and fearful, unready for politics."

Perhaps it was natural precaution that when the French gave Vietnam its own security police under the pockmarked, capable little flyweight fighter Nguyen Van Tam, they re-

tained the indispensable dossiers in their own parallel Sûreté. But Tam, Premier since June and father of Vietnam chief of staff Nguyen Van Hinh, soon created his own files. Hard-boiled and efficient, he has not hesitated to snatch Vietnamese out of American missions when he thought them suspect.

The unfortunate thing about French policy is that almost every concession seems to follow a Vietnam "victory," real or fancied. France did not really begin to create a national army and to turn over to the Vietnamese certain local government bureaus until after the Reds had attacked in Korea and Ho had won alarming victories on the Chinese frontier at Langson and Cao-bang. But the accord of March 8, 1949, with Bao Dai, though getting more out of date every minute, still remains sacred. France still controls the treaty rights of all three nations, and enjoys a form of extraterritoriality (along with some 800,000 Chinese, many of them wealthy). The first elections since 1946 were municipal, and less than three-quarters of a million votes (all male) were cast out of a total population of about eleven million in unoccupied territories; and while Vietnamese were running for the municipal councils, Frenchmen continued to hold appointive offices in them.

The passivity of the Vietnamese outside highly paid government and army posts may be due to knowing exactly what lies at the foot of the rainbow. The citizen will get a government of his own, perhaps, but the economy will remain at least eighty-five per cent French-controlled or -owned. All the rubber trade, sixty-six per cent of the rice exports, all the mining except a few Chinese

mines, all the river transport, real-estate firms, metalworking establishments, and most of the sea services will remain in French hands.

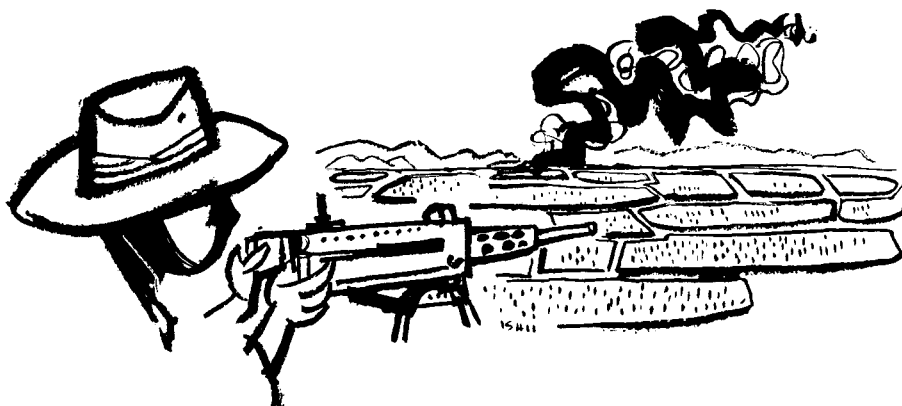
## The American Role

American policy in Indo-China has been split between an unequal team: the ECA-MSA group and others in Indo-China, tied to village economy, and the State Department group in Paris, tied to the hard dilemma of western defense. Former Ambassador David Bruce, the most genial and effective figure of the Paris group, once told a party of American Senators in Paris that the value of French investments in Indo-China was only \$250 million. The zero he mislaid was not important—the French are certainly not fighting the war for the Banque de l'Indochine, even at \$2.5 billion—but it typifies a desire in Washington and Paris to get the Americans to endow the war without examining it critically.

The genteel blackmail used to convince Congressmen sometimes goes as far as "the French will walk out of Indo-China if we do not help." But if some specialists in French affairs in the State Department are occasionally haunted by fears of a French walkout, they, like the French, are quite aware that the prestige of France hangs on leaving at a walk, not a run, and that France could not depart suddenly and retain its prestige in North Africa, its veto power in the Security Council, or its millions of dollars in accumulated arms.

The other factor that emasculated our policy for a time in Indo-China was the annihilating personality of Marshal de Lattre de Tassigny. He came when morale was on a down curve; he accepted a command shaken by defeat on the Chinese border. He restored the line; he built forts; he ran off a cheap though spurious victory in his "*offensive budgétaire*" at Hoabinh, aimed at swinging the French Chamber into financing another year of war. When he visited Washington in September, 1951, he was never more hypnotic. "We have given our shirts and now we are asked to give our lives," he declared to the National Press Club. "Who can ask for more?"

De Lattre preferred his American





partnership in guns, trucks, and planes, with as little advice as possible. Though generally admitting that Indo-China was a liability to France, he seemed to harbor a tormenting doubt that it might turn out to be an asset to America. "You Americans are expanding, pushing in your reporters, missionaries, propagandists," he said. "I understand it historically. But as a Frenchman I don't like it."

MISSION chief Robert Blum, the gentle but realistic Yale teacher of international relations who ran ECA in Indo-China, insisted that his \$22 million annually be spent the way the U.S. wanted it spent. Blum wanted a rice-roots program, decentralized into village welfare, housing, and sanitation. The French wanted the American help to be spent on capital investments and imported goods from France, on roads and bulk materials, centralized and remote from the villages. Blum won his battle.

The generals who followed de Lattre have been less obsessed than he with the fear that American help might be met with Vietnamese gratitude. Yet at a rally of forces I saw in Hanoi, both political and military, not a single American flag was shown, not even as decoration.

When I was in Tonkin, the Americans seemed neurotically afraid of asking even for the simple rights of an ally. The most important thing for the Americans to know, on account of Korea, was what the Chinese were doing in South China under the conqueror of Manchuria, General Lin Piao; but the vast, embattled delta was being covered by one military attaché, an intelligent but overworked colonel who lacked even a sergeant to write his reports.

### A New Course

The United States owes something to France in Indo-China and something to itself. To France it owes, besides arms where needed, a promise that if the Chinese Reds increase their army of six thousand "supply sergeants" the United States will reply with swift retaliation.

To itself the United States owes an obligation to analyze more thoroughly the rate of supply and the effi-

ciency of maintenance and use. The French have been thrifty, and good at maintenance except on some types of aircraft. To arm lightly without artillery or heavy transport the hundred-odd Vietnamese battalions of about eight hundred men intended for jungle commandos is an expense that can be kept under close control. If the United States is also to pay the high wage rates of these troops,



a long-term plan for passing at least part of the bill back to the big French corporations and the Vietnamese taxpayer should be arranged. Our military attaché should be given direct access to all Communist prisoners, as well as access to interrogation documents and combat records of the army.

The American political program should be such as to keep the French apprised that their stout future ally is not the American taxpayer but the Vietnamese nationalist. Bao Dai is not ashamed to woo this undeclared middleman or even his Viet-minh enemy. (*"Je n'ai jamais jeté l'exclusif contre personne."*)

THE FIRST aim of such a program must be genuine independence for the three states, not under either French or American tutelage and associated with the French Union only in such degree as the peoples gen-

uinely desire. This genuine independence is the only way that Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos can win the respect of the Asian states, which now almost wholly refuse to recognize them. Such "recognitions" as might be extorted by American pressure from the Philippines, Japan, and Formosa have small value. Pakistan, Burma, Indonesia, and India must be persuaded to give their recognition, and their votes in the United Nations.

The second political aim must be that France's mission and its sacrifices are recognized, but as a gallant act, not as a mortgage. France must learn that the quadripartite arrangement of the "Associated States" will gradually wither away and must even bring to an end its leading role, as happened in the Levant with Lebanon and Syria. It is France's job, in its own interest, to see that this disengagement happens more gracefully in Indo-China.

The third political aim must be that France is reassured. Reassurance means that if Red China gets tired of its present peace drive and moves southward again for conquest, France must have help in protecting the three Associated States. And the indecisive Indo-Chinese fence sitters must be assured by our actions that America's stake in their security and independence will endure.

THE ECONOMIC role of the United States is not large at this stage. A slow rice-roots program, with advisory rather than large-scale activity, seems advisable. The ownership of Indo-China's economy and resources should pass gradually and legally into the hands of the Indo-Chinese, away from the Chinese and French. Vigorous extension of land reform and of agricultural credits is the first step. The next is to provide the Vietnamese with means to buy a managerial share in business.

To house in guarded settlements the refugees of the Tonkin delta is the immediate task. The farther the United States stays away from building big subsidized apartments filled with Indo-Chinese bureaucrats, the better. But the nearer America moves toward the farmer, both as voter and as sower, the closer we shall be to Asia.

# Build-up and Letdown In the Philippines

DAVID BERNSTEIN



**H**ALF a century ago, when the United States, in a fit of absent-minded imperialism, annexed the Philippines and found a full-fledged rebellion on its hands, President McKinley sent for the president of Cornell University, Jacob Gould Schurman. He asked Schurman to head a civilian commission to “adjust differences” in the islands.

“Mr. President,” said Schurman, “there is only one difficulty. I am opposed to your Philippine policy. I never wanted the Philippine Islands.”

“That need not trouble you,” replied McKinley, “I didn’t want the Philippine Islands either, and in the protocol to the treaty [with Spain] I left myself free not to take them, but in the end there was no alternative.”

So Schurman went to Manila. Two years later he announced:

“The destiny of the Philippine Islands is not to be a State or territory in the United States of America, but a daughter republic of ours—a new birth of liberty on the other side of the Pacific, which shall animate and energize these lovely islands of the tropical seas, and, rearing its head aloft, stand as a monument of progress and a beacon of hope to all the oppressed and benighted millions of the Asiatic continent.”

Since 1899 the islands have gone through a bloody insurrection, forty years of steady progress, a four-year ordeal of war and occupation ended by a highly destructive liberation, and finally, in 1946, the achievement of full independence at a time when Asia was becoming a testing ground of Communism and democracy.

We are still not quite sure why

we are so deeply involved there; but we still tend to regard the archipelago as a “daughter republic” which ought to be a monument of progress, a beacon of hope, and a symbol of America’s good faith in the eyes of all Asia.

At the moment, unfortunately, the monument seems a little cracked, the beacon a little dim, and the symbol a little confusing. If America is to be judged by conditions in the Philippines today, we are not doing so well.

President Elpidio Quirino’s Administration is increasingly unpopular, and graft and vote stealing are taken for granted—perhaps even where they do not occur. The Communist-led Hukos are still in revolt, although their operations are not so widespread as they were a year or two ago. The bloodcurdling inequities of land tenure continue. As for the United States, the Filipinos do not hate us; but nearly everything we do seems to increase the atmosphere of mutual irritation, and our own officials lose their patience just as often as their Filipino opposite numbers.

## Reborn or Just Rebuilt?

A Filipino who had left Manila just after its liberation in 1945 tried to find words for his impressions on returning a few weeks ago:

“Manila’s rebirth is phenomenal. New buildings, new homes, new apartment houses, feverish construction in every vacant lot. The old landmarks gone. Big new advertising signs: *Ford! Rita Is Back! Coca-Cola!* Thanks to American aid, what in 1945 were crumbled heaps of masonry and twisted steel are now imposing government buildings. Twenty thousand new buildings between

1948 and 1951, and a lot more started last year.

“But I found Manila strange and disturbing. A newspaperman told me: ‘It’s like Japanese times, only worse. At least there was a semblance of order then. Today there is only chaos.’ An exaggeration, I thought. But not after you get to know the city. Manila is an overgrown boom town. Life is hectic and insecure. One lives by one’s wits—and gall. Human life is cheap. Gunplay, robbery, murder, gambling. It is like a jungle in which a million and a half people fight to survive.”

**M**ANILA is, of course, no index to the Philippines. Three-quarters of the people live in the provinces, in the little barrios at the ends of dusty roads, in nipa huts amid the eternal greenness of the islands. These are the Filipino peasants, the taos. In recent years the tao has begun to resent his condition more and more, especially in the ricelands, and from time to time his anger has flared into open revolt. The Communists are only the most recent, and the most determined, exploiters of the all too legitimate complaints of the taos.

The simple fact, of course, is that the average tao works a farm too small to support his family. He earns about \$250 a year, half of which is his to spend, if he is lucky. The rest goes to the village usurer and to the absentee landlord. There are few places in Asia in which land distribution is more unequal than in the Philippines. In the rice country of Central Luzon, ninety-eight per cent of the land belongs to three per cent of the population. Utter apathy or desperate rebelliousness is the result. The area has, inevitably, become the