The Other Side of the 1945 Vietnamese Revolution:
The Empire of Viet-Nam (March—August 1945)

Vu Ngu Chieu

The brief period between the termination of French administrative authority in Indochina, on March 9, 1945, and the collapse of the Japanese military structure, on August 25, 1945, was one of the most crucial phases in modern Vietnamese history. During this period, two "independent" Vietnamese governments emerged that ended eight decades of French domination and stimulated a social revolution characterized by the Vietnamization of all social institutions.1 In the existing literature on this period, writers have focused on the so-called Japanese coup of March 9, 1945, or on the rise to power of the Communist-led Viet Minh (League for the Independence of Viet-Nam), which was backed by the American Office of Strategic Services (OSS), while neglecting or assiduously discrediting the Japanese-sponsored "new" Empire of Viet-Nam (March 11—August 25, 1945). The only exceptions are the writings of Ralph B. Smith (1978) and Masaya Shiraishi (1982).2 Using mainly Japanese archival materials concerning Japan’s disarmament of French troops in March 1945 and, also, the Saigon newspaper L’Opinion-Impartial, Smith gives an informative narrative account of the Japanese military strike (code-named Meigo Operation) against the French administration in Indochina and the Tran Trong Kim government (April 17—August 25, 1945) in Hue. Having access to the same archival materials and to additional Japanese and Vietnamese publications, plus in-depth interviews with various Japanese figures, Shiraishi gives a detailed story of the Japanese purge on March 9, 1945 and insight

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Complete Vietnamese readings, including dia-critical marks, are provided in the Glossary and List of References for all names and terms introduced in the text and for those mentioned in the footnotes.1 The term "Vietnamization" (Viet-Nam hoa) is used here to denote the processes of domesticating European social, cultural, and political institutions that were imposed on the Viets under French rule (1861–1945). Despite its negative connotation in English, the word "Vietnamization" is more appropriate than terms such as "Vietnamism" or "Vietism." 2 Since the first draft of this essay was written, Kiyoko Kurusu Nitz (1983, 1984) has written on the subject in English. Japanese scholars have also written in Japanese on the subject; their works are not accessible to me because of my lack of knowledge of the Japanese language. In French, the best work is Isoart 1982.
into Japan's selection of its new Vietnamese collaborators. Nevertheless, the rich French archival materials and the Japanese and Indochinese periodicals produced during this period have not been fully explored, and consequently authors have not been able to provide a full account of this transitional epoch, one of the turning points in Vietnamese history.

This article presents a fuller account of the period than has been available. It introduces the larger situation in Viet-Nam as a background for further discussion and then focuses on internal affairs, especially the activities and significance of the government of Tran Trong Kim. I believe that Kim's government—within a period of four months and under extremely difficult conditions—took important first steps toward Vietnamese national independence, including a partial Vietnamization of the French colonial administration, and it negotiated the formal territorial unification of Viet-Nam prior to the Viet Minh's seizure of power in August 1945. It stimulated mass political participation, accentuating the break from France and handed to its rival and successor, Ho Chi Minh's Democratic Republic of Viet-Nam (DRVN), a generation of organized and politicized youths—a valuable asset in the August Revolution and the ensuing anti-French war of resistance. Kim's government launched educational reforms, including the elevation of Vietnamese to the official language in classrooms and offices. Without a close examination of the actions of this neglected government, I believe that one would misrepresent the 1945 Vietnamese Revolution and also oversimplify the subsequent events leading toward the Thirty Years' War (1945–1975).

My sources include the records of the International Military Tribunal for the Far East (Pritchard and Zaide 1981), monographs prepared by former Japanese officers regarding the operations of the Japanese Southern Army (Detwiler and Burdick 1980), French archival material, and English-language press accounts from Indochina and Japan.

Japan's "New" Indochina

The Japanese—after employing the Vichy-aligned French administration in Indochina for almost fifty-four months as an administrative tool to extract as large a share of war contributions as Indochina could afford toward Japan's Greater East Asia War—terminated the mutually profitable arrangement on March 9, 1945 (Hammer 1954:26; Vu 1984:chaps. 2, 5). That evening, Ambassador Matsumoto Shunichi handed Governor-General Jean Decoux an ultimatum demanding Japan's direct control of Indochina and the disarmament of French troops and armed police within two hours. Immediately after the time limit had expired, brushing aside Decoux's call for further negotiations, the Japanese military commanders ordered their troops to attack all French offices and garrisons in Indochina, and within forty-eight hours, the Japanese were in complete control. Decoux, his close associates, and almost all generals—including General Eugène Mordant (code-named "Narcisse"), delegate general of the French Provisional Government under General Charles de Gaulle—were arrested. Only

3 My sources are drawn mainly from the Overseas Branch of the French National Archives in Paris (AOM [Paris]), the Repository of Overseas Archives in Aix-en-Provence (DOM[Aix]), and the Historical Service of the Army at Chateau de Vincennes (SHAT [Vincennes]).

4 Save for the long titles—such as the Tieu Thuyet Thu Bay [Saturday Stories], which is referred to by its acronym TTTB—most of the newspapers and periodicals are mentioned by their Vietnamese names. For English-language translations, see the List of References.
a part of the French Tonkin Division, under General Gabriel Sabattier, escaped Japan’s sudden strike and retreated toward the mountainous areas of Lai-chau and Phong Saly near the Sino-Indochina border. By May 2, all of the French troops had evacuated Indochina for South China, and by that date, Indochina had entered a new era on Japanese terms (SHAT [Vincennes]:cartons 78–80; IMTFE:exhibits 661–63; Dertwiler and Burdick 1980:vol. 6, Japanese monograph no. 25, p. 16; L’Action, March 18, 19, and 21, 1945; Tin Moi, March 11–19, 1945; Decoux 1949:305–6; Pereyra’s report in AOM [Paris], INF, carton 133, dossier 1107; Sabattier’s report in AOM [Paris], PA 14, carton 1; Nitz 1983).

Japan had two goals in suppressing the Decoux administration: first, to neutralize French troops, armed police, and underground Gaullists, whose presence would pose considerable difficulty to the Japanese authorities in the case of an Allied invasion of the Asian mainland, something that was widely anticipated at that time; second, and more importantly, to strengthen the defense of Indochina by acquiring direct control over it and by soliciting support from the Indochinese people, who were to be given conditional independence.

The most significant change in Japan’s new Indochina was the replacement of all high-ranking officials in the general government in Hanoi and in the five regional administrations in Cambodia, Laos, Tonkin, Annam, and Cochinchina. On March 16, 1945, General Tsuchihashi Yuitsu, commander of the 38th Army, which also functioned as the Garrison Army, became the first (and the only) Japanese governor-general of Indochina, and shortly thereafter, in May, he changed his residence from Saigon to Hanoi. Ambassador Matsumoto Shunichi served as his political assistant; later Matsumoto was replaced by Tsukamoto Takeshi, whose official title was to be “Secretary-General” (Pho Toan Quyen or “Vice-Governor-General” in Vietnamese eyes). Japanese officials took direct control of all offices of the general government, specifically the police, judicial, financial, youth and sports, and information branches. Meanwhile, Cochinchina was given a new governor (thong doc), Minoda Fujio, the former consul general in Saigon. Tonkin obtained a new interim resident superior (thong su), Nishimura Kumao, who served until early May 1945, when the region was incorporated into King Bao Dai’s “new” Empire of Viet-Nam. Newly independent “Annam,” Cambodia, and, later, Laos each got a Japanese supreme adviser or ambassador (L’Action, March 19 and April 20, 1945).

Except for mopping-up operations—including a search for pro-Vichy police and Gaullist spies who had secretly infiltrated the coastal area of Tonkin under the auspices of the American OSS—the French community was relatively well treated. Lesser French officials and technicians were allowed to continue their jobs. As for French civilians, only ordinary wartime restrictions, such as confiscation of weapons, radio sets, cameras and typewriters, control on movement, and assembly and forced relocation, were imposed on them. For most French civilians, life returned to normal. On March 15, the Banque de l’Indochine reopened. French newspapers reappeared in Saigon and Hanoi, namely, L’Opinion-Impartial and L’Action. Although the tone of these newspapers was pro-Japanese, their appearance helped to clarify Japanese policy that had been clouded previously by Allied propaganda or by groundless rumors. In cases of forced relocation, each household was permitted to bring with it a domestic. Also, the Japanese guaranteed the safety of French civilians.

As for the Indochinese, General Tsuchihashi decided to convert as many former French collaborators as possible to Japan’s cause. King Bao Dai of Annam, King Norodom Sihanouk of Cambodia, and King Srisavang-vong of Laos were encouraged to declare independence from France and to accept the Joint Declaration of the Greater
East Asian Nations (L’Action, March 19 and April 15, 1945). Their subordinates, save for the most unpopular and convinced Francophiles, were kept on in office, and some were promoted to higher positions in the bureaucratic hierarchy to replace French superiors.

In Viet-Nam, Supreme Adviser Yokoyama Masayuki reportedly visited King Bao Dai in Hue on the morning of March 11 and successfully convinced him to collaborate with the Japanese. Bao Dai convened a cabinet meeting that afternoon, which gave unanimous support to his proclamation of independence from France. This proclamation deserves special attention. First, whether intentionally or not, it referred only to “Annam”—a term that might be interpreted as either Annam (the Central region) or the former Kingdom of Dai-Nam (all three regions). Second, the proclamation abrogated only the 1884 treaty regarding French “protection” of Annam and Tonkin; it completely ignored the treaties of 1862 and 1874 concerning the status of Cochinchina and the cities of Hanoi, Haiphong, and Da Nang (Tourane). Finally, Bao Dai’s declaration of independence from France was accompanied by a declaration of dependence on Japan, pledging to “extend all-out cooperation to the Japanese Empire with sincere faith in the true intentions of Japan” (Nippon Times, March 14, 1945).

Bao Dai’s role in Japan’s original plan thus was similar to his role during French rule—he was a royal symbol without substantial power. Nevertheless, facing a rising nationalist trend inside Viet-Nam, the Japanese decided to recast Bao Dai’s role. As a result, on March 17, Bao Dai handed his office director a written note, instructing the latter that he was to assume direct control of state affairs, based on the principle of dan vi qui (the most precious thing is the people; a teaching of Mencius) (Hoe 1982:60; Ngay Nay, May 5, 1945). Two days later, the former ministers of the French-patronized Court of Hue resigned. Bao Dai was then free to search for new men of talent and virtue (tai duc).

Bao Dai’s declaration of independence thus directly concerned only Annam and Tonkin. Although it inspired hopes for national independence and territorial unification in Cochinchina, for the time being it had no formal effect on the political situation in that region. Governor Minoda more than once reminded the over-excited Viet activists that Japan’s definition of “independence” was a severely limited one. On March 29, 1945, for instance, he insisted that no one should misunderstand the fact that Cochinchina was under Japanese military authority or that the independence of Viet-Nam would depend on the outcome of the war (L’Action, March 31, 1945).

The Situation in Viet-Nam: March—April 1945

Japan’s purge of the French and grant of “conditional independence” to Bao Dai occurred during a period of extreme difficulty in which public support for his leadership was seriously eroded.

First, it was obvious at that time that Japan was losing the war. The prospect of the defeat of Japan stimulated a noncommittal attitude among the educated classes that supplied most of Japan’s collaborators. Meanwhile, Charles de Gaulle’s provisional government in Paris worked hard to prepare for the reconquest of Indochina. Parallel to their attempt to secure international recognition of the French “sovereign right”.

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5 Bao Dai’s reign-name means “Protector of the Greatness,” and he did not adopt the new reign-name Dan Vi Qui. The word bieu in Ngay Nay (May 5, 1945) means “morto” or “banner” (khau bieu). It is an error to translate it as “reign-name” (dehieu).
over Indochina, the French authorities sent spies and commandos to Viet-Nam for intelligence and sabotage operations (Sainteny 1953; SHAT [Vincennes]: IOH 79 and 85). French propagandists stressed the official French declaration of March 24, 1945, in which France promised to give the five Indochinese states greater autonomy and to carry out various reforms to raise the living standard of the people (JOPI, November 15, 1945:2–3). More ominously, the French launched a propaganda campaign aimed at causing suspicion and division among Vietnamese political groups. Among the other things, the French repolished the image of the former “rebellious” King Duy Tan (1907–1916), who was dethroned and exiled to Réunion after he was involved in an abortive anti-French uprising in May 1916. This propaganda was intensified during the summer of 1945, when Duy Tan was brought from Réunion to Paris as a step in de Gaulle’s so-called “secret project” regarding Indochina (Gaulle 1959:230–31; Bois-sieu 1981:308–11, 333–36; L’Institut Charles de Gaulle 1982:174–80, 199–201; Vu 1984:chap. 12).

Meanwhile Viet-Nam was coming closer to anarchy, accentuated by the independence fever, the Great Famine of 1944–1945, and the rise of the Communist-led Viet Minh front, under the auspices of the American OSS.

One of the most significant developments immediately after the Japanese Meigo Operation of March 9–10, 1945, was the outburst of the independence fever in Viet-Nam. The word doc lap (independence) had a magical effect, which altered the attitude of everyone. In Hanoi a journalist noted that “we are entering into a new historical phase. The Japanese troops’ gunshots here on the night of March 9, 1945, destroyed the life of enslavement which had lasted for almost a century under cruel French domination. From now on, we are allowed to conduct our own true life” (TTTB, May 5, 1945).

Even those who had previously considered French rule closely tied to their “bowl of rice” changed their attitude. Japan’s employment of Bao Dai successfully cultivated support among the Viet elite and rich and powerful families. Hoang Trong Phu, the most powerful francophile figure in Tonkin during the French period, arrived in Hue to advise Bao Dai on the future independent government of “Annam.” Vi Van Dinh, the leading notable among the Tay (Tho) population in Lang-son, came to Hanoi to advise Nishimura Kumao (L’Action, April 7, 1945). Ho Dac Diem, considered by the Gaullist French as one of seventeen candidates who could be smuggled out of the colony to represent the Indochinese peoples at the French consultative assembly, retained his post of provincial chief of Ha-dong, on the southern outskirts of Hanoi (AOM [Paris], AP, carton 3448). Even Pham Quynh, well-known for his collaboration with the French, was reportedly willing to collaborate with the Japanese (Hoe 1982:59–60). The roads to Hue were suddenly crowded with important figures in Western suits or mandarin robes, invited by the Japanese or by themselves to make Viet-Nam an independent nation within Japan’s Greater East Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere.

This political explosion coincided with the Great Famine of At Dau (Year of the Chicken; 1945), a tragic event in Tonkin and northern Annam. The famine had started in late 1944; it was the final explosion of economic tension that had built up during the period of French rule; the famine was characterized by the increasing impoverishment of the inhabitants, and it intensified during the Japanese Occupation. Under normal conditions, the peasants in Tonkin and Annam barely produced enough rice for their own subsistence. In the case of natural disasters, they needed rice supplies from the south. However, beginning with the main-season harvest of 1943 (November–December), the Decoux administration had ordered all peasants in Tonkin and Annam to sell their “surplus rice” to the government. This meant that each villager had to
sell to the government a fixed quota regardless of the size of his harvest. In addition, the official price paid by the government was far below the market rate. Together with the abuse of power and profiteering by the rice collectors, this practice eliminated peasants' reserve stocks and bankrupted many middle landowners. Meanwhile, the air raids and naval blockade of the United States cut off nearly all rice transport from Cochinchina to the northern regions. The small amount of rice that was occasionally shipped was reserved for consumption in the cities or for conversion to industrial alcohol for military use. Consequently, after late 1943 the peasants in Tonkin and Annam had to depend on each successive year's uncertain rice harvest or had to fall back on whatever subordinate crop they could manage to grow (Lieu, Bich, and Dam 1957: vol. 2:87-88).

A series of natural disasters in the summer of 1944 destroyed the main-season harvest in several provinces, particularly Thai-binh in Tonkin, where problems of over-population and malnutrition were perennial. Worse, unusual cold during the winter of 1944–1945 ruined a large quantity of subordinate crops. Famine spread through the deltas of the Red and Ma rivers. Children, then adults, and finally whole families died of starvation. Faced with the inevitable, villagers in the regions ravaged by famine took to the road in quest of food. They flocked to local markets, and then headed toward provincial towns and cities, which they were told had plentiful stores of rice. In such places, however, the French and Japanese heavily guarded their rice stocks. The meager assistance available from private charity associations could not solve so grave a crisis. Wandering, begging peasants silently collapsed in the streets or did not wake up after sleeping overnight on the pavements of those cities and towns (Dan Moi, June 6, 1945; TTTB, May 12–June 23, 1945).

Meanwhile, the Communist-led Viet Minh front skillfully exploited wartime conditions to increase its support. This new mass organization of the Indochinese Communist Party (ICP) was reportedly created in May 1941 by Nguyen Tat Thanh (the future Ho Chi Minh), shortly after the French had arrested two Comintern representatives in Viet-Nam during the French “White Terror” of 1939–1941. Under the new slogan of “Struggle Against Japanese Fascism and French Imperialism,” the Viet Minh front maintained a low profile during the long indirect rule period of the Japanese Occupation (September 1940–March 1945). Although the Chinese and American intelligence communities in South China displayed some interest in Thanh and his organization, they only employed Thanh's Viet Minh to collect information on the Japanese via the Chinese warlord Chang Fa-kwei. The attitude of the American field commanders toward Thanh was one of skepticism. In late February 1945—after the Viet Minh had rescued an American pilot—his direct superior, General Claire L. Chennault, refused to grant Thanh an interview. The Japanese Migo, however, brought about a sudden change in the American attitude toward the Viet Minh. This change resulted from the urgent need for intelligence on the Japanese military situation in Indochina. The Japanese strike of March 9–10, 1945, had cut off nearly all existing intelligence, previously provided to the Chinese and Americans by the local French, from Indochina. OSS agents attached to General Gabriel Sabattier’s headquarters were

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6 According to a Vietnamese press account (Tan Dan, October 31, 1946), the quantities of southern rice shipped to Tonkin may be summed up as follows: 25,884 metric tons in 1940; 118,752 tons in 1941; 110,000 tons in 1942; 99,099 tons in 1943; 68,841 tons in 1944, 15,222 tons between January and March 1945; and 7,586 tons from April to August 1945.

7 Although Ho Chi Minh is the subject of several hagiographies, his life is wrapped in a thick veil created by both his friends and foes. For the most recent accounts of his life, see Vu 1984: chaps. 4, 6, 9, 12, and 13.
obliged to leave Indochina along with General Sabattier and his surviving forces (Patti 1980:75–80; Spector 1983:39–40; SHAT [Vincennes]: 10H 80).

On March 17, Charles Fenn, an OSS officer attached to the American Air Ground Aid Section (AGAS) in China, was authorized to contact Thanh, who was then given the code name “Lucius” and sent back into Indochina with two American agents (Fenn 1973:76–80). Later, Thanh was also approached by Captain Archimedes L. Patti, who, reportedly was impressed by Thanh’s sincerity and indifference to the abundant OSS operational fund; Patti ignored Thanh’s Communist background and continued to employ him along with the French agents (Patti 1980:83–87, 104–5). Patti’s decision, it should be noted, was an important one. Thereafter, thanks to the American weapons, medicine, equipment, and, particularly, the pretense of the American government’s recognition and support, the ICP—under the banner of the Viet Minh—quickly recovered from its dismemberment at the hands of the French during the period between 1939 and 1944 (Lieu et al. 1960; DOM [Aix], C.P., cartons 161 and 192). The Viet Minh’s propaganda organs successfully portrayed it as the sole legitimate “associate” of the winning Allies in Viet-Nam and vehemently denounced Bao Dai’s proclamation of independence as doc lap banh ve (token independence) (see, for instance, Lieu 1945). Viet Minh cadres also actively exploited the famine to mobilize the masses and to create an atmosphere favorable to their upcoming insurrection, which was anticipated by the time of the Allied landings in China and Indochina in the fall of 1945 and the spring of 1946 (Woodside 1976:228, 232–33; République Democratique du Viet-Nam 1959:28–48).

Like the Viet Minh, pro-Japanese groups in Viet-Nam did not regard Bao Dai highly. In fact, Japan’s decision to retain Bao Dai on the throne came as a surprise to everyone, including Bao Dai himself (Bao Dai 1980:101). For many decades, Japan had given shelter to Prince Cuong De, Bao Dai’s uncle and a legitimate descendant of Emperor Gia Long (1801–1820), the founder of the Nguyen dynasty (1801–1945). In 1939, Japan encouraged Cuong De to form the Viet-Nam Phuc Quoc Dong Minh Hoi (League for the National Restoration of Viet-Nam), better known as the Phuc Quoc (National Restoration) league. The general headquarters of the Japanese South China Army in Canton also organized Vietnamese refugees in China into a small armed force, the Viet-Nam Kien Quoc Quan (Army for the Reconstruction of Viet-Nam), with approximately 2,000 men and 300 to 400 rifles (AOM [Paris], INF, carton 133, dossier 1120), and placed them under the command of Tran Phuoc An (alias Shibata) and Tran Trung Lap, two close associates of Cuong De. In September 1940, the Kien Quoc armed force accompanied the Japanese 5th Division in the attack and occupation of Lang-son on the Sino-Vietnamese border. Shortly after Governor-General Decoux’s acceptance of the Japanese military occupation of northern Tonkin, in October 1940, the 5th Division began to evacuate Lang-son. Tran Trung Lap attempted to retain his liberated zone but was quickly defeated by French troops. Lap was arrested and executed in December 1940 (SHAT [Vincennes]: 10H 81).

Japanese abandonment of the Kien Quoc army and the self-serving collaboration of the Japanese with the French during World War II, however, did not prevent other Viet activists from enlisting in Cuong De’s Phuc Quoc league: unable to flee the country, hunted by French police, and frustrated by economic pressure, the Viet activists had to offer their services to the Japanese in return for protection and rice. After 1943, the Japanese began to repolish Cuong De and strengthen the Phuc Quoc inside Viet-Nam. In February 1943, Vu Dinh Dy—an agent of the Japanese Kempeitai (Military Police)—was sent to Tokyo to organize the Committee for National Reconstruction (Uy Ban Kien Quoc), a sort of embryonic government under Cuong De (Cuong
De 1957:138; *Thong Tin*, June 10, 1945). Meanwhile, inside Viet-Nam, the Japanese encouraged a number of political groups to join Cuong De’s organization. These included the Dai Viet (Great Viet) parties in Tonkin, the Catholic bloc led by Ngo Dinh Diem (1897–1963) and his brothers in Annam, and the Trotskyites and religious sects in Cochinchina (AOM [Paris], INF, carton 133, dossier 1210; DOM [Aix], GOUGAL, 7F 29 and 63, and C.P., carton 161). In July 1943, an influential Japanese figure, General Matsui Iwane, declared in Saigon that he was a friend of Prince Cuong De and, “It’s better that the French government leaves Indochina peacefully; if not, it will see what decision Japan will make” (AOM [Paris], INF, carton 133, dossier 1199). Whatever Matsui’s personal influence in Japanese circles, by March 1945 the Japanese had most of their Vietnamese supporters lined up and available to run an “independent,” united Viet-Nam under Cuong De, with Ngo Dinh Diem as premier (Shiraishi 1982: 226–27). General Tsuchihashi, however, did not want to place Cuong De on the throne, probably hoping to exploit the existing French-created administrative structure (Murakami 1981:511).

This decision—together with other factors, such as the postwar plans of the Great Powers, internal divisions among Vietnamese political parties and groups, and the growing atmosphere of anarchy—produced a crisis of government in Hue. In March and early April 1945, Bao Dai reportedly twice invited Ngo Dinh Diem to form a government, but he received no reply to his invitation. Only later did Supreme Adviser Yokoyama tell Bao Dai that Diem was not Japan’s choice (Bao Dai 1980:106). Instead, the Japanese brought in Tran Trong Kim, a well-known scholar and teacher who had been in exile since the beginning of 1944.

**The Tran Trong Kim Government (April 17–August 25, 1945)**

Although Tran Trong Kim’s government was an historical accident, born out of Japanese military need, this Japanese-sponsored administration illustrates an obscure side of the 1945 Vietnamese revolutionary coin, which has remained until now wrapped in propaganda. In order to gain a fuller understanding of the complex situation existing in Viet-Nam between March and August 1945, one must examine the backgrounds of members of Kim’s government, its major projects, and their implementation—as well as their significance at the time.

*Men of “Talent and Virtue” (Tai Duc)*

Tran Trong Kim was born in Ha-tinh (Annam) in 1883. After serving as an interpreter in Ninh-binh (Tonkin) for a short period, Kim was sent to France in 1905

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*It should be noted that all the Trotskyites of the early 1930s (Ta Thu Thau, Tran Van Thach, Ho Huu Tuong, and others) had been imprisoned by the French prior to the Japanese Occupation. The Trotskyites mentioned here belonged to the Viet Nam Nhon Dan Thong Nhat Cach Mang Dang (Vietnamese People’s Unified Revolutionary Party). In February 1941, thanks to the denunciation of several organs of the ICP, the French arrested fifteen members of the Vietnamese People’s Unified Revolutionary Party, including Vo Oanh, Phan Khac Suu, Duong Van Giao, Nguyen Van Nha, and Tran Van An. Shortly after their release in July 1941, Nha and An approached the Japanese for protection. The Japanese also organized Duong Van Giao’s escape from the French prison (for details, see DOM [Aix], GOUGAL, 7F 27 and C.P., carton 161). It is interesting to note that in March 1943, two ICP cadres—including Vo Van Kiet—were arrested by French police when attempting to seek Japanese protection (DOM [Aix], C.P., carton 161). The details of Kim’s life are drawn from his memoirs (Kim 1969), and from documents preserved in AOM (Paris), ECOLE COLONIALE, registres 5 and 41 and cartons 27 and 30, and DOM (Aix), AMIRAUX, dossier 2578.*

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as an employee of a private firm. Three years later, he received a scholarship from the Ecole Coloniale (Colonial School) to begin his training as a teacher at the Ecole Normale of Melun (Seine-et-Marne). Kim returned to Viet-Nam in September 1911, began his teaching career in Annam, and slowly climbed the educational hierarchy. By 1942 he was an inspector of elementary public instruction in Tonkin.

In contrast to his low-key career as a pedagogue, Kim was widely known as a scholar for a series of textbooks published in romanized Vietnamese (quoc ngu) and, in particular, for his works on Confucianism, Buddhism, and Vietnamese history. Thanks to his literary reputation, Kim became a leading figure of the Buddhist and Confucian associations and was appointed to the Chamber of People's Representatives in Tonkin in 1939. After Japan's annexation of Indochina into its Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere in 1940–1941, Kim was approached by several Japanese experts in Vietnamese studies. These contacts, together with his affiliation with a progressive association in Hanoi, made Kim politically suspect in the eyes of the Decoux administration. When Decoux carried out his second massive purge of pro-Japanese Viets in the fall of 1943, Kim was reportedly on the list of the Sûreté (Criminal Investigation Department). As a precaution, on October 28, 1943, Japanese agents escorted Kim to the Kempeitai office in Hanoi for protection. There, he was joined by Duong Ba Trac, co-editor with Kim of a dictionary in progress. According to Kim, Trac convinced him to cosign a letter requesting their evacuation from Viet-Nam to Singapore. In early November, the Japanese brought them to Saigon. After a short period of residence in the Kempeitai office, they became the guests of Dai Nan Koosi, a Japanese commercial firm owned by Matsushita Mitsuhiro, well-known for its intelligence operations, which were thinly disguised.

On January 1, 1944, Kim and Trac embarked for Singapore on a Japanese ship. After spending slightly over a year in this port city, and after Trac's death of lung cancer in December 1944, Kim was transferred to Bangkok. Three months later, on March 30, 1945, he was suddenly recalled to Saigon to be consulted on "history" by the Japanese. As it turned out, he was introduced to General Kawamura (Saburo?), Chief of Staff of the Japanese Garrison Army (38th Army), and Lieutenant-Colonel Hayashi Hidezumi, his chief of political affairs. Kawamura informed Kim that he was among the notables invited by Bao Dai to consult in Hue on the formation of a new independent government. According to his own account, Kim accepted the invitation because Hoang Xuan Han, a young friend and another of his co-editors, was also on Bao Dai's list.

Kim left Saigon on April 2, 1945, and he arrived in Hue three days later. On April 7, Bao Dai granted him a personal meeting and, to his astonishment, the king "looked respectful and spoke right things" (Kim 1969:49). Consequently, Kim prolonged his stay and finally consented to form a new government on April 16.

The next day, Kim submitted to Bao Dai a list of ten ministers who appeared to be the most tai duc. With the exception of Luu Van Lang, a naturalized French citizen who refused to take office, the others arrived in Hue in time to take office in late April or early May (see table 1).

A week after choosing his cabinet, Kim selected Tran Van Chuong, a Cochinchinese lawyer residing in Hanoi, as vice-premier. Kim also established the office of Kham sai (Imperial Commissioner) for Bac Bo (formerly Tonkin). Phan Ke Toai, a former

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10 According to one of his close associates, Kim did not hold Bao Dai in high regard prior to this meeting (personal interviews with Hoang Xuan Han, Paris, winter, 1982–1983). I am indebted to Mr. Han for granting these in-depth interviews as well as for access to several rare books on Viet-Nam.
Table 1. Members of Tran Trong Kim Government

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name and Function</th>
<th>Date of Birth</th>
<th>Birthplace</th>
<th>Family Background</th>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Profession and Residence</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tran Dinh Nam</td>
<td>1896</td>
<td>Nghe-an</td>
<td>Mandarin</td>
<td>Medicine</td>
<td>Physician (Da Nang)</td>
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<td>(Interior)</td>
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Source: Gouvernement Général de l’Indochine, 1943; AOM(Paris), INF, carton 360; SHAT (Vincennes), 10H 80 and 10H 4195; and personal communication from Hoang Xuan Han and Ho Ta Khanh.

Apart from the Minister of Rites, appointed two months later (L’Action, June 19, 1945), this group of “new men” was a team of modern professionals—two high school teachers, four lawyers, and four physicians. Save for Chuong and Nam, all of them had been journalists or writers. A majority of them had been educated in France, and all were relatively young, ranging in age from 33 to 49, except Kim, who was 62. All had been in touch with the Japanese in one way or the other. All were inexperienced in politics, although they possessed some traditional influence and prestige through familial ties or education. The most politicized members were Chuong, Nam, and Khanh. Because of his familial ties, Chuong had been prepared to enter the francophile collaborationist camp prior to the Japanese Occupation, but he gradually became a Japanophile figure during the 1940s. Nam belonged to Huynh Thuc Khang’s clan in Da Nang and Hue—the remnants of Phan Chau Trinh’s modernist movement in the 1900s and the Tan Viet Cach Mang Dang (New Viet Revolutionary Party) in Annam in the 1920s. Khanh—a son of a fish-sauce (nuoc mam) manufacturer in Phan-thiet who had reportedly taken care of Phan Chau Trinh during his sojourn in 1906 and given the wandering Nguyen Tat Thanh a teaching job at Duc Thanh “free school”

1 For the special relations between Chuong and Yokoyama, see the report of General Georges Ayme (October 4, 1945) (SHAT [Vincennes], carton 10 H 80, dossier 2).
from "January to September or October 1911 [sic]"—was a self-proclaimed "righteous anarchist." He was a member of the *Van Lang* [Civilized Young Men] magazine group, which was composed chiefly of young, educated men living in Saigon, such as Nguyen Van Nha, Kha Van Can, and Pham Ngoc Thach (an underground Stalinist). During the Japanese Occupation, the *Van Lang* group was reportedly attached to the pro-Japanese Viet-Nam Tan Chinh Dang (New Legitimate Party of Viet-Nam), a fact that was later denied by Khanh himself (AOM [Paris], PA 14, carton 2; personal interviews with Khanh, winter of 1982–1983). Khanh’s affiliation with the pro-Japanese groups, however, was undeniable. In the spring of 1943, he attended at least two reunions of the Phuc Quoc branch in Saigon (DOM [Aix], C.P., carton 161). Shortly after the Japanese purge, Khanh and his friends organized the Association for Civil Servants and Technicians in Saigon, demanding an immediate replacement of French officials by the Viets. Kim’s government, it should be noted, represented all three regions of Viet-Nam. Vice-Premier Chuong, for instance, was of Cochinchinese origin, and ministers Khanh and Thao, born in Annam and Tonkin respectively, were living in Saigon when they were called to service in the new government. Their ideological convictions were mixed, spreading from Chuong’s self-preservation to Khanh’s “anarchy,” but they all desired to be statesmen.

**Tran Trong Kim’s Projects**

Official Communist Vietnamese accounts, and scholars too, have often discredited Kim’s projects as paper reforms, or, more charitably, as simply proclamations of government intent. From the vantage point of history, during his four-month tenure, Kim had time to issue decree after decree, but his reforms had little effect upon the masses. Nevertheless, Kim’s projects deserve fuller consideration than is implied by these sweeping remarks. The projects reflected the general views of Viet elite and intellectuals on a de-Frenchified Viet-Nam at the height of Pan-Asianism and Vietnamese nationalism. Moreover, contrary to popular belief, Kim and his lieutenants partially carried out their programs. It is worthwhile to study Kim’s projects in detail and in their own historical right.

**Constitutional Matters.** Kim and his ministers spent considerable time on constitutional matters when they gathered for the first time in Hue on May 4, 1945. One of their first decisions was to change the national name to Viet-Nam. At that time this was a significant, and, in a sense, an urgent task. It implied territorial unification; “Viet-Nam” had been Emperor Gia Long’s choice for the national name after his unification of the three regions of the country in 1801. Moreover, this was the first time that Viet nationalists in the three regions officially recognized this national name. In March, for instance, the activists in the North always mentioned “Dai Viet,” while those in the South used “Viet-Nam,” and the Central leaders used “An-nam” or “Dai Nam.” Kim also renamed the three regions of the country—the North (former Tonkin or Bac Ky) became Bac Bo, the Central region (former Annam...
or Trung Ky) became Trung Bo, and the South (former Cochinchina or Nam Ky) became Nam Bo—even though only the North and Central regions were then under Kim’s direct authority. Thuan-hoa, the pre-French name for Hue, was restored. Kim’s officials also worked to find a French substitute for the humiliating word Annamite, which denoted the Viets and their characteristics as described in French literature and official use, and they came up with Vietnamiens (Vietnamese). These new names, save for Thuan-hoa, have been internationally accepted ever since. When one considers the fact that during their tenure, the French emphatically distinguished the three regions of “Tonkin,” “Annam”, and “Cochinchina”—implying a lack of national culture or political integration—Kim’s first acts were not only symbolic but they reflected the end of decades of frustration among the Viet intelligentsia and revolutionaries. On June 12, 1945, Kim selected a new national flag—a yellow, rectangular banner with three red lines modeled after the Li Kwai in the Book of Changes—and a new national anthem, the old hymn “Dang Dan Cung” (The King Mounts His Throne) (L’Action, June 30, 1945). His decision ended a three-month-long speculation concerning a new national flag.

Doan Ket (National Unity). Although national unity is an exceptional phenomenon rather than the normal condition of society, Vietnamese nationalists often accused the French of intentionally dividing the country and its people to facilitate French domination—a valid charge. Newly independent Viet-Nam, thus, would need the cement of “national unity” both “spiritually and politically” (L’Action, July 21, 1945) to bind its factions and social strata together. Ironically, however, the appeal for national unity worked more against than for the success of Kim’s government.

At that time, Vietnamese society was on the verge of revolution. The removal of the French community from the social apex—after a long period of erosion of French prestige and authority from 1940 to 1945—initiated an upward movement of Vietnamese notables and intelligentsia. Wartime conditions and the famine had intensified the rising anarchy and accelerated the collapse of the pseudostability that had been skillfully maintained under French rule, thanks to military and administrative strength. The country urgently needed more than technicians and professionals to direct its revolutionary forces. It needed charismatic leadership and powerful theories as well as administrative and military strength, which Kim and his government obviously did not possess.

Lack of leadership was all too apparent. Bao Dai had been trained to be a king who reigned but did not govern; he could not attract mass support. Although Kim was a respected educator who had trained numerous members of the Viet intelligentsia and had profound moral influence among urbanites, he was far from being a suitable political leader in such a volatile situation. In fact, Kim was accidentally forced into a political role only in late 1943; he had been apolitical up until that time. He was given the premiership simply because he was a respected figure without political party or supporters. Among his subordinates, there were talented young men like Hoang Xuan Han, Phan Anh and Vu Ngoc Anh; however, they were technicians rather than politicians or organizers; French policies had prevented such persons from acquiring broad administrative experience.

Reared within the French cultural orbit, and having acquired most of their political knowledge from Franco-centric publications and Viet Nam’s popular perceptions of national anti-French heroes, Kim and his men were incapable of outlining a practical theory. Although they viewed Marxism-Leninism as too radical, their own political views were too much the product of their special class experience to be useful in
governing a nation in turmoil. They saw the ideal citizen as a man who combined a "scientific" mind with "traditional" virtue—an example of cultural syncretism between the East and the West (L'Action, July 4, 1945). Unfortunately, such a cultural synthesis was wishful thinking, too vague for any purpose at the time. Meanwhile, and above all, the Japanese had determined what sort of political theory the "new" Empire of Viet-Nam should follow—that was later refined as "interdependence" or "satellite" independence.

Neither the Japanese nor Kim wanted to see rapid change in administrative structure, and therefore the French-created bureaucracy that was in place remained nearly intact. However, during the first days after Japan's purge, a state of confusion persisted. Some administrators and functionaries left their posts to take refuge in bigger cities and towns (L'Action, June 27, 1945). Under prevailing conditions, it would take months to bring the system back to normal. Time, however, was not on Kim's side. Less than four months after he came to power, Japan collapsed, and with it his government.

In the areas where Kim's government was able to assert control—the cities and towns in Bac Bo and Trung Bo and the communications lines linking them—Kim achieved some minor administrative reforms. Several unpopular mandarins were fired and some were even brought to trial on various charges (L'Action, May 2, 1945). This superficial purge did not satisfy the radicals who had asked for swift and thorough change in all fields. Moreover, even if Kim had wanted to strengthen the bureaucracy with new, able men, he would not have had enough of them to do so. Here, the very reason he was given the premiership—he was a man without a party—worked against him.

Kim's only hope was to improve the existing bureaucracy by appealing to the sense of morality and patriotism among the bureaucrats. He organized the civil servants into the Cong Chuc Tong hoi (General Association of Civil Servants), hoping to transform them into a political arm (L'Action, May 25, 1945). At first, the civil servants responded quite well. The excitement of newly acquired independence, however, did not ameliorate the growing economic crisis. Meanwhile, the Allies, de Gaulle's agents, and, particularly, the OSS-backed Viet Minh front continued to challenge the legitimacy and authority of Kim's government. These factors in combination significantly reduced the enthusiasm of the bureaucrats. Their attitude was so indifferent that by July 1945, Phan Anh, the minister of youth, publicly criticized their "unconcerned" mentality and decided to organize the younger civil servants into a "civil servant youth group" (Tinh Tien, August 7, 1945).

Military strength—a factor that might have helped Kim's government to deflect challenges from competing groups—was absolutely beyond Kim's control. His government did not have even a nominal defense minister. Some former tirailleurs (Viet soldiers under French rule) were assembled into a new organization, the Viet Nam Nghia Dung Quan (Viet-Nam Righteous Warriors), but they were kept safely under direct Japanese control. The police were also reorganized and controlled by the Japanese. It was not until June and July, when Japan agreed in principle to return Nam Bo to Kim's government, that Kim was allowed to organize a corps of Bao An (Security Guards), but by then the situation was beyond recovery (IMTFE, exhibit 663; Hai Phong, July 16, 1945; L'Action, August 3 and 9, 1945). The Japanese army thus was Kim's sole source of military strength. His government lasted only as long as the Japanese military presence in Viet-Nam.

These factors in combination made Kim's national unity a toothless tiger. Kim and his men did not have the means to bring about effective national unity. To be
sure, in order to sustain Kim’s government, the Japanese sponsored the creation of the Tan Viet Nam Dang (New Viet-Nam Party)—a group that included many prominent intellectuals, provisioned as the sole political party in Viet-Nam (L’Action, June 9, 1945; Saigon, June 12, 1945). Not all pro-Japanese groups, however, stood behind Kim. The most hostile were the Catholic dissidents in Thuan-hoa, led by Ngo Dinh Khoi and Ngo Dinh Diem. Although Kim appointed Tran Van Ly, one of Diem’s followers, to the office of governor of the four southern provinces in Trung Bo, Diem’s men distributed tracts and circulated rumors that Prince Cuong De and Diem were to take over power when Japan granted Viet-Nam its true independence (Kim 1969:64–65). Their war of rumors and harassment could hardly be controlled or retaliated against since Khoi’s eldest son served as “private secretary” to Adviser Yokoyama (see fn. 20).

More menacing, however, was the Viet Minh. By the summer of 1945, OSS support of the Viet Minh reached its peak. An American OSS team, led by Major Allison K. Thomas, was dropped into Ho’s secret zone in northern Bac Bo; the team helped to train Viet Minh militiamen and supplied them with the latest model rifles (U.S. Congress, Hearings [May 1972]:243–80; Patti 1980:129). The OSS and, in particular, its information on the geopolitical situation not only strengthened the position and popularity of the Viet Minh but also helped Ho to exploit Japan’s sudden surrender (Vu 1984: chap. 9).

Kim’s national unity program opened various government offices to underground Communist cadres or Viet Minh sympathizers. Nguyen Manh Ha, the future economy minister under Ho Chi Minh, served as the economic chief of Hai-phong and, later, as the economic chief of Bac Bo (L’Action, June 9, 1945; DOM [Aix], 7F 29-1). Hoang Minh Giam, Ho Chi Minh’s future foreign minister, started his on-the-job training by performing as chief of the Japan-Vietnamese liaison team in Bac Bo (Tin Moi, August 3, 1945). Ton Quang Phiet, the future chairman of the Viet Minh Revolutionary Committee in Nguyen Tri Phuong City (Hue), was a counselor of the National Youth Council, the secretary-general of the Japanese-sponsored New Viet-Nam Party, and also an adviser for many high-ranking officials, including Bao Dai’s office director and Ho Ta Khanh, the minister of economy (Etudes vietnamiennes 1973:58

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14 Diem’s pro-Japanese career, it should be noted, was both sweet and sour. Kha, Diem’s father, served the French as an interpreter during the French conquest. Kha’s most decorated service was his participation in the campaign against Phan Dinh Phung’s resistance movement in northern Annam in 1895, which helped him to climb to the post of deputy director of the Truong Quoc Hoc (National School), newly created in Hue in 1896 to replace the traditional School of Interpreters (Truong Hanh Nhon) (DOM [Aix], ANNAM, R 1). From 1907 onward, however, Kha was in disgrace due to his alleged opposition to the French deportation of King Thanh Thai (1889–1907) from Hue. Thanks to the aegis of Nguyen Hsu Bai, another powerful Catholic collaborator and father-in-law of Diem’s eldest brother, Khoi, the Ngo brothers survived and steadily advanced in the mandarinal bureaucracy. In 1929, as governor of Binh-thuan province (southern Annam), Diem gained a reputation as one of the “purest” (thanh liem) mandarins. Diem also displayed special zeal in crushing communism. A Chinese assassin was dispatched to Phan-rang, the provincial town of Binh-thuan, by the Communists, but he failed to liquidate Diem. In May 1933, Diem was recalled to Hue to head the Ministry of Interior (Bo Lai) under the newly returned King Bao Dai. Two months later, probably under Bai’s pressure, Diem resigned on the ground that the French had not honored the treaty of 1884. The French reacted, stripping all honorable titles of Bai and Diem. Thereafter Diem leaned toward the dissidents’ camp. In 1943, he began to reunify the Catholics into a bloc, and he sent an emissary to Japan to see Cuong De (Cuong De 1957:138). In June and July 1944, the French uncovered Diem’s Dai Viet Phuc Hung Hoi (Association for the Restoration of Great Viet), arresting a majority of his followers. Nevertheless, Diem escaped and went to Cochinchina under Japanese protection on July 12 (Ngo Dinh Thuc’s letter of August 21, 1944, in AOM [Paris], PA 14, carton 1; Paul Arroux’s reports in ibid.; and SHAT [Vincennes], 10H 4195).
and 60; Hoe 1982:60–63; personal interviews with Khanh in winter, 1982–1983). In Nam Bo, Pham Ngoc Thach continued to disguise his Communist background as he approached the Japanese to take control of the Thanh Nien Tien Phong (Vanguard Youth) organization. Pham Van Bach, the future chairman of the Executive and Resistance Committee of Nam Bo, sought advice from the "organization" (the ICP) before accepting the office of provincial judge in Ben-tre (Bach 1982). Infiltration by these Communist cadres and Viet Minh sympathizers, together with their psychological warfare, were important factors in the sudden collapse of Kim's government in late August 1945.

Worse, both the national economy and the government were bankrupt. Controlling the Banque de l'Indochine, the Japanese freely issued banknotes to meet their needs. From March to August 1945, the Japanese reportedly helped themselves 787 million yen (about 800 million piasters), more than the total amount transferred to them as occupation expenses by the French from late 1940 to February 1945 (720 million piasters), and up to one-third of the 500-piaster bills in circulation (AOM [Paris], A.E., cartons 182 and 289; Decoux 1949:446n1; JOFI, November 22, 1945:14–15). Meanwhile, the cost of living in cities became unbearable. In May, one had to pay over 800 piasters for 100 kilograms of rice, 20 piasters for 1 kilogram of pork fat, or 1 piaster for an egg, about forty times the cost of living in 1942 (Thong Tin, June 10, 1945; DOM [Aix], RST 70–77). Famine continued to ravage Bac Bo and Trung Bo. In many places it broke down all social order, and security declined in nearly all provinces. Many villages were almost empty. Bandits and thieves—either professional or led by revolutionaries—increased their activities. Anarchy started in the countryside and spread with refugees to the cities and provincial towns. Kim's national unity, therefore, was less attractive than personal interest and survival.

**Against the Famine.** Although their latitude for action was limited, Kim's government devoted its most concentrated efforts to fighting the famine. On the one hand, Kim asked for and obtained Japan's approval to abandon the forced sale of rice in Trung Bo and an exemption for those who owned rice fields of less than three mou (mou) in Bac Bo (L'Action, May 19, 1945; Hai Phong, July 16, 1945). His minister of supplies, Nguyen Huu Thi, was sent to Saigon to arrange the transport of rice from the South to Trung Bo and Bac Bo. In order to avoid American air raids, ports outside of Saigon were used as departure points for convoys of wooden vessels. Private rice shippers were granted freedom of transport, purchase, and sale. To prevent dishonest practices, however, strict control over rice price and stockage was decreed. Offenders could be given the death sentence and have their property and assets confiscated (Tin Moi, July 17, 1945). In Bac Bo, Kim created the Ty Liem Phong Kinh Te (Economic Police Office) to fight the malpractices of blackmarketeering under Nguyen Duy Que (Tin Moi, July 10 and 11, and August 3, 1945). A number of owners of rice depots were arrested and fined for their violations. On the other hand, Kim ordered the concentration of famine survivors and homeless wanderers into special camps. A press campaign stimulated the mushrooming development of famine relief associations.

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15 Vanguard Youth (TNTP) was created in May 1945 under Japanese auspices. Prior to August 19, 1945, Kha Vang Can was its principal leader (president of the Executive Committee) (Sai Gon, May 25, 26, 1945; Hung Viet, August 17, 20, and 22, 1945; DOM [Aix], C.P., carton 161).

16 According to Annuaire statistique de l'Indochine, 1943–1946 (pp. 204–6), from 1942 (second quarter) to 1945 (second quarter), the cost of food in Hanoi increased 900 percent for a European household, 1,440 percent for a Vietnamese middle-class household, and 1,920 percent for a working-class Vietnamese household.
around the country. In late March, all of these associations in Bac Bo merged into Nguyen Van To’s General Association for Assistance to the Famine Victims, which thereafter accelerated its operation from fund raising to distributing support where it was needed. From March to May 1945, To’s association raised 783,403 piasters (L’Action, March 21, April 27, and May 30, 1945). In Nam Bo, more than twenty relief associations were created in May 1945. Within a month, these groups had collected 1,677,886 piasters, including 481,570 piasters to purchase and ship 1,592 tons of rice for the famine victims (L’Action, May 24, and June 22, 1945; Hai Phong, June 23, 1945). Because all wooden vessels over thirty tons were requisitioned by the Japanese, and because the port of Haiphong was mined by the Americans, the rice from the South arrived in Bac Bo very slowly. Even so, Kim’s famine-relief programs not only helped to reduce the people’s misery but they also provided the masses, especially the youth, with an opportunity to engage in social activities.

Kim’s efforts did not always progress smoothly. In addition to the Viet Minh’s obstruction of his famine relief projects (by inciting the peasants to attack the public rice stocks or maliciously discrediting the officials and leaders of the relief associations), intelligence information collected by the Viet Minh helped American bombers to escalate their raids, causing further deterioration of the communications lines (AOM [Paris], AE, carton 578). Communications were so difficult that Kim’s cabinet had to transmit official messages using bicycles (Tin Moi, June 15, 1945). On July 23, Vu Ngoc Anh, one of Kim’s ministers, was killed in an American air raid in Bac Bo. Still, a good summer harvest (chiem harvest) in May and June 1945 and the fact that food requirements had been lowered by the loss of over one million famine victims significantly reduced the food crisis. By June 1945, the famine was nearly over. In Hanoi and other provinces, the price of rice plummeted from 850 to about 300 piasters per 100 kilograms (Thong Tin, June 10, 1945). In several provinces, the problem swiftly changed from a shortage of rice to a lack of harvest workers (Dan Moi, June 6, 1945). With the arrival of rice cargo ships from the South in July 1945, the famine finally ended.

**Tax Reforms.** Like its Communist arch rival, Kim’s government wanted to tackle the issue of taxes, particularly the unpopular thue than (capitation tax). Under French rule, this tax was divided into thirteen categories, from 750 piasters (the first tax bracket) to 3.50 piasters (the thirteenth tax bracket). In addition, each individual had to pay an amount equal to 60 percent of his principal tax for the regional budget and from 45 to 60 percent for the provincial budget, which meant that those of the thirteenth tax bracket, about 2,300,000 households, each had to pay a total of 7.70 piasters per year as their capitation tax. Kim successfully persuaded the Japanese to grant households in the thirteenth category a significant tax reduction. This group was then divided into two categories, the thirteenth and the fourteenth. About 1,800,000 taxpayers assigned to the redefined thirteenth tax bracket now had to pay a total amount of 3 piasters per year, and another 500,000 in the fourteenth bracket were to pay only 1 piaster. All additional regional and provincial taxes were suppressed. This tax reform was actually only adopted in Bac Bo. But on his own authority, Kim granted to the propertyless people and low-income employees of Trung Bo an exemption from the capitation tax. In Nam Bo, the Japanese continued to apply the French-imposed tax brackets of 1944 (Nuoc Nam, March 3, 1945; L’Action, May 19 and 30, 1945).

**Educational Reforms.** Kim’s government put great emphasis on educational reform, concentrating on the development of technical training and particularly on the use of
romanized script (quoc ngu) as the main language of instruction (Tinh Tien, July 5, 1945; L'Action, July 4 and 13, 1945). Less than two months in power, Kim organized the first primary examinations in Vietnamese and planned to use Vietnamese in the advanced tests (Tin Moi, June 13, 14, 23, 25, and July 18, 1945). Hoang Xuan Han, the minister of education, also worked hard to Vietnamize public secondary education. Such projects required a longer period than four months to achieve their full results, but they prepared the ground for the Viet Minh to launch its compulsory mass education in the near future. In July, when the Japanese decided to grant Viet-Nam full independence and territorial unification, Kim's government was preparing to carry out much more profound educational reform, starting with the formation of a national committee responsible for the creation of a national system of education.

Judicial Reforms. In his role as minister of justice, Trinh Dinh Thao launched an attempt to reform the existing judicial systems. In May 1945, the Committee for the Reform and Unification of Laws was created in Hue, headed by Thao (L'Action, June 2, 1945). In addition, Thao's ministry reexamined the sentences of political prisoners, releasing a number of anti-French activists and restoring the civil rights of the others. On this occasion, a number of Communist cadres returned to their former cells, and they actively participated in the destruction of Kim's authority (L'Action, July 4, 1945).

Mass Political Participation. An undeniable contribution of Kim's government was its sponsorship of mass political participation. In memorial ceremonies, Kim honored all national heroes, from the legendary national founders, the Hung kings (2879–257 B.C.), to prominent anti-French martyrs like Nguyen Thai Hoc, the leader of the Viet-Nam Nationalist Party (VNQDD) who was executed with twelve comrades in 1930. A committee was organized to select a list of national heroes to be introduced to the Temple of Martyrs (Nghia Liet Tu) (L'Action, June 26, 1945). City streets were renamed. In Thuan-hoa (Hue), King Le Thai To, who had regained independence from the Chinese in 1427, replaced Jules Ferry on the signboards of a principal boulevard. General Tran Hung Dao, who had twice checked Mongol invasions in the thirteenth century, took the place of Paul Bert. On August 1, the new mayor of Hanoi, Tran Van Lai, went even further when he ordered the destruction of French-erected statues in the city parks as part of his campaign to "Wipe Out Humiliating Remnants" (Tinh Moi, August 2, 1945). Similar campaigns were carried out in Nam Bo in late August (Hung Viet, August 23, 1945). Meanwhile, the Vietnamese press blossomed—free at last to publish accounts of anti-French movements and critical comments on French collaborators in the recent past. Severe criticism was even extended to Bao Dai's great-grandfather, Nguyen Huu Do—who had played an important role in the French conquest of Dai Nam in the 1880s (Dan Moi, May–July 1945; Hai Phong, July 28, 1945).

Kim's most impressive project was the organization of youth. Phan Anh, the minister of youth, attempted to centralize and strictly control all the youth organizations, which had proliferated immediately after March 9, 1945. On May 25, an imperial order laid down an inclusive, hierarchical structure for youth organizations. At the top was the National Youth Council, a consultative organ, to advise the minister of youth. Similar councils were to be organized down to the district level (L'Action, June 16, 1945). Meanwhile, youngsters were asked to join the local squads or groups, from provincial to communal levels. They were given physical training and were responsible for the maintenance of security in their communes. Each provincial town had a training center, where youths might take a one-month paramilitary course (Tinh
Territorial Unification. The most significant achievement of Kim's government was its negotiation for territorial unification. Immediately after the termination of French rule, the Japanese were not enthusiastic about the territorial unification of Viet-Nam. However, after the formation of Kim's government, Japan quickly agreed to return Bac Bo to Kim's authority, although it retained temporary control of the cities of Hanoi, Haiphong, and Da Nang. Meanwhile, Nam Bo remained under direct Japanese control, just as it had been under French rule.

Beginning in May 1945, Foreign Minister Chuong began negotiating with the Japanese in Hanoi for the return of the cities of Hanoi, Haiphong, and Da Nang to Viet-Nam, but the Japanese adopted a dilatory approach because Hanoi and Haiphong were strategic points in their defense plan. Not until June and July 1945, did the Japanese allow the essential steps leading toward national unification to be carried out. On June 16, Bao Dai issued a declaration announcing the coming unification of Viet-Nam (L'Action, June 27, 1945). On June 29, General Tsuchihashi signed a series of decrees transferring part of the responsibilities of the government general—including customs, information, and youth and sports—to the governments of Viet-Nam, Cambodia, and Laos, effective July 1 (L'Action, July 12, 1945). This move was followed by Bao Dai's issuance of four imperial orders: establishing the National Consultative Committee (Hoi dong Tu van Quoc Gia); a fifteen-member committee for the elaboration of a constitution; a fifteen-member committee for the reform of administration, legislation, and finance; and a committee for the reform of national education—the last included two women among its eighteen members (L'Action, July 13 and 17, 1945; Tinh Tien, July 3, 1945). For the first time, leaders from Nam Bo (for example, Tran Van An and Ho Van Nga) were invited to join these committees.

Meanwhile, other developments in Nam Bo in early July may be seen as preparatory steps by the Japanese toward granting territorial unification to Viet-Nam. In early July, when Nam Bo was alive with the spirit of independence and mass participation because of the creation of the Vanguard Youth organizations in Saigon and other provincial towns, Governor Minoda announced the organization of the Hoi nghi Nam Bo (Council of Nam Bo) to facilitate his governing task. This council was to be responsible for giving advice on the questions submitted to it by the Japanese and for inspecting provincial affairs. Its main task, Minoda underlined, was to make the Vietnamese realize that they had to collaborate closely with the Japanese, because “if the Japanese lose the war, the independence of Indochina would not become complete”
(L'Action, July 16 and 23, 1945). The presence of Tran Van An and other figures aligned with Cuong De in this council reflected an important change in Minoda's attitude toward the independence of Viet-Nam, since he had kept internal affairs in Nam Bo firmly in his own hands up to this time. At its inauguration on July 21, Minoda implicitly referred to the unification of Viet-Nam (L'Action, July 24, 1945). Tran Van An was then appointed president of the Council of Nam Bo, and Kha Vang Can, a leader of the Vanguard Youths, was appointed vice-president.

On July 13, Tran Trong Kim arrived in Hanoi to conduct negotiations with Governor-General Tsuchihashi. Tsuchihashi agreed to return control of the three cities of Hanoi, Haiphong, and Da Nang to Kim's government, effective July 20. After lengthy negotiation, it was also agreed that Nam Bo was to be returned to Viet-Nam and that Kim would go to Saigon to attend the reunification ceremonies on August 8 (Kim 1969:81-88; L'Action, July 30, 1945).

Kim's historic achievement was promptly overshadowed by external pressure and internal schism. On July 26, the leaders of the United States, China, and Great Britain issued a declaration demanding Japan's unconditional surrender. Japan's aim was no longer to win the war, but simply to search for an honorable cease-fire. Even worse, the possibility of future punishment by the Allies for collaboration with the Japanese discouraged many of those who might have sided with Kim. His ministers and collaborators fell away. The Imperial Commissioner of Bac Bo, Phan Ke Toai—flanked by his son and other Viet Minh sympathizers and underground Communists like Nguyen Manh Ha and Hoang Minh Giam—submitted his resignation. Nguyen Xuan Chu, a leader of the Viet-Nam Ai Quoc Dang and one of the five members of Cuong De's National Reconstruction Committee (Thong Tin, June 10, 1945), could not be persuaded to replace Toai (Kim 1969:84, 91). Returning to Thuan-hoa, Kim also found rising conflict among his ministers. Tran Van Chuong (who had started negotiations with the Japanese in May) wanted credit for arranging the return of the ceded cities and Nam Bo to Kim's government and, probably, the premiership itself (Kim 1969:88-89). The government meetings of August 5 and 6 were marked by personal quarrels and the resignation of the ministers of interior, economy, and supplies. Ho Ta Khanh, the economy minister, even demanded the resignation of the entire government. In his view, the Viet Minh should be given a chance to govern because of its strength (Kim 1969:89; Brocheux 1982:166). Kim's government did resign on August 7. Bao Dai asked Kim to form a new government, but the end of the war intervened.

On August 8, 1945, the Soviet Union declared war on Japan and invaded Manchuria. The next day, the second atomic bomb exploded over Nagasaki, and Japan could no longer continue the war. Surrender negotiations ensued, and Japan decided to give Kim and Vietnamese patriots what they had expected for years—national independence and territorial unification. Kim was repeatedly urged to come to Saigon to receive the official control of Nam Bo (Kim 1969:90). However, numerous factors prevented him from leaving the capital. From August 8 onward, Pham Khac Hoe—Bao Dai's office director—was instructed by Ton Quang Phiet (the future chairman of the Revolutionary Committee in Hue) to persuade the king to abdicate voluntarily. In order to carry out his mission, Hoe constantly undermined Kim, particularly by citing Kim's failure to invite the most influential figures to Thuan-hoa to form a new government (Hoe 1982:62-63). Meanwhile, Interior Minister Nam, citing the uprisings in Thanh-hoa and Quang-ngai in Trung Bo as the main reasons, discouraged Kim from going to Saigon (Hoe 1982:62-63; Kim 1969:89). The task of receiving sovereignty over Nam Bo was thus temporarily entrusted to the Council of Nam Bo.
Then, on August 14, Bao Dai appointed Nguyen Van Sam, former president of the Journalists' Syndicate, as the imperial commissioner of Nam Bo (L'Action, August 17, 1945). Sam left Thuan-hoa immediately for Saigon. He was, however, considerably delayed en route. Meanwhile the Viet Minh had taken advantage of the situation to launch a general insurrection.

The Frustrating End. In August, Viet-Nam went through one of its most eventful phases, played out against the background of global politics. On the one hand, the Allies began to put into effect their postwar plans for Viet-Nam, ranging from the disarmament of Japanese troops to the division of spheres of influence; on the other hand, the Japanese on the scene were paralyzed both by the unconditional surrender of their home government and the prospect of Allied retribution. Concerning the Vietnamese, the Japanese were divided psychologically and ideologically. Some Japanese leaned toward the Viet Minh, releasing Communist prisoners, providing weapons to the Viet Minh front, and even offering their services to the local Viet Minh forces (Lieu et al. 1960: vol. 1:43–44). Others, including the military commanders, wanted to use their forces to support Kim's government and to crush the Etsumei (Viet Minh) (Kim 1969:93; Dan Chu, September 12, 1945). Confusion reigned over the country, and it stimulated a race to power by diverse Vietnamese political groups.

On the eve of Japan's surrender, Kim and his men attempted to take control of the situation. On August 12, Kim's outgoing government was retained as “Provisional Government” to conduct daily affairs. Kim asked Bao Dai to issue an imperial order on August 14 abrogating the Franco-Viet treaties of June 6, 1862, and March 13, 1874, thus casting off the last French claims to sovereign rights over Viet-Nam (Bao Dai 1980:114-15). Messengers were then dispatched to Bac Bo and Nam Bo by Kim to reunify diverse groups under the central authority in Thuan-hoa, but they were arrested en route by the Viet Minh (Kim 1969:91).

Meanwhile, non-Viet Minh leaders in Bac Bo and Nam Bo also attempted to challenge the Viet Minh front. In Bac Bo, Nguyen Xuan Chu asked and obtained Kim's approval to form the Committee for National Salvation, and, consequently, he was appointed by Kim as chairman of the Political Directorate of Bac Bo on August 16 (L'Action, August 18, 1945; Kim 1969:91). In Nam Bo, on August 17, it was announced that all non-Viet Minh parties and groups, including Trotskyites and the religious sects of Cao Dai and Hoa Hao, had merged into the Mat Tran Quoc Gia Thong Nhut (National Unified Front) (Sai Gon, August 18, 1945). Tran Quang Vinh, the Cao Dai leader, and Huynh Phu So, the founder of the Hoa Hao, also issued a communiqué declaring an alliance in order to cope with new developments in the political situation (Sai Gon, August 15, 1945; L'Action, August 18, 1945). 17 On August 19, in Saigon, the Vanguard Youth organized their second official oath-taking ceremony, pledging to defend the Vietnamese independence at all costs. The next day, Ho Van Nga assumed the interim office of Imperial Commissioner and appointed Kha Vang Can, the Vanguard Youth leader, commander of Saigon/Cho-lon. Nguyen Van Sam's arrival in Saigon on August 22 provided the National Unified Front with a vital catalyst, the official proclamation of national independence and territorial unification.

17 Tran Quang Vinh's Cao Dai and Huynh Phu So's Hoa Hao played significant roles during the Japanese Occupation. However, their activities are outside the scope of this article. Two excellent studies on these religious sects are Werner 1981 and Tai 1983; See also Vu 1984: chaps. 2, 4, and 6 and SHAT [Vincennes], 10H 1039, 4139, 4160, 4166, and 4682.
Nevertheless, the Viet Minh prevailed. On August 17, in Hanoi, Viet Minh cadres successfully took control of a mass demonstration organized by the General Association of Civil Servants, originally aimed at celebrating independence and territorial unification and supporting Kim's government. Two days later, Nguyen Xuan Chu had to surrender his authority to the Viet Minh. This stunning triumph, combined with the official cease-fire of the Japanese army on August 21, threw Kim's associates into disarray. Kim's government collapsed. On August 23, the Viet Minh seized effective power in Hue. Two days later, Bao Dai officially announced his abdication, and Nguyen Van Sam handed power to the Viet Minh in Saigon. The Empire of Viet-Nam faded away together with Japan's Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere.

Conclusion

Tran Trong Kim's government has been either underrated or largely forgotten. The tendency to take the winning side, on the one hand, and a lack of precise information, on the other, are partially responsible for this. However, emotions have cooled and archival materials and other original sources have become available, and we are now better able fairly to evaluate the historical significance of Kim's government.

During its brief existence and under extremely difficult conditions, Kim's government partially initiated a revolution from above. Two of its major aspects must be emphasized: first, the stimulation of mass political participation, and, second, the Vietnamization of most social institutions.

The undeniable contribution of Kim's government to the Vietnamese Revolution of 1945 was its sponsorship of mass political participation. Under French rule, all mass gatherings other than social and sport events were prohibited and severely punished. Under Kim's tenure, mass participation was heartily encouraged—including street demonstrations, meetings, and marches that propagated a spirit of cultural and political independence. The ICP, like other political groups and parties, took advantage of this climate of opportunity to expand its structure and to consolidate and recruit cadres. Above all, Vietnamese thanh nien (youth) in 1945 was not exclusively either pro-Japanese or ICP-affiliated. In fact, similar to the pemuda (youth) organizations in Indonesia, a generation of Vietnamese youth was mobilized under the auspices of both Kim's government and the Japanese authorities. Although not all of the organizations were to join the Viet Minh front, Kim's youth projects provided the Viet Minh with tens of thousands of youngsters who were to serve the ICP's flag in the name of national independence and unity rather than in the name of Marxism-Leninism. The youth formed four People's Army Divisions (Su doan dan quan) in Nam Bo to fight the French immediately after the French, under the banner of the victorious Allies' occupation forces, reconquered Nam Bo in September and October 1945. Meanwhile, the Viet Minh "Honorable Squads" concentrated on purging those who they labeled Viet Gian (Viet Traitors)—particularly the Trotskyites and religious leaders in the South and the Nationalist Party (VNQDD) and Dai Viet in the North and Central regions. Even

18 The four divisions of the People's Army were created in late August 1945 to demonstrate "national unity" between the Viet Minh and the National Unified front. They included all armed groups in Cochinchina, such as the Cao Dai, Hoa Hao, Vanguard Youths, Viet Minh's National Salvation Youths, and the former gangsters at Phu-tho and Binh-xuyen (Cau Quoc, September 5, and November 5, 1945). As for Ho's principal armed force, it should be noted that it was called the Quan Giai Phong (Liberation Army) in the fall of 1945, and was later renamed Ve Quoc Doan (National Protection Brigade).
so, the alliance from above between Ho and non-Viet Minh forces began to erode only in the spring of 1946, after Ho had signed an agreement with the French to legitimize his regime. This controversial “Temporary Convention of March 6, 1946,” it should be noted, gave Ho’s Viet-Nam only the status of a “free state” within the Indochinese Federation and the French Union—which was much less than an autonomous state and, more importantly, was simply a passing promise on the French part in order to peacefully enter northern Viet-Nam (Vu 1984:chaps. 12, 13, and 14). Finally, after the outbreak of a full-scale war between the French and the Viet Minh, Kim’s free mass political participation was firmly channeled into ICP-controlled political participation. I am inclined to believe that this sort of monopoly of patriotism endorsed by Ho Chi Minh and his ICP was one of the major factors leading to the end of the revolutionary fervor of 1945 and, thus, to the Thirty Years’ War (1945–1975).

The Vietnamization process—the driving force behind the Viets’ survival as the people of a nation within the brutal atmosphere of world politics—was complicated by the political issues of independence and territorial unity. To begin with, Japan was not prepared to grant Viet-Nam immediate and complete independence while planning the Meigo Operation. As a result, the Japanese neither recognized Viet-Nam diplomatically nor signed a treaty with Kim’s government. Kim’s name was not even mentioned in the Nippon Times during his tenure. Kim enjoyed considerable autonomy in North and Central Viet-Nam, however, as long as he did not obstruct Japan’s strategic goals. These were the same general conditions granted to Decoux during the period of indirect rule by the Japanese and to Ho Chi Minh by the Chinese military authorities occupying northern Indochina immediately after the war.19 Comparing Kim’s conditional independence under Japanese auspices and Ho’s de facto “independence” within the Chinese military administration from September 1945 to June 1946, or Ho’s temporary “free state” within the French scheme of reconquering Viet-Nam, Kim’s doc lap seems less banh ve (token) than we have been informed. Indeed, the issue of the independence of smaller nations is more complicated than one might assume: treaties and agreements on “independence” are subject to the prevailing conditions of world politics—that is, the “law” is in the strongest hands. One must be concerned that the implementation of these accords reflects actual power ratios rather than mere legalities.

Official Vietnamese historians in Hanoi, and others, have asserted repeatedly that the Viet Minh spontaneously unified the country under its revolutionary banner. The record shows, however, that Kim obtained territorial unification of the country just prior to Japan’s unexpected surrender, and, more importantly, that various preparatory steps had been taken in Thuan-hoa and Nam Bo to carry out such unification. Whatever Japan’s motivation in suddenly granting Kim’s demand for territorial unification, such

19 In the existing literature, French writers often consider the period from September 1940 to March 1945 as simply “a stationing” of Japanese troops. This is a wishful thinking rather than a reality. As records show, the Japanese only wanted to employ the Decoux administration as their administrative tool to squeeze Indochina militarily and economically (Vu 1984: pt. 1). Regarding Ho’s “independence” between September 1945 and June 1946, the reality was no less ironic than Decoux’s maintaining of French “essential sovereignty.” In fact, since Chiang Kai-shek had agreed to return Northern Indochina to France before sending his troops to Viet-Nam, Ho’s DRVN was seen simply as an administrative tool to facilitate the Chinese occupation and Chiang’s negotiations with the French. Meanwhile, in northern Viet-Nam, the Chinese military administration, among the other things, ordered each official Vietnamese car to bear its own pass, and it arrested Ho for several hours, at least once. The dissolution of the ICP on November 11, 1945, it should be added, also resulted from Chinese pressure (Vu 1984: chaps. 12 and 13.
THE EMPIRE OF VIET-NAM (MARCH–AUGUST 1945)

an event is a verifiable fact. Another fact is Kim’s refusal of proposals advanced by several Japanese commanders to use Japanese troops to crush the Viet Minh. Without Kim’s neutrality, Ho and his men would have faced severe difficulties seizing power. Moreover, without the reintegration of Nam Bo from August 14 to late September 1945, Ho’s claim to national unity would have lacked both “international legality” and spiritual response from the southerners.

Although Viet-Nam was given only conditional independence under Japanese military authority, and although the country was only reunified near the end of the war, Kim’s process of Vietnamization was significant. He cast off French influence—from the adoption of Vietnamese romanized script as the official language to the change of street, city, and regional names; from the free formation of political parties to the replacement of French officials by Vietnamese cong chuc (civil servants). In the local press words such as “Annam,” “Tonkin,” “Cochinchine,” and “Annamite” were gradually replaced by new terms with more positive connotations. The popular acceptance of Kim’s terms is evident in their subsequent adoption by Ho’s DRVN. Given the extent to which the French had patronized the Viets—both culturally and personally—such a change was significant.

In examining Ho’s projects after September 2, 1945, one discovers that—save for Ho’s Communist revolutionary regime and his monopoly of nationalism—most of the major points advanced by the DRVN in late 1945 and early 1946 were nearly identical to those of its predecessor: romanized Vietnamese was exclusively used in classrooms and offices; cities and streets were renamed; and the forced sale of rice and the capitation tax were abolished. On the very afternoon of September 2, 1945, Ho disguised his intention to seek a self-governing state within the French-controlled Indochinese Fed-

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20 This shift of policy at first seemed to be intertwined with a plan for personnel change. In May and June 1945, rumors of Cuong De’s homecoming began to spread through the country. The prince’s message to his citizens, dated January 11, 1944, was published in a weekly magazine in Hanoi (Nac Nam, April 28–May 12, 1945). Vietnamese representatives reportedly attended the Greater East Asia Conference held in May in Kudan (Japan), under the auspices of General Matsui Iwane’s Asian Development General Headquarters of the Imperial Rule Assistance Association. On May 27, one of Cuong De’s followers arrived in Saigon from Tokyo and declared that there would be an important change in Vietnamese politics in the very near future (Hai Phong, June 7, 1945). In the following days, he worked hard to promote the prince’s return. Meanwhile, on May 28, Tran Van An—known as one of the two leaders of the Phuc Quoc in Nam Bo—was brought back to Saigon after nearly two years in exile in Singapore. A few days later, the Hanoi weekly Thong Tin published a photograph of five patriots belonging to the Uy Ban Kien Quoc (Committee for National Reconstruction), including Vu Van An, Vu Dinh Duy, Ngo Dinh Diem, Nguyen Xuan Chu, and Le Toan—all of whom had been rumored to be members of Cuong De’s exile government prior to March 9, 1945 (Thong Tin, June 10, 1945). According to Shiraiishi (1982:239–40), in a meeting with Bao Dai on June 11, Governor-General Tsuchihashi brought up the issue of Cuong De and obtained Bao Dai’s approval for his return to Viet-Nam as president of the Privy Council. Not much more than this, however, is known about the Tsuchihashi-Bao Dai meeting. What we can be certain of is that there was a tentative plan to bring Cuong De back to Viet-Nam. On July 20, 1945, General Matsui declared in Japan that the prince was to return to Viet-Nam to assist his nephew, Bao Dai, in state affairs. Five days later, Cuong De also issued a statement stressing his gratitude to Japan and pledging his sincere collaboration with Japan after his return home (Nippon Times, July 30, 1945). Cuong De, however, did not return to Viet-Nam. The sudden end of the war might be a plausible explanation (Shiraiishi 1982:240).

21 It is interesting to note that in the fall of 1945 Ho Chi Minh insisted that he had seized power from the Japanese and their puppets, but not from the French (Ho’s declaration of independence, September 2, 1945). Not only painstakingly abolishing Kim’s national flag and decrees (Cuu Quoc, September 13, 1945), Ho also enclosed a copy of King Bao Dai’s proclamation of abdication in his messages to the Truman administration (U.S. Department of Defense: book 1, C 80). Ho considered his government to be a legitimate regime that, similar to de Gaulle’s provisional government in Paris, had just liberated the nation from a Fascist-aligned regime. The Allies, of course, ignored Ho’s case for international legality and recognized French sovereignty over “French Indochina.”
eration, asking his Hanoi audience to take an “oath of four nos,” to pledge “not to serve in the French army, not to collaborate with the French administration, not to sell foodstuffs to the French, and not to act as scouts for the French” if French troops were to reconquer Viet-Nam (Giap 1974:32; Cửu Quốc, September 5, 1945).

To be sure, this similarity was more in pathos than in ethos. The difference, if not the contradiction, between Ho and Kim was rooted in their personal and ideological backgrounds. Kim was a successful scholar and a moderate urban nationalist. Ho was unlucky in his educational path, he failed to gain entry to the Ecole Coloniale that Kim did attend; he spent his youth in foreign ports as an assistant cook or janitor; and he later discovered the revolutionary path thanks to Lenin’s writings and Soviet support (Vu and Nguyen 1983). Kim’s sole adventure in politics started in late October 1943; Ho spent more than two decades in foreign countries, prisons, jungles, and Soviet training schools. He was given a death sentence by the Court of Hue, escaped a French-inspired attempt on his life in Canton in 1927, and, in general, experienced the brutality of world politics. Kim was a teacher who was deeply Confucian in his worldview; he espoused the popular concept of social participation—that is, engage in or withdraw from the task of governing at the right time and, in so doing, offer your best. In contrast, Ho—about ten years younger than Kim—was a professional Communist revolutionary who was street smart. He fought his way to power with dogged determination. Ideologically, Kim believed in evolutionary change in society. Change, thus, would be gradual and under the guidance of the elite to prevent a sudden breakdown of social and moral order. In contrast, rejected by established society, Ho advocated a complete destruction of the “remnants” or “symbols” of monarchism and colonialism in order to build up a new socialist society and state. In addition to charisma, a deep belief in Marxism-Leninism, a well-organized and disciplined party, and his armed forces, Ho’s personal background and his connections with the two superpowers at the end of World War II gave him great effectiveness in the struggle for power in August 1945. However, in 1945 and 1946, like his predecessor, Ho was deeply affected by his environment and his time. His decision formally to dissolve the ICP and his studied appeasement of the Chinese and French clearly reflected the profound influence of world politics on Viet-Nam at the wake of its internationalization. Therefore, it is not surprising that Ho found himself compelled in 1946 to step back from Kim’s Vietnamization process. Not only was he secretly parleying with the French, Ho even concluded a temporary convention with Jean Sainteny on March 6, 1946—under the terms of which, if the French had honored them, French troops would have been stationed in “free Viet-Nam” and French technicians would have continued their jobs in the country, at the same time as the issues of territorial unification and independence were ambiguously to be decided by referenda.

Kim’s historical role was more significant than has been generally appreciated. It may be true, as Vo Nguyen Giap wrote, that in August 1945 the Viet Minh “pulled down the tarnished yellow flags—a product of the brief Japanese occupation—as though plucking away wormy leaves.” Nevertheless, Kim’s achievements will not “sink into oblivion, without leaving a trace” (Giap 1974:22). In the final analysis, Ho was the principal beneficiary of, among the other things, Kim’s achievements.
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Glossary

An, Trần Phước
Alias Shibata; colonel in the Japanese army and one of the leaders of the Japanese-sponsored Việt-Nam Kiên Quốc Quân (Army for the National Reconstruction of Việt-Nam) in 1939–1940. Assassinated in Canton in 1942.

An, Vũ Văn
French-trained engineer who joined Prince Chương Đê’s Japanophile Việt-Nam Phúc Quốc Đồng Minh Hội (League for the National Restoration of Việt-Nam), or Phúc Quốc in brief, in the 1940s.

Anh, Phan
French-trained lawyer; Minister of Youth in the government of Trần Trọng Kim.

An-Nam
“Pacified South” or “Peaceful South”—name of the Central Region under French rule. See also Trung Bộ and Trung Kỳ.

Ân, Trần Văn
French-educated journalist. He was working as a rice broker in Long-xuyên (Cochinchina) when he was arrested by the French in February 1941 for suspected affiliation with the Trotskyite Việt-Nam Nhơn Dân Thông Nhựt Cách Mạng Đảng (Vietnamese People’s Unified Revolutionary Party). During the Japanese occupation Ân worked for the Japanese Military Police and was known as a leader of the Phúc Quốc in Cochinchina. He was transferred by the Japanese to Syonan (Singapore) in September 1943 under the French pressure, and he declared in Syonan in March 1945 that he had been released by the Japanese from Poulo Condore and was en route to Việt-Nam. After he returned to Saigon in May 1945, he was appointed Chairman of the Council of Nam Bộ (South Việt-Nam) in July.

Ât Dậu
Year of the Chicken (1945) in the twelve-animal cycle of the Vietnamese calendar.

Bạch, Phạm Văn
French-trained doctor of law; chairman of the Viet Minh-led Executive Committee of Nam Bộ in 1945.

Bài, Nguyễn Hữu
Notorious Catholic collaborator who dominated the Vietnamese Court in Hue from 1916 to 1933. Father-in-law and mentor of Ngô Đình Khoái.

Bảo An
“Security guards.”

Bảo Đại (1926–1945)
“Protector of the Greatness”—the thirteenth and last king of the Nguyễn dynasty (1801–1945). Born Viên Thựy (1913—).

Bắc Bộ
“Northern Region”—name of North Việt-Nam since May 1945. See also Bắc Kỳ.

Bắc Kỳ
“Northern Country”—Vietnamese name of North Việt-Nam (Tôngkin) during French rule.

bố lại
Ministry of Interior at the Hue Court.
Cao Đài

Religious sect founded in South Viet-Nam in 1926, revering the “Supreme God” (Cao Đài), or God of the gods.

Cần, Kha Vạng

French-trained engineer; principal leader of the Thanh Niên Tiên Phong (Vanguard Youth) in Cochinchina in 1945; Security Chief of Saigon/Cholon before the seizure of power by the Viet Minh on August 25, 1945.

chiêm

Second rice harvest in May–June.

Chương, Trần Văn

French-trained attorney; Vice-Premier and Foreign Minister in the government of Trần Trọng Kim.

Chủ, Nguyễn Xuân

Physician; a leader of the Japanophile Việt Nam Ai Quốc Đảng (Vietnamese Patriots’ Party); Chairman of the Directorate for Political Affairs of Bác Bo from August 16 to August 19, 1945.

công chức

Civil servants.

Công Chức Tổng Hội

General Association of Civil Servants.

Cương Đê (1882-1951)

Descendant of the eldest branch of the reigning Nguyễn dynasty and symbol of the Japanophile, anti-French movement since 1906. Founded the Việt-Nam Phúc Quốc Đảng Minh Hội or Phúc Quốc in China in March 1939. Eliminated from power after the Meigō Operation by General Tsuchihashi, Governor-General of Indochina.

dân vi quí

“The most precious thing is the people”—a teaching of Mencius promoted as the principle of Bảo Đại’s “new” Empire of Viet-Nam in 1945.

Diệm, Ngô Đình

Leader of the pro-Japanese Catholic bloc in the 1940s; leader of the Đại Việt Phục Hưng Hội (Association for the Restoration of Dai Viet) in An-Nam in 1944; member of Prince Cuong De’s Ưu Ban Kiến Quốc (Committee for the National Reconstruction); President of the Republic of (South) Viet-Nam between 1955 and 1963.

Dực Thanh

“Free school” reportedly established in Phan-thiet by a fish-sauce manufacturer in the 1900s. The young Hồ Chí Minh (Nguyễn Tất Thành) reportedly taught French and Vietnamese at this institution “from January to September or October 1911 [sic].”

Duy Tấn (1907–1916)


Dy, Vũ Đình

Tonkinese journalist; notorious agent of the Kempeitai 1940–1943; Prince Cuong De’s close associate after 1943.

Đại Nam

“Great South”—national name of Viet-Nam before the French occupation.
Dai Viet

"Great Viet"—national name of Viet-Nam from 1054 to 1801.

Dai Viet Phuc Hung Hoi

"Association for the Restoration of Dai Viet"—a Catholic secret party in Central Viet-Nam, uncovered by the French in the summer of 1944.

Dang Dan Cung

"The King Mounts His Throne"—the first national hymn of the "new" Empire of Viet-Nam.

chieu

A king's reign-name.

Diem, Ho Dac

Mandarinal governor of Ha-dong province, south of Hanoi.

Dinh, Vi Van

Powerful francophile leader of the Tay population in Lang-son province.

Do, Nguyen Hưu

Bao Dai's great-grandfather on the maternal side; severely criticized in 1945 for his collaboration with the French during the French conquest.

lap

Independence.

lap banh ve

Token independence; the Viet Minh's accusation of Bao Dai's declaration of independence in March 1945.

Giam, Hoang Minh

Former director of the Thang Long private school in Ha-noi; Chief of the Japanese-Vietnamese Liaison Office in August 1945; Ho Chi Minh's Deputy Foreign Minister and, later, Foreign Minister in 1946–1947.

Giao, Duong Van

French-trained lawyer; publisher of Duc Nhau Nam (Torch of the Southern House) in the 1920s; arrested and sentenced by the French in 1941 for his affiliation to the Trotskyite Vietnamese People's Unified Revolutionary Party; escaped from the French prison with the Japanese assistance and took refuge in Bangkok until 1945.

Giap, Vo Nguyen

History teacher turned revolutionary general; a pillar of the Indochinese Communist Party in the 1940s. His first wife, Nguyen Thi Quang Thai, was arrested and died in a French prison in 1942.

Ha, Nguyen Manh

French-educated Catholic youth leader; son-in-law of Georges Marrane, a French Communist leader; Chief of the Economic Office in Bac Bo during Tran Trong Kim's tenure; Ho Chi Minh's first Minister of Economy.

Han, Hoang Xuain

French-trained engineer and mathematics teacher; Minister of Education in the government of Tran Trong Kim.

Hiem, Vu Van

French-trained lawyer; a collaborator of the Thanh Nghiem [Healthy Discussion] in Hanoi; Minister of Finance in the government of Tran Trong Kim.

chieu

Store (cua chieu); motto, banner, or principle (khau chieu); and a variety of meanings.

Hoai Hao

Religious sect founded in the Lower Mekong Delta in 1945. The founding Master was Huynh Phu So.
Học, Nguyễn Thái  One of the three founders of the Việt-Nam Quốc Dân Đảng (Vietnamese Nationalist Party or VNQDD). Arrested and executed by the French after the failed insurrection in 1930 in Tonkin.

Hoë, Pham Khắc  Director of King Bao Dai’s office; Viet Minh sympathizer who successfully persuaded the King to resign.

Hồ Chí Minh  President of Việt-Nam Dân Chủ Cộng Hòa (Democratic Republic of Viet-Nam or DRVN) from 1945 to 1969. See also Nguyễn Tất Thành.

Hội đồng Tư vấn Quốc gia  National Consultative Committee; established in July 1945.

Hội nghị Nam Bộ  Council of Nam Bộ, founded in July 1945 by the Japanese to facilitate the territorial reunification of Viet-Nam.

Hồng Bàng (2879–257 B.C.)  The first legendary dynasty in Vietnamese history; included “eighteen” Hùng kings.

Khà, Ngô Đình  Notorious collaborator of first hour during the French conquest; father of Ngô Đình Khôi, Ngô Đình Diệm, and so on. Decorated for his achievements, including his participation in the operations against the anti-French resistance movement in the Nghê-Tĩnh region, 1895–1896. Eliminated from power in 1907 because of his involvement in the defense of King Thành Thái (1889–1907) and the Vietnamese monarchy.

Kháng, Huyễn Thúc  Traditional Laureate Doctor; modernist leader in Quang-nam (An-Nam) in the 1900s; publisher of the Hue-based Tiếng Dân [People’s Voice] newspaper; Ho Chi Minh’s Minister of Interior, 1946–1947.

Khanh, Hồ Tá  French-trained physician; director of the Liên Thanh fish-sauce plant in Phan-thiet; member of the pro-Japanese Văn Lang group; Tran Trọng Kim’s Minister of Economy.

Khôi, Ngô Đình  Eldest son of Ngô Đình Khả; son-in-law of Nguyễn Hữu Bái; brother and protector of Ngô Đình Diệm; and arch rival of Minister of Interior Phạm Quỳnh. Forced into retirement in 1943 by the French; assassinated by the Viet Minh in 1945.

Kiên Quốc Quân  Short for Việt-Nam Kiên Quốc Quân (Army for the National Reconstruction of Viet-Nam).

Kiệt, Võ Văn  Involved in the Communist insurrection in My-tho in 1940; arrested by the French in early 1943, when he reportedly approached the Japanese for protection; currently member of the Political Committee of the Central Committee of the Vietnamese Communist Party, Vice Chairman of the Ministerial Council of Viet-Nam, responsible for the Planning Department.

Kim, Trần Trọng (1883–1953)  French-trained teacher; well-known scholar; premier of the first “independent” government of Viet-Nam.
Lai, Trần Văn

Physician; first Vietnamese mayor of Hanoi.

Lang, Lưu Văn

French-trained engineer; offered the Ministry of Transportation and Public Works in the government of Trần Trọng Kim, but he refused.

Lập, Trần Trung

One of the three leaders of the Japanese-sponsored Kiên Quốc Quân. Abandoned by the Japanese in October 1945, he was captured and executed by the French in December 1945.

Lê Thái Tổ


Ly, Trần Văn

One of Diem’s followers; member of the Catholic organization Đại Việt Phục Hưng Hội; governor of the four southern provinces in Trung Bộ (central Việt-Nam) under the tenure of Kim.

Mật Trần Quốc Gia

National Unified Front; founded in Saigon in August 1945, including the Cao Dai and Hoa Hao sects, the Van guard Youth, the Association of Pureland Buddhist Laymen, the Group of Intellectuals, and so on.

mầu

Chinese: mòu. Unit of measure for rice fields and land (about 0.36 hectares).

Nam, Trần Đình

Physician; Minister of Interior in the government of Trần Trọng Kim.

Nam Bộ

“Southern Region”—Vietnamese name of south Việt-Nam since July 1945. See also Nam Kỳ.

Nam Kỳ

“Southern Country”—Vietnamese name of French Cochinchina under French rule.

Ngà, Hồ Văn

Leader of the Việt-Nam Độc Lập Đảng (Vietnamese Independence Party); Interim Imperial Commissioner of Nam Bộ from August 20 to August 22, 1945.

Nghiê Lịệt Tự

Temple of Martyrs; projected to honor all Vietnamese patriots.

Nùng

A minority population in North Việt-Nam. See also Thổ.

nuốc mắm

Fish-sauce.

Oanh, Vô

A leader of the Trotskyite Việt-Nam Nhĩn Dân Thông Nhuệ Cách Mạng Đảng (Vietnamese People’s Unified Revolutionary Party).

Phiệt, Tôn Quang

Member of the Tân Việt Cách Mạng Đảng (New Viet Revolutionary Party) in An-Nam in the 1920s; Secretary-General of the Tân Việt-Nam Đảng (New Viet-Nam Party) in the summer of 1945; Chairman of the Việt Minh Revolutionary Committee of Huế in August 1945.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Phò Toàn Quyền</td>
<td>Secretary-General of the French Indochinese administration in Hanoi, or “Vice Governor-General” in Vietnamese eyes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phú, Hoàng Trọng</td>
<td>One of the most influential francophile mandarins in Hanoi.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phúc Quốc</td>
<td>“National Restoration,” short for the Việt-Nam Phúc Quốc Đông Minh Hội (Association for the National Restoration of Viet-Nam).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phượng, Nguyễn Tri</td>
<td>Vietnamese governor who committed suicide during the French conquest.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quan Giải Phong</td>
<td>Viet Minh’s “Liberation Army.” See also Về Quốc Đoàn.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quê, Nguyễn Duy</td>
<td>Chief of Economic Police in Hanoi.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quốc ngữ</td>
<td>“National script” or Vietnamese romanized script.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quỳnh, Phạm (1892-1945)</td>
<td>Well-known scholar during French rule; Minister at the Hue Court between 1933 and 1945; killed by the Viet Minh in the fall of 1945.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sâm, Nguyễn Văn</td>
<td>Former President of the Journalists’ Amicale; Imperial Commissioner of Nam Bo in August 1945; surrendered to the Viet Minh on August 25, 1945.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sự đoàn dân quân</td>
<td>People’s Army Division; created in late August 1945 by the Viet Minh to fight the French in Nam Bo.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sưresté</td>
<td>French political police.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sựu, Phan Khắc</td>
<td>A leader of the Việt-Nam Nhơn Dân Thống Nhứt Cách Mạng Đảng (Vietnamese People’s Unified Revolutionary Party).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tài đức</td>
<td>Talent and virtue.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tân Việt Cách Mạng Đảng</td>
<td>New Viet Revolutionary Party—founded in An-Nam in the 1920s by a group of intellectuals and former political prisoners.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tân Việt-Nam Đảng</td>
<td>New Viet-Nam Party—founded in Thuận-hoa (Huế) in the summer of 1945 to support Trần Trọng Kim’s government. Ceased to function in July 1945.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tay</td>
<td>Minority population in Northern Bac Bo. See also Thố?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thạch, Phạm Ngọc</td>
<td>French-trained physician; notorious underground Communist associated with the Saigon-based Van Lang group; expelled from the Vichyite French-sponsored Directory Board of Scoutist Association in 1943; Secretary-General of the Vanguard Youth in Saigon in the summer of 1945; openly supported the Viet Minh on August 24, 1945.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thạch, Trần Văn</td>
<td>Journalist collaborating to the Trotskyite La Lutte [Struggle] group.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Thành, Nguyễn Tật (1892–1969)
Better known as Hồ Chí Minh and Nguyễn Ai Quốc; left Viet-Nam in May 1911 as an assistant cook on the ship *Latouche-Tréville*; joined the French Communist Party in 1920; went to the Soviet Union in 1923; agitated in China and Siam as an international Communist agent beginning in 1924; worked for Chinese and American intelligence organizations during World War II; returned to Hanoi on August 26, 1945, as the head of a pro-Allied, American-backed Provisional Government of Viet-Nam; signed a Temporary Convention with Jean Sainteny on March 6, 1946, accepting the status of a free state within the Indochinese Federation and the French Union; signed modus vivendi with French Overseas Minister Marius Moutet on September 14, 1946, promoting the spirit of the March 6, 1946, Convention.

*thanh liêm*
Honest and pure.

*thanh niên*
Youth.

Thành Niên Tiền Phong
“Vanguard Youth”—created in Nam Bo in May 1945 by Thái Văn Lung, Kha Vang Căn, and Phạm Ngốc Thạch under auspices of the Japanese.

Thành Niên Tiền Tuyên
“Advanced Front Youth”—the first Vietnamese officer-cadet class in Hue.

Thảo, Trịnh Đình
French-trained attorney; one of the founders of the Francophile Dân Chủ Đảng (Democratic Party) in Saigon in February 1937; Minister of Justice in the government of Trần Trong Kim.

Thâu, Tả Thu
Notorious Trotskyite leader in Cochinchina in the 1930s; publisher of the *La Lutte* [Struggle] newspaper in Saigon; killed by the Viet Minh in Quảng-ngai (Trung Bổ) in 1945.

Thi, Nguyễn Hữu
Physician; Minister of Supplies in the government of Trần Trong Kim.

Thọ
French name for both the Nùng and Tây populations in Northern Bac Bo.

thông đốc
Vietnamese name for French Cochinchinese governor.

thông sứ
Vietnamese name for French Tonkinese Resident Superior.

Thuận-hoa
Pre-French name of Huế, the capital of the Nguyễn dynasty.

thuế than
Body tax or capitation tax.

Tôi, Phan Kế
Imperial Commissioner of Bac Bo from May to August 1945; leaned toward the Viet Minh in August 1945.

Tôian, Lê
A leader of the Việt-Nam Ái Quốc Đảng (Vietnamese Patriots’ Party) in Hanoi.

Tố, Nguyễn Văn
Well-known writer; President of the Famine Relief Association in Bac Bo in 1945.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tổng Hội Sinh Viên và Thanh Niên</td>
<td>General Association of Students and Youth.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tạ Trạch, Dương Bá</td>
<td>Well-known writer; accompanied Trần Trọng Kim to Singapore in 1944.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trần Hùng Đạo</td>
<td>Prince, general; checked the Mongol invasions of Việt-Nam in the thirteenth century; revered as a saint.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trần Phan Châu (1871–1926)</td>
<td>Well-known modernist leader during the first quarter of this century, advocating “to modernize Việt-Nam under French tutorship.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trần Bọ</td>
<td>“Central Region”—new name of Central Việt-Nam since May 1945. See also Trần Kỳ.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trần Kỳ</td>
<td>“Central Country”—Vietnamese name of An-Nam under French rule.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trường Hành Nhận</td>
<td>Ancient School of Interpreters in Thuận-hoa.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trường Quốc Học</td>
<td>“National School”—established in Hue in 1896 to replace the Trường Hành Nhận. Aimed to teach French and Vietnamese romanized script to the mandarinal cadets and offspring of the royal and mandarinal families.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tướng, Hồ Hữu</td>
<td>Well-known journalist; known as a Trotskyite activist.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tý Liêm Phòng Kinh Tế</td>
<td>Economic Police Service.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ủy Ban Kiến Quốc</td>
<td>“Committee for National Reconstruction”—included five members (Ngô Đình Diệm, Nguyễn Xuân Chữ, Vũ Đình Dy, Lê Toàn and Vũ Văn An) known as Prince Cuong Đệ’s government-in-exile.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Văn Lang</td>
<td>An ancient national name of Việt-Nam, associated with the Hong Bang dynasty, meaning “Civilized Young Men.” Used as the title of a Saigon-based journal in 1939–1940, which assembled a group of “returnees from France” such as Phạm Ngọc Thạch, Kha Văn Cẩn, Hồ Tà Khanh, Nguyễn Văn Nhà.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vệ Quốc Đoàn</td>
<td>“National Protection Brigade”—new name of the Việt Minh’s Liberation Army in the fall of 1945.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Việt gian</td>
<td>“Viet traitor.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Việt Minh</td>
<td>“Viet Alliance”—short for Việt-Nam Độc Lập Động Minh (League for the Independence of Việt-Nam).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Việt-Nam</td>
<td>“Southern Viets”—national name adopted by the Nguyễn kings in the early nineteenth century and by Việt governments after March 1945.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Việt-Nam Ðệ Ðộc Quốc Đặng</td>
<td>“Vietnamese Patriots’ Party”—a pro-Japanese organization led by Vũ Đình Dy, Nguyễn Xuân Chữ and Lê Toàn in the North and Hồ Nhật Tân in the South.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Việt-Nam Độc Lập
Đông Minh

"League for the Independence of Viet-Nam," or, for short, "Viet Minh." Founded and registered with Chinese authorities in Nanning by Hồ Học Lâm, a non-Communist refugee, in 1936; reorganized and revitalized in November 1940 to cover up the Overseas Bureau of the Indochinese Communist Party (ICP) in China; adopted as the official mass organization of the ICP inside Viet-Nam at the Eighth Plenum in May 1941, to replace the Mặt Trận Phạm Đề Đông Dương (Indochinese Anti-Feudalist League).

Viet-Nam hoa

"Vietnamization." (see fn. 1).

Việt-Nam Kiên Quốc Quân

Created in Canton in 1939 by the Japanese to facilitate their invasion of Tonkin. Its indigenous leaders included Trần Phước An, Trần Trung Lập, and Hoàng Lutron. Abandoned by the Japanese in October 1940, Lập was arrested and executed by the French in December 1940. Hoàng Lutron and Lutron Văn Y, a former lieutenant, led the survivors to China.

Việt-Nam Nghĩa Dũng Quần

"Viet-Nam Righteous Warriors"—auxiliary Viet forces employed by the Japanese.

Việt-Nam Nhớt Dan Thống Nhứt Cách Mạng Đảng

"Vietnamese People's Unified Revolutionary Party"—reportedly of Trotskyite tendency. Uncovered by the French in late 1940 and early 1941 after its denunciation by several ICP organs. Its principal leaders included Võ Oanh, Phan Khắc Sưu, Trần Quốc Bửu, and Dương Văn Giảo.

Việt-Nam Phúc Quốc Đồng Minh Hội

"Association for the National Restoration of Viet-Nam"—founded in China in March 1939 by Prince Cuong De. Its principal leaders included Trần Phước An, Trần Trung Lập, and Hoàng Lutron. In late 1944 and early 1945, the Japanese officially supported Cuong De's association, assembling various religious and political organizations under its banner.

Việt-Nam Quốc Dân Đảng

"Vietnamese People's Party" or "Vietnamese Nationalist Party." Founded in December 1927 by Nguyễn Thái Học, Phạm Tư Tần, and Hoàng Phạm Trần. It began to decline after 1930.

Việt-Nam Tân Chính Đảng

"New Legitimate Party of Viet-Nam"—founded by Phạm Đình Cựong in 1942. The Văn Lang group was reportedly involved in this party.

Vinh, Trần Quang

Military commander and religious leader of the Cao Dai sect during Japanese occupation.