

HUỲNH KIM KHÁNH



VIETNAMESE COMMUNISM

1925–1945

VIETNAMESE COMMUNISM

1925-1945

The Institute of Southeast Asian Studies was established as an autonomous corporation by an Act of the Parliament of the Republic of Singapore in May 1968. It is a regional center for scholars and other specialists concerned with modern Southeast Asia. Its research interest is focused on the many-faceted problems of modernization and social change in Southeast Asia.

The Institute is governed by a twenty-four member Board of Trustees on which are represented the National University of Singapore, appointees from the Government, as well as representatives from a broad range of professional and civic organizations and groups. A ten-man Executive Committee oversees day-to-day operations; it is ex officio chaired by the Director, the Institute's chief academic and administrative officer.

The opinions expressed in this publication are the responsibility of the author and not of the Institute.

HUỲNH KIM KHÁNH

VIETNAMESE COMMUNISM

1925–1945

PUBLISHED UNDER THE AUSPICES OF THE INSTITUTE
OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN STUDIES, SINGAPORE, BY

CORNELL UNIVERSITY PRESS

Ithaca and London

Cornell University Press gratefully acknowledges a grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation that aided in bringing this book to publication.

Copyright © 1982 by Cornell University Press.

All rights reserved. Except for brief quotations in a review, this book, or parts thereof, must not be reproduced in any form without permission in writing from the publisher. For information address Cornell University Press, 124 Roberts Place, Ithaca, New York 14850.

First published 1982 by Cornell University Press.

Published in the United Kingdom by Cornell University Press Ltd., Ely House, 37 Dover Street, London W1X 4HQ.

International Standard Book Number 0-8014-1369-9

Library of Congress Catalog Card Number 81-70696

Printed in the United States of America

Librarians: Library of Congress cataloging information appears on the last page of the book.

The paper in this book is acid-free, and meets the guidelines for permanence and durability of the Committee on Production Guidelines for Book Longevity of the Council on Library Resources.

To the “prodigal sons” of Vietnam

PREFACE

This book is a selective history—a history of the transplantation and adaptation of an imported revolutionary ideology in the sociopolitical environment of colonized Vietnam. In the broadest sense it is an analysis of one response to Western imperialism, of Vietnam's prolonged search for teachers, ideas, and techniques to free itself from colonial rule and become a modern society. It is also a history of Vietnamese radicalism—the story of a few thousand young men and women who challenged conventional wisdom, questioned the *raison d'être* of the centuries-old social and political order, and dedicated their lives to regaining Vietnamese independence and rebuilding Vietnamese society. Specifically, this is the story of the Vietnamese Communist movement, from its formation in 1925 until its half-planned, half-accidental victory in August 1945. My aim here is twofold: first to chronicle the internal developments of the Indochinese Communist Party (ICP)—its leadership, organization, ideological orientations, strategies, and tactics, and its relationship with both international communism and Vietnamese society—and second, to assess the reasons for communism's success in 1945.

My discussion of various noncommunist, anticolonial groups is limited to those occasions when they impinged upon or converged with the development of communism. In the late 1920s and early 1940s, for example, the Communists emphasized patriotism and

national liberation, and no clear distinction existed between their political orientation and objectives and those of the Vietnamese nation. During the 1930s, however, the Communist party adopted an antinationalist stance; national independence was abandoned as a goal, and throughout the decade there was virtually no convergence between the two historical processes.

Though not neglecting the various non-ICP Marxist-Leninist groups, I have focused on the mainstream of Vietnamese communism: the movement that began with Thanh Nien (Youth) in 1925 and culminated in today's Vietnamese Communist party. My discussion of the short-lived Trotskyist movement and the Trotskyist-Stalinist controversy of the 1930s acknowledges the important role of these groups in the early development of Vietnamese communism. Nevertheless, they constituted only sideshows to the story examined here.

My book is not a biographical study of the men and women who made the Vietnamese revolution. Throughout, I have pointed out the predominant role of Nguyen Ai Quoc (Ho Chi Minh) in the founding and continued existence of the ICP. When appropriate, I have also provided biographical footnotes on individuals who contributed directly to the progress of Vietnamese communism. I am, however, neither a subscriber to the so-called Great Man Theory nor a determinist. In my view, Nguyen Ai Quoc was, to borrow Sidney Hook's terminology, both an "eventful man" and an "event-making man." He appeared on the historical scene because he was part of larger events, and his conduct was partly determined by pressures about him. But he was more than a pawn of historical forces. He impressed his personality on the course of Vietnamese history by his intelligence, vision, will, and ability to influence the Vietnamese masses. To a lesser extent, the same can be said of several other leaders of the Vietnamese Communist movement—individuals who had to make decisions within the confines of historical forces beyond their immediate control.

It is not possible to name or express adequate gratitude to the many individuals who have helped to make this book possible. I owe a large intellectual debt to Professor Sheldon Wolin and to two former teachers who are now personal friends, Robert A. Scalapino and Franz Schurmann. Their interest in this project, as well as their guidance and persistent encouragement, has been an

inspiration to me from the beginning. I am obligated to the Center for South/Southeast Asian Studies at the University of California, Berkeley, and its former chairman, Herbert Phillips, for a travel fellowship that enabled me to initiate research for this book. I am grateful to Oey Giok-po, curator of the Wason Collection, Cornell University Library; to Peter Ananda, head of the South/Southeast Asia Library, University of California, Berkeley; and to Monique Pouliquen and the staff members of the Archives Nationales de France, Section Outre-Mer, Paris, for their unfailing assistance. I have unabashedly made full use of the generous help of my colleagues and the staff at the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, Singapore, especially its director, Kernial S. Sandhu, and its librarian, Patricia Lim Pui Huen. Without their support, it is difficult to imagine how this book could have been completed. I also thank the Association for Asian Studies, Inc., for permission to use, as part of Chapter 6, selections from my article "The Vietnamese August Revolution Reinterpreted," which appeared in the *Journal of Asian Studies*, 30, no. 4 (August 1971), pp. 761-782.

Several of my friends and colleagues have read all or parts of the book at various stages of its composition, though in confronting me with facts, they deprived the world of some startling insights. Professor Tran van Giau wrote a stimulating review of my doctoral dissertation in *Nghien cuu lich su*, raising many questions that are examined here. Philippe Devillers, David G. Marr, Kit G. Machado, Nguyen The Anh, Ong Beng Gaik, George McT. Kahin, Truong Buu Lam, Moffett B. Hall, Deborah Frenkel, Milton Osborne, and Jacqueline Henshall readily offered their help, whenever needed. Finally, I am grateful to Ann Hawthorne, the staff of Cornell University Press, and Sophie Quinn-Judge for their assistance in matters of style and presentation. My shortcomings in these and other respects are not owing to lack of advice.

HUỲNH KIM KHÁNH

Singapore

CONTENTS

ABBREVIATIONS	14
INTRODUCTION <i>Patriotism and Internationalism in Vietnam</i>	19
 <u>CHAPTER ONE</u>	
THE GRAFTING OF LENINISM	35
<i>A New Political Tradition 36</i>	
<i>The Introduction of Communism into Vietnam 53</i>	
<i>Thanh Nien and the Grafting of Leninism 63</i>	
 <u>CHAPTER TWO</u>	
A PARTY OF THE NEW TYPE	90
<i>The Defeat of Revolutionary Patriotism 91</i>	
<i>Proletarian Internationalism and the Vietnamese Revolution 99</i>	
<i>The Vietnamese Communist Party (VCP) 119</i>	
<i>The Indochinese Communist Party (ICP) 126</i>	
 <u>CHAPTER THREE</u>	
THE CRISIS OF INFANTILE COMMUNISM	142
<i>French Colonialism at the Crossroads 143</i>	
<i>The Nghe Tinh Soviet Movement 151</i>	
<i>Moscow and Vietnamese Infantile Communism 171</i>	

CHAPTER FOUR

IN THE INTERNATIONALIST WILDERNESS 189

Trotskyists and Stalinists 190

The French Popular Front and Vietnam 205

A People's Front for Vietnam 218

CHAPTER FIVE

A NATIONAL LIBERATION REVOLUTION 232

The Wane of French Colonial Power 233

An Insurrection That Misfired 249

The Viet Minh Front 256

CHAPTER SIX

THE AUGUST REVOLUTION 290

The Japanese Interlude 291

Prelude to Insurrection 302

The August Revolution 322

An Assessment of the August Revolution 333

EPILOGUE 339

APPENDIX *Organizational Charts* 343

BIBLIOGRAPHY 347

INDEX 369

ILLUSTRATIONS

PLATES

Photographs of ICP leaders following page 70

MAPS

Map 1. *Colonial Vietnam* 22

Map 2. *Areas under Viet Minh control as of 17 August 1945* 323

Figure 1. *The ICP and its front networks* 140

ABBREVIATIONS

AOM	Archives Nationales de France, Section Outre-Mer
CCP	Chinese Communist Party
CMTT	<i>Cach mang thang Tam (Tong khoi nghia o Hanoi va cac dia phuong)</i> : The August Revolution (The general insurrection in Hanoi and other localities)
CYC	Communist Youth Corps
DDCSD	Dong duong Cong san Dang: Indochinese Communist Party
DKM	<i>Duong kach menh</i> : The road to revolution
DRV	Democratic Republic of Vietnam
FLPH	Foreign Languages Publishing House (Hanoi)
ICP	Indochinese Communist Party
KMT	Kuomintang
KUTV	University for the Toilers of the East (Moscow)
NCLS	<i>Nghien cuu lich su</i> : Historical studies
NPM	Notes periodiques mensuelles
NXB	Nha xuất bản: Publishing House
PAI	Parti annamite d'indépendance
PCF	French Communist Party
SLOTFOM	Service de Liaison avec les Originaires des Territoires de la France Outre-Mer

TLTK	<i>Tai lieu tham khao lich su cach mang can dai Viet-Nam</i> : Research materials on the history of the contemporary Vietnamese revolution
VNQDD	Viet Nam Quoc dan Dang: Vietnamese Nationalist Party
VWP	Vietnam Workers' Party
\$	Indochinese piaster