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## INDOCHINA, FRANCE, AND THE VIET MINH WAR, 1945-1954: RECORDS OF THE U.S. STATE DEPARTMENT, PART 1: 1945-1949



Comprising records of the State Department's Central Classified Files, this collection contains records relating to the internal affairs of Indochina, during the period 1945-49. The records include instructions sent to and correspondence received by the State Department; the State Department's internal documentation, as well as correspondence between the Department and other federal departments and agencies, Congress, and private individuals and organizations; telegrams, airgrams, instructions, inquiries, studies, memoranda, situation reports, translations, special reports, plans, and official and unofficial correspondence.

**Date Range:** 1945-1949

**Content:** 10,715 images

**Source Library:** National Archives (U.S.)

### **Detailed Description:**

Following the surrender of the Japanese in September 1945, France pushed for the nullification of the 1938 Franco-Siamese Treaty and attempted to reassert itself in the region, but came into conflict with the Viet Minh, a coalition of Communist and Vietnamese nationalists under French-educated dissident Ho Chi Minh. During World War II, the United States had supported the Viet Minh in resistance against the Japanese; the group had been in control of the countryside since the French gave way in March 1945.

Privately, President Roosevelt and General Joseph Stilwell (American military adviser to chairman of the Nationalist Chinese Government and generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek during World War II) made it adamantly clear that the French were not to reacquire French Indochina after the war was over. President Roosevelt offered Chiang Kai-shek the entire Indochina to be put under Chinese rule, but publicly Chiang Kai-shek declined.

After the war, 200,000 Chinese troops under General Lu Han were sent by Chiang Kai-shek to occupy northern Indochina north of the 16th parallel to accept the surrender of Japanese forces, and remained there until 1946. The Chinese used the VNQDD, the Vietnamese branch of the Chinese Kuomintang, to increase their influence in Indochina

and put pressure on their opponents. Chiang Kai-shek threatened the French with war in response to maneuvering by the French and Ho Chi Minh against each other, forcing them to come to a peace agreement, and in February 1946 he also forced the French to surrender all of their concessions in China and renounce their extraterritorial privileges in exchange for withdrawing from northern Indochina and allowing French troops to reoccupy the region starting in March 1946.

After persuading Emperor Bao Dai to abdicate in his favor, on September 2, 1945 President Ho declared independence for the Democratic Republic of Vietnam. But before September's end, a force of British and French soldiers, along with captured Japanese troops, restored French control. Bitter fighting ensued in the First Indochina War. In 1950 Ho again declared an independent Democratic Republic of Vietnam, which was recognized by the fellow Communist governments of China and the Soviet Union. Fighting lasted until March 1954, when the Viet Minh won the decisive victory against French forces at the grueling Battle of Dien Bien Phu.

*N.B.: for further information on the role of the U.S. in Indochina, please consult the Pentagon Papers, Part 1 at the following link — <http://www.archives.gov/research/pentagon-papers/>*

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