



---

The Longest Wars: Indochina 1945-75

Author(s): Stein Tønnesson

Source: *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 22, No. 1 (Mar., 1985), pp. 9-29

Published by: Sage Publications, Ltd.

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/423583>

Accessed: 03/01/2010 16:17

---

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of JSTOR's Terms and Conditions of Use, available at <http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp>. JSTOR's Terms and Conditions of Use provides, in part, that unless you have obtained prior permission, you may not download an entire issue of a journal or multiple copies of articles, and you may use content in the JSTOR archive only for your personal, non-commercial use.

Please contact the publisher regarding any further use of this work. Publisher contact information may be obtained at <http://www.jstor.org/action/showPublisher?publisherCode=sageltd>.

Each copy of any part of a JSTOR transmission must contain the same copyright notice that appears on the screen or printed page of such transmission.

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact [support@jstor.org](mailto:support@jstor.org).



Sage Publications, Ltd. is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *Journal of Peace Research*.

<http://www.jstor.org>

# The Longest Wars: Indochina 1945-75\*

STEIN TØNNESSON

International Peace Research Institute, Oslo

In 1981-82, as a graduate student of history, Stein Tønnesson was lucky enough to be admitted to the Indochina files of the French archives, where secret cables and reports had been conserved since the outbreak of the first Indochinese war in late 1946. In the first part of this article he presents a new version of the process that led to the Franco-Vietnamese war, based on this previously unpublished material. New light is thrown on French actions and motives and also on the Indochina policy of the United States at that time. The French sources show how the high commissioner in Saigon, with backing from the French premier and foreign minister Georges Bidault, deliberately provoked war. This was done at the same time as Bidault's government was replaced by a Socialist government under the veteran Léon Blum. Once taking office, Blum sent a peace proposal to Vietnamese president Ho Chi Minh and ordered the French troops to negotiate a cease-fire. His order was ignored by the French army, however, and in the face of vigorous nationalist sentiments in France, Blum had to give in. In the second part of the article Stein Tønnesson compares the first and second Indochinese wars and finds notable parallels in the ways they escalated and in the reasons why they lasted so long.

## 1. Introduction

Indochina occupies a central place in the history of modern war. In Small/Singer's index of 224 wars 1816-1980, the 'Indochinese war' (1945-54) and the 'Vietnamese war' (1965-75) belong to the longest. Only two civil wars were longer than the Vietnamese war. They took place in China 1860-72 and in Colombia 1949-62. This presents us with a precise reason for giving priority to the wars in Indochina as a subject in the study of drawn out wars, and particularly how they begin. There are other, less precise but more important reasons for con-

sidering the wars in Indochina as a major theme in modern history:

1. They are central to the understanding of the two most important events in international relations since World War 2, the disruption of the colonial empires and the cold war.
2. They led to important changes not only in Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia and all of South-east Asia, but also in the political situation in France, the United States and elsewhere.

In this article I shall prefer to speak of two Indochinese wars instead of distinguishing between Vietnamese, Laotian and Campuchean wars. Developments in those three countries were closely interrelated and the sequence of wars ultimately (1978-79) led to a Vietnam-dominated Indochina. The focus of the article will be on Vietnam, however, not on Laos and Cambodia. The focus will further be on political decision-making related to the outbreak and end of the wars, not on military, economic, or social matters.

The article is in two main parts. Part one presents the findings of my own research on the outbreak of the first Indochinese war.

Part two compares the two Indochinese wars

\* The article is drawn from the author's dissertation *The Outbreak of War in Indochina 1946*, which can be identified as *PRIO Report 3/84*. The dissertation is based on sources in: — Archives Nationales (Paris), file F60 C3024. — Archives Nationales Section Outre-Mer (Paris), telegrams, 'Affaires Politiques', Moutet's papers. — Archives Nationales Dépôt des Archives d'Outre-Mer (Aix-en-Provence), CP-, IMIF- and HC-files. — Archives du Ministère des Relations Extérieures (Paris), file E 162-1. — National Archives and Records Service (Washington D.C.), file 851G.00. The author wishes to express his gratitude to Professor Philippe Devillers at the Fondation Nationale des Sciences Politiques (Paris) for the kindness with which he received a Norwegian student in Paris and for his many valuable comments on the dissertation and on this paper.

and shows some striking similarities between the ways first the French and later the American government consciously sent the young men of their nation to a war they did not really expect to win. Yet they only pulled out when forced to by domestic public opinion.

Before entering the history of how the first war broke out in 1945-46, some words must be said to characterise the wars in Indochina. The two Indochinese wars were neither interstate nor civil wars, or rather they were both. The fight was directed against foreign military forces, but the foreigners were present in the country from the outset. They were backed up by a political and administrative apparatus and had excellent relations with parts of the population. War was in fact a result of a process where a political struggle gradually became more and more violent. The conflict that produced the wars in Vietnam centred on two main issues; foreign dominance and the separation of the Vietnamese nation into a northern and a southern political entity. From an official Vietnamese perspective the two wars are seen as one long war, 'the long resistance', and the goals were the same all the time: liberation from foreign rule and national unification. The official Vietnamese version is of course ideological, but this is the same ideology that served the cause of Vietminh, the Democratic Republic Vietnam (DRV), and the National Liberation Front (NLF) all the way from the August revolution 1945 to the conquest of Saigon 1975. This ideology is an important part of these wars. If wars were classified according to the main goals of the victor, then the wars in Vietnam should belong to the classes of 'wars of liberation from foreign dominance' and 'wars for national unification'. That classification would, however, tend to draw our attention away from the fact that in all three Indochinese countries there were also civil wars between rivaling political, ethnical and religious factions. The wars in Laos and Cambodia were to a large extent side effects of the war in Vietnam, and the issue of foreign dominance took a different form than in Vietnam because all factions could claim to fight it. One faction fought the Vietnamese

dominance, the other fought the American. Khmer Rouge was able to combine both. The wars were thus fought on three levels:

1. *The civil level.* This was the dominant aspect during the initial phase of the second war (1960-63) and after the Paris accords (1973-75).
2. *The national liberation level,* which dominated in Vietnam during the whole war against the French (1945-54) and the period when the Saigon regime was an American puppet (1963-73).
3. *The international cold war or diplomatic level,* which played an important role from 1950 and all the time up to 1975, but especially at the two Geneva conferences which ended the first Indochinese war in 1954 and the war in Laos 1962.

The first war started on the second level. In the aftermath of World War 2, the French had very little support from the Vietnamese population, and the position of Ho Chi Minh was extremely strong. French policy towards Indochina was also very little affected by the international diplomacy of the emerging cold war. The war in Indochina began as a Franco-Vietnamese affair, a French attempt to regain full control over the 'pearl of its empire'.

## 2. *The first Indochinese war*

### 2.1 *The background*

The outbreak of war between France and the young Vietnamese republic in late 1946 should be understood on the background of three events:

1. The French loss of Indochina in March 1945.
2. The partition of Indochina into two allied occupation zones, decided at Potsdam in July 1945.
3. The Vietnamese revolution in August 1945.

There were Japanese forces in French Indochina from as early as 1940, with the consent of the French Vichy government and of the colonial regime headed by Admiral Decoux, but Decoux

managed to hold the reins of Indochinese internal affairs until March 9, 1945. At that date the Japanese staged a coup against him because they feared that the French colonial forces would assist in a possible allied invasion. The French troops were taken by surprise, and most of them were easily overcome and interned in concentration camps. The Japanese coup had fateful, but self-contradictory consequences in Vietnamese history.

First of all, the coup ended French colonial rule. The French were never to resume the degree of control and obedience on the part of the Vietnamese population that they had enjoyed until March 9, 1945.

Second, the Japanese never bothered to control Vietnamese public life the way the French had done. They permitted Emperor Bao Dai to proclaim Vietnamese 'independence' and set up a Vietnamese government. Even more important is the fact that they tolerated a veritable upsurge of political organising. In the towns, intellectual political associations shot up like bamboo in spring rain, to borrow an expression from a scholar who goes on to say that the Vietnamese revolution went through two stages: The 'bourgeois stage' which began with the coup of March 9, and the 'communist stage' which began with a congress convoked by the Vietminh front in mid-August 1945 (Smith 1978a, p. 301). The second stage had been systematically prepared at secret headquarters in the Tonkinese country-side where the Vietminh front, founded in 1941 by Ho Chi Minh's group of communists, in the spring of 1945 established a liberated zone. Vietminh also influenced political life in the towns and rivalled with the two political and religious sects Hoa Hao and Cao Dai over control of the country-side in southern Vietnam (Cochinchina). It did much to strengthen Vietminh's hand that in exchange for valuable intelligence on Japanese military moves, the U.S. intelligence mission in Kunming, southwest China, was willing to support Vietminh with equipment and even sent a delegation to Ho Chi Minh's headquarters. Before March 9, the Americans had been able to obtain the necessary intelligence from French sources (Patti 1980).

Third, the March 9 coup contributed to strengthen the *French* position on the international scene. As long as French colonial authorities were cooperating with the Japanese, the U.S. president Franklin D. Roosevelt could stick to his anticolonialist attitude and demand that an international trusteeship replace the French Vichy-oriented colonial rule in Indochina. When the news arrived in the West that the collaborating Decoux regime had suddenly been converted into Japanese prisoners of war, Charles de Gaulle launched a diplomatic campaign in Washington for American assistance to French 'freedom fighters' in Tonkin and for American recognition of French sovereignty in Indochina. Roosevelt stalled, but on April 3, his Secretary of State gave the French the necessary promise and when Roosevelt died ten days later and was replaced by Harry S. Truman, the idea of an international trusteeship was put on the shelf. Thus France saw her sovereignty in Indochina diplomatically accepted at the same time as it lost reality on the spot.<sup>1</sup>

In the trusteeship that Roosevelt had envisaged for Indochina, Chiang Kaishek's China was planned to have an important role, and Indochina was placed within the boundaries of the generalissimo's China theatre in the war against Japan. But this was linked to Roosevelt's hope for a better Chinese performance in the war. In 1945, nationalist China had certainly not become the kind of great power that Roosevelt had envisaged, and this strengthened the British attempts to have Indochina included in the war theatre of Mountbatten's Southeast Asia command. At the Potsdam conference in July 1945, this issue had to be settled, and the Americans gave in to British demands, but only half way. In order not to offend Chiang Kaishek and his American advisers unnecessarily, the Combined Chiefs of Staff settled for a compromise at Potsdam. Indochina was to be temporarily divided along the 16th parallel into a British southern zone and a Chinese northern zone, but it was also agreed that the northern zone could at some later date be included in the British sphere of operations. When the atomic ex-

plosions at Hiroshima and Nagasaki and the Soviet declaration of war suddenly led to Japanese capitulation and thus made military operations in Indochina unnecessary, the British tried to have northern Indochina (and Hong Kong) included in the area where British forces would receive the Japanese capitulation. Truman refused. The British submitted to Washington's decision with relation to Indochina, but not to Hong Kong, where they landed without prior American or Chinese consent (FRUS 1945, vol. II *Potsdam*, p. 1465). (Following historical convention the volumes in the *FRUS* (Foreign Relations of the United States) series are cited by the year they cover rather than the year of publication.)

The Potsdam partition of Indochina had vast although unintended implications for future developments. Before the allied forces arrived, Vietminh launched the August revolution. Liberation committees, dominated by the Vietminh, but in southern Vietnam in a necessary coalition with the Hoa Hao, Cao Dai and in Saigon even with Trotskyists, took power in the towns, and the Vietnamese Democratic Republic (DRV) with Ho Chi Minh as president was proclaimed in Hanoi on September 2, 1945. Shortly afterwards, however, British troops arrived in Saigon, and Chinese troops poured into the north.

In fact, the Potsdam decision led also to a rapid French return to southern Indochina. The British brought the French general Leclerc and his expeditionary corps with them. On September 23, the Liberation Committee of the South was ousted from Saigon in a French coup, and in a matter of three or four months, the French and British forces, even using Japanese troops, had crushed the armies of the Hoa Hao and the Cao Dai and forced Vietminh to disperse its forces south of the 16th parallel. The French set up a new colonial administration in Saigon, led by a high commissioner, Admiral Thierry d'Argenlieu.

In the north, the presence of a huge Chinese army, which tolerated Ho Chi Minh's regime, delayed the French return and eventually forced the French to come to terms with Ho Chi Minh. This gave Vietminh more than a year

(September 1945 to December 1946) to build up its political and administrative apparatus and its military forces before there was war with the French in the north.

In February 1946, the French planned a risky operation against the north, landing troops in Haiphong and taking Hanoi from the air. But they feared that (despite the fact that they obtained a deal with Chiang Kaishek on February 28) this might lead to war both with Vietminh and Chinese forces simultaneously and ultimately to U.S. intervention. Therefore, as they sent the French troops north with ships, they also engaged in talks with Ho Chi Minh, and on March 6, 1946, the same day as the French vessels approached Haiphong harbour, Ho Chi Minh and the French representative, Jean Sainteny, signed a preliminary accord. The Vietnamese would accept the presence of 15,000 French troops in the north, and the French would recognise Vietnam as a 'free state'. The population was to decide by referendum on the unification of the three Ky, the three political entities that France had established in Vietnam during the colonial period.

## 2.2 *The outbreak of war 1946*

The preliminary accord of March 6 was precarious. Neither the French authorities in Saigon nor the French government in Paris ever intended to give the Hanoi regime authority south of the 16th parallel. The French refused to enter any cease-fire arrangements with Vietnamese forces in the south, and they were unwilling to fix a date for the referendum. In the final days of March, Vietminh's forces in the south, which had now been regrouped and put under effective command, started guerilla warfare against the French troops. At the same time they systematically sentenced and punished (often executed) village 'notables' who were cooperating with the French (Devillers 1952, pp. 251ff). There were drawn out negotiations between delegations from Hanoi and French representatives at the same time as the guerilla war in the south took on greater and greater proportions. First there were talks at Dalat (April 17 — May 11, 1946) and later at Fon-

tainebleau outside Paris (July 6 — September 10, 1964). Ho Chi Minh and Pham Van Dong, who were both in Paris, stuck to their two principal demands: recognition of Vietnam as an *independent* (and not only 'free') state and *national unity* of the three Ky. The French steadfastly refused. In September, the Vietnamese delegation gave up and returned by ship to Vietnam, but Ho Chi Minh stayed in Paris a little longer and on September 14 signed a 'modus vivendi' with the French colonial minister, Socialist Marius Moutet. The main clauses of this modus vivendi were a cease-fire in southern Vietnam to be effective from October 30, democratic liberties for the population in all of Vietnam, and the establishment of a series of mixed commissions to settle Franco-Vietnamese relations in economic, military and other fields.

The modus vivendi was not well received by d'Argenlieu and his staff in Saigon. In the north, while waiting for Ho Chi Minh's return by ship, the Vietnamese government under the effective leadership of Vo Nguyen Giap had eliminated the internal Vietnamese opposition by very violent means. Thereby the Vietminh front became the only political organisation worth considering in the north. The opposition, which had enjoyed Chinese support until the Chinese occupation troops finally left in the autumn of 1946, was pro-Chiang Kaishek, pro-American, and violently anti-French. Therefore the French did nothing to protect them, something they were later deeply to regret.

In the south, guerilla warfare was stepped up considerably in October, but from October 30, the date of the cease-fire, calm was total. This proved that the Vietminh forces in the south were completely under Hanoi's authority, something the French had denied. The democratic liberties which were granted in the modus vivendi, permitted the Vietnamese population in the southern towns to utter its preference for unity with the north. The vernacular Saigon press in November 1946 left no doubt as to the wish of the Vietnamese majority (Devillers 1952, p. 324). The movement for national unity provoked a serious crisis in the separatist Cochinchinese government,

which the French had set up on March 26 and formally recognised on June 1, 1946. On November 10, the crisis led to a tragic event. The president of the Cochinchinese government, Dr. Thinh, committed suicide.

Now the crisis was total, and d'Argenlieu, together with his political adviser, Léon Pignon, and the commander of the French forces, General Valluy, decided that something dramatic would have to be done. They concluded that the crisis could not be solved only by actions in the south. It would be preferable to put the Hanoi regime under direct pressure, either force it to submit to French demands, provoke a split in the Vietminh leadership, or a total breakdown of the relations between France and DRV (Tønnesson 1984, pp. 114-123). The problem was how to secure support from the coalition cabinet in Paris for breaking with the modus vivendi of September 14. In order to achieve this, d'Argenlieu went to Paris and left Valluy behind with instructions not to exclude 'l'hypothèse d'être contraints de recourir à une action de force directe contre le gouvernement de Hanoi...'<sup>2</sup>

The opportunity arrived when on November 20 in Haiphong a Vietnamese police patrol intervened against French customs officers seizing a Chinese junk with gasoline. No mixed Franco-Vietnamese customs commission had yet been established despite Vietnamese insistence, but the French had unilaterally set up an office of 'import-export controls', competing with the Vietnamese customs services. The hawkish local French commander, Colonel Dèbes, reacted vigorously to the incident over customs, attacking Vietnamese posts in the town with armoured cars and occupying strategic points. This was exactly the sort of development that Saigon had hoped for, and Dèbes' action would certainly have led to a major battle if the commander of the French forces in the north, the peace-loving General Morlière in Hanoi, had not intervened. He instructed Dèbes to avoid further incidents and sent a representative who negotiated a cease-fire. When Saigon learned this, Valluy was furious, and a heated exchange of cables took place between him and Morlière. Valluy instructed Morlière and Dèbes

to resume Dèbes' first line of action, give the Vietnamese 'une dure leçon' and 'vous rendre maître complètement de Haiphong'. This was what Dèbes did when on November 23 he ordered the town to be bombed by heavy artillery. Thousands of civilians were killed, and Haiphong was occupied by the French.<sup>3</sup>

In Paris, d'Argenlieu did his part of the job, and despite the fact that Valluy informed Paris accurately of the instructions he had sent Morlière, on November 25, d'Argenlieu could inform Valluy that his actions were in accordance with the disposition of the French government. The most important ministers had met on November 23 and approved of d'Argenlieu's demand that the cease-fire agreement in the *modus vivendi* be ignored (Tønnesson 1984, p. 235).

Saigon now had to face two new problems. First, the occupation of Haiphong did not as expected lead to a breakdown of Franco-Vietnamese relations in Hanoi, where the soft Morlière was in command. French and Vietnamese forces continued to live side by side in the Vietnamese capital, although there were some incidents, and barricades were built to protect the Vietnamese quarters. Ho Chi Minh continued to hope for a peaceful solution. This hope was related to Saigon's second problem. In Paris, there was a cabinet crisis after the November 10 elections, and on November 28, d'Argenlieu's protector in the cabinet, Christian Democrat premier and foreign minister Georges Bidault, had to announce his resignation. On December 12, after both Bidault and the Communist leader, Maurice Thorez, had failed to obtain a majority vote in Parliament, it became clear that Bidault would be replaced temporarily by the veteran Socialist leader, Léon Blum. He could be expected to do anything in order to *avoid* war in Indochina. Once Blum's designation became known in Hanoi, Ho Chi Minh started to send desperate telegrams with peace proposals, but the cables were delayed by the French in Saigon, and Blum only received the first of them on December 20, one day after war had broken out in Hanoi. Once Blum was installed as premier and foreign minister

on December 18, he too sent a peace-urging telegram to Ho Chi Minh, marked 'ABSOLUTE PRIORITY'. This also only reached Ho Chi Minh after war had broken out.<sup>4</sup>

War broke out in Hanoi in the evening of December 19. A fortnight earlier, Valluy had sent Jean Sainteny to Hanoi in order to take over the reins from General Morlière. Sainteny had instructions to make no substantial concessions in his talks with Ho Chi Minh, but to try and create open dissension between the president and the more extreme Vietminh leaders rather than force Ho Chi Minh himself to desperate solutions. Sainteny was further instructed that 'si une rupture devait intervenir en laisser soigneusement l'initiative à nos partenaires en prenant toutes précautions pour ne pas être surpris par les événements'<sup>5</sup> This last paragraph reflected Saigon's fear that Paris would not accept another Haiphong. This time the scenario would have to be such that the Vietnamese could be portrayed as aggressors.

Sainteny did not obtain the desired split in the Vietnamese leadership, but by launching 'reprisals' in the streets of Hanoi during the days up to December 19, killing several, he managed to create an atmosphere where the Vietnamese feared a repetition of the Haiphong events. On December 19, the agitated Vietnamese 'self defence forces' (Tu Ve) launched an assault on the French forces. This assault was certainly the result of carefully prepared contingency plans, but something went wrong. It seems that in the morning the Vietnamese leaders were prepared to strike the first blow because they felt a French attack was imminent. In the afternoon they called off the attack. The French had namely released their troops from their confinement to barracks, and that gave Ho Chi Minh a little more time to wait for an answer from Léon Blum. Then, in the evening, the French command received intelligence reports on the Vietnamese preparations for an assault and hastily reconfined the French troops to the barracks. Some Vietnamese commander must have taken that as a sign that the French would attack, and the Tu Ve resumed the first line of action and started the assault at 2000 hrs. In the initial phase they did not

receive any aid from General Giap's regular troops surrounding the capital, as the prepared plans had probably prescribed, so very soon the French were on the offensive, capturing all public buildings and besieging the Vietnamese quarters. The attacks on the other French garrisons in the north only came many hours later, and were therefore of no surprise. The actions of the Vietnamese leaders on that fateful day are enigmatic and can probably only be explained by fear, confusion and internal disagreement. It certainly seems that Ho Chi Minh lost control, but he managed to escape before the French fought their way into the presidential residency.<sup>6</sup>

When Blum learned of the December 19 events, he ordered Valluy to negotiate a suspension of hostilities if it was possible without compromising the position of the troops and of French civilians:

Gouvernement vous donne l'ordre d'arriver à une suspension d'armes si vous en voyez la possibilité sans compromettre la situation des troupes et des ressortissants français.

In clear distrust of Valluy and Sainteny, Blum further asked Saigon to 'explain' Sainteny's actions during the day preceding the Vietnamese attack, and he wrote a new message to Ho Chi Minh which Saigon was asked to forward to the Vietnamese president. Valluy decided to ignore the premier's order and explained his reasons for this in a cable to Paris:

Je ne vois pas honnêtement moyen pour moi arriver à une suspension d'armes. Nous avons perdu le contact avec Gouvernement VN ... Toutefois si les moyens que général MORLIERE va mettre en oeuvre pour atteindre président HO se révèlent inefficace je suis prêt à faire diffuser par radio Saigon texte du message de Monsieur Président BLUM. Je crois devoir cependant attirer attention du Gouvernement sur les inconvénients très graves qu'auraient cette diffusion sur moral des troupes engagées dans un dur combat et sur celui des civils français très émus par les assassinats perpétrés sur leurs concitoyens avec une sauvagerie et une perfidie qui vous seront relatées par ailleurs. J'ajoute que l'opinion publique autochtone elle même ne comprendrait pas.<sup>7</sup>

A stream of telegrams followed, pretending

to prove Vietnamese 'premeditation' of the assault in Hanoi and describing atrocities inflicted on French civilians. Blum then gave in, also in face of vigorous nationalist indignation against the Vietnamese among leading French politicians and in the press. He hoped, however, that his colonial minister, Marius Moutet, whom he had sent on a mission to investigate the developments on the spot, would meet with Ho Chi Minh and obtain a truce. But Moutet, although also a Socialist, did not share Blum's attitude. He had led the colonial ministry under Bidault too, and being convinced that full independence was premature, he had invested his hopes in the success of the French-controlled Cochinchinese, Cam-puchean and Laotian governments. Instead of trying to meet Ho Chi Minh, Moutet toured the other Indochinese countries. He also expressed his *support* for Valluy's actions and cabled Paris that the French army needed reinforcements. In the days following December 19, both the Vietnamese and the French took up active warfare all over Vietnam, and in mid-January, Blum was replaced as premier by another Socialist, Paul Ramadier, who shared Moutet's views. Ramadier formed a new tripartite coalition cabinet, and Georges Bidault once again took seat in the Quai d'Orsay. Those who opposed any negotiation with Ho Chi Minh's government were now able to dominate the French decision-making process, although the French Communist party and the majority in the 'Comité directeur' of the Socialist party wanted to end the war by co-operating with Ho Chi Minh. The war soon became an established fact.

What were the French and Vietnamese motives for their actions in the last months preceding the war? As for the French authorities in Saigon, they were under considerable pressure from the French colonialist population, which sought revenge for the humiliation it had suffered from March to September 1945. The French decision-makers in Saigon were further led by military pride and by loyalty to General de Gaulle rather than to the actual French government, especially that of Léon Blum. De Gaulle at this time placed considerable



emphasis on the importance of controlling the colonies as a means to restore France as a great power. In Paris, the tendency was to postpone clear-cut decisions and leave the difficulties to the high commissioner in Saigon. The Vietnamese problem was hard to solve for a tripartite government of Christian Democrats, Socialists, and Communists. Bidault therefore seems to have preferred to let Saigon make many of the sensible decisions thereby avoiding concessions to Vietnamese nationalism. The most important motive for George Bidault's lack of flexibility in Indochinese matters seems to have been his fear of contamination in French North Africa:

Il y a un problème local, celui de l'Indochine et un problème général, celui de l'Union Française. Ils ne peuvent être dissociés. Il ne faut rien faire en Indochine qui puisse servir de précédent, notamment au regard du Maroc ou de la Tunisie, ni sur le plan des concessions, ni sur le plan des initiatives,

said Bidault at a top-level meeting on November 29.<sup>8</sup> It was only on December 10 that his caretaker government was able to give the High Commissioner instructions of a more principal nature. The instructions pointed out three basic French objectives in Indochina:

1. Maintenance of French cultural influence and economic interests.
2. Protection of the ethnic minorities.
3. Strategic bases.

According to the instructions, these French interests could not be safeguarded without French control on the political level and the maintenance of directly controlled French zones, whereas it was possible for the United States to control the Philippines even with formal independence because of the U.S. economic strength. It was also possible for the Soviet Union, the instructions argued, to control its formally independent satellites because they were so close and the possibilities of intervention immediate. France, however, was economically weak and far away from Indochina. Therefore, if the French Union should develop into a 'Commonwealth à

l'allégeance purement symbolique', as the Vietnamese wanted, it would rapidly lead to 'une démission totale de la France et le sacrifice de tous ses intérêts'.<sup>9</sup>

It thus seems that the Paris authorities had two main reasons in late 1946 for not making concessions to Ho Chi Minh:

1. The fear of setting an example for nationalists in French North-Africa.
2. The fear that Vietnamese political independence would lead to the loss of all French interests in Indochina.

The instructions emphatically stated that if Vietnam had been able to safeguard French economic and cultural activities, nothing would stand in the way of the 'abandon de toute garantie', but one hundred years of French experience in Indochina as well as the latest incidents showed that this was premature. On these grounds Bidault, Moutet, and some other key ministers consciously faced the possibility of war. The Communists disagreed, but kept out of the decision-making process on Indochina in order not to disturb governmental unity. Léon Blum also seems to have been in disagreement with the December 10 instructions (see his article in *Le Populaire* December 10, 1946).

As for the DRV government it is clear that it sought a negotiated solution up to the very last moment. Ho Chi Minh's desperate appeals to Léon Blum and the improvised nature of the December 19 attack cannot leave any doubt on this point. It also seems clear that the DRV was willing to guarantee French economic and cultural interests if it could obtain independence and sovereignty also in the southern half of the country. It is of course another question whether such guarantees would have been respected later on. Some of the Vietnamese actions and also French intelligence on internal Vietnamese affairs indicate that there existed an opposition to Ho Chi Minh's moderation. This opposition was strong in southern Vietnam and also among many cadres in the north. It gained strength after the French massacre in Haiphong. It is possible that someone within

this opposition controlled the Tu Ve in Hanoi on December 19 and that the abortive assault was executed without the consent of Ho Chi Minh and General Giap.

### 2.3 *The first Indochinese war at the international level*

While the newborn United Nations with active support both from Washington and Moscow intervened profoundly in the decolonisation process of the Netherlands Indies 1945-47, neither anticolonialist Washington nor anticolonialist Moscow did anything effective to stop France in Indochina. In fact, the U.S. Department of State reached an understanding with the United Nation's secretariat ('Trygve Lie's people') that a Vietnamese appeal, received in the beginning of 1947, should be filed and never circulated to the members of the Security Council.<sup>10</sup> Why?

In 1945-46, Moscow showed little interest in the Vietnamese revolution. The interest in Asian communism was clearly subordinate to Moscow's interest in the French Communist Party, which until May 1947 was represented in the French government. To the French Communist Party the Vietnamese revolution was annoying because it threatened to disturb its policy of alliance with the Socialists and Christian Democrats and its attempts to pose as a French patriotic party. The PCF was eager to avoid war in Indochina, because it feared that war would lead to economic problems in France and possibly to American intervention in the 'affairs of the French Union'. On the other hand the PCF did not dare to fight the protagonists of war. An open conflict might alienate the Communists from mainstream French politics.<sup>11</sup> The Communist press wrote much less about Indochina than most other French newspapers, and the Communists voted *for* a parliamentary message of support to the French troops on December 23, 1946 and made no objections some days later when funds were moved from one part of the defence budget to another in order to send reinforcements to Indochina. Later in 1947, when ousted from the French cabinet, the PCF came out with an outspoken opposition to the war, both for

reasons of proletarian internationalism and because the war would constitute a drain on the French economy which might lead to dependency on American economic aid.

Paradoxically, the fears of the French Communists were like a mirror of the worries in Washington, where the decision-makers only took interest in Indochina as a French problem. Washington expected that a costly war would undermine France's position in world affairs, aggravate the French economic crisis and thereby turn the masses towards communism. Therefore, Washington also opposed French Indochina policy. On the other hand, the United States was afraid to lay open pressure on France because this might provoke anti-American feelings and strengthen the position of the French Communists. On February 3, 1947, Washington nevertheless instructed the U.S. ambassador in Paris to threaten the French government with interference from the United Nations if French Indochina policy was not made more generous.<sup>12</sup> Ambassador Jefferson Caffery seems to have disliked the instructions, and when he met Bidault, he did what he could to soften the threats, probably believing that the instructions were due to an initiative from the pro-Vietnamese and anticolonialist, but little influential Southeast Asian division in State Department. John Hickerson, chief of the European Office, had to assure the American embassy in Paris that *he* was the man behind the instructions. He explained his view this way:

... in my opinion one of the most important things in the world is for the United States to help France, within the limits of her capabilities, to become strong and united ... France is in my opinion going to lose her whole empire unless she finds an early and a satisfactory solution of this Indochina mess ... There is still time for France to have something from the wreckage by being generous and acknowledging the trend of the times the way the British Government is doing in Burma.<sup>13</sup>

Georges Bidault answered the US threats with a token concession to American (and French Socialist) demands; he dismissed High Commissioner d'Argenlieu,<sup>14</sup> but this did not lead to any 'generosity'. The war went on, but was not discussed in the United Nations.

We may conclude that, in 1945-47, the anti-colonialist cause suffered from the fact that Moscow and Washington gave priority to safeguarding their relations with the European powers, France especially. It was the fear of French rather than Vietnamese communism that made the United States refrain from intervening to stop the war. Both the French Communist Party and the United States Department of State were opposed to French Indochina policy, mainly because of its possible economic and political effects in domestic France, but neither of them dared provoke French nationalist and colonialist feelings openly, for fear that this might isolate themselves and serve the cause of the other. The State Department feared French communism, and the French Communists feared the United States. This paralysed both of them in dealing with the 'Indochina mess'.

Until 1950, the war in Indochina was 'the forgotten war', seldom mentioned in the Western press, where it was overshadowed by events related to the developing cold war in Europe and by the civil war in China. To the French the war in Indochina became 'the dirty war', where French soldiers never knew friend from foe and must expect any moment to be shot in the back. The DRV forces had to stick to a pure guerilla strategy, because they received little aid from the socialist countries. This was changed by the victory of the Chinese red army 1949-50. Military equipment started to flow to Vietminh forces over the Chinese border, and as early as January 18, 1950, Beijing recognised Ho Chi Minh's government, forcing Moscow to do the same (January 30, 1950). The French government turned to the United States for help.

As a reaction to the successful test of a Soviet atomic bomb and the victory of the Chinese revolution, Washington had just changed its earlier Euro-centred strategy to a strategy of containing communism all over the world. In this new perspective the French war was no longer a colonial war, but a war to stop communist aggression. When the United States answered the French request for aid positively, this constituted the first American

cold war initiative in Asia. American aid to Chiang Kaishek had been halfhearted, but the United States really committed itself to the anti-communist cause in Indochina. On February 4, 1950, Washington recognised the French puppet regime under the former emperor Bao Dai, which had been set up after lengthy negotiations in 1949, and on May 8, 1950, Secretary of State Dean Acheson announced that France would receive economic and military help to fight the war in Indochina. The next U.S. cold war initiative in Asia was the intervention in Korea June 1950. After the Korean war had been stalemated in the summer of 1951, the Indochinese war was stepped up considerably on both sides. General Giap was now able to engage his forces in larger battles. To make a long story short, this ended with the victory at Dien Bien Phu (May 8, 1954) and a partition of Vietnam along the 17th parallel, decided at the great power conference in Geneva 1954. Two states were created, North Vietnam under Ho Chi Minh's presidency, and South Vietnam, which under the leadership of Ngo Dinh Diem chose to rely on American aid and guarantees, expel all French advisers, and brutally suppress all opposition. Thus the first Indochinese war laid the foundation for the second Indochinese war.

\* \*

This is the story of how the first Indochinese war began, how the great powers first merely permitted it to go on, then became actively involved, and finally in 1954 ended the war temporarily by separating the Vietnamese nation into two states. The account of the outbreak of war in 1946 is based on available material in French and American archives. In the next part of the article I will deal with periods that I only know from published literature. A new historical summary is therefore unnecessary. Instead I will go directly to a comparison of the way the two Indochinese wars started, the reasons why they lasted so long, and the way they finally ended.

### 3. *The two Indochinese wars: A comparison*

#### 3.1 *How they started*

In the seventies, under the impression of the American failure in Vietnam, most of the attention was focused on the American involvement in the sixties and much less on the outbreak of the second Indochinese war in the late fifties.<sup>15</sup> This has now changed. In 1983, the British scholar Ralph B. Smith started to publish *An International History of the Vietnam War*, of which the first volume covers exactly the period that was ignored by so many critics of the American war, the years 1955-61. Smith differs from most other authors of books on the Vietnam war by analysing the motives and actions of all powers involved, not only on one of the sides. When reading Smith's analysis of the global situation in the second half of the fifties, almost nothing reminds one of the situation when the first Indochinese war started. The revolution in China, the worldwide cold war, everything had changed since 1946. But when considering the situation in Vietnam itself, I cannot help but being amazed by the many parallels between the ways the two wars started. On both occasions, Vietnam was divided into a communist-controlled north and a south held by non-communist forces. In 1946 these forces were French and French-led so-called 'partisan troops', which were recruited mainly from ethnic minorities. In the fifties, they were French-trained Diem forces with American equipment and advisers. In late 1945 and the beginning of 1946, General Leclerc successfully persecuted Vietminh's poorly equipped forces in the south and obliged them to disperse. In the fifties, Ngo Dinh Diem nearly destroyed the Communist party in the south. The southern communists later recalled the year 1958 as 'the darkest hour'. Both in 1946 and 1958 they felt that the only way to survive was to take up armed fighting, but they were restrained by the leaders in the north who were reluctant to permit armed uprising because it might jeopardise the necessary support from other nations and provoke attacks against the north itself. In late March 1946, Vietminh troops in the south had regrouped after the initial defeats and launched a military campaign

in 'support' of the Franco-Vietnamese negotiations. These attacks were probably authorised from the north. In the late fifties, the southern leaders also pressed for an authorisation from Hanoi to start armed struggle. There were lengthy discussions in the Hanoi leadership over the matter. Three problems had to be solved before Hanoi would permit the southerners to enter a phase of armed uprising:

1. Effective communication lines would have to be established between North and South Vietnam.
2. The political situation in the South would have to be evaluated as making it possible to portray the struggle as an independent southern popular uprising against Diem and not as a Hanoi-inspired war. There should be no easy excuse for South Vietnamese or American aggression against North Vietnam.
3. Support would have to be ascertained from China and the Soviet Union. (The solution of the second problem was probably a precondition for the solution of the third).

The first problem was much greater in the late fifties than it had been during the first Indochinese war. The demarcation line at the 17th parallel had become one of the strictest borders in the world. The only way to communicate with the south was through Laos. The Vietnamese had withdrawn their troops from Laos after Geneva, but continued to back the Pathet Lao in the very complex political developments in that country. In December 1958, North-Vietnam occupied some disputed villages at the border between Laos and Vietnam close to the 17th parallel. This was probably done in order to make it possible to send men and equipment to the south along what was later to be called the 'Ho Chi Minh trail'. The movement of cadres to the south seems to have begun on a modest scale about July 1959 (Smith 1982, p. 323; Smith 1983, p. 166, 168).

The second point constituted an important difference in relation to the situation in 1946, when it had been important to show the French that the guerillas in the south were actually

under the control of the Hanoi government. In the autumn of 1946 the French were willing to cooperate with the Hanoi leaders as far as the north was concerned, but they claimed that the guerillas in the south were local bandits who had nothing to do with the Hanoi government. Hanoi was able to demonstrate its authority in the south by the effective ceasefire of October 30, 1946. This provoked a serious crisis for the French puppet regime in Saigon and for French Indochina policy in general. In the late fifties the situation was opposite. It was Hanoi that wanted to portray the southern uprising as an internal affair for which Hanoi could bear no responsibility. The political basis of Diem's regime had been weak all the time. It was limited to the Catholic minority and the army, and in the event the latter also turned out to be disloyal to Diem. Yet Diem had considerable success in the fifties because of the economic growth that resulted from US economic aid and because of moderation on the part of the communists. At first Diem's harsh methods were quite successful, too, but his brutal oppression of all sorts of opposition led everyone to turn against him once he got problems. In 1959 the regime was in a serious crisis. In fact, other anti-Diem groups than the communists were even more active in undermining the regime, and a general uprising might have occurred even if the communists had not taken the initiative. In that case, the communists would have lost even more of their influence in the south. But once Hanoi made the decision to sustain armed uprising in the south, the communists with their superior organisational techniques were able to play the leading role in the resistance against Diem. They were also to control the National Liberation Front when it was established in December 1960.

Hanoi's third problem was to obtain support from China and the Soviet Union for a war that might disturb the balance of power in all of Southeast Asia. In 1946 the presence of Chinese troops in North Vietnam postponed the French reconquest and gave the young republic a respite. At that time Hanoi could expect no aid from the Soviet Union, and the Chinese communists were far away from the Vietnamese

border. In fact, the great power that Hanoi hoped to obtain support from in 1946, was the United States. All this was of course different in the late fifties, when North Vietnam belonged to a socialist camp where the Chinese neighbour was a prominent member. In 1954 the two socialist great powers had endorsed the partition of Vietnam at Geneva, but in the late fifties the Sino-Soviet dispute had developed, and that increased Hanoi's possibility of manoeuvre. Hanoi played the role as mediator, insisting one and the same time on doctrinal orthodoxy, unity of the socialist camp, and independence of each communist party in matters of its own (Smyser 1980). This reflected Hanoi's national interests. Differences between Moscow and Beijing were convenient, because they made combined Sino-Soviet pressure on Hanoi impossible. But the differences should not be allowed to develop into a split that would make Hanoi depend on only one of the two socialist great powers and perhaps lead to disunity within the Lao Dong party itself. In the changing global situation of the years 1958-59, the competition between Soviet and China within the socialist camp took the form of rivalry as to who would be most effective in supporting the liberation movements in the third world. In 1959, Khrushchev moved towards detente with the United States, but Hanoi was then unwilling to reverse its policy of active support to the struggle in South Vietnam, and Moscow could not afford to reject Hanoi's policy because that might give China an even stronger position in Asia. In the crucial years 1959-60, Hanoi therefore obtained support both from Khrushchev and Mao for resuming war in the south. After the Cuba crisis 1962, Khrushchev seems to have withheld his support to the struggle in South Vietnam. Hanoi consequently moved closer to China, but during the cultural revolution this was reversed.

In 1959, all three conditions for a successful uprising in the south were thus established. Communication lines through Laos had been prepared. The political climate in the south was such that it would be easy to portray the uprising as an internal South Vietnamese

affair, and Hanoi had probably obtained assurances of support from Beijing and Moscow. At the 15th plenum of the Central Committee in January 1959, Hanoi made the first important decision concerning the south, but it was only made known after a Politburo meeting in May that year (Chen 1975, p. 246). The decision was probably controversial within the Lao Dong party itself, and its content is not absolutely clear. It seems to have been a compromise between a faction that favored a long term strategy of 'peaceful unification' and another that wanted to use the opportunity to launch an armed uprising. Although we lack evidence, it is normal to see the old Vietminh leaders (Ho Chi Minh, Pham Van Dong, Vo Nguyen Giap) as defending the 'peaceful unification' formula, while the younger 'southerners' (Le Duan, Nguyen Chi Tanh, Pham Hung, Le Duc Tho) were favouring armed struggle. The position of Truong Chinh, who was the main figure behind the radical social transformation of the north 1954-56, is not quite clear. He was removed as general secretary in 1956, but continued to hold important posts in the party hierarchy. In 1957, Le Duan was recalled from the south and took over as general secretary. There is no doubt that the decision to start another guerilla war was related to the emergence of Le Duan as the strong man of the party. Ralph B. Smith sees Le Duan as Ho Chi Minh's rival rather than his close associate (Smith 1983, p. 129). In the south, the communist cadres probably interpreted Hanoi's January 1959 decision as a permission to start armed struggle. Later party historians also interpreted it this way (Porter 1979, vol. 2, doc. 21, p. 44). Guerilla activity gradually increased in 1959 and culminated in the attacks of January 1960. That year the crisis of the Diem regime became acute. In November 1960, Diem barely survived an abortive military coup.

In September 1960, Hanoi made its second decision. The third party congress decided on a new strategy of consolidating the north and liberating the south at the same time. The liberation of the south should be obtained by a united front and a coalition government in the south,

at first without formal ties to the north. Three months after this decision the NLF was founded, and in February 1961, the People's Liberation Armed Forces were also formally created. Even the party was established as an independent body in the south, but its main function was to secure that the movement did not develop policies in contradiction with Hanoi's overall strategy.

There were important differences between Hanoi's policy towards the south in 1946 and in the 1958-61 period, but the basic dilemma was the same: How can we step up the fighting in the south without dragging the north into the war? In 1946 the aim of the armed fighting in the south was to kill any French attempt to establish an alternative regime, and the cease-fire of October 30 was used to demonstrate that the population in the south saw the Hanoi government as its legitimate authority. This certainly impressed the French, but not in the way Hanoi had hoped. In fact it convinced the French that they had to seek a direct military confrontation in the north and break the ties with the DRV. In the late fifties, Hanoi therefore chose another strategy, the strategy of an independent southern uprising with no formal ties to Hanoi. For several years it was a success. It took five years from the first infiltration of men into the south until the Americans started to bomb North Vietnam.

Let's now consider the American response to the South Vietnamese crisis in the mid-sixties and compare it to the French policy of November-December 1946. The American involvement in the war has been extensively documented in the Pentagon Papers and later discussed and even better documented in a great many books.<sup>16</sup> I shall be very brief and begin by asserting that the American involvement was a logical result of a commitment to the state of South Vietnam which had already been established under President Eisenhower. All important decisions on military escalation in the sixties were felt by the decision-makers to be necessary in order *not* to change U.S. Southeast Asian policy, and not to break with the inherited containment imperative. These decisions were not active attempts to test or

implement a new Kennedian 'flexible response' strategy.<sup>17</sup> The differences between the wars in Korea and Vietnam were not principally due to shifting strategies in Washington, but to the fact that they were different sorts of war. The Korean war was an essentially 'interstate' war (although within one nation), because it started with a sudden attack with regular forces crossing a border and conquering a territory with a population which, if not indifferent, at least did not take active part in the war. The war in Vietnam on the contrary was a guerilla war which only gradually escalated from the inside of the attacked state's territory and with careful political and organisational preparation of the inhabitants. An independent General McArthur could not have done much better in Vietnam than did the restrained General Westmoreland. McArthur would probably have hit North Vietnam harder, as General Abrams did in the beginning of the seventies, but that would not have stopped the insurgency in the south.

All the American decisions to escalate were in fact felt as necessary only to hold the line. This applies for Kennedy's approval of the counter-insurgency plan on January 28, 1961 with the subsequent increase in the number of American military advisers, for the set up of an American command on February 8, 1962, the continued growth in the number of advisers and for Johnson's more dramatic decisions in 1964-65. The same cannot, however, be said of the decision to back the overthrow of Diem in November 1963. Without U.S. backing, the coup would probably not have been executed. That was a fateful, controversial and unnecessary US decision — a real choice, over which there were different views in Washington. Deposing Diem meant removing an extremely unpopular dictator, yes, but it also meant killing the only able nationalist leader in Saigon, the only one who could depend on Washington without becoming a puppet. One might say that the political chaos following Diem's overthrow ruined America's political possibilities before the military effort really started. As long as Diem was there, Washington could retain the idea of assisting a non-communist government. After the coup against

Diem, the US was in the same situation that France had been, defending a territory more than a government, and trying to *construct* a political alternative to the National Liberation Front. To illustrate this point, it is convenient to quote what Ambassador Henry Cabot Lodge, the one who 'authorised' the coup in November 1963, said two years later (seemingly unchallenged) at a meeting with President Johnson and his top advisers (July 21, 1965):

There is not a tradition of a national government in Saigon. There are no roots in the country. Not until there is tranquility can you have any stability. I don't think we ought to take this government seriously. There is simply no one who can do anything. We have to do what we think we ought to do regardless of what the Saigon government does ... (Berman 1982, p. 108).

The assassination of Ngo Dinh Diem created a situation for the Americans in South-Vietnam which was amazingly similar to the French situation in late 1946. After Dr. Thinh's suicide November 10, 1946, there followed a month of quarrels over who should succeed him. After the murder of Diem there were years of internal power struggles in the military junta. When the NLF (like Vietminh in 1946) was able to exploit the crisis and increase its control of the countryside, the Americans decided, just as d'Argenlieu and Valluy had done in 1946, that the crisis in the south could only be met by military pressure on the north. By mid-summer 1964, Johnson's advisers had developed a full scenario of graduated overt pressures against the north, including the bombing of selected North-Vietnamese targets (Herring 1979, p. 119). The problem was to secure support from Congress for such operations against another state. D'Argenlieu and Bidault had felt this problem even stronger with the left-oriented French National Assembly in 1946, but atrocities committed against French citizens in Hanoi on December 19 were used for all their worth in the French propaganda. This created a national indignation which neither Léon Blum nor the French communists could afford to counter. The National Assembly in fact unanimously

voted a message of sympathy to the French troops and the sending of reinforcements. The Americans got their 'December 19' when on August 2, 1964, the American destroyer Maddox came under fire from a group of Vietnamese torpedo boats near the coast of North Vietnam and *perhaps* was attacked again two days later while it was in open sea in the Gulf of Tonkin. President Johnson quickly decided on an air strike against North Vietnamese torpedo boat bases, and by a swift political move he obtained the 'Gulf of Tonkin resolution' in Congress, giving him *carte blanche* in Vietnam. In January 1965, the bombing of North Vietnam began in earnest. From then on there were two wars in one, an air war against the north and a counter-insurgency war in the south.

I hope by now to have shown some interesting parallels between the outbreak of the first and the second Indochinese wars. In both cases, an insurgency developed gradually in the south and rapidly deepened the crisis of the southern regime. The leadership in Hanoi tried to avoid the north being dragged into the war, but both the French and Americans reacted to the crisis in the south by starting military operations against the north. The main difference is that the French fought a ground war in all of Vietnam while the Americans limited the war against North Vietnam to air attacks.

### 3.2 *Why where the wars so long?*

I have mentioned that both Indochinese wars belong to the longest in Small/Singer's index. This can of course be explained in many ways, but part of the explanation is that they were not traditional interstate wars with two armies attacking each other over a front line. The Indochinese wars were fought between antagonists of which one was militarily strong but with little support in the population, the other militarily weak but with an extraordinarily well organized political basis in the population, especially in the countryside. The weakest party militarily therefore had to adopt a strategy of protracted war in which the goal was to exhaust the other psychologically, not to defeat him militarily. Vietminh and NLF military

operations were meant to impress the Vietnamese, French, American and international publics, not to obtain a military victory. The decisive battles were over public opinion. Vietnamese public opinion was on Vietminh's side from the outset, and France was never able to change that. After the 'darkest hour' in the south (1956-58) the communists resumed the initiative, and with remarkable rapidity the NLF reconquered the popular position that Vietminh had earlier enjoyed. The Americans were thus placed in the same position as the French had been. It took a long time before the Vietnamese were able to 'exhaust' French and American public opinion, but that was the way in which they won the wars.

The strange thing is that the French and American decision-makers seem to have known from the start what sort of war they were engaging in, and that it could not be won primarily with military means. The best informed French decision-makers soon understood that if they were to obtain a change in Vietnamese public opinion and defeat Vietminh, they would have to offer someone else what they refused to concede to Ho Chi Minh: independence and unity. But why should they fight the war if it was not to defend the *French* position in that country? That was the paradox from which the French were never able to escape. If they did not give up their control of Indochinese affairs, they would not win the popular support that was necessary to win the war. If they did give it up, the war would not be worth fighting, and the concessions might set a negative example for nationalists in North-Africa and elsewhere. This is why the Vietnamese state under former emperor Bao Dai took so long to evolve, and this is why the French never really gave Bao Dai independence. In the end, France lost one half of Vietnam to Ho Chi Minh, the other half to Ngo Dinh Diem and the Americans.

As early as January 8, 1947, General Leclerc reasoned as follows in an important report to the French government:

... the complex solution, which will probably be long in forthcoming, can only be political: in 1947 France



can no longer put down by force a grouping of 24 million inhabitants ... yet, the more powerful the *military effort* that accompanies our political effort is, the more possible and sooner in forthcoming will this solution be. The whole problem is there. It is not up to me to consider what our policy should be in the political field. Yet I will permit myself to suggest that it should consist in opposing to the existing vietminh nationalism one or several other nationalisms...<sup>18</sup>

This was in perfect harmony with the views held by the most important French policy-maker in Saigon, Léon Pignon (from 1948 high commissioner). It seems, however, that the French colonial authorities in Saigon were more optimistic than Leclerc concerning the rapidity of the desired psychological changes, at least in the first months of 1947. They believed in what they called a 'psychological shock', which would result from the demonstration of French determination and military strength. Saigon was quickly disappointed. The French could find no 'nationalism' with which to oppose Vietminh except the monarchical solution: Bao Dai. Even he demanded more than the French were willing to give.

What is important here, is to note that from the very outset, both Vietnam and the French conceived of their military efforts as means to obtain political and psychological support from the population, not as decisive in themselves. The French wanted to shock the Vietnamese into a state of obedience. The Vietnamese leaders intended to exhaust the French by denying them any support from the Vietnamese population and thereby compelling them to fight a costly and drawn out war that the French public would not in the end tolerate.

The same applies for the American war, but the American decision-makers seem also to have understood at a very early stage that the war would last long. They consciously prepared for a long war. It is true that in his otherwise excellent history of the American war in Vietnam, George Chr. Herring contends:

..., the optimism with which the nation went to war more than anything else accounts for the great frustration that subsequently developed *in* and out of government. Failure never comes easily, but it comes especially hard when success is anticipated at little

cost. Within two years, the optimism of 1965 had given way to deep and painful frustration (Herring 1979, pp. 145f, my emphasis).

This is true of American public opinion, because Johnson consciously refrained from telling the public the truth, but it is not true of the American government. That is convincingly shown in Larry Berman's recent study of the decision-making process in 1965. Johnson's national security adviser McGeorge Bundy wrote to the President from Vietnam on the very day that the American forces started their bombing campaign against North Vietnam, February 7, 1965:

At its very best, the struggle in Vietnam will be long. It seems to us important that this fundamental fact be made clear to our people and to the people of Vietnam. Too often in the past we have conveyed the impression that we expect an early solution is possible. It is our own belief that the people of the United States have the necessary will to accept and to execute a policy that rests upon the reality that there is no short cut to success in South Vietnam (Berman 1982, p. 43).

On July 2, 1965, Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara established a small group of military experts in order to answer the question: 'If we do everything we can, can we have assurance of winning in South Vietnam?' The answer was that this depended on 'what we mean by the words *assurance* and *win*'. The assurance 'should be better than 75%' if the word *win* could be understood as 'demonstrating to the VC (Viet Cong) that they cannot win' (Berman 1982, pp. 138f).

This shows that the military experts did not promise any military victory even if the United States did all it could, which it never did. In fact the bombing of North Vietnam reflects the lack of belief in a victory in the south. McGeorge Bundy's report also shows that he understood the importance that the endurance of the American public would have. Others told Johnson too, but he refused to prepare the public for a long war because he feared that this might disturb his domestic reform programme.

Why then, did the French and the Americans

engage in wars where no military victory could be expected and where the prospects of a political victory were frail? The answer is not to be found in optimistic expectations, but in a short-sighted conviction that *the alternative to war would be worse*. The answer is found in a lack of ability on the part of the French and American decision-makers to draw the only rational, but also very radical conclusion from what they knew about the Vietnamese reality, the same conclusion that the British drew in 1947 with relation to Burma and India and that in 1962 Charles de Gaulle drew from the situation in Algeria. Georges Bidault's French Fourth Republic was never able to launch such radical policies, both for fear of contamination in other French colonies, for fear of splitting domestic political coalitions and for fear of France's position as a great power. McNamara and Johnson also felt that the United States would lose international credibility if it failed to 'live up to its obligations' in South-Vietnam. McNamara took the domino theory quite seriously, and Johnson was afraid to figure as the first US president to lose a war (Berman 1982, pp. 110, 116, 118). The alternatives were seen as worse than war even if no victory was in sight.

To conclude, the length of the Indochinese wars must be explained by the fact that neither of the antagonists from the very beginning believed in or sought a military victory. Instead they waited for and sought to promote political and psychological changes with military means. The two Indochinese wars were protracted political and psychological wars where victory meant convincing the enemy that he could not win.

### 3.3 *How they ended*

The turning points of the wars were the battle of Dien Bien Phu 1954 and the Tet offensive 1968. The Tet offensive had much the same impact on the American public that the fall of Dien Bien Phu had on the French. This is somewhat ironical because Dien Bien Phu was a French military disaster while the Tet offensive in a strictly military sense was a NLF and North Vietnamese failure. The attacking forces were

driven back all over the line and lost so many men that the NLF had to stay on the defensive for more than a year. In the words of Bernard Brodie, the Tet offensive was 'probably unique in that the side that lost completely in the tactical sense came away with an overwhelming psychological and hence political victory' (Herring 1979, p. 184).

After Dien Bien Phu and the Tet offensive it became clear to the French and American governments that the only way to a solution was negotiations with the Vietnamese counterpart. The French were already engaged in negotiations at the Geneva conference when the defeat at Dien Bien Phu came about. The American-Vietnamese negotiations in Paris started in 1969. The top French negotiator at Geneva was the same man who led France to war in 1946, premier and foreign minister in one: Georges Bidault. He tried to avoid the collapse at Dien Bien Phu by asking for assistance from US B-52 bombers. Washington considered the request seriously, and even evaluated the possibility of using an atomic bomb. President Eisenhower decided, however, much to Bidault's disappointment, to refrain from direct military involvement in the war (FRUS 1952-54; Moisi 1979). The French then had to play only their diplomatic cards. A short time after the American decision of 'non-intervention', Georges Bidault was compelled to depart from the scene and leave both the premiership and the foreign ministry to the radical war critic Pierre Mendès France, who was able to obtain results in Geneva that astonished everyone in light of the fact that France had just suffered the terrible disaster at Dien Bien Phu. In fact the Vietnamese government of Ho Chi Minh made a deal they would not have made in 1946. They promised to withdraw all their troops from the south, establish a demarcation line at the 17th parallel and make the unification of their nation depend on a fragile hope that the regime in Saigon would respect its obligation to arrange for national elections in 1956. Geneva was the greatest triumph in Pierre Mendès France's political life. US Secretary of State John Foster Dulles called him Superman. The only flaw

was that France herself did not profit from the success of Mendès. During the conference, Bao Dai appointed Ngo Dinh Diem as his premier. Diem was utterly anti-French and soon had the French army and colonial administration replaced by American advisors.

How come the Vietnamese were so yielding at Geneva? This must be explained by the fact that the French and Vietnamese negotiators were not left to themselves. Geneva was a great power conference, where the British, Soviet and Chinese foreign ministers took active part in the procedures. The United States was also represented by a delegation, but at a much lower level. Dulles did not wish to become involved in negotiations with the 'commies'. The reason for the yielding attitude of Pham Van Dong's Vietnamese delegation must have been communist perceptions of the Franco-American relationship. The Hanoi leaders probably hoped to avoid further American involvement in Vietnamese affairs by keeping the French there a little longer. They hoped that the French presence in the south would be a counterweight to the rising power of Ngo Dinh Diem. This was probably the policy of Ho Chi Minh and his closest associates Pham Van Dong and Vo Nguyen Giap. Their policy must have been perceived as a failure when Diem succeeded in ousting the French, and from the very first moment the partition of Vietnam must have been deeply resented by those Vietnamese leaders who had been responsible for the struggle in the south. The main 'southerner' was Le Duan, who rose to power in North Vietnam 1957 and a couple of years later convinced the party that armed struggle in the south should be put on the agenda once more.

It may also be that the Vietnamese came under Sino-Soviet pressure at Geneva. Zhou Enlai played an important part when Pham Van Dong accepted to move the proposed demarcation line north from the 13th to the 16th parallel, and Molotov was instrumental in moving the partition line further from the 16th to the 17th parallel (FRUS 1952-54, pp. 1368, 1373f; Lacouture 1981, p. 255). The participation at Geneva was an important diplomatic breakthrough for the People's Republic of China.

It was important for Zhou Enlai to make it a success. He also could gain from splitting American and Franco-British interests in Asia from each other. Molotov was even more eager to split London and Paris from Washington. He thereby hoped to avoid the European Army (EDC), which Dulles put all his prestige in making France accept. As the American delegation to Geneva reported to Washington on May 17, Molotov's message to the French and British was that 'if they will disassociate themselves from US strength and leadership, they will find Soviets not unreasonable regarding their interests in Indochinese settlement' (FRUS 1952-54, p. 827).

The French thus gained leverage at Geneva from the international power game of the cold war. The Vietnamese fear of US intervention and the hope of the communist powers for a split in the western world were cards in the hands of Pierre Mendès France. In 1969, Johnson and his successor Richard Nixon had no such cards. After the Tet offensive, the American public knew what the Johnson administration had known from the start: The war would last long and could not be won militarily. Washington's problem was the same as that of Pierre Mendès France in 1954, how to get out 'with honor'. Washington certainly had its own candidate for 'Supermanship', Harvard professor Henry Kissinger, but he was unable to obtain any quick negotiated solution in Paris. This time the Vietnamese negotiated independently. Nixon-Kissinger used all available means to lay pressure on Hanoi, except increases in the number of American troops. That instrument had been blocked by their promise during the election campaign that American troops would be gradually withdrawn and that the war should be 'vietnamized'. But Nixon-Kissinger bombed more than Johnson had ever done and from 1970 dragged Cambodia into the war. They made friends with Mao Zedong and Leonid Brezhnev and tried to make them influence Hanoi towards moderation. But Moscow and Beijing did not take part in the negotiations, as in 1954. This time the Vietnamese were their own masters and declared that if necessary they would stay in Paris till the chairs rot.

After four years of negotiations and war, with only temporary bombing halts, Washington in 1973 accepted an agreement much worse than the one the French had obtained in 1954. The US troops should be withdrawn completely, leaving NLF and Nguyen Van Thieu's forces in control of the territory they held respectively in the south. Of course there was a cease-fire, but it did not last long. It is interesting to note that the same decision-making process that we witnessed on the communist side in 1946 and in the late fifties seems to have repeated itself in 1973-75. Only after considerable pressure from both the NLF, the military commanders in the south and from Le Duan's people in Hanoi did the Politburo allow the NLF to break the cease-fire agreement and attack Thieu's forces. On the other side Thieu's commanders seem to have ignored the cease-fire almost completely. The North Vietnamese decision to launch the final offensive in March-April 1975 was only made in the last minute and with considerable reluctance on the part of the Hanoi leaders, who were facing contrary advice from Beijing.<sup>19</sup> Phnom Penh fell to the Khmer Rouge before NLF and North Vietnamese troops conquered Saigon.

\* \*

I have tried to show how similar the two Indochinese wars were, both in the way they started and in the way they lasted, but not in the way they ended. In fact the whole 1945-75 period can be seen as one single revolutionary process with four separate attempts to create Vietnamese independence and unity under communist leadership. The first attempt in 1945 did not succeed because the British brought the French back to southern Vietnam. The second attempt in 1946 to obtain unity by negotiating with the French also failed. Instead the French went to war. After eight years they were exhausted, but they were able to save the state of South Vietnam from the wreckage. The first Indochinese war changed French Indochina into four independent states, but did not give the Vietnamese unity. The third attempt only began in 1959. It was more

carefully prepared than the first attempts had been. This time the communists followed a long-term strategy, but after five years of guerilla war in the south they had come so far that the Americans decided to escalate the same way the French had done in 1946. The American public was as patient as the French had been and also permitted the war to go on for eight years (1965-73). Then a new deal was made which endorsed the presence of communist forces in the south, but still unity had not been obtained. Then came the fourth attempt in 1975. This time, no western power was ready to intervene. The American president was paralysed in the aftermath of the Watergate scandal, and the revolution triumphed at last. If we consider the whole 1946-75 period as one long revolutionary war, it truly becomes the longest of all modern wars, the thirty years war of our time.

## NOTES

1. The revision of Roosevelt's anti-French Indochina policy has been discussed by many historians, i.e. Hess 1972; Siracusa 1974; Hess 1975; LaFeber 1975; Thorne 1976; Herring 1977. They disagree on whether, when and why Roosevelt's policy was revised in the 1944-46 period, especially on whether the revision was due to Roosevelt's death or not, but they all fail to appreciate the importance of the March 9 coup for the change in American Indochina policy.
2. Letter no. 460, Nov. 11, 1946 from d'Argenlieu to Valluy as quoted in an article by Valluy in *La Revue des deux mondes*, Dec. 1, 1967, p. 363. Tønnesson 1984, p. 115.
3. Valluy to Morlière No. 1903/3.T, and to Dèbes No. 1904/3.T, November 22, 1946, quoted in Morlière's report of December 4, 1946, Archives Nationales Dépôt des Archives d'Outre-Mer, CP 7. Tønnesson 1984, p. 144. Most of the literature cites 6000 killed, but this stems from one single source: Admiral Battet, who was not in Indochina at all in November 1946. He told the French professor Paul Mus, in May 1947, that 'no more than 6000 could have been killed, as far as the fire from the cruiser on the refugee flocks was concerned' (Paul Mus in *Témoignage Chrétien*, August 12, 1949). Other estimates vary from 300 (Valluy) to 20,000 (DRV). A Dec. 13, 1946 note from one of the local French intelligence services said that 10,000 Vietnamese had been killed or wounded in the battles of Haiphong and Langson. This at least makes it likely that several thousand were killed. Most of them must have been civilians (Tønnesson 1984 p. 148f).

4. Ho Chi Minh's appeal was sent in Haussaire to Cominindo, no. 2062F, Dec. 18, 1946 (received in Paris on Dec. 20, 1946), Archives Nationales Section Outre-Mer, telegrams, box 938. Blum's message to Ho Chi Minh was sent as no. 238/CH/Cab, December 18, 1946, Archives Nationales Section Outre-Mer, telegrams, box 938. For quotations see Tønnesson 1984, pp. 198ff, 242f. In most books and articles on the Indochinese war it is said that Blum only received the telegram on December 26 (Devillers 1952, p. 352; Marsot 1984, p. 347, Le Couriard 1984, p. 343; Ruscio 1984, p. 30). The correct date is December 20, but that was already too late.
5. Haussaire to d'Argenlieu (who was in Paris), no. 1938F, December 3, 1946, Archives Nationales Dépôt des Archives d'Outre-Mer, CP 2(3). For the full text of the instructions to Sainteny, as reported by Valluy to Paris, see Tønnesson 1984, appendix 2.
6. The events of December 19 are outlined from hour to hour in Tønnesson 1984, pp. 205-221. They have been discussed in a great many books and articles, too many to mention here. The above version is based on a thorough study of all available French telegrams and reports, but the whole truth of the matter can only be known if at some time the Vietnamese files (if they exist) are opened to historians. The only other author who has presented a version of December 19 which is in full accordance with the above account is Ruscio 1984. I want to thank Ruscio for our stimulating discussions on the matter.
7. EMGDN to Haussaire (signed Juin), No. DN/CAB 264, Dec. 20, 1946; Haussaire to FOM and EMGDN (signed Valluy), Dec. 21, 1946, both in Archives Nationales Section Outre-Mer, telegrams, box 933. Léon Blum, the French chief of staff, General Juin (who issued Blum's order), and General Valluy do not seem to have told anybody of Blum's December 20 attempt to stop the war and of Valluy's refusal to carry out the wish of his premier. At least I have found no reference to this in French literature. See, for instance, Le Couriard 1984, who carefully discusses the Indochina policies of Blum, Moutet and Ramadier 1946-47, but makes no mention of Blum's order to Valluy.
8. Summary of the November 29, 1946 session in the 'Comité interministériel de l'Indochine', Archives Nationales, F60 C3024. Tønnesson 1984, p. 280.
9. 'Instructions (10-XII-46) pour Monsieur le Haut-Commissaire de France en Indochine', Archives du Ministère des Relations Extérieures E-162-I-2. For the full text of the general introduction to the instructions, see Tønnesson 1984, appendix 4. I have not been able to locate the rest of the instructions in the French archives.
10. W. Wallner note, February 14, 1947. National Archives (Washington, D.C.), file 851G.00/2-447.
11. For an interesting attempt to present, analyse and defend PCF's Indochina policy against allegations that it broke with the principles of proletarian internationalism, see Fournieau & Ruscio 1976, 1977; Ruscio 1983.
12. Porter 1979, doc. 94, pp. 139f.; Gravel 1971, p. 31; FRUS 1972, p. 68. This document has often been misunderstood because emphasis in the Pentagon Papers (Gravel 1971) was placed on the phrase 'Frankly we have no solution to suggest' while the threat inherent in 'If some country should bring matter before Security Council we would find it difficult to oppose an investigation Indochinese problem unless negotiations between parties were going on' was left out in the quotation.
13. Hickerson to Bonbright, February 4, 1947. National Archives, file 851G.00/2-447.
14. Bidault informed Caffery of d'Argenlieu's forthcoming dismissal on February 7, long before the formal decision had been made. Marshall to Reed, February 7, 1947. National Archives, file 851G.00/2-747.
15. Porter 1979 contains 16 documents from the years 1956-59, 127 documents from 1960-63 and 143 documents from 1964-67.
16. Some of the more important are: Herring 1979; Gelb & Betts 1979; Berman 1982.
17. This is the basic idea of the chapter on Vietnam in Gaddis 1982.
18. Translated from the appendix in Auriol 1970, pp. 661-664. Both in France and in the US (see Marsot 1984 and the Pentagon Papers) there exists a myth that Leclerc was a liberal who favoured cooperation with Ho Chi Minh. In fact Leclerc's general views were well in accordance with the thinking of other French decision-makers, although he was certainly more flexible than d'Argenlieu. The only anti-war French general in Indochina was Morlière, who was dismissed on Leclerc's initiative (Tønnesson 1984, pp. 253f. and n. 113).
19. See the review of general Tran Van Tra's memoirs in *Far Eastern Economic Review*, October 1, 1982.

## REFERENCES

- Auriol, Vincent 1970. *Journal du Septennat, 1947-1954*, vol. 1 (1947). Paris: Armand Colin.
- Berman, Larry 1982. *Planning a Tragedy, the Americanization of the War in Vietnam*. New York, London: Norton.
- Chen, King C. 1975 'Hanoi's Three Decisions and the Escalation of the Vietnam War', *Political Science Quarterly*, vol. 90, no. 2, pp. 239-259.
- Devillers, Philippe 1952. *Histoire du Viêt-Nam de 1940 à 1952*. Paris: Seuil.
- Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS) 1960. *Diplomatic Papers 1945, The Conference of Berlin (The Potsdam Conference)*, vol. II. Washington: US Government Printing Office. (Cited in the text as FRUS 1945).
- Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS) 1972.

- 1947, vol. VI *The Far East*. Washington: US Government Printing Office. (Cited in the text as FRUS 1947).
- Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS) 1981. 1952-54, vol. XVI *The Geneva Conference*. Washington: US Government Printing Office. (Cited in the text as FRUS 1952-54).
- Fourniau, Charles & Alain Ruscio 1976 'Le monde politique français, le P.C.F. face au déclenchement de la première guerre d'Indochine', *Cahiers d'histoire de l'Institut Maurice Thorez*, vol. 10, no. 19, pp. 191-227.
- Fourniau, Charles & Alain Ruscio 1977. 'Le déclenchement de la guerre (2<sup>e</sup> partie)', *Cahiers d'histoire de l'Institut Maurice Thorez*, vol. 11, no. 22, pp. 177-217.
- FRUS. See Foreign Relations of the United States.
- Gaddis, John Lewis 1982. *Strategies of Containment*. New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Gelb, Leslie H. & Richard K. Betts 1979. *The Irony of Vietnam: The System Worked*. Washington: Brookings.
- Gravel, Senator ed. 1971. *The Pentagon Papers, the Defense Department History of United States Decisionmaking on Vietnam*, vol. 1. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Herring, George Chr. 1977. 'The Truman Administration and the Restoration of French Sovereignty in Indochina', *Diplomatic History*, vol. 1, Spring, pp. 97-117.
- Herring, George Chr. 1979. *America's Longest War, The United States and Vietnam 1950-1975*. New York: Wiley.
- Hess, Gary R. 1972. 'Franklin Roosevelt and Indochina', *Journal of American History*, vol. 59, September, pp. 353-368.
- Hess, Gary R. 1975. 'United States Policy and the Origins of the French-Viet Minh War, 1945-46', *Peace and Change*, vol. 3, nos. 2 & 3, Summer/Fall, pp. 21-33.
- Lacouture, Jean 1981. *Pierre Mendès France*. Paris: Seuil.
- LaFeber, Walter 1975. 'Roosevelt, Churchill and Indochina: 1942-45', *American Historical Review*, vol. 80, December, pp. 1277-1295.
- Le Couriard, Daniel 1984. 'Les socialistes et les débuts de la guerre d'Indochine (1946-1947)', *Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine*, vol. 31, April-June 1984, pp. 334-353.
- Marsot, Alain-Gérard 1984. 'The Crucial Year: Indochina 1946', *Journal of Contemporary History*, vol. 19, pp. 337-354.
- Moisi, Dominique 1979. 'La diplomatie américaine et la crise de Dien Bien Phu', *Politique Etrangère*, no. 2, pp. 293-305.
- Patti, Archimedes L. 1980. *Why Vietnam? Prelude to America's Albatross*. Berkeley/Los Angeles/London: Univ. of California Press.
- Pentagon Papers, see Gravel 1971.
- Porter, Gareth (ed.) 1979. *Vietnam: The Definitive Documentation of Human Decisions*, vol. 1 and 2. New York: Coleman.
- Ruscio, Alain 1983a. 'Les communistes français, le ménéisme et l'Indochine (1950-1954)', *Cahiers d'histoire de l'Institut de recherches marxistes*, no. 12, pp. 115-122.
- Ruscio, Alain 1983b. 'Les communistes, le gouvernement français et l'Indochine en 1947', *Cahiers d'histoire de l'Institut de recherches marxistes*, no. 13, pp. 25-40.
- Ruscio, Alain 1984. 'Le premier mois de la guerre. (Etude sur le déclenchement du conflit franco-vietnamien, novembre-décembre 1946)', *Cahiers d'histoire de l'Institut de recherches marxistes*, no. 17, pp. 15-32.
- Siracusa, Joseph M. 1974. 'The United States, Viet-Nam and the Cold War: A Reappraisal', *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, vol. 5, pp. 82-101.
- Small, Melvin & Singer, J. David 1982. *Resort to Arms, International and Civil Wars, 1816-1980*, Beverly Hills/London/New Delhi: Sage.
- Smith, Ralph B. 1978a. 'The Japanese Period in Indochina and the Coup of 9 March 1945', *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, vol. 9, no. 2, September, pp. 268-301.
- Smith, Ralph B. 1978b. 'The Work of the Provisional Government of Vietnam, August-December 1945', *Modern Asian Studies*, vol. 12, no. 4, pp. 571-609.
- Smith, Ralph B. 1982. 'Towards a History of Vietnam, 1941-75' (review of Porter 1979), *Modern Asian Studies*, vol. 16, no. 2, pp. 311-352.
- Smith, Ralph B. 1983. *An International History of the Vietnam War*, vol. 1, *Revolution versus Containment, 1955-61*. London: MacMillan.
- Smyser, W.R. 1980. *The Independent Vietnamese: Vietnamese Communism Between Russia and China, 1956-1969*. Athens Ohio.
- Thorne, Christopher 1976. 'Indochina and the Anglo-American Relations 1942-45', *Pacific Historical Review*, vol. 45, February, pp. 73-96.
- Tønnesson, Stein 1984. *The Outbreak of War in Indochina 1946*. PRIO-Report no. 3.