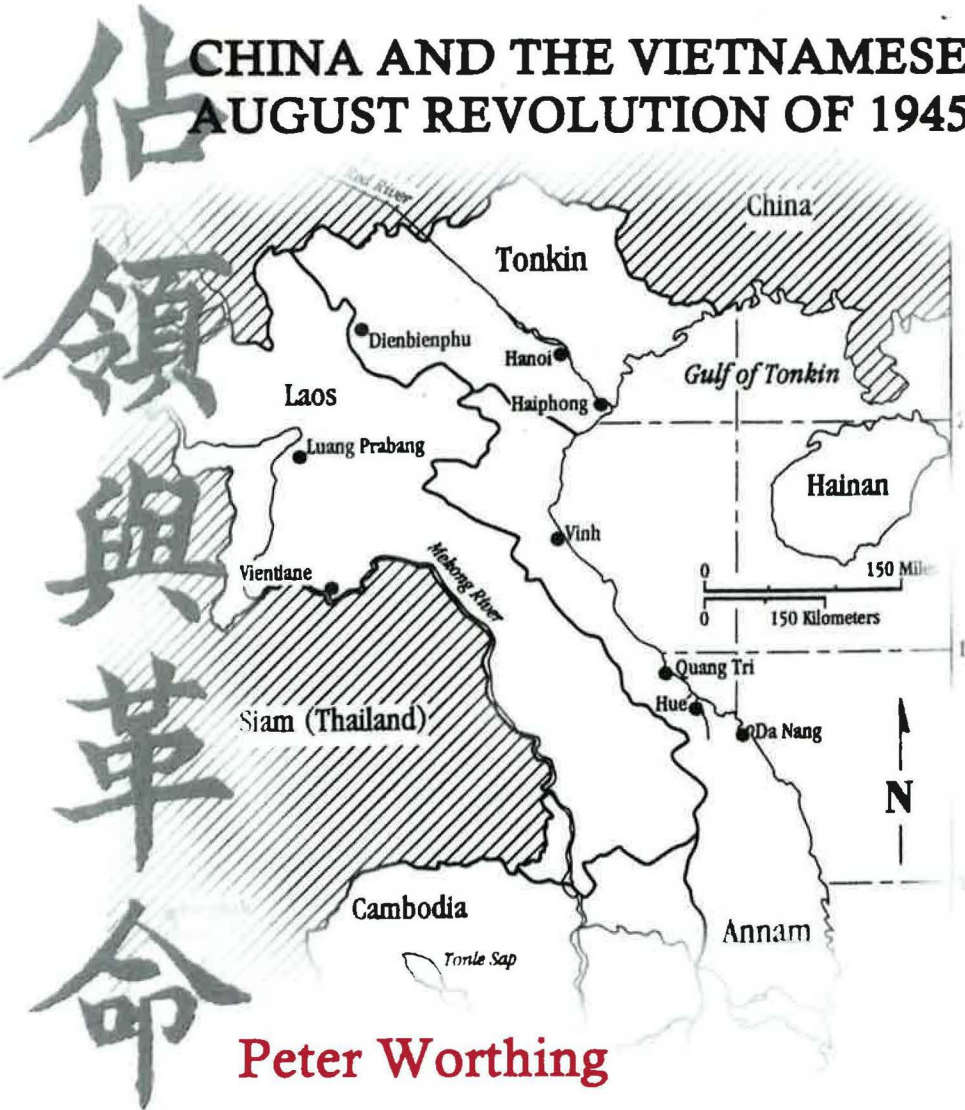


Occupation and Revolution

CHINA AND THE VIETNAMESE
AUGUST REVOLUTION OF 1945



Peter Worthing

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August Revolution of 1945

Peter Worthing

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Contents

Abbreviations Used in the Notes.....	vi
Acknowledgments	vii
Introduction.....	1
1. The Context of Sino-Vietnamese Relations	5
2. China, Vietnam, and the Pacific War	23
3. China and the Vietnamese Nationalists.....	40
4. Planning for the Occupation	54
5. On the Ground in Hanoi.....	69
6. The Sino-French Financial Dispute.....	89
7. China and the August Revolution.....	101
8. Negotiations: January 1946.....	113
9. Negotiations: February 1946.....	128
10. Negotiations: March 1946.....	143
11. The Haiphong Incident.....	158
Conclusion	170
Appendix 1: Sino-French Agreement.....	174
Appendix 2: Exchange of Notes	177
Appendix 3: Franco-Vietnamese Preliminary Agreement of 6 March 1946.....	179
Sources Cited	182
Index.....	192

Abbreviations Used in the Notes

AOM	Centre des Archives d'Outre-Mer
FRUS	U.S. Department of State. <i>Foreign Relations of the United States.</i>
GFB	Guofangbu shizheng bianyiju
MAE	Ministère des Affaires Étrangère de la France
OSS	Office of Strategic Services
SHAT	Service Historique de l'Armée de Terre
ZDAG	Zhongguo di'er lishi dang'an guan
ZYSL	Zhongguo Goumindang zhongyang weiyuanhui dangshi weiyuanhui, comp. <i>Zhonghua minguo zhongyao shiliao chubian.</i>

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Introduction

"The presence of the Chinese in Tonkin," Jean Sainteny wrote in 1953, "weighed in such a fashion on the entire situation so that it is necessary to study their behavior during this period to understand the events that unfolded in Indochina."¹ Sainteny was describing the Chinese occupation of northern Vietnam of 1945–1946, to which he was eyewitness. Chinese military forces undertook the occupation of northern Vietnam as a result of the Potsdam conference of July 1945, where Jiang Jieshi (Chiang K'ai-shek) took responsibility for accepting the surrender of Japanese troops in the former French colonial territory of Indochina north of the sixteenth parallel. British forces prepared to undertake the same task south of the sixteenth parallel. In compliance with this responsibility, Chinese forces entered Vietnam only a few weeks after Vietnamese nationalists launched the August Revolution. Thus, Chinese occupation troops found themselves in the middle of a Vietnamese revolution they knew little of and were ill-prepared to mediate. Their presence, however, was a significant factor in the overall story of the Vietnamese struggle for independence.

Despite Sainteny's assessment of the importance of the Chinese influence on events in Vietnam, scholars have paid little attention to the Chinese occupation or the part it played in the Vietnamese revolution and, more indirectly, in the subsequent wars the French and Americans waged in Vietnam. Western scholars have produced numerous works on the Vietnamese revolution in which most agree that the Pacific War was a turning point in the history of the Vietnamese struggle for independence. However, few have taken Sainteny's words seriously concerning the Chinese occupation of northern Vietnam at the end of the Pacific War. David

¹ Sainteny, *Histoire d'une paix manquée*, 143.

Marr made reference to this omission in his exhaustive study *Vietnam 1945: The Quest for Power*, where he notes that the importance of China's role in the August Revolution has been overlooked and underemphasized in both Western and Vietnamese studies.²

The Chinese occupation came at a critical point in the development of the Vietnamese revolution and had a significant effect on the subsequent history of that revolution. The presence of the Chinese occupation force alongside French colonialists and Vietnamese nationalists created a unique situation in which the August Revolution unfolded. The Chinese played an important role in relations between the French and Vietnamese and helped direct the course of the Vietnamese revolution. Indeed, as Sainteny indicated, an understanding of the Chinese occupation is necessary to understand events in Indochina in 1945 and afterward.

Scholarly treatments of the Chinese occupation have appeared as minor parts of larger studies of the Vietnamese revolution. This neglect is primarily due to the dearth of sources, particularly Chinese archival materials. During and immediately after the occupation, the only sources available to Western scholars were memoirs of Westerners who were in Vietnam in 1945 and documentation released by Western governments. As a result, a standard interpretation of the occupation emerged in the ensuing years and made its way into most of the Western scholarship on the Vietnamese August Revolution of 1945.

This standard interpretation of the Chinese occupation offers a very unflattering characterization of the Chinese, officers and enlisted men alike. The Chinese occupation officials are usually described as "warlords" from southern China, more interested in material profit and war booty than in accomplishing the occupation mission. Some have suggested that the Chinese had territorial ambitions in northern Vietnam and that the Chinese went so far as to sabotage an agreement between the French and Viet Minh in 1946 to prolong the plundering of northern Vietnam.³ Others have characterized the Chinese occupation force as a whole as greedy, corrupt, rapacious, and racist.⁴ This negative view of the

² Marr, *Vietnam 1945*, 6.

³ On China's alleged territorial ambitions and sabotage of the Franco-Vietnamese agreement see Devillers, *Histoire du Vietnam*; Sainteny, *Histoire d'une paix manquée*; and idem, *Ho Chi Minh and His Vietnam*.

⁴ For early works containing the standard interpretation of Chinese actions in Vietnam see Hammer, *The Struggle for Indochina*; Lancaster, *The Emancipation of French Indochina*; Fall, *The Two Viet-Nams*; Buttinger, *Vietnam: A Dragon Embattled*,

The Context of Sino-Vietnamese Relations

In August 1945, Chinese armies crossed the border from southern China into northern Vietnam. It was not the first time this had happened, nor would it be the last. In fact, the presence of Chinese troops in northern Vietnam has been an enduring theme in Vietnamese history and has significantly influenced the way the two states and people view each other. If one were to describe the historical views of the Vietnamese toward their neighbors to the north, the Chinese, one would inevitably use words such as respect, admiration, and deference. However, one would just as surely include words such as fear, suspicion, and animosity. Such feelings are inevitably associated with the several occasions on which Chinese troops have occupied Vietnamese soil. These mixed emotions make the historical relationship between China and Vietnam one of the most intriguing relationships among neighboring states of the world.

Historically speaking, China has played a role as an older brother and protector to which the Vietnamese owe a tremendous intellectual debt. For some thousand years, the Vietnamese were a part of the Chinese political world and therefore were subject to the powerful forces of sinicization. There can be no doubt but that the Vietnamese have been strongly influenced by Chinese culture, turning the Vietnamese political world into a miniature model of the Chinese imperial court and producing a class of scholar elites to rule as Chinese-style officials. Nonetheless, the Vietnamese were able to retain their own identity, especially in the Vietnamese village, which was able to resist the forces of sinicization that transformed the Vietnamese ruler and bureaucracy. As a result, the Vietnamese have traditionally viewed China not only as an age-old enemy, to be feared and distrusted, but also as an intellectual and political tutor, to be admired and respected. The

China, Vietnam, and the Pacific War

The story of the Chinese occupation of northern Vietnam begins with the Pacific War, which united China and Vietnam against a common enemy. China had not been ready for war when it came, still struggling as it was with the issues of national unification and state building that had plagued the Republic of China since its inception. However, when full-scale war broke out in 1937, an upsurge in nationalism contributed to a sense of unity that positively affected the nation and the war effort. Although forced to retreat to the remote southwest while still ostensibly in control of a politically and militarily fragmented nation, the Chinese Guomindang (GMD) leader Jiang Jieshi and his government survived eight years of bitter warfare. Jiang's China emerged from the war with the nominal status of a "great power," one of the states that would shape the contours of the postwar world order. Although the army, the economy, and the people of China were exhausted, Jiang's government was one of the victorious Allies, and Jiang at least was prepared to take on a major role in the postwar world.

World War II brought equally important changes in Vietnam, where the Japanese wartime occupation proved to be a key episode in the decolonization process. With a long history of resistance to French imperialism, Vietnamese nationalists of all political stripes took advantage of the Japanese occupation to prepare for insurrection against foreign imperialism, whether Japanese or French. At the end of the war, not surprisingly, Vietnamese nationalists launched a power seizure that set off a thirty-year struggle for independence and national unification.

The war thus brought China and Vietnam together against a common aggressor, Japan. The end of the war made them potential enemies, for it made one the occupier and the other the occupied. To understand the Chinese role in postwar Vietnam, it is

THREE

China and the Vietnamese Nationalists

International factors helped dictate China's involvement in Vietnam at the end of the war, but that is not to say that China had no plans of its own. In the Sino-Vietnamese border province of Guangxi, General Zhang Fakui, commander of the fourth war zone, had firsthand experience in dealing with Vietnamese nationalists who fled to southern China.¹ After moving his headquarters from Guangdong to Guangxi in 1940, Zhang found himself in contact with numerous Vietnamese nationalist exiles who fled northern Vietnam to elude French police. Through his contacts with these exiles, Zhang was much more aware of the realities of the political situation in Vietnam than were Jiang and his diplomats. As a result, a dichotomy developed in Chinese attitudes concerning policy toward Vietnam. On one hand Jiang Jieshi and the Chinese Foreign Ministry viewed Vietnam from a diplomatic perspective and as a factor in China's relations with other nations. On the other hand, provincial officials such as Zhang Fakui viewed Vietnam through lenses colored by their close proximity to it and by their contacts with Vietnamese nationalists. They therefore had much more personalized views on policy matters and were much better informed on Vietnamese affairs.²

In the war years, it is perhaps more accurate to speak of two "Vietnam policies" in China. Jiang Jieshi worked with the Allies exploring the possibilities of Indochinese independence; Zhang

¹ For biographical information on Zhang see Boorman, *Biographical Dictionary*, 1:56-61.

² This division was not unique in Chinese diplomatic history. Liu Xiaoyuan has shown that the Chinese developed a "double-barreled" plan to deal with Korea's postwar status by simultaneously consulting the Allies, the United States in particular, on the possibilities of Korean independence, and cultivating a relationship with Korean exiles in China. See Liu Xiaoyuan, "Sino-American Diplomacy," 232.

FOUR

Planning for the Occupation

The Chinese people were ecstatic with the end of the war, and the Chinese government was eager to restore areas of Japanese occupation to Chinese rule. The Japanese surrender on August 15 gave the Allies little time to prepare for the occupation of Japanese-controlled areas. As decided at the Potsdam conference in late July 1945, Chinese Nationalist troops were to take the surrender of Japanese troops in Indochina north of the sixteenth parallel. The Chinese hurriedly planned for the technical aspects of the occupation, but they gave little thought to the political problems that might arise with regard to sovereignty in Vietnam. The Chinese government did not provide clear direction to the occupation force, complicating what would prove to be a delicate mission. A basic problem was that Jiang Jieshi and the Chongqing government had a different view of the situation than did those who would actually occupy northern Vietnam. While Jiang saw the occupation in terms of his own international and domestic objectives, the occupation command in Hanoi was confronted with the realities of the Vietnamese nationalist opposition to a restoration of French rule. Thus, the Chinese occupation force was largely unprepared for the challenges it would encounter in northern Vietnam.

The Occupation Mission

On August 20, Jiang Jieshi gave orders for the Chinese First Front Army (*Diyi fangmian jun*), under the command of General Lu Han of Yunnan, to cross into Vietnam to accept the surrender of the Japanese 38th Army. The First Front Army was a combined force composed of the 52nd, 60th, 62nd, and 93rd Armies along with three temporary divisions, the 19th, 23rd, and 93rd. The 62nd and 52nd Armies were not part of the Indochina occupation force, but rather only passed through Indochina on their way to

On the Ground in Hanoi

The Chinese occupation has not received a great deal of attention from Western scholars, but most Western accounts tend to view the occupation as an extension of Chinese "warlord politics" into Vietnam.¹ Such accounts tend to view Lu Han as a self-serving military separatist or "warlord" pursuing his own interests to the detriment of those of the French, the Vietnamese, and Jiang's government. They variously describe Lu's concerns as lining his pockets by exploiting the Vietnamese economy, creating a private fief in Tonkin next to his native Yunnan, or replacing Viet Minh nationalists with his own Vietnamese puppets. They also describe the Chinese occupation force as a ravenous horde interested only in plunder and pillage, stealing everything from chickens to roof tiles.² This view is largely the result of inadequate source material available to Western scholars. This view has changed in recent years as Chinese archives of the Republican era have opened. Furthermore, the memoirs of several Chinese participants in the occupation, such as Ling Qihan, Chen Xiuhe, Wang Lihuan, Zhu Xie, and Yang Zhaorang, make a more complete examination and analysis of the Chinese occupation possible.³

A more thorough examination of the sources indicates that the complicated political and economic situation in Vietnam in

¹ See McAlister, *Vietnam: The Origins of Revolution*, chap. 17: "The Warlord Occupation of Northern Vietnam," 223–30.

² See Devillers, *Histoire du Vietnam*; Sainteny, *Histoire d'une paix manquée*; Hammer, *Struggle for Indochina*; Lancaster, *Emancipation of French Indochina*; Buttinger, *Vietnam: A Dragon Embattled*; McAlister, *Vietnam: The Origins of Revolution*; K. C. Chen, *Vietnam and China*; Spector, *Advice and Support*; Fall, *Two Viet-Nams*.

³ For example, see Ling Qihan, *Zai henei jieshou riben touxiang neimu*; Chen Xiuhe, "Kangzhan shengli hou guomindang jun ruyue shouxiang jilue"; Zhu Xie, "Kangzhan shengli hou ruyue shouxiang de yixie huiyi"; Wang Lihuan, "Kangzhan shengli hou haifang tongji fajun jishi"; Yang Zhaorang, "Yijiusili nian yuenan haifang zhongfa junshi chongtu neimu."

The Sino-French Financial Dispute

At the very time Lu Han was preparing to assume the chairmanship of Yunnan province, a serious dispute between Chinese and French officials erupted in Hanoi. Mutual suspicion and distrust between the Chinese and French was a constant problem during the occupation and has heavily influenced Western interpretations of China's role in the events of 1945-46 in Vietnam. The French saw the Chinese as duplicitous and antagonistic to French interests in Vietnam. The Chinese saw the French as arrogant imperialists determined to restore French colonial rule over Vietnam by force of arms. The animosity between the two sides culminated in a financial dispute that arose over the question of who would pay for the occupation. This dispute has often been interpreted as a part of a larger program of Chinese "plunder" in Vietnam. In reality, the dispute reveals that above all the Chinese occupation command was concerned with maintaining order and stability in the northern occupation zone.

Sources of Sino-French Tension

From the French perspective in late 1945, there was little reason to expect Chinese cooperation in Vietnam. Beginning in August, promises made in Chongqing were not delivered upon by Chinese officials in Hanoi. Chinese diplomats assured their French counterparts that Chongqing would allow the French troops in China to return to Vietnam, but the assurances were useless because Lu Han and He Yingqin feared that the presence of French troops in the north would cause the kind of trouble already apparent in the south. Chongqing also repeatedly assured the French that China recognized French sovereignty over Vietnam and intended to return the northern zone to French control as soon as possible. For example, Song Ziwen had already met with French officials in September, assuring them that China favored a

China and the August Revolution

Western studies of the August Revolution have identified the period of the Japanese occupation as a critical one. The war in the Pacific and the Japanese invasion of Vietnam are often cited as important catalysts for the Vietnamese nationalist movement. David Marr, Stein Tonnesson, and Huynh Kim Khanh have each identified the Japanese occupation as a strategic opportunity of which the Indochinese Communist Party successfully took advantage. Kiyoko Kurusu Nitz has argued that the Japanese decision not to intervene in the August power seizure was a defining moment in shaping the subsequent political situation in northern Vietnam. Truong Buu Lam, on the other hand, sees the Japanese occupation as a negative factor, a disruptive presence that weakened the nationalist movement.¹ Despite these differences, few scholars have denied that the Japanese occupation brought important changes to the social and political situation in Vietnam. Likewise, few of them would disagree that the August Revolution was a product of many factors, domestic and international. The Chinese occupation of northern Vietnam must be seen as an important part of the August Revolution because it helped sustain the Vietnamese bid for independence at a crucial time.

¹ The most thorough studies of the August Revolution are Marr, *Vietnam 1945*, and Tonnesson, *Vietnamese Revolution of 1945*. See also Marr, "World War II and the Vietnamese Revolution"; Huynh Kim Khanh, "Vietnamese August Revolution Reinterpreted," 415-16, 761-82; Kiyoko Kurusu Nitz, "Independence without Nationalists?"; Truong Buu Lam, "Japan and the Disruption of the Vietnamese Nationalist Movement."

Negotiations: January 1946

As serious negotiations began between Chinese and French diplomats in late 1945, the major concern of French officials in both Hanoi and Chongqing was to bring about a prompt withdrawal of Chinese troops from northern Vietnam. Such issues as the financial crisis of November–December and the French suspicion that China had territorial ambitions in Indochina created tension between the Chinese and the French. It was clear that the restoration of French control in northern Vietnam would not begin until the Chinese occupation force withdrew. The Chinese withdrawal, however, would have to be coordinated with the arrival of a French force sufficient to assert effective control. Premature withdrawal would leave the Viet Minh in complete control of north Vietnam and make a French return difficult. It was therefore essential that the French reach an agreement with the Chinese to secure an orderly and coordinated transfer of control north of the sixteenth parallel. In January 1946, French officials turned their full attention to obtaining such an agreement.

Negotiations on the Withdrawal

The French were divided over how best to pursue the objective of returning to the northern zone. Some believed that a formal agreement with the Vietnamese was an essential prerequisite to that goal. Without such an agreement, they argued, the Vietnamese were likely to resist the return, and the resistance might well be strong enough to precipitate a guerrilla war that France could ill afford. Among those French officials holding this view were General Philippe Leclerc, commander of the French armed forces in the Far East, and Jean Sainteny, the civilian commissioner for Tonkin.¹

¹ Sainteny, *Histoire d'une paix manquée*, 172; McAlister, *Vietnam: The Origins of*

Negotiations: February 1946

In early 1946, the Chinese government began serious negotiations with French officials in preparation for the return of French troops to northern Vietnam. At the same time, Chinese officials in Hanoi grew increasingly unhappy with French actions in Vietnam and opposed Chongqing's decision to proceed with the negotiations. They even went so far as to attempt to convince Chinese authorities in Chongqing to reconsider the terms under which the French should be allowed to return. Jiang Jieshi and the Chinese Foreign Ministry were not interested in the views of the occupation command and proceeded with negotiations to replace Chinese troops in northern Vietnam with French troops. The result was a new Sino-French treaty, in February 1946, that further complicated an already difficult situation for Chinese officials in Hanoi.

Treatment of the Huaqiao

The most important reason for the occupation command's unhappiness with the French was what it perceived as the latter's systematically brutal treatment of Huaqiao. In addition to the attacks on Huaqiao in Laos, ethnic Chinese in the Saigon area also suffered at the hands of French and British occupation troops. The French had broken Viet Minh resistance in the southern occupation zone, but their "mopping up" operations sometimes resulted in the destruction of Huaqiao villages. Such actions clearly influenced Chinese attitudes toward the French in Hanoi. On the day after Pierre Baylin's murder, Sainteny asked Ma Ying for protection for French nationals against armed Vietnamese, only to hear protests from Ma Ying about equally violent incidents against Huaqiao in the south. Ma demanded compensation for the damages incurred and an end to the campaign of violence around Saigon.¹ Afterward, in Hanoi, Ma convened a meeting of Huaqiao

¹ *Releve*, 10 H 141.

Negotiations: March 1946

Many believed that the completion of the February 28 Sino-French treaty marked the end of China's responsibilities in Vietnam and that it was only a simple matter of replacing Chinese troops with French troops before the mission was concluded. Although the negotiations over the treaty were relatively uncomplicated, the discussion of the exchange of troops was fraught with difficulties. Jiang Jieshi and the Chinese Foreign Ministry had obtained the treaty they desired and were prepared to facilitate a French return to northern Vietnam. The occupation command in Hanoi, however, was not prepared to do so because it was disturbed by French actions in both the northern and southern occupation zones. Once again, the thinking of Chinese officials in Hanoi differed from that of the officials in Chongqing. Fearful that the appearance of French troops would precipitate a war with the Vietnamese, endangering the lives of Chinese troops and civilians, the Chinese occupation officials pressed the French and Vietnamese to reach a political agreement before the return of French troops.

Negotiating the Exchange: Chongqing

Immediately after the signing of the Sino-French treaty, talks shifted to the technical aspects of the exchange of occupation troops. On the evening of February 28, French and Chinese military representatives met in Chongqing to draw up detailed plans for withdrawing the Chinese occupation force and replacing it with a French force. The February 28 exchange of notes between Jacques Meyrier and Wang Shijie had covered only the generalities of the exchange, leaving military representatives to work out the details. The Chinese agreed to allow French troops to land at Haiphong but reserved the port at Hongay for the use of their own departing troops. After lengthy discussion over the rearming

The Haiphong Incident

Although it appeared that a tentative solution to the problem had been agreed upon by Chinese and French officials at Hanoi on the afternoon of March 5, the difficulties were just beginning. Both sides remained firm in pursuit of their objectives. The French were determined to land troops at Haiphong on March 6 to begin the restoration of French rule in northern Vietnam (which had ended unceremoniously almost exactly one year earlier with the Japanese coup of March 9, 1945). The Chinese were equally insistent that a Franco-Vietnamese political agreement precede the French troop landing to avoid a potential guerrilla war in which Chinese troops and civilians would be vulnerable. These differing objectives put the Chinese and French on a collision course that resulted in a military clash at the port of Haiphong on the morning of March 6, 1946.

Chinese Pressure on Ho Chi Minh

While Chinese and French military representatives engaged in their frantic discussions, Sainteny and Leon Pignon met with Ho Chi Minh for last-minute talks. The outstanding issues between the two sides remained the same. Ho insisted on the inclusion of the word *doc lap* or "independence" in the agreement and that it specify the unification of the "three *kys*." Pressure to reach an agreement mounted when on March 5, Leclerc informed Sainteny that the Chinese would not allow the French to land at Haiphong without the conclusion of a Franco-Vietnamese political agreement. Leclerc instructed Sainteny to reach an agreement "even at the cost of initiatives that could later be disavowed."¹ Sainteny then made a final offer to Ho Chi Minh. Northern and central

¹ Sainteny, *Ho Chi Minh and His Vietnam*, 62.

Conclusion

The completion of the Franco-Vietnamese preliminary accord on March 6 removed the last obstacle to the withdrawal of Chinese troops from Vietnam. General Leclerc led French troops ashore at Haiphong on March 7 and into Hanoi on March 18. French troops gradually took control over areas of Vietnam north of the sixteenth parallel, ending the Chinese occupation. With both Jiang Jieshi and the Chinese occupation command ready to pull out, the withdrawal proceeded relatively smoothly. By June all Chinese troops had left Indochina, leaving only a skeleton crew behind in Hanoi.

The preliminary accord was but the first step toward an intended overall and lasting agreement. Southern Vietnam's future political status had to be negotiated. From June to September 1946 Ho Chi Minh met with French representatives in Vietnam and France to discuss this and other issues. Unfortunately, almost immediately after the signing of the March 6 accord, relations began to deteriorate. Negotiations first at Dalat and later at Fontainebleau broke down over the issue of the political unification of Vietnam. As talks failed to bring results, both sides began to prepare for a military solution. Provocations by both French and Vietnamese troops led to the outbreak of full-scale guerrilla war on December 19, 1946. Six months after the Chinese withdrew, Vietnam and France were at war.

To understand China's objectives and actions in Indochina during the occupation one must recognize the bifurcation of China's policy toward Vietnam at the time. Jiang Jieshi and the Chinese occupation command in Hanoi had differing conceptions of China's goals in Vietnam and the methods for achieving them. From Jiang's perspective, there were serious problems to be addressed at the end of the Pacific War. China's infrastructure was destroyed, the economy was in terrible shape, and the reoccupation of Japanese-held areas was a slow and disorderly process.

Sino-French Agreement

The Chinese Government and the French Government, equally desirous of strengthening their traditional bonds of friendship, and in accordance with the terms of the exchange of notes between China and France of 13 March 1945, of restoring and developing the economic relations between China and Indo-China, have resolved to conclude an agreement for this purpose and have appointed as their plenipotentiaries:

The National Government of the Republic of China:

His Excellency Dr. Wang Shih-chieh, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of China, and

The Provisional Government of the French Republic:

His excellency M. Jacques Meyrier, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the French Republic to China,

Who having communicated to each other their full powers to be found in good and due form, have agreed upon the following articles:

Title I. Conditions of Establishment

Article 1. Chinese nationals shall continue to enjoy the rights, privileges and exemptions which they have traditionally held in Indochina, particularly in relation to entry and exit, taxation, the acquisition and possession of rural and urban real property, commercial bookkeeping, establishment of primary and secondary

This Agreement between the Chinese Government and the French Government Respecting Sino-Indochinese Relations is from Chen, *Treaties and Agreements*, 267-69.

APPENDIX 2

Exchange of Notes

LETTER A:

His Excellency M. Jacques Meyrier, French Ambassador, to His Excellency Dr. Wang Shih-chieh, Minister of Foreign Affairs.

Chungking, 28 February 1946

Sir:

I have the honor to confirm to Your Excellency that the French Command is prepared to assume entire responsibility for guarding the Japanese prisoners, the maintenance of order and security, and the protection of Chinese nationals in the territories of the Indo-chinese Union to the north of the 16th degree of latitude and to propose for this purpose that the relief of Chinese troops by French troops be carried out upon the following bases:

The relief of Chinese troops stationed in Indochina to the north of the 16th degree of latitude shall begin between 1 and 15 March and should be completed at the latest on 31 March. The Chinese and French Military Staffs shall come to an agreement within the scope of the conversations now taking place at Chungking, with respect to the procedure for carrying out this operation.

Any units of the Chinese Army which are to be moved by sea but may not be able to embark after the relief will be regrouped in the stationing areas adjacent to the ports of embarkation, it being agreed that their evacuation shall be carried out as rapidly as physical conditions may permit. These areas shall be defined by local agreement between the Chinese and French Commands. With regard to the Chinese units which are to be withdrawn by other routes, their movements shall be governed by local agreement between the Chinese and French Commands.

This Exchange of Notes between the Republic of China and France Relating to the Relief of Chinese Troops by French Troops in North Indochina is from Chen, *Treaties and Agreements*, 258-59.

Franco-Vietnamese Preliminary Agreement of 6 March 1946

The government of the French Republic, represented by M. Sainteny, a delegate from the High Commissioner of France, properly authorized by Admiral D'Argenlieu, High Commissioner of France, in whom resides the sovereign powers of the French Republic, on one part; And the government of Vietnam, represented by its president, Ho Chi Minh, and the special delegate of the Council of Ministers, M. Vu Hong Khanh, on the other part;

The following has been agreed upon:

1. The French government recognizes the Republic of Vietnam as a free state, having its own government, parliament, army, and treasury, belonging to the Indo-Chinese Federation and to the French Union.

Concerning the unification of the three *ky* [Tonkin, Annam, and Cochin China], the French government binds itself to carry out the decisions taken by the population through a referendum.

2. The government of Vietnam declares itself ready to accept amicably the French army when, in conformance with international agreements, it relieves the Chinese forces.

An annex agreed upon and attached to the present preliminary convention will establish the terms according to which the relief operations will be effected.

3. The stipulations formulated above will enter into force immediately. Directly after the exchange of signatures, each of the high contracting parties will take all necessary measures to stop hostilities immediately, to keep military forces in their respective positions, and to create the favorable climate necessary to the immediate opening of friendly and frank negotiations.

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Index

- Airfields: French access to, 118, 119, 120; Japanese use of, 28
- Alessandri, General Marcel, 47, 74, 77, 82, 83, 117, 153
- American advisors, 58, 72–73
- Andre, Max, 130
- Anglo-Chinese wars, 17
- Annam, 50, 116
- Archival sources, 3, 69
- Argenlieu, General Thierry d':
decree regarding 500-piastre notes, 96–97, 98; and Franco-Vietnamese agreement, 137–38; and restoration of French rule, 71–72, 114, 115, 116–17
- Assassinations, 111, 119, 124, 134, 156; of Pierre Baylin, 124–25, 129
- Atlantic Charter, 75
- Au Lac, 6, 7, 11
- August Revolution of 1945, 1–2, 45–46, 49–53, 101, 125
- Bac ky. *See* Tonkin
- Bach Mai airport, 118
- Bai Chongxi, 24
- Bank of Indochina, 88n69, 92–93, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99
- Bao Dai, 49–50, 111, 138–39
- Baylin, Pierre: and financial dispute, 92–93, 99; murder of, 124–25, 126, 129
- Beijing University, 65
- Ben Thuy, 118
- Berry, Lt. Col., 94n11
- Bidault, Georges, 117, 130
- Binh Xuyen, 81
- Boycotts, 99, 104, 129
- Brussels conference (1937), 25–26
- Burma, 26, 28, 32, 34–35, 38
- Cairo Declaration, 33
- Cairo meetings (November 1943), 33, 35
- Cambodia, 32
- Cao Bang, 58, 59
- Cao Dai, 80
- Catroux, Georges, 28, 90, 115
- Cedile, Jean, 80–81
- Ceylon, 32
- Champa, 13
- Changsha, 45
- Chen Chang, 155
- Chen, K. C., 41n3, 44, 57, 84, 105, 110n29
- Chen Xiuhe: and Chinese version of Haiphong incident, 164–65; and delay of French landing, 123, 151–52; and Huang Qiang, 78–79n34, 79; after Lu Han's departure, 95, 172; memoirs of, 69, 90, 154; and plans for the occupation, 60, 62, 68
- Chiang Kai-shek. *See* Jiang Jieshi
- China: historical relationship with Vietnam, 5–6; neutrality in