

Fate Of Indochina May Be Decided At Geneva Meet

Editor's Note—William L. Ryan, AP specialist on Communist affairs, has reported the cold war from the Soviet Union and many other countries on four continents. A few weeks ago he went to Indochina to see the hot war involving communism on one side and the free world on the other. He then flew to Singapore to write his findings free of censorship. This is the first of several articles he will write this week on the eve of the Geneva Conference.

By WILLIAM L. RYAN
AP Foreign News Analyst
SINGAPORE (AP)—In North Indochina today you find it difficult to shake off the feeling you are standing by and watching a nation slowly die.

Viet Nam can be saved, you are told. But all the solutions involve time—and time is running out in Indochina.

In Tonkin in the north and Cochinchina in the south, I attempted to sift all shades of opinion—French, Vietnamese and American, optimistic and pessimistic, the wishfully thinking and the bluntly realistic. I could only conclude: Unless the West holds fast at the Geneva Conference, opening next Monday, Indochina eventually will become another Communist-dominated people's democracy.

These questions are uppermost in many minds in Saigon and Hanoi.

Is Viet Nam to be another Korea? Can it be saved short of powerful military intervention? Is it in fact the sputtering fuse of World War III?

There are some encouraging signs on the horizon, but they are too few to warrant any pleasant optimism. There is a long hard road ahead for the French and the Vietnamese if the country is to survive. If it does not, the best American military opinion is the West can write off most of Southeast Asia in the vast political and economic war.

Why are the French and Vietnamese, with so much superiority in equipment, such vastly greater firepower and such an economic advantage in Indochina still largely on the defensive after 7½ years of dreary jungle war?

For one thing, Ho Chi Minh and the other Communists who lead the Vietminh rebellion are fighting the war on three fronts—military, political and psychological. On the other side, the French and Vietnamese up to now have been waging only a military war, with little attention to the other fronts.

Ho directs powerful propaganda to areas not yet within his grasp. There has been little to counter it. Ho's iron discipline, his rigid control and his total mobilization in areas he controls are met by the other side with half measures.

Gen. Rene Cogny, French commander in North Indochina, and Maj. Gen. Thomas J. H. Trapnell, retiring commander of the U. S. Military Assistance Group, seem wholly agreed it is impossible to

separate the political and psychological from the military aspects of the Indochina war. Yet little has been done by the French and Vietnamese.

Even the French—those who speak frankly—admit Ho has a strong grip on the imaginations of a large number of illiterate, landless peasants and even on intellectuals outside the areas he controls. The Vietnamese masses know nothing about the global war between democracy and communism. To many of them, Ho is a nationalist, a patriot who is going to drive out the foreigner and who is going to give them land.

In free Viet Nam there is no cohesive force, no bandwagon, no ideal, no leader who can capture the imagination of a whole people. Nor has there been any adequate counter-propaganda to Ho's promises.

To say Chief of State Bao Dai is a respected leader is to deal in delusion. From all I could gather in Indochina, the most popular thing Bao Dai ever did was abdicate the throne of Annam in late 1945 and join Ho's Cabinet as an adviser.

Bao Dai has almost no connection with the people. A peasant in a rice field knows nothing about him. Intellectuals of the country dislike and even despise him. His following is limited to a most narrow group. He has never been permitted in the past to be anything but a puppet of the French, never permitted to be a real leader of his country.

On the contrary, to many Vietnamese, Ho is a patriotic leader. Only a few know anything about the fact that Ho belongs to Moscow.

Some people drifting back from areas under Vietminh control have spread seeds of disillusionment about Ho. But for the most part the peasant reaction is one of hope that all foreigners will go home. Ho wants land and he wants to be left to till it in peace. For him all other things are largely meaningless. Talking to him in terms of intangible ideologies is useless.

In Viet Nam, the reaction to the war against Ho ranges from apathy to outright hostility. Vietnamese young men are not happy about being drafted into the army. Many dodge the draft, or buy their way out, or flee to parts unknown when the draft is near.

There is much talk of tightening up loopholes, of rationing and clamping down on black markets and graft. It is well known that in Saigon an active black market trade supplies the Vietminh with food and supplies, for example. But thus far, the remedies are only in the talking stage.

The French insist the Vietminh

already have reached the peak of their effort, that the rebel forces can improve in quality with Chinese advice and supplies but not in quantity. Yet the same French admit that Ho's forces even now remain at full strength, despite his steady and heavy losses.

With his system of recruitment, starting at the village level, his pool of reserves seems almost bottomless.

The French say they hope by 1955 to develop a Vietnamese army which can take over national defense. There is even some French hope that by next fall the Vietminh army as an effective fighting force can shoulder responsibility for the defense of its own nation.

Viet Nam, one of the three associated states of Indochina, has an importance today vastly out of proportion to its size. In area—127,000 square miles—it is the size of Kansas and Pennsylvania combined. It has 22 million people, or as many as New York and Illinois together. This is not very big in sprawling Asia, but the whole continent is watching anxiously.

On the credit side of the ledger, the French still control the key delta areas—the pie-shaped wedge on the north with Hanoi as its focal point and most of Cochinchina in the south. In the northern delta area some seven million people are nominally under Vietminh control. In all Viet Nam, the French continue to control areas sheltering more than half the population. And the areas which the French control are rich producing ones which feed the land and used to feed much of Asia.

On the debit side, the Vietminh are strong inside the French-held Tonkin delta, ready to strike when and if the signal is given. The Vietminh also retain the initiative, choosing the time and place of battle. The rebels have forces scattered all through the French-controlled areas, posing a constant danger to French control.

For the time being the battle is only for Viet Nam. The fighting in Laos and Cambodia is relatively unimportant. The Laotians appear to hate Communists and Chinese

with equal fervor.

If Viet Nam should fall—even if part of Viet Nam should be turned over to Ho and his Communists—other Asians will be sure they see the handwriting on the wall. They could be expected to salvage what they could from what they would regard as an unstemmable tide of communism. Western influence and prestige would suffer and communism's drive through Asia would be considerably eased.

"We are over a barrel at Geneva," a high-ranking American told me in Indochina. "If there is an armistice the political side goes into action. Ho Chi Minh has the only organized, disciplined force in Viet Nam. If this means a coalition government is in the offing, the Communists surely will win out in the long run. The only thing we can do at Geneva is not budge an inch."

But this war is being fought just as much in Paris as in Viet Nam, just as much in the French National Assembly as on the jungle battlefield. Soviet propaganda guns are aimed at metropolitan France, playing on its irritation with the costly conflict in Southeast Asia. And in the long run, they say in Saigon, Paris will decide whether the Indochina war is won or lost.

Tree Planting To Begin

U. S. Forest Service crews of the Big Valley District will begin planting 120,000 Ponderosa and Jeffrey pine seedlings on the Willow Creek and McClellan Burns of 1951 within the next two weeks, weather permitting.

Many Big Valley residents will remember the large fires and their disastrous results on the areas burned. The burns were salvage logged in the spring and summer of 1952 to remove the merchantable, fire-killed and high insect risk trees. Grass seed was sowed on the landings and skid trails to help retard erosion following the logging.

Timber stand improvement money was collected on the sales and will be used to restock the areas denuded of young timber reproduction.

The pine seedlings will be trucked from the Mount Shasta Nursery to the planting areas. This stock will consist of two and three-year old seedlings, many of which were collected on the Modoc National Forest as seed and sent to the Mount Shasta Nursery for planting.

It is planned to plant the 120,000 seedlings within a three-week period to take advantage of favorable weather and ground conditions.



RONNALIE OLSON OF THE TRI-HI-Y CLUB is shown here with the results of a cookie making project for the Klamath County Nursing Home. The club, sponsored by the YMCA, has a membership of over 40 girls and stresses Christian living between home, school and church. Shirley Moore, Margie Harkins and Ronnalie Olson (pictured above) delivered the cookies to the nursing home. Mrs. Jim Olson is the club adviser.

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Store, Auto Sales Gain; Steel, Textiles Weakest

By WALTER BREEDE JR.
NEW YORK (AP)—There was plenty of good news about business this week, although some indicators pointed lower.

Easter shopping gave a much-needed fillip to retail trade. Announced plans for construction and capital investment pointed to a higher level of overall business activity in the months ahead. Auto sales climbed sharply; stock averages pushed into new high ground. The decline in manufacturing that set in last August showed further signs of leveling off.

Less favorable were new indications of overproduction in steel, petroleum and textiles. In some instances, drastic steps were taken to bring output in line with demand.

Outstanding development of the week was the big upsurge in Easter retail buying which promised to offset a good part of the March slump. Actually, the big week. The Federal Reserve Board said department store sales in the week ended Palm Sunday were 16 per cent above the same week last year (when Easter was two weeks earlier).

Even better results were expected for the week immediately preceding Easter.

Auto sales still are picking up. New car sales in March, said the trade journal Automotive News, were "far better than anybody had expected" and since April 1 the tempo has been accelerating. While the lion's share of the increased business has gone to General Motors and Ford (the industry's "big two" now hold 83 per cent of the market), the small independents have been reporting substantial gains, too.

Weakest spot in generally sound economy seems to be in synthetic textiles. One after another, the big weavers of synthetic fabrics have been announcing drastic production cuts. J. Spencer Love, chair-

man of Burlington Mills, deplored what he called "a slug-it-out contest among mills and converters to determine who can sell the most goods at the greatest losses."

There's still no sign of a pickup in the steel industry, which continues to loaf along at 68 per cent or less of its recently expanded capacity. And the oil industry is having its overproduction problems. Gasoline inventories, which should be going down at this time of year, are still moving up. Texas authorities have ordered a cut of 200,000 barrels a day next month in the state's allowable crude production.

ENVOY

TOKYO (AP)—Communist China will send Premier-Foreign Minister Chou En-Lai to the Geneva conference, Peiping radio said Monday.

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