

Viet-Nam Crisis

A DOCUMENTARY HISTORY

VOLUME I: 1940-1956

Edited, with commentary and annotation, by

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Preface

After 1961 the United States became involved in what was to be the longest, second-largest, and most unpopular foreign war in American history—the conflict in Viet-Nam. The new American role was only the latest stage of a crisis that had continued since the end of World War II. Throughout this period the level of military activity at any given time largely determined the amount of public attention Viet-Nam received. But the forces that constantly threatened not only the peoples of Indochina but also world peace were found in the diplomatic activities of the many nations involved in Viet-Nam. It is with the international diplomacy of the Viet-Nam crisis since World War II, and especially the development of American policy, that this collection of documents is primarily concerned.

The collection is intended to help both the serious scholar and the concerned citizen to analyze and understand the complex Vietnamese situation. It will serve, hopefully, to bring order and meaning to the mass of material on the conflict by clarifying the sequence and nature of the events that marked the crisis. It also attempts to give the reader a historical tool for evaluating the many differing arguments and conclusions about Viet-Nam.

The documents have not been selected in support of, or in opposition to, any particular point of view. Since some basic principles are needed for selecting from the thousands of available documents, for editing those too long to include in full, and for presenting the background necessary to make them meaningful, it is only fair to describe the considerations that shaped the editor's choice of documents and influenced his commentary.

The primary focus of the collection is on the development of the

Viet-Nam crisis as an international issue. As such, the crisis is unique, for not only has it endured at a high level of intensity but also it has involved all the world's great powers almost continually. The editor sees two issues as important causes of the crisis. The first is the conflict between Communism and anti-Communism, both among the Vietnamese themselves and among the foreign states that became involved in Vietnamese affairs. The second is the unification of the country, which involves the questions of nationalism and anticolonialism. In the editor's view the second issue is the crucial one, for the crisis endures because Viet-Nam is not unified, not because of "Communist expansionism." So long as there are two Vietnamese governments, in explicit or implicit conflict with one another, the crisis will continue. The issue of unification was crucial in the Paris negotiations begun in 1968, at the Geneva Conference in 1954, in the implementation of the Geneva Agreements, and in the outbreak of the initial conflict between France and the Democratic Republic of Viet-Nam in 1945 and 1946. The issue of Communism versus anti-Communism which has divided the Vietnamese people as well as their various foreign supporters has been reflected in the continued political division of Viet-Nam, so that these two issues have reinforced and exacerbated each other.

This volume covers the period from the beginning of World War II to the summer of 1956, when the elections called for in the Final Declaration of the 1954 Geneva Conference were to have been held. This period corresponds to the phase of French involvement as the primary Western power concerned with Viet-Nam, beginning with the reassertion of French authority after World War II and ending with the replacement of France by the United States during the two years after the Geneva Conference. The summer of 1956 was therefore marked not only by the failure of the 1954 Geneva Agreements to end the Vietnamese crisis but also by the nearly complete elimination of France as a primary actor in it. A second volume, covering the period from the summer of 1956 through the beginning of major American military involvement in 1965, will be concerned with the dominant role of the United States and the continuing partition of Viet-Nam confirmed by the failure of the Geneva Agreements.

In the years covered by the first volume, the development of five questions is emphasized. The first is the policy of the Western allies, and particularly the United States, during World War II and the months immediately following the Japanese surrender. The second is the independence of Viet-Nam, whether Communist or non-Communist, from

France. The third is the growth of the (Communist) Democratic Republic of Viet-Nam and its relations with the Communist powers. The fourth is the Geneva Conference of 1954, the agreements it produced, and the failure of those agreements to resolve the crisis. The last is the emergence of the Republic of Viet-Nam under the leadership of Ngo Dinh Diem with the strong support of the United States.

Because all these questions, and their ramifications and interrelationships, could not be treated in equal depth without expanding the collection to an unacceptable length, the editor has chosen to emphasize the development of United States policy and to include the complete texts of a number of documents which mark the development of the Vietnamese Communist movement. Documents in the latter category frequently dwell at length upon domestic matters, but form an essential basis for understanding the development of later events, particularly policies endorsed by the National Liberation Front of South Viet-Nam after 1960.

The 190 selections included in this volume were chosen from more than three thousand documents available to the editor. Obviously all the important and interesting documents could not be included. Many crucial items remain classified by the governments concerned, and for many others no complete and reliable text could be found. Particular difficulties were encountered in locating documents which adequately illustrate Chinese and Soviet policy before the Geneva Conference in 1954. Many United States documents, notably for the period after 1945 but in some instances before that time, remain classified. Of the thousands available the editor has chosen those that mark essential events or that show succinctly the development of contending positions. Commentary has been kept to the minimum necessary to place the documents in a meaningful context. The selections are not analyzed in depth, nor is there detailed examination of the development and interaction of the various forces of which the documents are a product and reflection. In many cases the documents themselves provide information of this type. More complete interpretative treatments are to be found in the analytical works listed in the Selected Bibliography.

Whenever possible, reference has been made, in the introductions and annotation to the documents, to other pertinent items. The reader may find it useful to consult Ho Chi Minh's *Selected Works* (4 vols., Hanoi: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1961-1962), since only a few of Ho's statements and writings are included. Many of the more important items from the *Selected Works* are available in *Ho Chi Minh on Revolu-*

tion: *Selected Writings, 1920–1966*, edited by Bernard B. Fall (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1967). Neither collection, however, is complete, and in some instances the *Selected Works* texts have been altered from their original form by the North Vietnamese.

The documents in this collection are presented in chronological order and are included in the form and wording of the source indicated, with only glaring typographical and grammatical errors in the original corrected where necessary for clarity. All documents for which a foreign-language source is cited were translated anew, although they may have appeared in English elsewhere. Where alternative texts were available, the editor has tried to select the most accurate and readable one; in many cases the alternative sources are indicated. The reader may have confidence in the authenticity of all the documents included, with due regard to questions of source, wording, or legitimacy indicated by the editor.

The extended research project of more than three years that has culminated in the publication of this work had its origin in an attempt to revise and update the valuable collection *Conflict in Indo-China and International Repercussions: A Documentary History, 1945–1955*. This work was assembled by Professor Allan B. Cole of the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, Tufts University, and was published in 1956 by Cornell University Press under the auspices of the Fletcher School and Cornell's Southeast Asia Program.

It rapidly became apparent, however, that the revised collection would have to be so much larger than the original that it would constitute less a revision than an entirely fresh effort. In the first place, the period of time since the original collection appeared had produced many important events and much attendant documentation. Second, developments since 1955 have given the observer a new perspective on earlier events. As a result many documents omitted from the first collection have been added and others, less vital, have been dropped. Finally, a great amount of new material on events prior to 1955, particularly on American policy during 1944 and 1945, has become available.

The Cole collection presented documents covering events in all the countries of Indochina (Viet-Nam, Laos, and Cambodia). The present collection concentrates on Viet-Nam and includes documents pertaining to Laos and Cambodia only when they are directly relevant to Viet-Nam. Likewise, documents dealing with purely internal matters in Viet-Nam, such as land reform laws, have been omitted except when they are directly relevant to the international aspects of the crisis.

It was necessary to make a judgment on the usage of certain proper names. Vietnam, Viet Nam, and Viet-nam are variant spellings in current use, but Viet-Nam is the form most in accord with the Vietnamese language, so the editor has adopted it. Vietnamese names are presented according to common English usage, without hyphenation or diacritical marks and with all syllables capitalized ("Ho Chi Minh"), except in cases, mostly place names, where usage has made a variant form so common that to change would be confusing ("Danang" instead of "Da Nang," "Saigon" instead of "Sai Gon"). In all cases the spelling in the documents has been left as in the original, so the reader may expect to encounter substantial variation.

The editor is grateful to the staffs of the libraries where a number of the documents in this collection were located: the Edward Ginn Library of the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, Tufts University; the Widener Library, the Library of the Harvard Law School, and the Library of the Russian Research Center, Harvard University; the Library of Congress (and particularly Mr. Cecil Hobbs and Mr. Abdul Rony of the South Asia Section, Orientalia Division); the Wason Collection of the Cornell University Library; the Library of the Hoover Institution on War, Revolution and Peace at Stanford University; the Western History Collections of the University of Oklahoma Library; and the New York Public Library. Dr. William M. Franklin and Dr. Arthur G. Kogan of the Historical Office of the Department of State helped locate a number of United States documents and provided much useful advice. The French Press and Information Service in New York helped to find several scarce French documents. Professor Allan B. Cole of the Fletcher School generously made available materials from his personal collection. Sincere thanks are also extended to Dr. Herbert L. Sawyer for the translation from the Russian of Document 77 and to Mr. Alexander A. L. G. Zampieron for translation from the Italian of Document 39. Dr. Truong Buu Lam of the State University of New York at Stony Brook graciously made numerous valuable suggestions about the historical content of the introductions as well as about the translations from the French. Dr. Phan Thien Chau of Rider College was most generous in making available the results of his own research along parallel lines.

A special word of thanks is due Professor Allan B. Cole, whose constant advice and cooperation have been invaluable and without whose stimulation and initial efforts this project would not have been undertaken. Cornell University Press has been unfailingly cooperative and patient. Much of the research on which this collection is based was

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A. W. C.

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