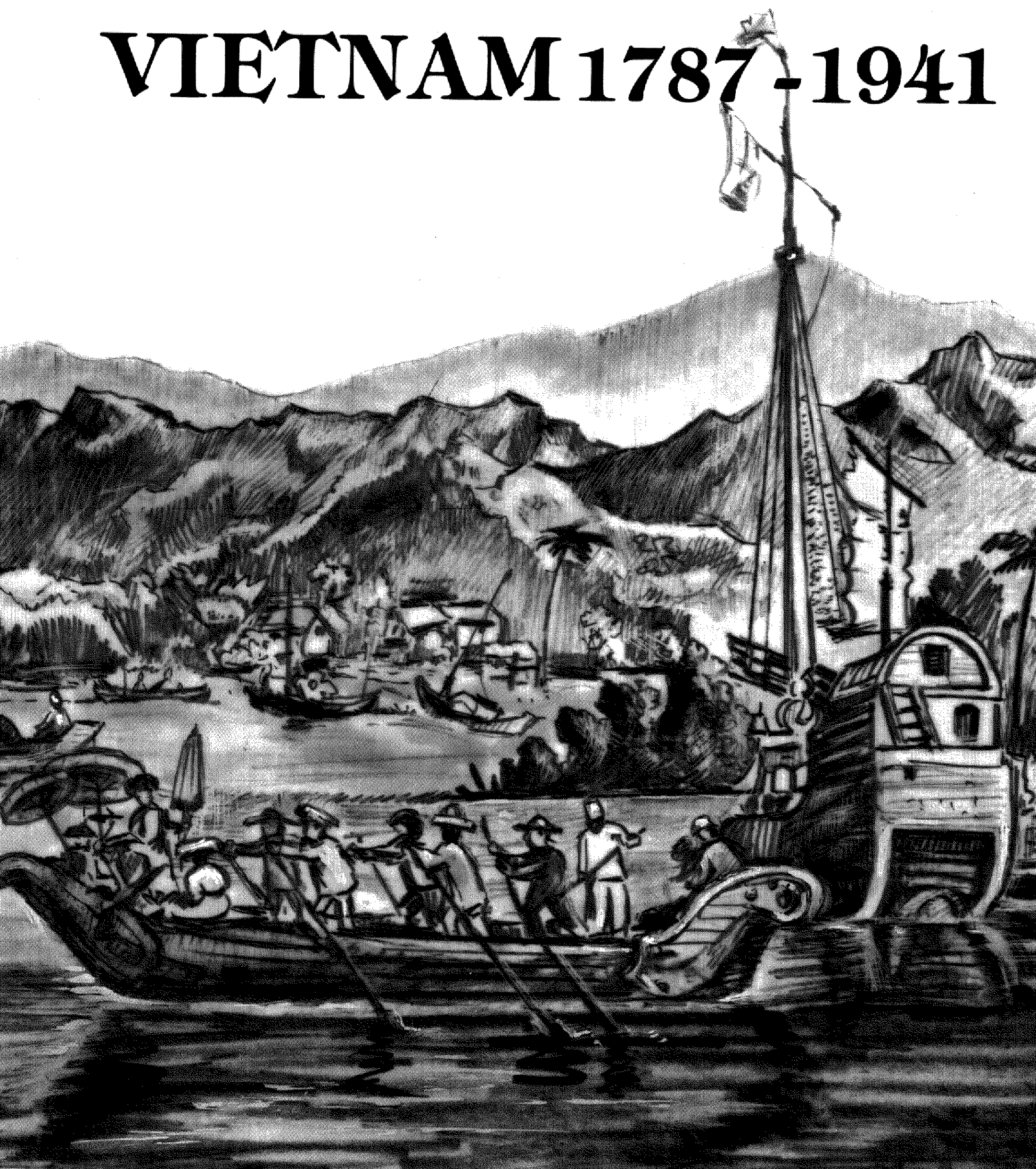
the UNITED STATES and VIETNAM 1787-1941



Robert Hopkins Miller

Cover: Cochinchinese shipping on the River Tai-fo. (Cover art prepared by Laszlo Bodrogi, based on an illustration in John Barrow, *A Voyage to Cochinchina*, Oxford in Asia Historial Reprints, Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1975.)

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Robert Hopkins Miller

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To Kaity, George, and Margaret, for whom Vietnam became much more than a faraway place ...

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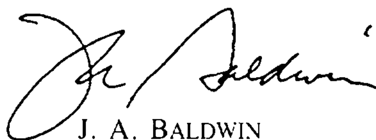
FOREWORD

As efforts continue to settle the Cambodia-Laos issue, Vietnam is again a focus of American attention. With the passage of time since the United States pulled out of Vietnam, American policymakers have begun approaching the major Indochinese issues from new perspectives, particularly new perspectives toward that general region. As is so often the case, history, by informing, may also help illuminate these issues.

In this book, Ambassador Robert Hopkins Miller, a diplomat with considerable experience in Southeast Asia, presents the early history of US-Vietnam relations. In 1787, President Thomas Jefferson first showed an interest in the region—then called Cochinchina—for the purpose of trading for rice. From this beginning, Miller traces the ebb and flow of US diplomatic, economic, and strategic interests in Vietnam. Amply illustrated with excerpts from contemporary correspondence and official documents, the research shows Vietnam's intricate relationship with China, the gradually increasing commercial involvement of the Western powers, and the impact of Japan's expansionist policy. The chapters building up to World War II are particularly informative as they demonstrate, among other matters, the responsibility of national leaders to identify unambiguous political aims.

In documenting the early development of US-Vietnam relations, the author has provided a service for historians and contemporary analysts alike. In presenting the long view of historical perspective, Ambassador Miller has enhanced our understanding of this area of the world.



J. A. BALDWIN
Vice Admiral, US Navy
President, National Defense University

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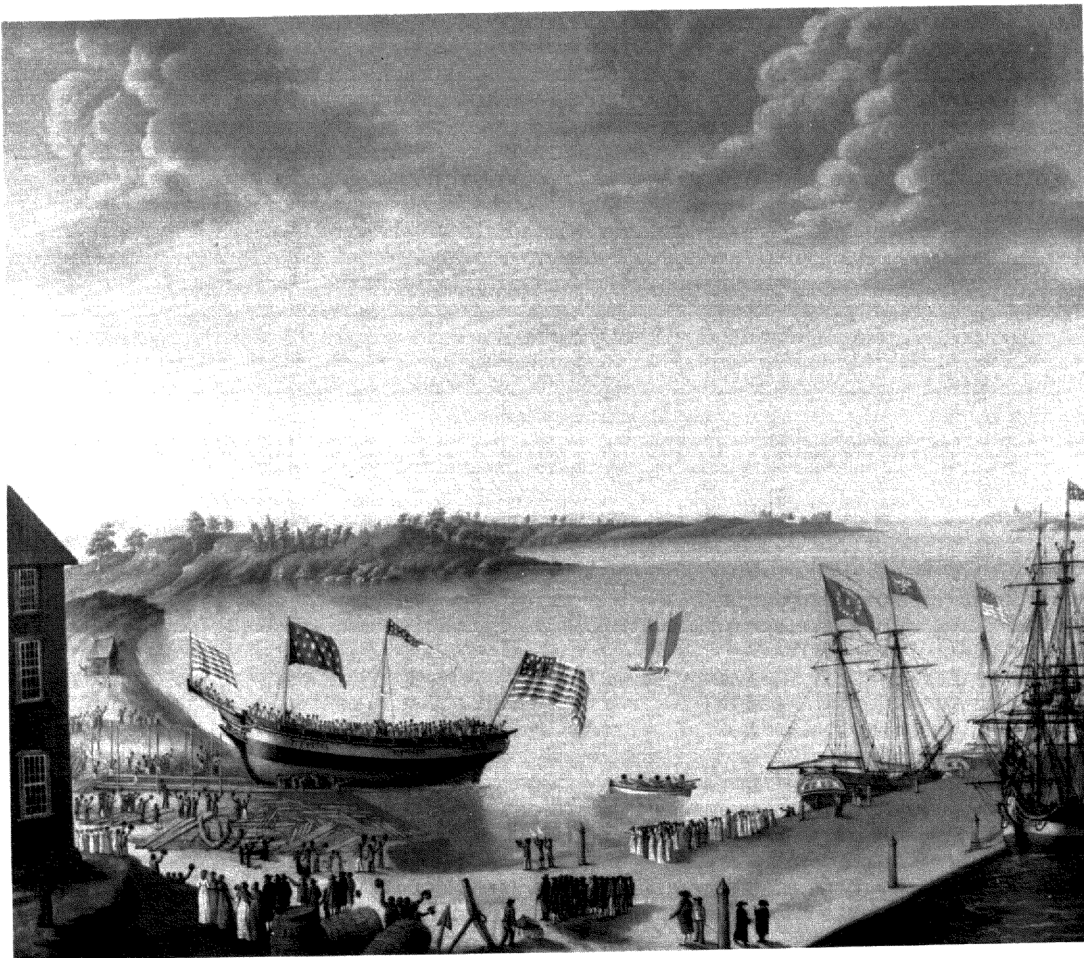
Errors and inaccuracies are, of course, my own responsibility.



Launching of the Ship *Fame* in 1802, by George Ropes. This photograph may be reproduced only with written permission of The Essex Institute. Courtesy of The Essex Institute, Salem, Massachusetts.

PREFACE

In July 1787, Thomas Jefferson, then American Minister to France, expressed an interest in acquiring rice seed from Vietnam (or Cochin China, as it was commonly referred to at the time). This may constitute the first official American awareness of that distant foreign country. Writing to William Drayton of South Carolina, Jefferson noted, "Monsr. Poivre, a farmer general of the Isle of France, in travelling through several countries of Asia, observed with particular attention the objects of their agriculture, and he tells us that in Cochinchina they cultivate 6 several kinds of rice, which he describes, three of them requiring water, and three growing on highlands."[1] Later in the same letter, Jefferson—visionary as always—resolved to import the best Vietnamese rice:

> The dry rice of Cochinchina has the reputation of being whitest to the eye, best flavored to the taste, and most productive.It seems then to unite the good qualities of both the others known to us. Could it supplant them, it would be a great happiness, as it would enable us to get rid of those ponds of stagnant water so fatal to human health and life. But such is the force of habit, and caprice of taste, that we could not be sure beforehand it would produce this effect. The experiment however is worth trying, should it only end in producing a third quality, and increasing the demand. I will endeavor to procure some to be brought from Cochinchina. The event however will be uncertain and distant.[2]

Writing to Drayton six months later, in January 1788, Jefferson shows his continuing resolve:

> I have considerable hopes of receiving some dry rice from Cochin-china, the young prince of that country, lately gone from hence, having undertaken that it shall come to me. But it will be some time first. These are all but experiments; the precept however is wise which directs us to try all things, and hold fast that which is good.[3]

Apparently, Jefferson's efforts with the young prince were not successful because, over a year later, in March 1789, he wrote to Malesherbes, a prominent Frenchman whose varied interests included botanical studies, asking him to use his influence to obtain "one of

the species of rice which grows in Cochin-china on high lands, and which needs no other watering than the ordinary rains."

> The sun and soil of Carolina are sufficiently powerful to ensure the success of this plant, and Monsieur de Poivre gives such an account of its quality as might induce the Carolinians to introduce it instead of the kind they now possess, which requiring the whole country to be laid under water during a certain season of the year, sweeps off numbers of the inhabitants annually with pestilential fevers. If you would be so good as to interest yourself in the procuring for me of some seeds of the dry rice of Cochin-china you would render the most precious service to my countrymen.[4]

On the same day, Jefferson wrote similarly to a Mr. Benjamin Vaughn in London, again citing Poivre and hoping that Vaughn knew people "so connected in Asia as that they could procure us some seeds of the best of the species of dry rice from Cochinchina," and if so, "I am sure you will readily avail us of it to procure some of the seed."[5] Although no reply from Vaughn is recorded, Malesherbes answered Jefferson immediately, saying that the dry Cochinchinese rice seed never ripened in Paris and, consequently, was very difficult to find locally.[6]

Fifteen years would pass before an American merchant ship actually sailed into a Vietnamese port—the point at which this narrative begins—and three decades would pass before an American merchantman would return with a little silk and sugar and a small cargo of rice that unfortunately succumbed to weevils and other vermin. That second voyage encountered a xenophobia, a disinterest in trade with America, a provincialism, and a range of exotic diseases, all of which were discouraging to American interest in the area for yet another decade.

* * *

Japan's occupation of French Indochina, and its subsequent attack on Pearl Harbor on 7 December 1941—where this narrative ends—set in train events that have not only seared Vietnam into America's consciousness but have led to the integration of thousands

upon thousands of Vietnamese into American society. Many writers have examined these events, their meaning, and their origins; many more will do so as more materials become available and the passage of time permits greater objectivity.

The purpose of this narrative has been far more modest: to look backward instead of forward—to trace to their earliest beginnings American perceptions of Vietnam and its people. It has been an endeavor that would perhaps serve little more than a narrow academic interest were it not for the major American military commitment in Vietnam in the 1950s and 1960s. Most of the key events in this story have been referred to in other, broader contexts. What to the writer's knowledge are less well known are the early 19th century American diplomatic field assessments of Vietnam's potential as a trading partner, and the four instances of American good offices concerning Vietnam in the late 19th century. The present work attempts to focus on all of this material systematically and in detail.

I have chosen to organize my material essentially in a chronological, rather than an analytical, format. I believe this reflects more faithfully the gradual historical evolution of American perceptions of Vietnam as a country and people, and of American interests in that far-off land. Throughout the 19th century, for example, the reactions and decisions of policymakers in Washington were surely affected by the slowness of communications, the lag between events and their being learned, understood, interpreted, and reported by far-flung American diplomats and consuls. Similarly, the time taken by Washington to react and take action—on problems that must have been far from the center of its concerns and its attention—influenced in turn the way American diplomats and consuls reacted to these events and conducted their dialogues on them abroad. Even later, during the gradual buildup of tensions between the United States and Japan that eventually led to war, Vietnam's importance to US interests only gradually came into focus in Washington. I believe that a chronological treatment renders this progression more accurately than would an analytical treatment that benefits from distance and hindsight.

If it makes even a small contribution to scholarship in this important area, I will be satisfied that this labor of love has been worth it. If it has missed some details, or has imperfectly described or assessed them—as surely must be so in some cases—I hope that at least my work will cause others as curious, but perhaps more qualified, to fill in the gaps and to correct assessments.

I MERCHANT SHIPS AND THEIR CAPTAINS

Jeremiah Briggs. Courtesy of Peabody Museum of Salem.

The *Fame* and Captain Jeremiah Briggs

In 1802, the Crowninshields of Salem, Massachusetts, one of the principal shipping families of New England, sent a vessel to Cochinchina, apparently to test a new and untried source for sugar and coffee. The Crowninshields seemed confident that if the voyage to Cochinchina failed, the ship could pick up a lucrative cargo in Borneo or elsewhere along the route and the voyage would not be in vain. In any event, this was the first American ship of record to visit Vietnam, and its captain the first American to set foot there.[1]

The ship chosen for the voyage, the *Fame*, which was launched with great fanfare, sailed on 17 January 1803, captained by Jeremiah Briggs.[2] On 15 May 1803, the *Fame* sighted the island of Poulo Condore off the southern coast of Cochinchina. The next morning, the ship sighted Cape St. James on the southern coast and continued up the coast. On 21 May, the *Fame* anchored in Turon (present-day DaNang) Bay. Briggs boarded one of two ships in the bay and found they belonged to the "King of Cochinchina" and were commanded by Frenchmen. He set off for DaNang to see the ships' officers, returning to the *Fame* the next day. The French commodore with whom Briggs spoke in DaNang advised him to go to "Cowe" (presumably Hué), the capital, to see the king in order to learn whether there was any possibility of trade.

Briggs set out for Hué on 23 May in a small boat with five hands and a local Portuguese pilot from Macao. They spent the night at "Hai-foo, a place of some trade." Briggs' journal records that "there was not the least appearance of industry there, they are the most indolent set of beings that ever I saw, they live principally on fish which they have in abundance, their huts are in general small, and entirely open to the air, which the climate makes necessary for it is excessive warm."

The next day, Briggs set out again for Hué, up the "Hai-foo river," which he found navigable by junks and even small ships. When Briggs arrived at Hué, he boarded a frigate anchored there and found a Frenchman in command. Briggs stayed three days with the Frenchman and learned that he had "never heard of such a thing as getting a cargo of Sugar on this part of the coast, and that he did not think it a possibility." However, the Frenchman sought the king's

authorization for Briggs to trade at any port on the coast. The king gave his authority, but Briggs noted he was "very jealous at first that we came to trade with his enemies, as he'd had possession of this place only about 6 months."

After being away from the ship 6 days Briggs returned to the *Fame* with the king's authority to trade. For the next 10 days, the *Fame* spent its time taking soundings along the coast, but apparently without ever putting into land again because of the strong currents encountered. On 10 June, the *Fame* headed for Manila.

The remainder of the portion of Briggs' journal on Cochinchina consists of a description of that country, information he presumably obtained through his contacts with the local French ship commanders, and a brief account of recent political events in Cochinchina, in which he noted increased French influence there. Briggs also briefly described the city of Hué, its impressive cannon defenses, the Council House, the citadel, and the king, his concubines, royal guard, and elephants. Finally, Briggs' log records that the king sent a French priest to see Briggs to get a description of the United States and its boundaries.

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Remarks in and along the Coast of Cochin China.

May 16th 1803 at 5 A.M. saw Cape St. James bearing N W by W dist.
about 5 lea. the land is very high but at this season so hazy that we
can scarce discern it at 7 or 8 lea. distance, our soundings from Pulo Con-
dore to Cape St. James from 29 to 12 fathoms Sand, the weather looking
very wild & squally, got the Ship under snug sail, at 9 A.M. have had found
18 fathoms water, the next cast 10, haul'd off E N E, & the next cast deep-
en'd to 23 fathoms, all within 10 minutes. At meridian the land bore
from W by N ½ N to N by E. May 17th Commences with moderate breezes
& pleasant to what it has been, saw a great number of water spouts,
stood in for the land, at 6 P.M. the land bore from N E by N ½ N to W N
W found we were not more than 2 or 3 lea. from the land, so hazy that
the land deceived us again, sounded 13 fathoms, hauled offshore next cast 12,
then 10, 13, 14 & so deepen'd, at 11 P.M. got 20 fathoms hove to till morn-
ing, at day light saw Pulo Cecir de Mar bearing E S ½ S distant
6 or 7 lea. pass'd between it and the Hollands Garden, but saw nothing of
the Hollands Garden, there is a small Island about 1 lea. N W from Pulo
Cecir de Mar lon. in by 2 sets of OLD the Island bearing S S E dist 3 lea. 108°.
May 18th Commences with moderate breezes & pleasant, at 2 P.M. Pulo
Cecir bore N W ½ W 5 or 6 lea. sounded, no bottom with 60 fathoms sounded
several times in the night no bottom with 100 fathoms. at 5 A.M. made
all sail, & stood for the land the current having set us off at the rate
of about 2 knots per Hour, at meridian the mountain of Varella bore W S W 10 lea.

Page 430 from Captain Jeremiah Briggs' Handwritten Log of the *Fame*'s Voyage to Cochinchina in 1803. This photograph may be reproduced only with written permission of the Peabody Museum. Courtesy of the Peabody Museum of Salem, Massachusetts.

The Brig *Franklin* and Captain John White

The second recorded account of an American visiting Vietnam is that of John White, a lieutenant in the US Navy, whose ship, the brig *Franklin,* anchored off Cape St. James (Vung-tau) on 7 June 1819. White, born in Marblehead, Massachusetts, in 1782, was elected a member of the East India Marine Society of Salem, Massachusetts in 1806. He died in Boston in 1840 after achieving the rank of Commander.[1]

White's account of his voyage was published in 1823 in Boston under the title *A History of a Voyage to the China Sea.* In it, White states his belief that the *Franklin* was the first American ship to display "the stars and stripes before the city of Saigon." His editor mentions several unsuccessful efforts by American ships seeking cargoes in Vietnam that preceded his, including the voyage of the *Fame,* captained by Jeremiah Briggs. White himself acknowledges that two other Americans actually set foot in Saigon shortly before he did, but that one, Oliver Blanchard, captain of the ship *Marmion* out of Boston, was stricken ill in Saigon and died even before his ship left Vietnamese waters. White mentions two other American ships that visited Cochinchina during the same period—the *Beverly,* belonging to the owner of the *Marmion* and captained by John Gardner, and the *Aurora,* of Salem, Massachusetts, captained by Robert Gould.[2]

In his memoir, White gives no clue as to why he undertook the voyage to Cochinchina. His mission was clearly a commercial one—to find and bring back a profitable cargo—but he does not explain either why a brig under the command of an American naval officer was given such a mission or who financed the mission. Neither does White indicate what interest there was generally in the United States at the time in Cochin China per se or even how much the young republic knew about that particular part of the world.

His memoir does, however, give some evidence of knowledge about the area. In it, he makes several references, either in the text or in footnotes, to available sources of information on Cochinchina (including Poivre, whose writings had come to Thomas Jefferson's attention).[3] In fact, White must have read the same passage from Poivre that attracted Thomas Jefferson's curiosity about Cochinchinese rice. Like Jefferson, White refers to six kinds of rice grown

in Cochinchina although White claimed that two were upland or mountain varieties, while Jefferson spoke of three upland varieties. Like Jefferson, White sought to bring home samples of the rice, "but unfortunately, the weavels and other vermin, destroyed the vegetative principle in all of them."[4] Finally, White refers frequently to objects which he brought back and deposited in the East Asia Marine Society Museum in Salem, Massachusetts. Some of these objects are still in the Peabody Museum in that city.

John White's account of his trip to Cochinchina is quite simply an account of the trip itself, the people he found, their character, their customs, their habits, their government, and their country. The book's interest to readers today lies chiefly in that it is the first detailed—and published—account of an American's visit to Vietnam, and that it provides a vivid example of an early American reaction to the Vietnamese and their ways.

Lieutenant White sailed from Salem, Massachusetts, on Saturday, 2 January 1819, in the brig *Franklin*, a ship of 250 tons "burthen." After an initial contact with local authorities at Vung-tau, the *Franklin* moved the next day to the village of Canjeo (Can Gio), about 7 miles west of Vung-tau, and awaited permission to proceed up the river to Saigon. Permission never came, and after several days of exasperating discussions with the local authorities, White concluded that the local authorities were not empowered to authorize him to proceed to Saigon. On 12 June, therefore, he weighed anchor for Hué, the capital of Cochinchina and the residence of the king. The local mandarins at Canjeo assured White that if he returned from Hué with a proper document from the king, he might proceed to Saigon.

The *Franklin* arrived in Turon (present-day DaNang) on 18 June. It was immediately visited by local authorities, who informed White that the king was absent from Hué in Tonquin (North Vietnam), that the country was recovering from devastating wars, and that what little produce (sugar and raw silk) there was in the country available for commercial purposes had already been promised to two French ships which had earlier contracted to supply the king with "fancy articles" and arms and uniforms for his troops. In July, White proceeded to Manila to find someone who spoke Vietnamese and could accompany them back to Cochinchina, and help them obtain permission to proceed up the river to Saigon ("for that was still the place to which our wishes pointed").

White stayed in Manila two months, during which time, by a stroke of luck, he met Captain John Brown of the *Marmion* out of Boston, originally under the command of Captain Oliver Blanchard. The *Marmion* had apparently arrived at Vung-tau and Canjeo a few days after the *Franklin* had departed. Blanchard and his fellow officers were received more hospitably by the local mandarins, apparently profiting from the reaction of the viceroy at Saigon to the news of the *Franklin's* arrival down river. In any case, the viceroy had sent an interpreter who was able to communicate ''indifferently'' in ''Eastern Portuguese.'' Through this interpreter, Blanchard received permission to proceed to Saigon in a local craft with one other officer, a Mr. Putnam, and a sailor who spoke some Portuguese. However, once in Saigon, Blanchard found he could use his doubloons only at a very great discount and that the Saigon authorities greatly preferred Spanish dollars, with which they were more familiar. Blanchard therefore gave up the thought of taking on a cargo in Saigon and decided to proceed to Manila for this purpose. Unfortunately, he took sick in Saigon and died even before the *Marmion* left the river at Vung-tau. John Brown took command of the ship and continued to the Philippines arriving there 22 June. During their stay in the Philippines, another American ship arrived after a brief, unsuccessful visit to Cochinchina. This was the *Beverly*, belonging to the owner of the *Marmion*, which had attempted to sail down the coast from DaNang to Vung-tau but was driven off by the monsoon.

Captains White and Brown decided to join forces and return to Saigon with both ships, calculating that two ships might even force their way up to Saigon if the local authorities at Vung-tau and Canjeo resisted. The crews carried out needed repairs on the *Marmion*, exchanged gold doubloons for Spanish dollars, waited out the southwest monsoon, then sailed for Cochinchina once again on 6 September. The two ships anchored off Vung-tau for the second time on 25 September. Proceeding the next day to Canjeo, they received permission to go on to Saigon within a few days and, on 7 October, after a seven-day journey up the Don-nai River (a passage of 59 1/2 miles, according to White), the *Franklin*, followed shortly by the *Marmion*, anchored in the river opposite Saigon. On 9 October, the two captains, together with their second officers, Mr. Bessel of the *Franklin* and Mr. Putnam of the *Marmion*, and a sailor from the *Marmion* who spoke Portuguese, entered the city of Saigon. They soon learned from the interpreter provided by the Cochinchinese that two other American ships had visited Cochinchina since the *Franklin* first

dropped anchor at Canjeo. One of these had been the *Aurora* of Salem, commanded by Captain Robert Gould. Like the *Franklin*, the *Aurora* stayed off Vung-tau for several days after the *Marmion* had departed, then made its way up the coast to DaNang but, failing to trade there, continue to Manila. The second was the *Beverly*, captained by John Gardner, which White had seen in Manila.

White's arrival in Saigon was followed by four months of almost totally unproductive ceremony and haggling with the Cochinchinese authorities. During his stay there, White developed an appreciation of the economic and political potential of Cochinchina and its people. But this impression was wholly overridden by his thorough disgust with their personal habits, their culture, and, above all, their complete and unashamed duplicity:

> It would be tedious to the reader, and painful to myself, to recapitulate the constant villainy and turpitude, which we experienced from these people, during our residence in the country. Their total want of faith, constant eagerness to deceive and overreach us, and their pertinacity in trying to gain by shuffling and manoeuvering, what might have been better and easier gained by openness and fair dealing; the tedious forms and ceremonies in transacting all kinds of business, carried into the most trifling transactions; the uncertainty of the eventual ratification of any bargain, (the least hope of wearing the patience of the purchaser out, and inducing him to offer a little more, being sufficient to annul any verbal stipulation) and there being no appeal, unless there is a written contract, which is never made, till every art has been used, and every engine of extortion put in motion and exhausted to gain more; all these vexations, combined with the rapacious, faithless, despotic and anti-commercial character of the government, will, as long as these causes exist, render Cochin-China the least desirable country for mercantile adventurers. These causes have made the Japanese relinquish the trade; they have driven the Portuguese of Macao from the country, and turned their commerce into other channels; and are yearly and rapidly lessening their intercourse with China and Siam. The philanthropist, the man of enterprise, and the civilized world generally, can see in the present miserable state of this naturally fine country, no other than a source of deep regret and commiseration.[5]

In his account, White openly expresses his disappointment with his experience, and he refers in several places to other accounts of Cochinchina which had led him to anticipate a quite different

King of Cochin China, from a drawing in John Crawfurd, *Journal of an Embassy to the Courts of Siam and Cochin China*. Reproduced with the permission of Oxford in Asia Historical Reprints, Oxford University Press, Kuala Lumpur, London, New York, 1967.

reception. He attributes the stark contrast between these accounts and his own experience to a marked deterioration in the conditions of life of the Cochinchinese brought on by an increasingly despotic leadership in Hué. That leadership, according to White, had occupied itself more and more in wars of conquest and debauchery, laying waste a rich and fertile land and destroying the morale and well-being of its people. White notes that the French had had a very positive and constructive influence on the Cochinchinese in years past, but the current situation had become precarious, forcing the French to prepare for abandoning their colonial adventure. He records that the French bishop Adran, dead some years by then, had been a towering figure in Cochinchina, and White suggests that his death led to a deterioration. White recounted this state of affairs to warn others who might have been tempted to seek trading opportunities in the "miserable" land of Cochinchina.

White's account includes a description of the royal citadel at Hué paralleling that of Briggs, although it differs considerably in its specific detail. White claims to have obtained the description from "an American gentleman who was at Turon a short time after I left it. . . ." White proceeds from this description to generalize about the country:

> These people have great quickness of perception, and a disposition to acquire a knowledge of the arts and sciences, and, with the exception of their coasting craft, which are decidedly primitive, they have, under the instruction of the French, made considerable advances in naval architecture, according to European ideas; nor have they been inattentive to fortification, the art of war in general, and the manufactures connected with it. These facts prove, beyond a doubt, that there is no physical defect in them; and the annals of the country, with the testimony of travellers, show, in respect to moral characteristics, that while they were under a mild and equitable government, they were a kind, hospitable, polite, vivacious, honest, and industrious people.
>
> Cochin China is perhaps, of all the powers in Asia, the best adapted to maritime adventure; from her local situation in respect to other powers; from her facilities towards the production of a powerful navy to protect her commerce; from the excellency of her harbors, and from the *aquatic* nature of her population on the sea-board, the Onamese rivalling even the Chinese as sailors.

Continuing in this vein, White applied value judgments to Cochinchina's national priorities that reflected his naval background and

Cochinchinese Soldier, from John Barrow, *A Voyage to Cochinchina*. Reproduced with the permission of Oxford in Asia Historical Reprints, Oxford University Press, Kuala Lumpur, London, New York, Melbourne, 1975.

seemed more appropriate to a young, dynamic United States than to a small but ancient people and culture:

> A prince who would understand, and pursue the true interests of his country, would, instead of building cities like Hué, commit his abundant resources to the ocean, under the protection of a powerful navy, which would also guarantee the safety of his maritime frontier, with the assistance of proper fortifications; a few small garrisons would effectually protect the interior, already naturally guarded by lofty, and inaccessible mountains, and boundless and impenetrable forests, from the incursions of a hostile army; he would remove the vexatious restrictions, by which commerce is now shackled, and invite his neighbors and strangers to a liberal participation in its blessings, which would at the same time be the means of enriching his own country, and introducing the arts of more civilised and polished nations. But it is to be feared that this is not likely soon to be realised; for the swarthy, ill-favoured heir-apparent to the crown of Onam, is an avaricious, narrow-minded man ... (and) the impending destiny of the country appears gloomy.[6]

On 30 January 1820, a sadder and wiser man—and having contracted what he described as elephantiasis—Lieutenant White led both ships out of Saigon with only partial cargoes of sugar and raw silk. The *Franklin* and the *Marmion* made up the rest of their cargo in Java and sailed for home. The *Franklin* left the *Marmion* in Mauritius and returned to Salem on 31 August 1820, some twenty months after its departure.

One modern French observer judges White's experience in Cochinchina harshly, describing White as a "rigid puritan" who judged the local people from a limited viewpoint and who "never wondered to what extent the attitude of the Vietnamese was conditioned by his own." Nevertheless, this observer acknowledges that White's account of South Vietnam, designed to be a useful work for the commerce of his country, painted a picture which, despite its errors and blemishes, was vivid and picturesque. The observer also speculates that White's published account resulted in the diversion of American ships from Indochina and "thus hindered the arrival of foreigners whose presence could have created a serious obstacle to the French. . . ." This observer claims that no American commercial ship appeared in Saigon between 1820 and 1860.[7]

Although this French observer may be factually correct in his statement that no American commercial ships appeared in Saigon

between 1820 and 1860, it seems a heavy burden of responsibility to lay on John White alone. Surely, the failure of the US government to negotiate commercial agreements with Cochinchina over that same period, together with the attitude of the Cochinchinese authorities described by White himself, must have had at least an equally negative impact on any potential US trade there.

II DIPLOMATS AND NAVAL VESSELS

John Shillaber, US Consul in Batavia

In 1826, only six years after John White's unsuccessful attempt to obtain a cargo in Cochinchina, John Shillaber, US Consul in Batavia, Dutch East Indies (present-day Indonesia), began urging the Department of State to consider sending occasional naval vessels into the "Indian seas" to show the flag, to protect a growing American trade, and to effect commercial treaties with Siam, Cochinchina, and Japan. From 1826 to 1832, Shillaber sent a series of letters to the Secretary of State pressing his point of view and repeating that he would be honored to receive a Presidential Commission to negotiate such treaties.[1]

After acknowledging Shillaber's requests for a commission to negotiate treaties, Secretary of State Martin van Buren, over clerk Daniel Brent's signature, sent Shillaber a letter of instruction on 13 December 1830 that encouraged him in his proposals:

> I am directed moreover by the Secretary to inform you, as I accordingly do, that the suggestions contained in your Letter, with regard to the practicability of establishing Commercial regulations or Treaties between the United States and the *Independent* Sovereigns of Siam and Cochinchina, and to the advantage to be derived from such measures, will receive due attention. It is desirable, however, that you should make a more formal communication to this Department upon the subjects referred to, describing, in more detail, the inconvenience to which the Trade of the United States is now exposed, from existing regulations, or the want of suitable regulations in the Countries in question, and the advantages of which that intercourse is, in your judgment susceptible from the formation of the Commercial Regulations recommended. A more precise knowledge of the nature and character of the Government in question will also be required.
>
> If the President upon the view of the whole subject, should hereafter determine upon making the attempt to place our commerce with those Countries upon such a footing, I am directed by the Secretary to state that in that case a Commission and instructions will in due season be forwarded to you for entering upon the necessary negotiations to that end.[2]

Spurred on by this expression of interest, Shillaber continued his drumfire of correspondence on the subject.[3] His hopes and expectations were in vain. An incident off the west coast of Sumatra in 1831 involving a pirate attack against an American ship, the *Friendship,* caught the attention of the Congress, and offered Secretary of the Navy Levi Woodbury the occasion to press for increased appropriations for the Navy. In his annual report to the President of 3 December 1831, Woodbury said:

> The great value of our commerce in India and China, exceeding five millions annually, and its constant exposure, with many valuable lives, to insult and rapine, furnish a strong appeal to the government for the protection of a naval force. Should appropriations be made for the ensuing year, in conformity to the estimates, it will enable the Department not only to strengthen the squadron in the Mediterranean, and extend its cruising ground with success, as before suggested, but to guard more efficiently our navigation on the coasts of South America, and provide a sufficient force to visit occasionally the Indian and Chinese seas.[4]

Following the attack on the *Friendship*, the USS *Potomac* was ordered to the Pacific to seek restitution for the "barbarous and piratical injury." A detachment from the US Brazilian squadron was subsequently ordered to sail to Sumatra, India, China, and the east coast of Africa in an attempt to insure "the security and prosperity of our important commercial interests in those regions."[5]

Edmund Roberts, Special Agent, and the Sloop-of-War *Peacock*

The detachment from the Brazilian squadron that followed the *Potomac* to the Far East included the ship *Peacock* carrying Edmund Roberts, special envoy of President Andrew Jackson, on his first unsuccessful mission to Cochinchina. As President Jackson later explained in his message to the Senate of 30 May 1834:

> It having been represented to me by persons whose statements and opinions were thought worthy of confidence that the trade of the United States might be extended and rendered more lucrative by commercial arrangements with the countries bordering on the Indian Ocean, and being informed that the success of any efforts which might be made to accomplish that object would materially depend upon the secrecy with which they should be conducted, I appointed Mr. Edmund Roberts a special agent of this Government for the purpose of visiting those seas and concluding such commercial conventions as might have the effect of securing additional advantages to our trade in that quarter.... The expenses of the agency have been defrayed out of the contingent fund for foreign intercourse.[1]

Edmund Roberts gives his own account of how he was chosen for this mission:

> Having some years since become acquainted with the commerce of Asia and Eastern Africa, the information produced on my mind a conviction that considerable benefit would result from effecting treaties with some of the native powers bordering on the Indian ocean.
>
> With a view to effect an object apparently so important, I addressed a letter to the Hon. Levi Woodbury, then a Senator in Congress from the State of New Hampshire, detailing the neglected state of our commerce with certain eastern princes, and showing that the difference between the duties paid on English and American commerce, in their dominions, constituted of itself a very important item in profit, in favour of the former.
>
> Subsequently to this period, Mr. Woodbury was appointed to the secretaryship of the Navy, and consequently became

No. 7

Draft of Treaty

I There shall be a perpetual peace between the United States and the King of Cochin China... giving him his titles.

II. The citizens of the United States shall have free liberty to enter all the ports of the King with their cargoes, of whatever kind the said cargoes may consist, and they shall have liberty to sell the same to any of the subjects of the King, or others, who may wish to purchase the same or to barter the same for any of the produce or manufacture of the Kingdom, or other articles that may be found there—that no price shall be fixed by the King or his officers on the articles to be sold by the merchants of the United States, or the merchandise they may wish to buy, but that the trade shall be free, on both sides, to sell, or buy, or exchange, on the terms and for the price the owners may think fit—and whenever the said citizens of the United States may think fit to depart they shall be at liberty so to do. And if any Viceroy, Mandarin, or officer of the customs of the King, shall contravene this article, he shall be severely punished.

III. The American citizens shall pay no other duties on export or import, tonnage, license to trade or other charge whatsoever than the nation the most favored shall pay.

IV. If any vessel of the United States should suffer shipwreck on any part of the King's dominions, the persons escaping from the wreck, shall be taken care of, and hospitably entertained at the expense of the King until they shall find an opportunity to be returned to their country, when the United States will pay all the expenses which they have incurred—and the property saved from such wreck shall be carefully preserved and delivered to the owner or the Consul of the United States.

V. The citizens of the United States resorting to the ports of the Kingdom for the purposes of trade, shall have leave to land and reside in the said ports without paying any tax or imposition whatever, for such liberty, other than the general duties on import and export, which the most favored nation shall pay.

VI. If any citizens of the United States, or their vessels or other property, shall be taken by pirates, and brought within

Draft Treaty Between the United States and Cochinchina. Photocopy courtesy of the US Department of State Archives, *Special Missions*, Vol. I [1932], pp. 80-81.

the dominions of the King, the persons shall be set at liberty, and the property restored to the owner if he is present, or to the American Consul, to be restored to the owner if he is not present.

VII. All the above articles shall apply to the subjects of the King, and their property, if they trade to the United States, where they shall enjoy all the privileges given by the above articles to the citizens of the United States in the dominions of the King.

VIII. The President of the United States may appoint Consuls to reside in the ports of the Kingdom where the principal commerce shall be carried on, which Consuls shall be the exclusive judges of all disputes or suits wherever American citizens shall be engaged with each other — they shall have power to receive the property of any American citizen dying within the Kingdom, and to send the same to his heirs, first paying all his debts due to the King's subjects. The said Consuls shall not be arrested, nor shall their property be seized — nor shall any of their household be arrested, but their persons and property and their houses shall be inviolate. Should any Consul, however, commit any offence against the laws of the Kingdom, complaint shall be made to the President who will immediately displace him.

Circular
Consul of the U.S. at ______.

Department of State,
Washington, 6th Feby 1832

Sir —

I beg leave to recommend Mr Edmund Roberts, the bearer of this letter, to your special attention and to bespeak for him such good offices, on your part, as circumstances and your situation may enable you with propriety to render, in case the United States' Ship Peacock, in which he goes, should touch at the port of your Consulate, in the prosecution of her destined cruise in that region, upon the public service.

I am respectfully,
Your obedient servant,
Edw. Livingston.

[Addressed, individually, to the United States Consuls at Manilla, Batavia, — Canton.]

Draft Treaty Between the United States and Cochinchina. (continued)

> more deeply interested in the success of our floating commerce.
>
> Scarcely had his appointment been confirmed before the melancholy news arrived, that the ship Friendship, of Salem, Mass., had been plundered, and a great portion of her crew murdered, by the natives of Qualah Battu. . . .
>
> About this period, the U.S. ship-of-war Potomac was nearby ready to proceed to her station on the western coast of South America, by way of Cape Horn, but her destination was immediately changed for the western coast of Sumatra, accompanied by instructions to carry into effect the measures of government against the inhabitants of Qualah Battu.
>
> As our government was anxious to guard against any casualty which might befall the Potomac in fulfilling her directions, it resolved to despatch the United States' sloop-of-war Peacock and schooner Boxer, to carry into effect, if necessary, the orders of the first-named vessel, and also to convey to the courts of Cochin-China, Siam and Muscat, a mission charged to effect, if practicable, treaties with those respective powers which would place American commerce on a surer basis, and on an equality with that of the most favoured nations trading to those kingdoms.
>
> A special or confidential agent being necessary to carry into effect the new measures of government, I had the honour to be selected for that duty, at the particular recommendation of the secretary of the Navy.[2]

Despite the State Department's promises to Shillaber, the task of negotiating with the Cochinchinese was assigned to another.[3]

Edmund Roberts' explanation for the total failure of his first mission to Cochinchina was that the blame lay with his Cochinchinese interlocutors:

> With the courts of Siam and Muscat, it will be seen, I was enabled to effect the most friendly relation, and to place our commerce on a basis in which the excessive export and import duties, previously demanded, were reduced fifteen per cent.
>
> If in the attainment of these benefits some sacrifice of personal feeling was at times made for the advantage of American commerce, the dignity of my country was never lost sight of, nor her honour jeopardized by humiliating and degrading concessions to eastern etiquette.

> The insulting formalities required as preliminaries to the treaty, by the ministers from the capital of Cochinchina, left me no alternative, save that of terminating a protracted correspondence, singularly marked from its commencement to its termination by duplicity and prevarication in the official servants of the emperor. The detail of the various conversations, admissions and denials, on the part of these eastern ministers, in the pages of the Embassy, exhibits their diplomatic character in true, but not favourable colours.[4]

A modern Vietnamese observer, however, in commenting upon Roberts' mission to Cochinchina, suggests that Roberts seemed to lack "diplomatic flexibility." He notes that the pages of Roberts' book devoted to Cochinchina and its people were "denuded of all goodwill and understanding."[5] Edmund Roberts was from Portsmouth, New Hampshire. He had followed a mercantile career, rising from merchant and "supercargo" to ship-owner only to lose his accumulated wealth by a series of misfortunes. After a number of efforts to rehabilitate himself, he succeeded in 1823 in being appointed US Consul at Demerara, on the east coast of Africa. Four and a half years later, he was again a supercargo on an American vessel plying the east coast of Africa and perhaps as far east as Bombay. When he returned home to the United States, he raised with Senator Woodbury his idea of seeking to negotiate commercial treaties with some sovereigns in the East Indies.

To what extent Roberts' campaign was aided by John Shillaber's extensive correspondence pressing for the same end or by the pirate attack on the *Friendship* off the west coast of Sumatra is not known. Undoubtedly, Roberts' case was helped by the fact that former Senator Woodbury had become Secretary of the Navy and thus was in a better position to advance his constituent's cause. In any case, on 5 January 1832, Secretary of State Edward Livingston informed Secretary of the Navy Woodbury that the President had agreed to the latter's recommendation to appoint Roberts "a confidential agent to the Indian seas," sailing with the ships about to be dispatched there following the pirate attack at Quallah Battoo. Livingston asked Woodbury to inform Roberts and to tell him to proceed to Washington to receive his instructions, to "recommend secrecy to him," and to provide him with "some ostensible employment" on the ship on which he would sail.[6]

Three weeks later, on 27 January 1832, Livingston issued Roberts his instructions for his secret mission to Cochinchina. The

letter instructed Roberts to report as much information as he could on the products and trade of Cochinchina and to seek to negotiate a commercial treaty with the authorities of the country.[7] Further correspondence from Livingston conveyed passports, credentials, and copies of a bill of lading forwarding presents for foreign potentates. Roberts was authorized to make commercial arrangements with Burma and the King of Acheen (Sumatra) if he thought he had sufficient time to do so. Livingston also cautioned Roberts to pay particular attention to the possibility of securing "one or more ports in that quarter into which by treaty with the native powers our ships might always be received and protected."[8]

According to Edmund Roberts' own account, the *Peacock,* with him on board, sailed from Boston in March 1832 bound for the western Pacific via Rio de Janeiro.[9] En route they learned that the *Potomac* had accomplished its mission of showing the flag off the west coast of Sumatra and of punishing those who carried out the attack on the *Friendship.* Thus, the *Peacock* could proceed directly on its own commercial mission.

After visiting the Philippines and China, the *Peacock* in bad weather made for DaNang Bay, the "nearest and best point" to communicate with the capital at Hué, some fifty miles away. After lying off the coast of DaNang for 4 days the ship was caught in strong southeast monsoonal currents. It was pushed southward and finally was able to put into the harbor of Vung-lam, south of Pulo Cambir and north of Cape Averella, somewhat south of the modern town of Qui Nhon.

The very next day, Edmund Roberts' long travail with the Cochinchinese began. An old man, a village chief, came on board to inquire about the purpose of the ship's visit. The Americans told him the ship was a warship sent by the President of the United States with a special envoy on board who had a letter for the King of Cochinchina. They further told him that the envoy wished to go to the capital as soon as possible to present the President's letter to the king.[10] The village chief seemed to seek a letter describing all this for his superior, but he was told that the envoy would himself write a letter to the capital explaining his mission. Answering the Americans' questions, the old man described the government structure of the village, the province, and the capital, to which he said the ship might proceed in 3 or 4 days. Roberts himself notes in his account that everyone was paying so much attention to the other details of the man's statements that they ignored this latter one.[11]

The next day, 6 January, two provincial officers sent a larger party to make more inquiries. When their questions were answered, the visitors asked for and received a written paper for their superiors. The following day, the party returned again to the ship, this time with the two provincial officers and their retinue of "umbrella-bearers, trumpeters and sword bearers." The Americans covered the same ground with them, and then told the party that the envoy was preparing a dispatch that a naval officer would deliver on shore in an hour for transmission immediately to the province capital. The visitors, however, posed a number of "impertinent queries, such as, whether there were any presents for the king," and asked to see a copy of the envoy's dispatch to the capital, as well as the envoy's and ship captain's commissions. The dispatch was duly delivered on shore, more questions asked on both sides, and the provincial officials' party departed for the provincial capital of Phu Yen.

On 17 January two mandarins from Hué, the imperial capital, came on board with their party. Roberts' account of the meeting epitomizes the frustration of his whole mission:

> They then inquired to what country the ship belonged, and produced a large sheet, containing representations of every known national flag, with the names of the countries attached, in French and Chinese characters. The flag of the United States was pointed out to them, and they were informed that the ship was a man of war.... They had long, they said, heard of the country, as a good and happy one; and were now rejoiced at the meeting. They inquired the purpose of our coming, a species of question which every new comer repeated, as though ignorant of any previous intercourse with the officers of government. The necessary answer being given, they were asked respecting the letter from the envoy to the king, whether it had reached the capital before they left. They replied it had; but the address on the cover was erroneous; and therefore the minister of commerce and navigation ... could not venture to hand it to the king. The country, they said, is not now called Annam, as formerly, but Wietman, (in Mandarin dialect, Yuenan;) and it is ruled, not by a king, (wang,) but by an emperor, (hwang-te).... They said, also, that they had received orders to pay particular attention, and examine everything, so as to prevent any farther miscarriage or delay in the business of the mission. It was explained to them, that the errors they mentioned did not arise from any disrespect towards the king, (or emperor,) but from the ignorance of their forms, which want of intercourse

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as that of the most favoured Nations, or on what conditions he will admit it, and into what ports. No exclusive privileges are asked for. And the Envoy is not charged with any other matter or thing, excepting to establish a suitable commercial treaty between the two Nations. These are the only objects of the Mission.

'Had your Excellency sent a written answer, requesting the above information the Envoy would have given these particulars previously, but certain persons enquired the object of the vessel's coming and asked for a copy of the President's letter, to whom this information could not be given, because they could show no document or authority from Your Excellency.

'The Envoy has already been here some time, and will be unable to delay much longer. He therefore requests your Excelly to provide the means for himself and others who are to accompany him to proceed to Hue speedily. For unless within seven days permission be received from the Emperor to proceed thither at once, the vessel must go to Sea.

'Signed and sealed on board the U. S. Ship of War Peacock, in the roadstead of Vung lam in the province of Phoyan, this 30th day of January A.D. 1833. and of Independence the fifty seventh

(Signed) Edmund Roberts.

(Copy No. 5.)

Andrew Jackson, President of the United States of America to His Majesty the Emperor of Cochinchina.

Great and Good Friend,

This will be delivered to your Majesty by Edmund Roberts, a respectable Citizen of these United States, who has been appointed Special Agent on the part of this Government to transact important business with Your Majesty. I pray Your Majesty to protect him in the exercise of the duties which are thus confided to him, and to treat him with Kindness and Confidence, placing entire reliance on what he shall say to you in our behalf,

Pages from the Record of Mission Undertaken by Edmund Roberts, Special Agent, including text of President Andrew Jackson's letter to the Emperor of Cochinchina. Photocopy courtesy of US Department of State Archives, *Special Agents*, pp. 37-38.

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specially when he shall repeat the assurances of our perfect amity and Good will towards your Majesty. I pray God to have you always, Great and Good friend, under his safe and holy keeping.

Written at the City of Washington, the 20th day of January AD 1833 and in the fifty six year of Independence,

Your Good & faithful Friend

(Signed) Andrew Jackson.

By the President

(Signed) Edw. Livingston, Sec. of State

The foregoing is a true copy of the Original now in my possession (Signed) Edmund Roberts.

These documents being completed, the packet was sealed up, and taken on Shore by Mr Morrison. But now a new and unexpected difficulty arose. The letter (which, they were told, though addressed to the Minister, was intended to be seen by the Emperor) must be opened, submitted to their inspection, and corrected entirely accordingly to their taste, ere they would receive or forward it.

This unheard of and arrogant requisition was strongly objected to: "What is the cause" they were asked, "of such behaviour? Here are four officers of whose names and rank we are equally ignorant (for their rank they had evaded telling when asked, and their names, though told by two of them, were not suffered to be written down); — these officers require full information respecting the objects of our Mission; and refuse to forward our Official letters. In no other Country we have been to is an Envoy thus treated."

With the deputies, however, nothing that could be said was of any use. They acted apparently on Specific and peremptory orders, and evinced a total disregard for every thing but a complete concession to all their demands. On the present

Record of Mission Undertaken by Edmund Roberts, Special Agent (continued)

occasioned. They were asked to point out in what manner the address should be altered, and replied, that it would be preferable to address a letter to the minister of commerce and navigation, informing him of the ship's arrival and object of coming; and requesting him to state the same to the king. They desired to be allowed to see the letter, in order to prevent the admission of 'interdicted words,' that is, expressions which, according to the Chinese punctilios of writing, are considered inadmissible in official correspondence with the higher ranks of officers. The letter to the king was then returned, at the desire of the envoy; and the deputies expressed a wish to know the contents of the President's letter, as well as the particular and specific object of the mission. They were informed that the President's letter was an introduction of the envoy to the king, and that the envoy was prepared to negotiate respecting the particular objects of this mission, after his arrival at Hué; but that the one general object, a treaty of friendly intercourse, was inclusive of all other objects. This answer was far from being satisfactory, and they repeatedly returned to the same point, till, finding they could obtain no other reply, they at length desisted. Being now requested to give an explicit address for the letter to be written to the minister, they drew a short letter to the following effect:

Edmund Roberts, envoy from the United States of America, desires to state to your excellency, that he has received the commands of his president, deputing him, a petty officer, to bring a public letter to this effect:[12] 'I have long regarded the fame of your kingdoms with a desire for friendly intercourse; but I have not previously had an opportunity for obtaining it. I now entreat earnestly for a friendly intercourse. Beyond this, there is no other point I desire.'

The said envoy presumes to make this statement, praying you to report it to the emperor, that having glanced thereat, he may happily allow him to repair speedily to the capital, and respectfully present the letter," etc.

The tone of this letter is extremely objectionable, for, besides the servileness of particular expressions, the general language is that of an inferior, (the same idea being often expressed in Chinese in different words, according to the respective ranks of the writer, and the person he addresses:) the letter was therefore immediately rejected; and some of the most offensive expressions, such as "petty officer" and "earnest entreaty", were pointed out and animadverted on. With the

> effrontery of falsehood common among the Chinese, they denied that the expressions were those of an inferior; but truth does not form a part of their creed. They were then informed that a letter would be written by the envoy the next day, and that the expressions should be respectful, but not mean or servile. They repeated their desire to see the letter before it was closed, in order to expunge improper words; and insisted on the necessity of their so doing. They were told, that they might see the letter; but that no material corrections could be made at their suggestions, after a fair copy of the letter had been prepared. After some further conversation and dispute concerning points of small import, they returned to the shore, at about eleven o'clock in the afternoon.[13]

So it went for the remainder of Robert's mission to Cochinchina. Until 8 February, the discussions continued to no avail. Roberts was unwilling to submit the American Republic to the humiliations of servile forms of address, and the Cochinchinese were unwilling to risk their sovereign's ire by accepting unsuitable forms of address from a faraway government of commoners to the Emperor at Hué. On 26 January, the repetitive and unproductive discussions were broken by the offer, from the provincial authorities by order of the king, of a feast of fifty-one dishes. Roberts and his colleagues learned that the feast was in response to Roberts' letter to the Minister in Hué and that a reply might be expected in two or three days. Roberts explains his acceptance of the feast thus:

> As it would have given offense, and impeded, if not wholly destroyed the object of the mission, to have refused the present, it was immediately accepted with thanks: and the officers, who brought it off, were informed, that a salute of thirteen guns would be fired in honour of the king, as the present was said to have come from him. The feast was brought on board in handsomely varnished and gilded cases; to all outward appearance, it was very neat and cleanly; but we could not divest ourselves of the idea, that it was cooked in the uncleanly vessels we had seen on shore, and that it had come in contact with the filthy paws, dirty nails, and heads filled with vermin, which we had seen on shore; we, therefore, barely tasted of one article, the confectionary. A complimentary toast was drunk to the emperor, in a glass of their favourite rice wine.[14]

The following day, 27 January, Roberts learned that two officers, sent in lieu of a written reply, had arrived from Hué wishing to discuss the letter with him.

The officers from Hué continued to raise difficulties, at length insisting that since the President was an elected official and not a king he must address the emperor in a decorous and respectful manner. Therefore, they intended to examine the translation and to expunge any improper words. Roberts replied to this "insulting language" that his president was inferior to neither king nor emperor.

On 30 January, when it was clear the officers from Hué were bound by their instructions, Roberts addressed a letter to the minister enclosing a copy of the President's letter and setting forth the purpose of his mission.[15] However, the two officers from Hué insisted on seeing the President's letter and "correcting" it to their taste. After the Americans refused, the two officers asked if presents had been brought for the emperor and whether the American party was ready to abide by the etiquette of the court. This led to the final impasse because Roberts would not agree to what he considered demeaning gestures to the emperor, and his interlocutors would not forward the President's letter unless he agreed to observe court etiquette.

On 7 February, the officers from Hué, informed that the ship was leaving the following day,

> requested that no offence would be taken, nor any unpleasant feeling be entertained, on account of the manner in which the mission left; as the failure was entirely owing to the difference in custom in the two countries. The spokesman said he hoped that all unfriendliness would be dismissed, and that American vessels would frequent the Cochin-Chinese harbours, as much as if the mission had succeeded.[16]

During the ensuing discussion, the Hué spokesman repeated that he hoped the mission's failure would not prevent American ships from coming to trade. The reply was that trade was on "so bad a footing, the regulations being unknown, and the government's charges and duties unascertained, that vessels cannot come here." The discussion continued, and the Hué official finally stated: "All nations that come here . . . for instance, the English and French, are on the same footing with you. They do not inquire about the laws; and none dare extort from them more than the regular charges." The American replied, "This . . . is not true; for the Chinese are on a different footing, being able to go to many places where the English and French cannot go. England and France have endeavored to form treaties, but without success. We know the regulations of the English and French trade, but do not know any for the American trade: hence our mission."[17]

Toasts were drunk to the health of the President, and to the emperor. The Hué officials then left, wishing the Americans health, a pleasant voyage, and a speedy return. The Americans replied that they did not expect to return and sailed the next morning, 8 February. Roberts defended his actions thus:

> It may be thought by those who are for submitting to every species of degradation, to gain commercial advantages, that I was unnecessarily fastidious in the course I adopted in the negotiation with Cochin-China; but when it is known that there is no end to the doctrine of submission with the ultra-Gangetic nations; and all past negotiations of European powers will fully confirm what I now state, that neither privileges, nor immunities, nor advantages of any kind, are to be gained by submission, condescension, conciliation, or by flattery, (they despise the former as a proof of weakness—the latter as arguing a want of spirit;) that threats and aggressions are neither justifiable nor necessary, a dignified, yet unassuming conduct, jealous of its own honor, open and disinterested, seeking its own advantage, but willing to promote that of others, will doubtless effect much with nations of this stamp and character, and must in the end be able to accomplish the object desired.
>
> Previous to visiting Cochin-China, I had laid down certain rules of conduct, which I had resolved to adopt towards these people, as well as the Siamese. In the first place, I had determined to adhere most strictly to the truth, however detrimental it might be to the interest of our commerce at *present*, or however unpalatable it might be to either of the nations. I had further resolved, not to submit to any degrading ceremonies, by performing the Ko-tow, uncovering the feet, etc, etc.... Seeing the gross impositions practiced, by apparently friendly nations, with other negotiators, I had further determined never to repose any confidence in their advice, but to let my own judgment be the guide of what was just and right. Furthermore, to be kind and courteous to all; but after some little formalities, to reveal as little to inferior officers as possible; and lastly, to use some state and show, as they are useful auxiliaries in making an impression upon the uncivilized mind.

And finally:

> To all outward appearance the country surrounding this noble bay is in a highly flourishing condition, but on a more close examination this beautiful vision is not realized. The

> inhabitants are without exception the most filthy people in the world.[18] ... [The Cochin-Chinese] were not aware ... of the distance between the two countries, neither did they know the situation of North America, but supposed it to be in Europe, as we afterward ascertained.[19]

Thanks to an American consular officer, W.E. Scotten, we have an interesting view of the Roberts mission from the Cochinchinese side. Interested in early American contacts with Indochina, Scotten, while he was posted in Saigon in 1932, sought assistance in researching imperial archives for any account of the Roberts mission. The following entry was discovered in the imperial records of the time:

> *Winter, 11th month, 13th year of Minh-Mang* (December 1832)
> The President of the Republic Nha-di-ly [Chinese characters also given], located on the Atlantic Ocean and known also by the names Hoa-Ky, [Chinese characters], (United States), Maly-can, [Chinese characters], (American), Tan-anh-cat-ly [Chinese characters] (New England), sent his subjects Mr. Nighia-duc-mon-La-bach[20] [Chinese characters], Captain Duc-giai Tam-gia [Chinese characters], and their party, to our country, bearers of a letter transmitting the desire to enter into relations with us. Their ship anchored at Vung-Lam, port of Phu-Yen. Our Government ordered Chief of the Office of Ministries Nguyen-Tri-Phuong and the Deputy Chief of the Office of Ministries Ly-Van-Phuc to join with the mandarins of the said province to go aboard the ship and to give there a welcoming banquet. Questioned about the purpose of their voyage, these foreigners answered that their intent was to create good commercial relations. Their words were marked with respect and courtesy. But, after translation of the letter, it was seen to contain numerous forms lacking in logic. An imperial order was thus issued as follows: "It would be superfluous to forward the letter to the throne. The envoys Nguyen-Tri-Phuong and Ly-Van-Phuc are authorized to assume for purpose of their mission the function of officials of Foreign Commerce in order to respond summarily to the Americans in this sense: "Your nation asks to undertake commercial relations with us. We have firmly decided not to oppose such relations. On the other hand, you should conform strictly to the relevant rules in use in our country. Henceforth, on arriving in our country, your ships will anchor off the bay of Tra-son. In any case, you will not be able to build houses for your use on land. If you do, you will go

> beyond the limits of the law." And they can leave after receiving this response."[21]

Joseph Balestier, US Consul in Singapore at the time, also reported a Cochinchinese reaction to the Roberts mission. His letter to Secretary of State Forsyth of 30 March 1835 contained the following passage:

> [A] Roman Catholic missionary lately arrived here from Cochin-China informs me that the King of that country was greatly incensed that his reply to the letter which Mr. Roberts addressed to him during his visit to that Kingdom in the Peacock. [sic] It appears that the messenger employed by Mr. Roberts was very tardy in conveying the Despatch to the King, who as soon as he received it immediately invited the Commission to come round to Segong with the ships. But the letter did not reach the Port till some considerable time after the departure of the Peacock.[22]

These Cochinchinese accounts of the Roberts mission both recall the statement early in Roberts' account that he and his party were advised to proceed to the Bay of DaNang, then to Hué. In his summary report, Roberts himself speculated that had more favorable weather permitted the *Peacock* to go directly to Danang or to anchor off Hué, the results of his mission might have been more positive. However, he also noted that he probably would still have been subjected to "demeaning ceremonies" at the court.[23] The accounts of Cochinchinese reactions to the Roberts mission tend to support Roberts' judgment that, had circumstances been different, he might have come to terms with the court in Hué. In any case, he went on to successfully negotiate agreements with Siam and Muscat. He returned to Cochinchina three years later for another effort at negotiation, but he failed a second time—illness and death cut short his mission.

Edmund Roberts: Second Mission

Between Roberts' first and second unsuccessful missions to Cochinchina, the next determined advocate of US commercial ties with Cochinchina and other countries of the region appeared: Joseph Balestier, son-in-law of Paul Revere. Balestier arrived in Singapore in 1834 as the first US consul in that city, a year after Roberts left DaNang Bay. Almost immediately, he began campaigning for active US efforts to expand commercial ties in the region and to show the flag there as well. In what may have been his first official communication after his arrival at his new post, a letter to the Secretary of State dated 2 June 1834, Balestier decried the fact that Singapore was closed to American trade:

> To us the loss is great, for we are deprived in participating in a most valuable trade with the people of the Eastern Islands & embracing a circle of which the limits are China, Celebes, New Guinea, Australia, Java, Sumatra, Bengall, the Malayan Peninsula, Siam and Cochin China: all of whom in a greater or lesser degree resort to this Port, free in every sense of the word, with their commodities, which they exchange for European fabrics. Many of ours would find a ready and profitable sale could they be brought here & landed from our ships, as from vessels of other nations who wait while the sales and investments are being made, or employ the meanwhile in short trading excursions to the neighboring Ports or Coasts.[1]

Nine months later, in the same letter in which he reported the Cochinchinese reaction to the first Roberts mission (see p. 32), Balestier put in the first of many applications for Roberts' job:

> Should my vicinity to, and my [illegible word] of intercourse with, Cochin China and Siam be thought a suitable channel to effect useful purposes, I beg leave to tender my services to the President. . . .[2]

In March 1835, however, Secretary of State John Forsyth sent Roberts formal notice that the President had once again appointed him as Agent, this time to exchange ratifications of the treaties Roberts had concluded with Siam and Muscat. Roberts was also "to make such commercial arrangements with other powers whose dominions border upon the Indian Ocean, as may lend to the

advancement or security of the Commerce of the United States in that quarter."[3] Forsyth's letter gave Roberts both concrete instructions and broad discretionary powers:

> From Siam you will proceed to Cochin-China, and use every endeavor, consistent with the dignity of this Government, and with the means afforded you, to form a commercial treaty with that country. In the efforts which you are expected to make for the accomplishment of this object, much must necessarily be left to your own discretion. Everything has been done by this Government that suggested itself as likely to facilitate your negotiations with a people possessing habits and feelings peculiar to the East and so different from our own. You will have at your disposal such an amount of presents as has been thought necessary to precede the negotiations, which you will distribute in such way as you may think most conducive to your success: and you are also furnished with a power to treat, and with a letter from the President to the Emperor, in the preparation of which regard has been had to the ideas of the nation for which it is intended, in respect to the ceremony which should characterize all intercourse with the Sovereign. Observing the same policy, you will of course accommodate yourself to the peculiar notions and customs of the country, however absurd they may be, wherever you can do so without such an acknowledgment of inferiority as would be incompatible with the dignity of your own Government, of which you will on all occasions assert the equality with the most powerful nations of the world. You will studiously inculcate upon all those with whom you have intercourse the particular situation, character, and views of this country: that it is an essential part of our policy to avoid political connexion with any other Government: that although we are a powerful nation, possessing great resources, an extensive trade, and a large fleet, all our past history shows that we are not ambitious of conquest: that we desire no colonial possessions: that we seek a free and friendly intercourse with all the world: and that our interests and inclinations alike lead us to deprecate a state of war with any nation, except in self defense, or in vindication of our own violated rights or honor. You will point out, where it may be necessary, the difference which exists between ourselves and other nations in these respects; and endeavor to remove the fears and prejudices which may have been generated by the encroachments or aggression of European Powers.[4]

A small squadron of two naval vessels, the sloop of war *Peacock* and the schooner *Enterprise*, under the command of Commodore E.P. Kennedy, was placed at Roberts' disposal for his mission. Commodore Kennedy thus became the first commander of the "East India squadron."[5]

After exchanging ratifications with Muscat and Siam in elaborate ceremonies, Roberts and his squadron sailed from Siam for Cochinchina on 20 April 1836. The officers and crews of both ships were, with few exceptions, ill, some seriously. Roberts himself was ill as well.[6] The Roberts mission arrived in DaNang Bay on 14 May 1836, and spent eight days trying to determine whether the negotiation of a commercial treaty with Cochinchina was a realistic proposition—essentially a repetition of the frustrations of Roberts' first mission a few years before. When a party of local officials came on board, although the mission was handicapped by the lack of an adequate interpreter, Roberts and his party conveyed the purpose of their visit and handed them a letter, prepared in French and English, addressed to the Court at Hué. The letter explained the purpose of the mission and asked for an early response because of Roberts' serious illness and the widespread illness among the crew. The boarding party gave them to understand that an answer might be expected in three days. On their next appearance they could not be persuaded that Roberts was the envoy because he wore no epaulettes as did the American naval officers. The Cochinchinese, after forecasting delays of 5 and then 11 days, finally explained that, since no one in the capital could read Roberts' letters, a high official had been sent by the emperor and was now waiting on shore to receive Roberts. Roberts replied that "etiquette required that the emperor's officer should first wait upon him." The local officials returned the next morning and left in chargrin when Roberts was too ill to receive them.

By then, according to the account of W.S.W. Ruschenberger, a naval doctor on the voyage, illness was so widespread on both vessels and Roberts' health had reached such a "dangerous" state, it was imperative to seek relief elsewhere. However, the party decided before sailing to find out if at all possible what the prospects were for negotiating a commercial treaty. If the prospects were favorable, the ships could return properly conditioned and equipped with interpreters. If the prospects were not favorable, however, the time for a return visit would not be wasted. Ruschenberger graphically describes the situation:

> It will be seen in the sequel that very little hope could be reasonably entertained of negotiating with a people who manifested distrust and suspicion on the most trifling points of intercourse; who, however ready they be to take unfair advantage, seem unwilling to reciprocate any thing to secure their own interests. Whether a treaty between the United States and Cochin-China, at this time, is particularly desirable, I have heard questioned by several intelligent and experienced merchants, who urged that the Cochin-Chinese are treacherous, and never would observe the provisions of any treaty; that they are too distant to enable us to bring their manufactures or produce into our markets with profit; that the existence of a treaty would not place it more in our power to obtain redress from them, for any improper treatment of our citizens, than at present; that the commercial experiments already made have proved their trade to be scarcely worth seeking; and that the only advantage of a treaty, and that, at best, problematical, would be in considering it a step toward China itself; but I leave the discussion of the subject to diplomatists, politicians and placemen, who may discover here a means of at once advancing their own interests and their country's glory.[7]

Ruschenberger continued:

> The English have made several unsuccessful attempts to effect a treaty with Cochin-China, and attribute their failure to the misrepresentations of the French and Portuguese, in regard to the British character. But there are other obstacles found in the low estimation at which merchants are held by the Cochin-Chinese, and the frequent civil and foreign wars by which the government has been distracted for ages. At present they are contending with the Siamese for the territory of Cambodia, which, it seems, they have long been desirous of annexing to their own.[8]

On the morning of 22 May, under instructions from the dying Roberts, Ruschenberger went ashore with a small party to bring things to a head. They had meetings with persons of increasing rank until they met finally with the high official sent by the emperor. During their discussions, it became clear that the Cochinchinese had been offended by Roberts' refusal to see the local officials who came on board the day before. However, a second ranking official, to whom they talked before the emperor's envoy arrived, offered to go on board to meet with Roberts. This was declined since "our object

would not be advanced by acceding to this proposal." However, Ruschenberger offered to escort the emperor's envoy on board to meet with Roberts. After considerable further discussion, Ruschenberger said that if the emperior's envoy declined to see them, the ships would sail that evening. He added that Roberts would in that event regret not seeing the emperor's envoy.

Finally, the *Lakak*, the emperor's envoy, arrived. As his colleagues had done earlier, he inquired as to why Roberts had not received those who had called on him the previous morning. Ruschenberger repeated his explanation and said he had been deputized by Roberts to inform the *Lakak* that Roberts had brought a letter and presents from the President of the United States to the Emperor of Cochinchina and was empowered to negotiate a commercial treaty or to find out on what basis American ships could trade in the ports of Cochinchina. Roberts wished it known, Ruschenberger continued, that his own illness and that of the crew regrettably required his speedy departure, but he hoped to return at some time with interpreters.

The *Lakak* asked whether Ruschenberger had the Presidential letter and was told only Mr. Roberts could deliver it. He asked to whom Roberts had delivered a letter on his first mission and was told that it had been given to a mandarin who refused to forward it without making unacceptable changes to it. The *Lakak* asked if there were interpreters on board, and, when he discovered there were not, he asked how it was possible to negotiate without interpreters. Ruschenberger explained that they had counted on assistance from the French, whom they assumed resided at Hué. He then asked whether the Cochinchinese were disposed to conclude a commercial treaty, noting that American ships did not visit Cochinchina because they did not know how they would be received or what charges they might be subject to. He said that if a treaty were concluded, mutually beneficial trade would follow. The *Lakak* observed that the French and Dutch had made similar proposals the year before, but he was unaware of what answer the emperor had given them. He added he was not authorized to say whether or not the emperor was willing to negotiate, or whether American ships might be permitted to trade.

The *Lakak* asked for the Presidential letter again, and again was refused, whereupon he said he would withdraw if the American party had nothing more to say. When Ruschenberger started to leave, repeating his regrets that illness on board and a lack of interpreters required their departure, the *Lakak* suddenly proposed settling the

matter at once between them. Ruschenberger said that was out of the question because they did not have interpreters adequate for such a task.

When the *Lakak* repeated his offer twice, Ruschenberger said he would communicate the offer to Roberts. The *Lakak* then asked if Roberts could come on shore, and Ruschenberger repeated that etiquette required the *Lakak* to call on Mr. Roberts on board first. Further discussion ensued; Ruschenberger repeated he would convey the *Lakak's* proposals to Roberts, but he thought it probable the ships would sail that evening. The *Lakak* then said a reply from the emperor was likely in three to five days, and he would try to procure some medicines for the sick on board. Meanwhile, he said, the ship's officers and men could come on shore to amuse themselves. He also tried to persuade Ruschenberger, in an apparent effort to get the ship to stay, that the ships' water supplies were no good and they needed replacement. Ruschenberger concludes this account: "We shook hands, and I took leave impressed with the belief, that though a treaty might be expected, it would be at the expense of much time and patience, to overcome their vacillating and suspicious conduct."[9] Roberts' death in Macao on 12 June 1836 was reported by Commodore Kennedy, the squadron commader, to the Secretary of State. Kennedy added that after days at DaNang nothing had been accomplished because of Roberts' severe illness.[10]

The American consular officer, Scotten, found the following reference to Roberts' second mission in the imperial archives at Hué:

> *Summer, 4th month, 17th year of Minh-Mang (May 1836).*
>
> An American warship was anchored in the bay of Tra-Son, port of Tourane, province of Quang-Nam. The officers let it be known that they had a letter from their country seeking to enter into relations and asked to be presented to the Emperor. The mandarins of this province brought this matter to the attention of His Majesty who discussed it also with Mr. Dao-Tri-Phu, official of the Ministry of Finance: "The intentions and the words of these men seem to me to be marked with respect and courtesy. Would it not be appropriate to grant their wishes?
>
> "Sire, they are foreigners and we do not know if the sentiments they have expressed are true or false. Your humble subject thinks it would be appropriate to authorize them to

come to the capital and to establish them in the lodgings of the office of foreign commerce, and to instruct our mandarins to treat them well and to sound out their purposes."

Mr. Huynh-Quynh, official of the private secretariat of the Palace, gave his opinion: "Sire, their nation is very cunning and there is reason to break off all relations with them. To tolerate them this time could create troubles for us in the future. Men in olden times closed the frontiers of their country in order not to welcome nationals of western countries and to protect themselves against the invasion of barbarians. That is a good policy."

His Majesty replied:

"Crossing the oceans and a distance of forty thousand stades*, driven by sentiments of admiration for the power and virtue of our Government, they have come all this way. If we were resolutely to break all relations with them, we would prove to them that we lack generous goodwill." And His Majesty sent Mr. Dao-Tri-Phu and Mr. Le-Ba-Tu (officer at the Ministry of Interior), vested with the functions of the office of foreign commerce, to enter into friendly relations and to inform themselves of the situation. On their arrival, the ship's commander sent word that he was ill and did not appear in person to receive them. The imperial envoys thus sent an interpreter to pay him a visit and the commander, for his part, sent his representative to express his thanks. The same day, the ship sailed surreptitiously. Mr. Dao-Tri-Phu addressed a report to the Throne taking note of his mission and saying among other things: "In haste, they came; in haste, they departed; they certainly lacked manners."

The Emperor annotated the said report with a quatrain as follows:

We did not oppose their coming,
We did not pursue them on their departure,
We behaved according to the manners of a civilized nation,
What good would it do for us to complain of foreign barbarians?"[11]

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*A stade is equivalent to 888 meters.

Joseph Balestier, US Consul, and Captain John Percival of the USS *Constitution*

Scarcely a year after Edmund Roberts' untimely demise, the American consul in Singapore, Joseph Balestier, renewed his campaign for greater official support for expanding and protecting American trade in the region. Using the occasion of the appearance in Singapore of a Siamese warship of forty guns, Balestier argued in a letter to Washington that such a ship would "not improbably cause no little annoyance to the European and American trade in these seas." He pressed "the expediency of Placing our extensive and still growing trade in this quarter under the protection of one of our large ships of war, the Commander of which might be instructed to visit in succession the Coast of Sumatra the Straits of Malacca Singapore the Gulf of Siam the Coast of Cochin China Lintin Manilla ... Borneo & Java. In fact—all the principal Ports in or near this great equatorial basin. By taking advantage of the Monsoons most if not all of these principal Nations might be visited twice a year which would be amply sufficient under the present state of things."[1]

In a letter to Secretary of State Forsyth, dated 4 June 1838, Balestier recommended himself as a possible successor to Roberts and agreed to become a resident Agent to watch over US interests in the entire region. He welcomed the prospect of more regular US naval visits to the area, both as protection for US trading vessels and as transport for his visits throughout the area. However, he thought his expertise and experience in the region would bring better results than relying on naval officers as negotiators:

> Our widely extended trade in these seas, without a single port of our own nearer than those our own shores, forms an unparalleled case in the East: and one which seems to have a claim on the attention of the Govt. I am aware that our naval commanders have usually acted as negotiators in cases of need, but altho sensible of their energetical & efficient services in that capacity, still the want of long experience of a demi civilized people with whom they may have occasion to open negotiations, for the opening of trade, or for the settlement of existing misunderstandings, makes them less useful than the interference of one possessed of a good knowledge

> of the men, their customs and the nature of the trade. Through the newspapers I learn the determination of the Government to keep up a naval force in this quarter of the world which would afford to such an agent the means of occasionally visiting such places as the interest of our country might require his presence.

Balestier recommended in this letter:

> the sending out of various kinds of well finished fire arms, sabres, gold, mounted spectacles, spyglasses, globes, [word illegible] etc. etc. for distribution among the Princes & principal chiefs, who will receive them as tokens of friendship and not as is too commonly believed as acknowledgements of inferiority.[2]

Nine years later, Balestier was able to provide a specific reason to promote his mission to Cochinchina. On 6 April 1847, he wrote to the Secretary of State:

> A year ago some Mandarins of the King of Cochin China who came here as usual in his ships applied to me for redress for ill treatment received at the hands of the commander of the "Constitution". They represented that they were ashore on the King's business when the "Constitution" anchored at the port of Turong [DaNang] Bay, that on the commander's making known his want of wood & water they willingly supplied him and held friendly communications with him. But on another day he came on shore with a party from his ship and ordered them to deliver some French Priests, who he represented were prisoners in the country, to which they protested they knew nothing and that it would be better for him to go to the Capital, a sea port and apply to the King himself, upon this they were handcuffed and degraded in the presence of their dependants and servants and finally taken to the "Constitution" where they were kept prisoner for many days and daily threatened with execution if the French Roman Catholic Priests were not delivered to him.
>
> Other Mandarins confirmed the above & stated that as they knew nothing of the detention of the foreigners and as moreover they had no power to release them, it was so stated to him daily. That on a certain day they saw many Boats leaving the ship full of armed men but as they or the people of the town apprehended no danger a crowd was gathered to see them land; after affecting which the strangers were formed in a line and fired on the crowd and as it fled towards the town

> they ran after them. Seventeen persons, men, women, and children were killed. In the mean time the "Constitution" had taken a position near the Port, which it soon destroyed and fired on the Rice Junks in the River which caused many to be killed and wounded by the shots and others to drown in the Junks as they sunk. . . .
>
> I wish not to constitute myself the accuser of Capt. Percival, or to bring to the notice of the Government any thing that had not already appeared in the newspapers of India and Europe, but I have considered it my duty in bringing to your notice the hospitable conduct of the Radja of Subi and to recommend a proper national acknowledgement of it and at the same time consider it in my line of official duty to apprise you of the unfavorable impressions that prevail against our national character in these quarters and which if not removed will certainly lead to the sacrifice of innocent lives under the most horrible torture, as practiced on his enemies by the King of Cochin China.
>
> The French Bishop & the Priests above alluded to were a short time after the visit of the "Constitution" in Cochin China delivered over on application to the commander of the French Sloop of War "Alcmène."[3]

Exactly what happened during the visit of the USS *Constitution* to DaNang Bay is not clear. Jean Chesneaux, a French writer on Vietnam writing in the mid-1950s, confirms the Cochinchinese version of the incident and says caustically,

> To a naval vessel of the United States of America in 1845 belongs the doubtful privilege of having carried out the first act of armed intervention against the Vietnamese nation: an American commodore, whose name history has not kept, arrived that year before Tourane, disembarked in order to force the release of a French bishop in detention, captured all the mandarins as well as all junks of war in the port; but the hostages resisted, and the American, not knowing very well what to do with his prisoners, released them finally and sailed away.[4]

Despite his charge that the United States carried out the first act of armed intervention (presumably Western) against Vietnam, Chesneaux mentions no shooting or casualties. D.G.E. Hall, British historian of Southeast Asia, writing about the same time, supports Chesneaux's version and refers as well to shooting and casualties, but he is quoting from contemporary British sources in Singapore who

US Frigate *Constitution*. Official US Navy Photo, courtesy of US Department of Defense, Still Media Records Center, Washington, DC.

heard the tale, we assume, from the same Cochinchinese officials who made the démarche to Balestier.[5]

On the other hand, Buttinger, the American historian on Vietnam whose work was published in 1958, scoffs mildly at Chesneaux's attempt to "classify the temporary retention of some mandarins as an 'act of armed intervention,'" calling it "rather an overstatement." He suggests Chesneaux was not well informed about the incident and cites the fact that he did not even know the American Commander's name (John Percival).[6] Buttinger should not be accused of chauvinism in his view of the incident, for he categorized Percival's efforts as clumsy. Buttinger's assessment is supported by Auguste Haussman, another French writer, who gives the following account:

> The American captain, imbued with a generous spirit, sought to obtain the release of the bishop and here is how he behaved: three or four madarins sent by the King on board the frigate, were seized and guarded as hostages, while awaiting the release of the missionary. On hearing this, the King became furious and refused to give up the bishop in the face of such a procedure. It even seems that he sent a small fleet to attack the frigate, but a storm dispersed his ships. Wishing to avoid a battle, the Americans decided to release their captives, who were imprisoned a second time by order of the King for letting themselves be captured.[7]

This account states that the American ship promptly departed, making menaces as it left.

Then we have the testimony of Captain John Percival himself, who, according to his own correspondence, had brought the USS *Constitution* into DaNang Bay for reprovisioning. On 21 June 1845, following the arrival of the *Constitution* off Whampoa Island in China, Percival reported the "occurrence" in a letter to the Secretary of the Navy. His letter, which is primarily a justification for his action, encloses a document describing the incident itself which he sent to the French admiral in the area. The letter cites Percival's awareness of the help France provided the United States in its infancy as well as a belief that governments must treat with respect foreigners whom they permit to live within their domain. However, it also reveals Percival's concern that his superiors may consider that he overreached his instructions, which called on him to afford all necessary protection to American citizens and American commerce, but

Lieutenant John Percival, US Navy. Photo courtesy of US Naval Historical Center.

which said nothing about the citizens of even the friendliest countries.

The document Percival sent to the French describes the incident in some detail, but it is ambiguous as to whether any shooting took place.

> At the same time I arrested three mandarins and carried them on board of my ship as hostages [for the?] safety of the Bishop's life. The day following I took possession of three junks belonging to the King, and moved my ship closer in shore so as to reach the Forts and [words illegible] with my battery, hoping that a demonstration, evincing a disposition for hostilities would more effectively secure the safety of the Bishop.[8]

At the end of this document, Percival clearly implies that he did not engage in hostilities, as they would have violated his instructions. As Percival feared, the Navy Department was not impressed. His correspondence in the Naval Archives bears the notation: "Answer at once. The Department disapproves the conduct of Capt. Percival as not warranted either by the demand of the Bishop or the laws of nations."[9]

A month later, presumably before he could learn of his Department's negative reaction, Percival hastened to send the Secretary of the Navy copies of the favorable reactions both of the French admiral and the French Minister to China, together with the information that the Bishop was freed a few days after Percival left the scene. Percival's letter to the Secretary of the Navy exuded confidence that the Bishop's liberation was largely due to his (Percival's) timely and decisive action and that, had he been able to stay a little longer, the Bishop would have been delivered directly into his hands.[10] Finally, as demonstrated below, when the United States tried to make amends for the incident, the Cochinchinese denied it had ever happened!

In any event, whichever version of the incident is the correct one, it was the version most damaging to Percival that was conveyed to Balestier, that Balestier conveyed to Washington, and that Washington chose to act upon.[11] President Zachary Taylor decided to send Balestier as a special diplomatic agent to make amends with the King of Cochinchina and, while at it, to make another effort to negotiate a commercial treaty with Cochinchina; he was also to try to persuade the Siamese to live up to the terms of the treaty Edmund Roberts had negotiated in 1833 and to pay goodwill visits and negotiate treaties with several principalities among the islands of the East Indies.[12]

Balestier's entire mission was plagued with delays and with tension and disagreements with the ship's commodore. His mission to Cochinchina failed for many of the same reasons the two Roberts missions failed—2 distant cultures were talking past each other, and the importance of each to the other was insufficient to overcome these barriers. Balestier, like Roberts before him, was unable to persuade the Cochinchinese that America was different from the European nations and that it was interested simply in honest and mutually profitable trade, not in conquest or in outposts. For their part, the Cochinchinese simply lumped the Americans along with all predatory Westerners, and they were unwilling or unable to try to use the Americans (or the Dutch or Portuguese) to protect them from the increasing pressures and attentions of the French.

Secretary of State John Clayton provided Balestier, "Special Agent of the United States to Cochin China and other portions of South Eastern Asia," with his instructions on 16 August 1849, just before Balestier sailed from Boston on his mission:

> The President ... has appointed you Special Agent of the United States to proceed, without delay, to Cochin China, ... and afterwards to other parts of South Eastern Asia, for purposes and objects which will be described in the following instructions. Some of the duties, to be devolved on you are of a delicate, and all of them, of an important nature. Your long official residence in the East, during which your duties have been discharged with signal fidelity and success: and your familiar acquaintance with the manner and customs and the trade and commerce of oriental countries, have led to your present appointment, and give assurance that the duties will be satisfactorily executed.
>
> I transmit, herewith, a letter from the President to the King of Anam (Cochin China).... Its object is to disavow in a formal manner an alleged outrage, reported to have been perpetrated, in His Majesty's dominions, and upon his Majesty's subjects, by Captain John Percival, whilst in command of the United States Frigate Constitution, in the year 1845, the circumstances of which have been communicated to this Government by yourself, and which, for that reason, it would be superfluous for me to repeat in these instructions.
>
> You will proceed as expeditiously as practicable, ... to the station where you will find our East India Squadron, and deliver to the Commander, the accompanying letter, from the Secretary of the Navy directing him to take you on board and

to convey you to such port or ports, in Cochin China, as you may designate: and afterwards, to such other places, in South Eastern Asia, as your instructions will require you to visit.

Having embarked, on board the flag ship of the Squadron, you will proceed to the nearest port to Hué, the Capital of Cochin China, and on arriving there place yourself in communication with the proper authorities, and announce the object of your visit to be, to deliver to the King, in person, a letter of friendship and conciliation, from the President of the United States for an act of hostility said to have been committed, by an American naval Commander, several years ago, but which had, only recently been brought to his notice: Add that, it is on this account, he has now, promptly, despatched you, to make every proper, and possible explanation, and atonement.

If you should find it impossible to overcome the well known repugnance of the Sovereign to grant a personal interview, and audience, you will then pursue such a course, with the officers of his Court, whom he may appoint to confer with you, as will, in your opinion, be best calculated not only to effect the principal object of your mission; but also, to promote another very important object, which the President anxiously desires, viz., the negotiation and conclusion of a Treaty of Friendship and Commerce, by virtue of which the lives and property of our citizens may be protected in Cochin China: and our merchant vessels be admitted to trade, in the different ports of the Empire, on terms regulated by a fixed, fair and liberal tariff. And in any negotiations into which you may enter, with these objects, you will take special care to point out, and to explain, the very liberal course of policy pursued by your own Government which, under Treaties of reciprocity with foreign nations, freely admit their ships, into all our ports on the same footing with those of our own flag. A letter of credence, and a full power are herewith transmitted.

You will make known to the King, or to his Ministers, that the Government and people of the United States are devoted to peaceful occupations, rather than to war—that they have no colonies or forts abroad, like the English, Dutch, French, Spanish and Portuguese nations—that when their merchants go from the United States, to trade, they carry with them gold, silver and merchandise of various kinds to pay for the articles they purchase—and, that they are at peace with all the world: You will endeavor to make them comprehend the vast

> extent, and growing importance and power of our country—referring to maps of the world, and of the United States: acquainting them with the number of our war, steam, and merchant ships: and demonstrating the incalculable advantages, and benefits, likely to flow to them, from such a Treaty, with so great a nation, from which, when bound to it by international ties, they need have no fear of invasion.
>
> You will also endeavor to induce the Cochin Chinese Government to receive a Consul, or Commercial Agent, at one or more of their principal ports.
>
> Having successfully completed your mission to the King of Cochin China, the vessel will next convey you to Siam....[13]

Balestier embarked from Boston in August 1849. Because of damage to his ship off Halifax, he did not arrive in England until 17 September. However, he was able to leave England three days later, bound for Alexandria, Suez, and Hong Kong, where he arrived on 24 November, three months after he left Boston. (John White took five months from Boston to Cochinchina, via the Cape of Good Hope, in 1819; Edmund Roberts had taken the same route, stopping off at the Philippines and China before proceeding to Cochinchina. The advent of the "steamer" in the 1840s made the "overland route" to Asia through the Mediterranean much faster than going around either Cape.)

Balestier was obliged to wait another three months in Hong Kong before embarking on his mission. The commander of the East India Squadron, Commodore David Geisinger (who had captained Edmund Roberts' vessel, the *Peacock*), would not accept Balestier's mission despite the instructions of the Secretary of the Navy carried by Balestier, claiming that he was to be momentarily relieved of his command by Commodore Voorhees. Voorhees arrived three months later, and Balestier was able to depart for Cochinchina on 21 February 1850, after engaging the Rev. William Dean of Hong Kong as his secretary of embassy, interpreter, and translator.[14]

Balestier's encounter with the Cochinchinese was remarkably similar to that of Edmund Roberts.[15] The USS *Plymouth*, carrying Balestier and his secretary Dean, anchored in DaNang Bay on 25 February 1850. The ship was promptly visited by two Cochinchinese officials "of inferior rank," who inquired regarding the reason for the visit. Balestier gave them a letter describing the mission's friendly motives which the officials read but declined to accept.They agreed, however, to communicate its contents to their superiors.

There ensued, once again, numerous preliminary, ritualistic meetings with various lower-ranking Vietnamese officials. The latter were polite but cautious, saying they had been deceived by foreigners in warships who came as friends but who committed hostile acts, destroying their ships and killing hundreds of people.

On 6 March, Balestier's visitors requested him to inform them of the contents of the President's letter to the Emperor. The pressures of time led Balestier to comply against his better judgment. When he did so, the Cochinchinese, as they had with Roberts twenty years before, objected to the forms of address as well as to the closing remarks of the President, which they interpreted as a threat. Balestier tried to explain away the errors of etiquette. Regarding the implied threat in the President's letter, he argued that the President was offering to make amends for Captain Percival's acts but warning that if the President's gestures were not accepted and the emperor carried out his threat to avenge Percival's actions against other Americans, the United States would be obliged to send warships to demand satisfactory explanations.

On 13 March, word was sent to Balestier that the Governor of Kwangnam (Quang Nam) Province invited him on shore for a meeting. The meeting took place, and the Governor informed Balestier that the letter could not be received because it referred to the killing of Cochinchinese by the crew of an American warship, and this could not be substantiated by the records of the country. Balestier accused the Cochin Chinese of seeking a pretext to deny the event so as to remain free to commit hostile acts on Americans. He charged that refusal of the President's letter would be highly offensive to the President. The Governor of Quang Nam was unmoved, terminated the discussion after three hours, and departed. Balestier's ship remained in the harbor until the 16th to await any further sign of interest or attempt at contact. When none came, he left the harbor, intending to renew his efforts when the ship got to the mouth of the river on which Hué was located, but the weather was uncooperative, and the *Plymouth* sailed instead for Bangkok.[16]

In his reports to Secretary of State Clayton on his mission to Cochinchina, Balestier wrote that some lower-ranking Cochinchinese officials had admitted privately to him that Captain Percival's ship had killed a number of Cochinchinese, but that the Hué authorities had ordered this fact denied and the President's letter rejected altogether. Balestier analyzed the reasons for his failure and advocated coming to terms with the Cochinchinese—by force:

> My firm belief is, that by objecting to receive the President's disavowal of the outrage, they consider they will be at liberty to wreak their vengeance on such of our citizens as may fall into their power, being unpledged to us to a friendly course. I was made to feel, as I more than once had the honor to observe to you in conversation, how hopeless it is to attempt serious negotiation with so impracticable a people, without a controlling force at hand. Had I been in a squadron of three ships instead of being in a single ship, and had gone to the entrance of the river, only a few miles from the capital, after my endeavors had failed at negotiation at Turong, little doubt rests on my mind as to the manner I would have been received, and the respect shown to the letter of the President.
>
> Permit me, sir, to observe that the Cochin Chinese are like all other isolated and uninformed people, full of vain personal pretensions and childish conceit—abject slaves themselves, and subservient to their sovereign and superiors, they have a total disregard to the rights and feelings of others, and, in their unbounded notion of their own greatness, they are pleased to consider as a homage due to them every attempt to enter into friendly relations with them on the part of Europeans.
>
> I would respectfully bring to your notice, sir, the extensive line of coast in the China sea under the rule of this people, which our shipping, in common with that of other nations, are compelled to approach on the passage up and down the China sea, in any part of which the lives of our citizens are exposed and liable to be sacrificed, or their persons detained in captivity; and, to protect such practices, it becomes absolutely necessary to obtain the security of a direct expression of friendly treatment on their part. To obtain this desirable security, in my opinion it is necessary to make a formal demand of Hué, with an armed force able to enforce it. But, it is likewise my opinion that no hostile act would be needed on our part, believing that the appearance of three ships of war in those waters would be sufficient to obtain everything that could be reasonably asked of them.[17]

In a letter addressed directly to the President on 15 December 1851, in which Balestier supports his claim for reimbursement for expenses incurred during his unsuccessful mission, he lamely evaluates the reasons for his failure in Cochinchina:

> As to the result of my visit to Cochin China, Siam & Borneo, I beg further to say that my failure in a treaty with Cochin

China grew out of the settled determination of the Government of that country to enter into no negotiation, diplomatic or commercial, with Europeans on account of late outrages on their shipping and commerce.[18]

III COMMERCE, STRATEGIC THINKING, AND COLONIAL EXPANSION

Daniel Webster and Commodore Perry

With the failure of the Balestier mission in 1850, the opportunity to develop a satisfactory, if not thriving, relationship between the United States and Cochinchina had apparently passed—for at least a full century. From Jeremiah Briggs' and John White's first tentative private efforts in 1803 and 1819 respectively to Joseph Balestier's unsuccessful mission in 1850, the United States' interest in Cochinchina, to the extent it existed at all, had been promoted by a handful of Americans knowledgeable in the area—Shillaber, Roberts, and Balestier. Their conviction that the "states bordering on the Eastern seas" offered lucrative opportunities for the expansion of American trade was matched only by their desire to promote their own fortunes and careers as special diplomatic agents of the President. Their persuasive powers and, at least in Roberts' case, their acquaintance with high American officials complemented the prevailing view in Washington that trade was, and would be, America's life blood. By the mid-19th century, however, America's perceptions of Asia began to change, and broader historical events overtook the unsuccessful American efforts to establish meaningful contact with the Cochinchinese, reducing the priority attached to those efforts from that of a desirable goal in itself to that of a mere target of opportunity.

From the Roberts missions in 1832 and 1836 to the Balestier mission in 1850, the American objective in Cochinchina and neighboring Siam evolved from a limited one of satisfactory treaty assurances regarding the treatment of American ships and crews and tolerable duties on goods, with outposts and consular agents explicitly excluded, to treaty assurances that included provision for permanent consuls and consular agents. The Roberts mission was specifically instructed to draw distinctions between American and European practice, to point out that the United States harbored no colonial desires or purposes, unlike the European nations. It was important to reassure the Cochinchinese that the United States sought no outposts or installations on foreign soil: "In all his goings and comings the envoy was to teach Eastern folk to thank God that Americans were not as other people. He was explicitly instructed to point out the superior virtues of the United States in dealing with the

countries of the East."[1] The Balestier mission was also under injunction to draw distinctions between the United States and European nations, regarding colonial policies. However, unlike the earlier Roberts missions, Balestier was specifically instructed to seek authority for consuls and consular agents to operate in key Cochinchinese ports.

For the Cochinchinese, on the other hand, the encroachments of the West were inseparable one from another:

> For Emperors Minh Mang, Thieu Tri, and Tu Duc, the fight against the missionaries was always an inseparable part of their struggle against Western political interference. But these intellectuals on the throne were subject to a common ideological aberration. They saw the moral and material forces of the West as a single hostile totality, against which the East had to react with a total negation of all ideas, intentions and approaches from the West. English and American attempts to negotiate trade relations were as negatively treated as those of the French; Portuguese and Dutch interests in trade with Indochina were as much neglected as those of all other powers that had misgivings over France's designs on Vietnam and might have opposed French military intervention. The rulers of Vietnam were equally incapable of exploiting the currents of French opinion against military action in the East."[2]

As Joseph Buttinger points out,

> Vietnamese hostility toward the West strengthened and incited the forces of Western aggression; Western threats and demands, on the other hand, fortified the resolve of the Nguyen emperors to eradicate all foreign influence within the borders of their state. They may have overrated the aggressiveness of French policy toward Vietnam before 1850, but they could point to the examples of India and Burma, and after 1840 they experienced also the shock of English and French intervention in China. Unable to learn the proper political lesson, they continued to persecute, but they did it out of their own growing fear of being persecuted.[3]

Britain defeated China in the first Anglo-Chinese War (the Opium War) in 1842, acquiring Hong Kong through the Treaty of Nanking. China was thereby opened to foreign trade and the rights of extra-territoriality established for British citizens. In 1844, the United States obtained the same rights from China, and, in 1845, France obtained from China concessions which permitted Roman Catholic

proselytization. In 1852, Britain, the United States, and France obtained further concessions after a second war with China in which Britain was joined by France.[4]

By the end of the Balestier mission in 1850, America was beginning to think of Asia in political and strategic terms, not just in commercial terms. By 1850, America was deeply conscious that it was a continental power, facing the Pacific as well as the Atlantic. The advent of steamships brought East Asia closer to California, and the completion of the transcontinental railroad across the great plains and the Rocky Mountains cut distances and times even more sharply. The shortest way to China was across the Pacific from the East Coast, no longer by the "overland route" via Europe and Suez. This made Japan, the "Loo Choos" (Ryukyus), and Formosa (Taiwan) loom even larger in the designs of American public figures—the steam vessels required coal along the way, and Japan, Taiwan, and the Ryukyus held that precious substance. It also dimmed the lure of the elusive Cochinchina as a commercial target.

Secretary of State Daniel Webster spoke grandly of these new perceptions in his instructions to Commodore John H. Aulick, commander of the East India Squadron, dated 10 June 1851:

> The moment is near, when the last link of the chain of oceanic steam-navigation is to be formed. From China and the East-Indies to Egypt, thence through the Mediterranean and the Atlantic Ocean to England, thence again to our happy shores, and other parts of this great Continent, from our own ports to the Southern-most part of the Isthmus, that connects the two Western Continents; and from its Pacific Coast, north—and southwards, as far as civilization has spread—the steamers of other nations and of our own, carry intelligence, the wealth of the world, and thousands of travellers.
>
> It is the President's opinion, that steps should be taken at once, to enable our enterprising merchants, to supply the last link of that great chain, which unites all nations of the world, by the early establishment of a line of Steamers from California to China. In order to facilitate this enterprise, it is desirable, that we should obtain from the Emperor of Japan permission, to purchase from his subjects the necessary supplies of coal, which our steamers on their out- and inward voyages may require.[5]

As Daniel Webster's rhetoric suggested, America's modest pride in its simple, anti-colonial beginnings was soon replaced by the first

heady temptations of colonial conquest. America's self-righteous and self-conscious distinction from European colonial powers, as displayed in Edmund Roberts' and Joseph Balestier's instructions, gave way to stirrings of greater things.

In 1845, when Captain John Percival committed his hostile acts against the Cochinchinese in the Bay of DaNang, he had done so in a misguided and clumsy effort to save a French priest from an Asian prison; Percival was motivated by feelings of solidarity with the French, losing sight of earlier hopes that Cochinchina might constitute a lucrative trading partner. By 1850, America found itself supporting, and benefiting from, British and French efforts to open China to Western trade and to establish extraterritorial protection for westerners living and working in China.

Before the decade was out, Commodore Perry, the renowned American naval commander who opened Japan to western trade, and others, were advocating American outposts in key spots in East Asia for the protection and promotion of American trade, American rights, and American strategic interests in Asia. Writing to Secretary of the Navy James C. Dobbin from his ship in Hong Kong harbor on Christmas Eve 1853, Perry minced no words:

> I shall in no way allow of any infringement upon our national rights; on the contrary, I believe that this is the moment to assume a position in the east which will make the power and influence of the United States felt in such a way as to give greater importance to those rights which, among eastern nations, are generally estimated by the extent of military force exhibited. . . .
>
> It is self-evident that the course of coming events will ere long make it necessary for the United States to extend its territorial jurisdiction beyond the limits of the western continent, and I assume the responsibility of urging the expediency of establishing a foothold in this quarter of the globe, as a measure of positive necessity to the sustainment of our maritime rights in the east.[6]

In his formal report on his expedition to Japan, Perry expanded on this theme:

> In the general increase and extension of the commerce of the world, and the necessity of employing the constantly accumulating capital which the mines of California and Australia are annually yielding, it is important that the government of the United States should turn its attention to the

expediency of opening new avenues of trade, by the accomplishment of treaties of amity and commercial intercourse with those people of the East, who are, wholly or in part, independent of the control of the powers of Europe, and are looked upon as of sufficient importance to be entitled to sovereign rights.

Though England and the government of the Netherlands, as principals, and France, Spain, and Portugal, in a more limited degree, have extended their sway over large portions of the territories of the East, there are still left, in comparative independence, extensive areas of cultivated and populous lands, which have so far escaped the grasping policy of those powers; and though these lands are ruled over by half-civilized despots, nature has given to them advantages which, if properly directed, would render them available in contributing by their products to the general resources of commerce.

With the flourishing kingdoms of Japan, Lew Chew, and Siam, we have recently negotiated treaties, from which important benefits will undoubtedly be obtained. Though up to this time but little interest has been manifested by our government in availing itself of the means thus placed at its disposal, the day will however arrive, and at no distant period, when political events, and the unanimous and urgent appeals of our commercial men, will make it obligatory on the United States to look with greater solicitude to our eastern commerce, and to extend the advantages of our national friendship and protection, as well to Japan and Lew Chew as to other powers but little better known to western nations.

I may refer to Siam, Cambodia, Cochin China, part of Borneo and Sumatra, and many of the islands of the eastern archipelago, and more especially to the island of Formosa.

It may be interposed as an objection to my proposition, that either one or more of the European governments already mentioned may claim jurisdiction over these countries, and consequently the native princes would be excluded from any right to enter into treaty relations with us. But the right of sovereignty should, in these enlightened days, be admitted only upon proof of the power of the sovereign claiming jurisdiction to enforce his assumed prerogative, the same as with respect to the belligerent right of blockade, which should be recognized in national law only when it can be sustained by competent force; and I maintain that the government of the United States cannot justly be debarred from entering into treaty stipulations with either one or all of the native

> governments or communities of the East that are known to be *de facto* independent of any other established power.[7]

With such calls to the colors of imperial conquest, the United States had not forgotten Cochinchina as a target of opportunity. Indeed, both Commodore Perry and Commander Cadwallader Ringgold, who was sent on a survey mission to the "Bering Straits, North Pacific and China Seas" at the same time that Perry was sent to Japan, were given roving commissions in addition to their principal missions—they were both given a number of blank "full powers" by the President in case they had the occasion "to visit countries or islands with the sovereigns of which it might be advantageous for the United States to have treaties of friendship and commerce."[8] Neither Perry nor Ringgold made use of their extra full powers although Perry intended to go to Bangkok to renegotiate Edmund Roberts' treaty with Siam. However, his duties with respect to Japan and the Ryukyus were too time-consuming and he never reached Bangkok.

Perry's failure to visit Siam did not cause him to forget that part of the world. His peroration, quoted above, continued:

> But ... let us speak of Siam, Cambodia, Cochin China, and Formosa—the three former independent sovereignties, and the latter a nominal dependency of China.... Cambodia and Cochin China (the latter, if not both, sometimes called by the general name of Annam ...) are the intermediate kingdoms between Siam and China proper; and though capable of sustaining by their products and other resources a flourishing commerce with strangers, have little trade beyond a limited intercourse with the ports of Siam, Singapore and those of China. Though some feeble attempts have heretofore been made by England and France to establish a friendly understanding with these countries, they have met with indifferent success, and probably by reason of injudicious diplomacy; and, to make matters worse, two French frigates, in 1847, came into armed collision with the authorities at Touron Bay, by which the native flotilla was destroyed, with the loss of the greater number of their crews; and though Sir John Davis, then governor of Hong Kong, visited, with two British ships of war, the same place shortly after the occurrence of this event, in the hope of effecting for England some friendly arrangement with the Annamese government, he was obliged, after a disagreeable and perplexing delay, to depart without being admitted to an audience, or allowed even to visit Hué, the capital.[9]

> Now, the evident causes of the failures to bring these prejudiced and conceited people into any terms promising useful results, may be chiefly ascribed to the course of mistaken policy pursued by the western powers, whose agents invariably approach them as superiors, demanding *nolens volens*, and with little ceremony, concessions in the way of trade, the free exercise of religion, etc., etc., of the advantages or disadvantages, or ultimate bearing and consequence of which the native princes must necessarily be ignorant; and in the fear of granting too much, or even admitting amongst them strangers, of whose grasping propensities and love of encroachment they have full knowledge, they adopt the extreme course, and doggedly refuse all communication whatever; and in their failure to recognize these rules of diplomatic courtesy which are held sacred by more enlightened nations, and which they have never been made to comprehend and appreciate, some unwonted and perhaps unintentional insult is given, and then follow collision and shedding of blood, and the door is more firmly closed against peaceful negotiation. Besides, these people are too sagacious to be influenced by specious arguments or propositions of friendship, unless those professions are accompanied by corresponding acts.[10]

Later in the same document Perry writes:

> The geographical position of Formosa renders it eminently suited as an entrepot for American trade, from which communications might be established with China, Japan, Lew Chew, Cochin China, Cambodia, Siam, the Philippines, and all the islands situated in the adjacent seas; and it recommends itself more strongly from the fact of its capability of furnishing abundant supplies of coal, which, in the present and increasing use of steam for purposes of commerce, will prove of vast importance to the eastern trade.[11]

Perry commented further on Cochinchina's limited prospects as a trading partner in a letter to the Secretary of the Navy, dated 7 October 1854, written on shipboard on his way home:

> With respect to the possibility of opening an intercourse with Cochin China, notwithstanding the previous failures of England, France, and the United States, I am of the opinion, founded upon reliable information obtained in China proper and at Singapore, that a favorable issue might be accomplished, provided that small steamers of light draught were employed to ascend the rivers upon which the principal cities

> are situated, and in sufficient force to resist and prevent insult, to command respect, and as a consequence, *to secure the friendship* of these singular people; and though the trade of Cochin China and the neighboring countries is growing in importance, it is a question whether the advantages of a treaty purchased at so much expense would be otherwise desirable than as reflecting high honor upon the enterprise and energy of a nation yet comparatively in its infancy.[12]

The Department of State did not forget Cochinchina either. Secretary of State Marcy's instructions to the US Commissioner to China, Robert M. McLane, dated 9 November 1853, specifically empowered McLane to negotiate a treaty with Cochinchina and other countries:

> Without desiring exclusive privileges, it is deemed especially important that, in any crisis which may happen in the affairs of the Chinese empire, you should direct your efforts towards the establishment of the most unrestricted commercial intercourse between that empire and the United States; ... You will be duly empowered to make a similar treaty, if practicable, with Corea, Cochin China, or any other independent Asiatic power, with whom we have no treaty, and also to enlarge the powers and privileges heretofore obtained by treaty from such powers.[13]

McLane was in China barely a year, and he appears to have planned a trip to Siam late in 1854, but he was never able to carry it out because of illness.[14] He made one known reference to the problems attendant upon a visit to Cochinchina:

> The small steamer, referred to in connexion with a naval demonstration on the coast of China, is yet more indispensable to the United States commissioner, should circumstances render it desirable for him to visit Siam and Cochin China. On the last occasion that an attempt was made to open communications with Cochin China it was found impossible to effect it, and the principal difficulty seemed to be the distance at which our vessels-of-war were obliged to anchor from the mouth of the river on which the seat of government was situated.[15]

McLane's successor, Dr. Peter Parker, reminded Secretary of State Marcy of McLane's broad charter and sought the same authority for himself. But Parker went further, suggesting that the jurisdiction of the commissioner to China be extended also over Japan, the Ryukyus, Korea, Manila, Cochinchina, and Siam.[16]

American interest in Cochinchina appeared to be waning by the middle of the decade. Neither Townsend Harris, first US Consul General to Japan, who was empowered to renegotiate Edmund Roberts' treaty with Siam in 1856, nor C.W. Bradley, US Consul at Ningpo, China, who in 1857 was empowered to exchange the ratifications of the treaty negotiated by Harris with Siam, appear to have had any mandate with respect to Cochinchina.[17] Nor did Parker's successor, William B. Reed, receive any such instructions.[18]

By the 1880s, France had established control over Saigon and the surrounding areas and a protectorate over Tonkin. The latter brought it into conflict with China. From then on—and until the Geneva Conference in 1954—US relations with Indochina were a function of the US relations with other powers, France, China, Britain, and Japan.

Colonies and Consulates

John Cady, in his book *The Roots of French Imperialism in Eastern Asia,* describes two factors which drove the French to Indochina for eighty years of colonial rule:

> One was the vigorous religious revival, centering in France, which swept across Catholic Europe following the downfall of Napoleon. The other was the well-nigh desperate concern on the part of the Orleanist and Napoleonic dynasties, which ruled France from 1830 to 1870, to recover at least a measure of the international prestige that had so long been associated with the name of France. These two elements united to revive the imperialist tradition of France in the Orient during the mid-century decades.[1]

By the end of the 1850s, the British position in China was dominant among the Western powers; Britain operated in China from secure bases in Singapore and India from which nearly two centuries before, British pressures first drove the French to seek other footholds further east in Asia and first directed French attention to Indochina. During this period, under Presidents Fillmore and Pierce, American policy was "aggressively active" in the Pacific area.[2] This was the era in which Commodore Perry was sent to open Japan to western trade and influence and in which he and Peter Parker, US Minister to China, advocated American bases in the area and protectorate arrangements for countries in Southeast Asia. What had been a cooperative enterprise among western powers in the 1840s, when the first treaties with China were negotiated, gave way to competition and rivalry. As Cady's account reveals, the dispatches of Parker's French and British colleagues to their capitals contained many accounts of French and British activity in Indochina, but American diplomats in Peking and elsewhere in the region seemed scarcely aware of that activity, other than sending occasional reports of troop movements and distant fighting.

As the 1850s ended and the 1860s began, the United States was slipping into civil war and increasingly preoccupied with its domestic tragedy. The United States was troubled by British and French involvement with the warring sides in the United States and with French adventures in Mexico, not with events in far-off Indochina.

By the time the war was over and the national wounds had begun to heal, France had moved into Indochina in force, and the United States had no reason to involve itself in that distant struggle. Support of France would have aroused China, which had gone to the brink of war with France when she had invaded Tonkin, while opposition to France in Indochina would have served no American interest. It would have harmed the traditionally close and friendly relations with France—as symbolized by France's gift of the Statue of Liberty which touched the deepest wellsprings of friendship between the two countries.

American diplomats and consular officers in China, Hong Kong, Singapore, and Bangkok sent in sporadic reports of French activity in Indochina during the 1860s and 1870s. The French appear to have acted as secretively as possible to avoid stirring up opposition by other powers. But American diplomats and consuls also reported with increasing regularity that French control of Saigon in Cochinchina was opening up that port to foreign commerce. American ships were calling at Saigon with growing frequency, and US officials in the region argued that this expanding commerce required that a consul or at least a consular agent be stationed in Saigon to deal with American shipping and seamen's problems. Some of these reports also reflected skepticism at the wisdom of the French enterprise in Indochina in light of the costs to French troops in injuries and disease.

On 22 October 1858, the US Minister to China, William Reed, forwarded to Lewis Cass, Secretary of State, a copy of the notification by the French Legation in China of the blockade of the ports of Cochinchina by a combined French and Spanish force: "Little is known or surmised here of the object of this warlike operation."[3] Again in November of that year, Reed wrote Cass:

> Very little news that can be relied on has reached us from the French and Spanish expedition to Cochin China. The port of Turon has been taken, and is now occupied by the new allies; the Anamese have retired, maintaining a sort of feeble guerilla warfare, and disease is doing its deadly work among the French. The expedition is wholly in charge of [sic] military.[4]

Reed's successor, S. Wells Williams, wrote in February 1859:

> The proceedings and designs of the French in Cochinchina are both kept in such secrecy, that the most reliable information comes here by way of Europe. The men there on ship

> and shore have suffered much from sickness, and two or three steamtenders are constantly running between Turon and Hongkong or Macao, carrying provisions, invalids, and supplies, besides others which ply to Manila. The Anamese are said to have kept aloof from their enemies so firmly that provisions cannot be obtained to supply the troops. However, so little is known respecting the conduct and prospects of the whole undertaking that I refrain from recording rumors.[5]

A month later, US Consul O'Sullivan reported from Singapore that French reinforcements had been dispatched via the overland route and would shortly arrive in Cochinchina. "Indeed they will need them if they follow up the operations which they commenced recently—in company with the Spaniards—at Sai-Gon."[6] O'Sullivan included in his despatch an extract of a letter on the capture of Saigon written by a French officer on board the French frigate *Nemesis*, the day after the battle. O'Sullivan added his belief that French losses in the battle were heavy, despite French claims to the contrary.[7]

Two weeks later, Consul O'Sullivan reported that seven hundred French troops had arrived in Singapore en route to China and that six hundred Spanish soldiers who took part in the capture of Saigon had also arrived.[8] A few days later, the US Minister to China, S. Wells Williams, reported on the destination of presumably the same body of French troops and ventured some opinions:

> The body of French marines referred to in my dispatch No. 4 as likely to be located in Canton will be sent to Cochinchina directly on their arrival, the capture of Saigon on the river Mei-kon having rendered their presence there necessary. We continue to hear of skirmishes and assaults in that country, in which the French and Spanish troops are uniformly successful, but as to the value of these conquests and their bearing on the plans of the victors in relation to their general designs, very little authentic information can be ascertained. In one point of view, the proceedings of the Europeans in that miserably governed country, whatever be their aim or result, can hardly fail to benefit the mass of people and ameliorate their oppressions.[9]

In August 1859, the US Consul in Hong Kong reported that the French had concluded a treaty with Cochinchina and were about to evacuate DaNang and return to Canton. Consul Kennan reported that one transport ship with "troops and invalids" had already arrived in Hong Kong.[10]

By early 1861, consular dispatches from the area began shifting from military matters concerning Cochinchina to matters involving shipping and seamen. In March 1861, the Deputy US Consul in Singapore, Alexander Hutchinson, notified Washington that the French had changed anchorage fees at Saigon.[11] A month later, Hutchinson forwarded a notice from his French colleague that the continuing French naval blockade of the Cochinchinese coast would no longer apply to merchant ships proceeding up the river to Saigon.[12] Six months later, Hutchinson—now Acting Consul—forwarded to the State Department papers concerning an attempted murder aboard the American ship *Connecticut* while at Saigon the previous May.[13] One month later, Hutchinson noted that Admiral Bonard, the French Governor-General of Cochinchina, intended to erect a lighthouse at Vung-tau which would be in communication with Saigon "by the Electric Telegraph."[14] In the same letter, Hutchinson reported French intentions to build at Saigon a large drydock and facility for the repair of steam engines and machinery. According to Hutchinson, the French admiral evinced "the most earnest disposition to favor in every possible way the interests of the commercial community in the Eastern Archipelago."[15]

A few months later, in early 1862, the US Consul in Bangkok returned to a military theme in a letter on Cochinchina. Consul Westervelt concluded:

> Cochin China may now be considered a French colony. . . . At Saigon the French have and are still collecting large quantities of naval and military stores. They have a fleet of about 60 vessels in and near that point, the magnitude of force and preparation excite wonder every where in the East. Many are the surmises as to the real object in view. Some think it is intended against the Dutch colonies in case of a rupture in Europe. Others are of opinion it is to act against India should troubles arise with England.[16]

Nearly two years later, the US Consul in Hong Kong forwarded to Secretary of State William Seward a letter from William G. Hale, an American residing in Saigon, seeking appointment as a "Commercial Agent" at that port. Consul Congar noted that Mr. Hale was a merchant of character and standing, that he had shortly before acted "with great liberality" in the shipwreck of the American ship *Hotspur*, and that he was "a truly loyal man." Congar concluded that Hale's appointment would be commercially advantageous. Hale's own letter stated he had resided for two years in Saigon as a

merchant and he believed a consular or commercial agent would be received gladly by the French authorities. Hale also expressed the view that "as the Commerce of Cochinchina is rapidly increasing, such an appointment would meet with favor with American Vessels in the trade."[17] Again nearly two years later, the US Chargé in Peking, S. Wells Williams, reported that the Chinese and French had agreed to modify tonnage fees for ships plying between China and Japan and between China and French-controlled Saigon.[18]

Only after the American Civil War had ended did the State Department actively consider the establishment of a consulate at Saigon, stimulated at least in part by the petitions from Americans in the area and by Congressional requests to consider the appointment of a deserving constituent as consul there. In 1870, the State Department gave what appears to be its first serious policy consideration to the question of establishing a Consulate at Saigon, Cochinchina:

> Saigon is the principal port of that part of Cochin China now constituting a French Colony. Its importance to the commerce of the world is greatly increased by the fact that it is a colony of that nation. The attention of the Dep. was called to the growing importance of the place and to the propriety of appointing a consular officer there as early as the spring of 1868. At that time Senator Cattell addressed two notes to the Dep. on the subject inclosing a letter from Cortlandt Parker Esq. of Newark N.J. and other papers, asking the appointment of Mr. G.F. Parker as Consular or Commercial Agent there. The only action taken was to refer the matter to the late Consul at Hong Kong for report. On the 14th July/68 the Consul reported, that there was considerable American trade between Hong Kong and Saigon and that it was increasing, that there had been about 10 American vessels clearing at Hong Kong for Saigon during each of the last three years. He was not informed as to the trade in American bottoms between Saigon and other ports. All the french mail Steamers in that ocean touch at Saigon. The British are represented there by a full consul. He concluded that the U.S. should be represented there, that as great deference was paid to rank in the east, it would be better that a *Consul* should be appointed rather than a Consular or Com'l Agent. He spoke highly of Mr. Parker, who is a national of the U.S. His only objection to him being that he was at one time a Lieut. in the rebel army during our late war.
>
> If an American merchant acceptable to the Administration, can be found at Saigon, who will accept the appointment

without salary I see no objection to appointing him Consul. I doubt the propriety of creating a consular agency under Singapore, if for no other reason, because one is an English and the other a French port. It would be still better if Congress would make an appropriation for a Salaried Consulate. The two places are about 600 miles apart.

Respectfully submitted

Jasper Smith

Sept. 6/70

Handwritten on the top of this report is the following: "Mr. Pratt: It is not expedient to establish the Agency asked for. Make a memorandum to be [given?] in Dec. when Congress meets to suggest the establishment of a Consulate."[19]

US Consul Sewell at Singapore volunteered a recommendation favoring the establishment of a consular agency in Saigon and proposing a candidate at about the same time the State Department was studying the matter. Sewell advanced the name of the one American citizen residing in Saigon, Mr. William G. Hale, but acknowledged that Hale had sided with "our enemies" during the Civil War and that he was a Democrat(!). Accordingly, Sewell recommended as consular agent a Mr. F.A. Speidel, "a gentlemen, who is connected with the extensive firm of Kaltenbeck, Engle & Co., and intimately acquainted with maritime affairs."[20] Sewell was disappointed with the State Department's decision:

> I regret very much, the conclusion the Department have arrived at, in this case, as there is great need for an Agent of our Government at Saigon, to look after the interests of American Commerce, there, it being on the increase. Mr. F.W. Speidel, the gentleman, nominated by me for the position, of U.S. Consular Agent, stands very high in the community; and had taken great interest in our Commerce. He has been endeavoring to serve as Acting Consular Agent: had been of much assistance to the U.S. Gun Boat "Palas", which had put into Saigon, in a damaged condition, for repairs; had been of service to the U.S.S. "Alaska", and was popular among our people. If the Department should hereafter conclude to appoint an Agent at Saigon, which I recommend, I beg them to consider Mr. Speidel, as a very proper person.[21]

Consul Sewell continued to press the State Department for a favorable decision. In March 1871, he forwarded a later commercial

report of Messrs. Kaltenbach, Engle & Co., merchants of Saigon, to demonstrate how Saigon was increasing as a trade center and in particular how important American trade in that port was becoming:

> [Y]ou will perceive there arrived in port, during the Month of February, last past, no less than *Seven* American Vessels. The arrivals and departures of American Vessels, numbered *eleven;* and at the close of the month, there were *four* in port. Now, there is no American Consular Agent at that port, and, therefore, I think our maritime interests suffer; Seamen cannot be discharged or shipped; Vessels cannot be sold or bought; Invoices cannot be certified, etc. Other Governments have their Consular Agents at Saigon, and reap the benefit thereof. I beg leave, most respectfully, to again recommend the appointment of a Consular Agent at this post, of Saigon, and to recommend the name of Mr. F.W. Speidel, as such Agent, because of his voluntary services to our vessels heretofore.[22]

The evidence of a growing American trade with Saigon was building up from other sources as well. In the Secretary of State's annual report to the Congress, for the year ending 30 September 1871, on the "Commercial Relations Between the United States and Foreign Nations," the following statement appeared under "Hongkong";

> A very important branch of the trade of HongKong is the coast trade—that is, of rice from Bangkok and Saigon.... That this trade is on the increase may be gathered from the fact ... two prominent American firms run lines of steamers between this and Shanghai, and between this, Saigon and Singapore.[23]

By October 1871, there was a new US Consul in Singapore, A.G. Studer. At the beginning of his tenure, he was more cautious than his predecessor on the subject of Saigon. On 18 October 1871, Studer reported, basing his assessment on the views of a Frenchman named Phillips, who was cashier of the Comptoir d'Escompte National at Saigon, that Saigon was increasing steadily in importance although it could not be compared with Singapore. Studer said that every year after the rice harvest, for 3 or 4 months, a number of American vessels loaded rice in Saigon. Phillips spoke of sugar and raw silk as growing in importance as products available around Saigon. He spoke of the American firm in Saigon headed by Mr. Hale, but he noted that Hale now resided most of the time in Paris. Phillips spoke highly of Mr. Speidel of the firm of "Kaltenbach &

Speidel" (Kaltenbach, Engle & Co. in Singapore), saying he was a "most excellent, solid and trustworthy gentleman." Studer said he did not know whether Speidel would accept a consular agency if it were offered to him. He pointed out that several maritime nations had consuls there and he was submitting a report as to whether a consular agency should be established at Saigon.[24]

Studer soon became impressed with what he heard about Saigon as a commercial center, and he began actively recommending the establishment of a consular agency there with Mr. Speidel as consular agent. His next letter to the Department contained the following passage:

> In addition to the report about *Saigon* in my last dispatch I have the honor to mention the result of a conversation I had with a prominent merchant here (since my last dispatch), Mr. Zoeltman, who does much business at Saigon, and he informs me *that there are more ships freighted at Saigon,* in the course of a year, than at Singapore, that in spite of the bad climate of Saigon, and her unpretending appearance as yet, her commerce was irresistible and fast becoming great, that also the country above Saigon was beautiful, rich and more healthy, and a great future was in store for the Colony.... I now do believe that the establishment of a consular agency at Saigon would be beneficial for the commerce of the United States, and would recommend that I be permitted to ask *Mr. Speidel,* who, as I stated in my last dispatch, is a good merchant, well educated, a thorough gentleman in bearing and conduct, to accept the Consular Agency there.[25]

Soon Studer's dispatches showed a note of exasperation with the State Department for its continued reluctance on the question of Saigon. His dispatch of 23 April 1872 contained the following:

> In reference to your Dispatch No. 16, referring to Saigon, stating, that in as much as "Singapore is in British Territory and the proposed agency in the territory of France, and as it is a regulation of the Department, to confirm the jurisdiction of a Consul within the limits of the Country from which he receives his exequatur, etc., it would be an unusual proceeding." I would most respectfully beg leave to say, that, whether a Consular Agency be established there now or at any future time the same question (barring a change of frontiers of certain territories in the course of events) would prevail, unless a Consulate or Commercial Agency be established there....

Studer went on to say that if the Department opposed the establishment of a consular agency in Saigon under a Consul in British or other territory, the agency should be placed under the Consulate in Bangkok, the nearest US Consulate to Saigon. Studer noted however, that few ships went between Bangkok and Saigon, and that land routes were very difficult. He argued that Bangkok thus in reality was farthest away from Saigon and that Hong Kong had regular steamer service to Saigon. He estimated that at least thirty American vessels a year had put in at Saigon over the previous few years and that he had on several occasions had to refer ship captains to Kaltenbach Engles & Co., in Saigon for assistance. Studer concluded his report saying:

> I really and earnestly think, that our commercial interests demand the presence of a Consular Agent at Saigon. Vessels after long voyages, in 8 cases out of 10, require Consular assistance; this is my experience.
>
> Mr. Hale, head of the firm of Hale & Co. at Saigon, has been there for a couple of months this last winter, but left for Europe again, after having, as I am creditably informed, sold out his interests in the firm and retired, and thus the possibility of appointing him a Consul or Commercial Agent has vanished, there being now no American at Saigon.[26]

Studer's reports stirred the State Department to study again the case for a consular agency at Saigon. At the request of Acting Secretary Charles Hale, Mr. A.B. Wood, Chief of Bureau, wrote a report summarizing the contents of Studer's dispatch of 23 April and of the Department's Instruction No. 16. The brief report read as follows:

> Instruction No. 16 dated February 20th, 1872, in reply to Mr. Studer's despatch No. 4 of October 18, 1871, recommending the establishment of a Consular Agency at Saigon, states—that Saigon being in the territory of France, the rule of the Department confining the jurisdiction of a Consul to the country from which he receives his exequatur, prevents the proposed Agency being placed under Singapore, but the matter would be held under consideration.
>
> Mr. Studer's despatch No. 29 under date of April 23, 1872, acknowledging the receipt of Instruction No. 16 comments on the necessity for a Consular establishment at Saigon, if not an Agency then a Consulate or Commercial Agency. He also recommends, if a Consular Agency be established and the Department objects to placing it under a Consulate within British territory, that the Agency be under the jurisdiction of

> either Bangkok or HongKong. Bangkok on account of its proximity, or HongKong because of the frequency of mail communication. He states that he believes that 30 american vessels enter Saigon annually.[27]

Acting Secretary Hale was not impressed with Studer's arguments. Nevertheless, on 18 June 1872, he asked Wood to examine the case further, "with a view to seeing how much commerce there really is at Saigon in which Americans are interested." His note to Wood continued:

> Does it appear by the tables that is [sic] *anything whatever is exported thither direct from the US? or imported directly thence to the US?* This despatch speaks of American ships that carry coal thither & load with rice. It is pretty certain the US do not export coal to Saigon, nor import rice thence. Nevertheless all the vessels he mentions are from Boston.
>
> Under the circumstance if anything were done, it would seem to be a place for a *com'l agy.* But *would the fees be adequate* to support an agency? Thirty ships imply *how much tonnage fees?* and *how many invoices?* I doubt whether there is an exigency.
>
> If there is a prima facie case, Studer might perhaps be invited to explain some of the points here noted, but I do not regard the case as one of first-rate importance.[28]

On 6 July 1872, Mr. Wood submitted a further report:

> Mr. Young [Treasury Department] was requested to give the kind and amount of exports and imports to & from the U.S. and Saigon, and he replies under date of June 28 that his records do not afford "the means of distinguishing the imports and exports of the port of Saigon from the aggregate statistics of China."
>
> If the number of American ships that annually visit Saigon is as high as 30, it seems to me that a consular officer, if not actually necessary, would be very convenient.
>
> One invoice might cover the entire cargo of rice, or there might be a dozen or more. But in such articles as rice, sugar, molasses etc., one invoice frequently covers the whole cargo.
>
> I do not find anything in the tables (i.e. in the Com'l Relations) at all satisfactory respecting the trade of the U.S. with Saigon. The vessels touching there (S) appear to carry coals and load with rice. It is known that many of our vessels are in

> the coal carrying business between Cardiff (and other British home ports) and the East Indies.
>
> If reliance can be placed on the good judgment and honesty of a Consul, he is often a better judge of the necessity for an agency than our information here allows us to be. So far as this case is concerned it may be said that Studer is a cautious, and as I believe thoroughly reliable and honest in any opinion he may give.[29]

About this time, the US Consul in Bangkok joined his voice to that of his colleague in Singapore. On 20 June 1872, he wrote the Second Assistant Secretary of State:

> Sometimes American vessels "Charter" at Hongkong for "Saigon", a French Settlement on the China Sea in what is called here "French Cochin China"; but arrived there are induced to come around and up to this Port.
>
> Whenever this occurs I hear much complaint, of the great annoyance American Shipmasters experience at Saigon—where it seems the U.S. have no Consul or Consular Agent. Lately the "James S. Stone of Boston", Phinney Master, came here from Hongkong via "Saigon". He met with much annoyance and delay at "Saigon". There was a Mutiny among his crew—a serious one. No one he applied to could speak English on shore, and he could not talk French. After great delay and hazard he got a posse of Soldiers from the Governor and put down the Mutiny, but this was only the beginning of his troubles. The Authorities kept him, and consequently the ship, in Port, as evidence on the trial of the mutineers, and when the court adjourned (for some reason without reaching his case) to get *off* at all he had to procure heavy Bonds, at great expense and inconvenience, and leave several American sailors in "Saigon" for future trial. Of course I endeavored when he came here to put his relation of the facts into proper form, that he might be saved pecuniary liability when he arrived in the U.S., but it has struck me that I also ought to apprise the "Department" that such difficulties not unfrequently occur at "Saigon" where American ships are often sent.
>
> The settlement at "Saigon" is an important one, and the French are spending large sums to make it a rich and powerful Province.[30]

While US consuls in Singapore, Hong Kong, and Bangkok were reporting the great disadvantages to American commerce of the

absence of a consular presence in Saigon, there was some attempt by the American Ministers to China to interest the State Department in opening a consulate on Hainan Island, off the coast of Tonkin. One argument pointed to the favorable impact such a step would have in neighboring Tonkin and Cochinchina. Minister S. Ross Browne wrote in 1869:

> We may be permitted, however, to advert to the generally ameliorative effects of the proposed measure, as conducive to the well-being of the Chinese and the neighboring people of Tonquin and Cochin China, and promotive of emigration to California and of general Commerce.[31]

In 1872, Minister Frederick Low wrote in his report:

> The people appeared friendly and the authorities well disposed; they all hope that foreign trade will bring wealth and life to the port. Hoikow will certainly form a new centre; steamers will bring to it from HongKong, Macao and Saigon, many things that junks from the west coast now visit those places to procure, and will carry from it to those places what junks have hitherto carried at considerable risk. As a new centre it will take junk trade from HongKong, Macao and Saigon, substituting foreign bottoms; it will enrich the northern part of the island of Hainan, and will make it the centre, to and from which will converge and radiate the junk trade of the west coast. The opening of the port will suppress piracy in the neighborhood.[32]

For the remainder of the decade, State Department archives show fewer reports on the growing commercial importance of Cochinchina and fewer recommendations favoring an American consular presence there. Reports from the region in this period were infrequent and concerned only specific shipping and trade matters. In one written instance in 1878, Mr. H.S. Loring, the American vice consul in charge in Hong Kong, became annoyed that cinnamon from Cochinchina was being trans-shipped through Hong Kong to New York as "Saigon Cassia" rather than as cinnamon, thus both evading the higher US duty on cinnamon and cutting into the legitimate cassia trade from Canton.[33] In 1880 and 1881, Consul Studer in Singapore reported in detail on three cases involving ships, masters, and seamen in trouble in Saigon, which dramatized the great inconvenience of the lack of an American consular presence there.[34]

In February 1881, Consul Studer tried again to persuade the State Department to establish a consular presence in Saigon. Studer

reported that he had asked the Governor of French Cochinchina, through the French consul in Singapore, for information regarding the "commerce, progress etc. of that country, as well as upon French Cambodia" for transmission to Washington. Studer forwarded the report he received from the French authorities and stressed the importance of the information in the report:

> This is a *very* interesting book, indeed, demonstrating in a very systematical, practical and lucid way the Commerce and Navigation at Saigon, also about docks, arsenals, public works, agriculture, botany, domestic industries, the manner of conducting public affairs and carrying on the government (revenues, judicial business, etc., etc.). It conveys in a general way a good idea, not only of the importance of the Colony in various respects, but, also of what has been accomplished by the French Government, not losing sight of the fact, that Cochinchina, when conquered by the French, not so many years ago, was a very barbarous country, the abode and lurking place of a bad, cruel, type of pirates. . . .
>
> The chief article of Export of Cochinchina and Cambodia, through the port of Saigon, near the mouth of the mighty "MeiKong" river, is *Rice;* the other articles of Export, products of the Country, are substantially, the same as those of Siam, Teak and other woods. . . .
>
> Sugar planting on the rich alluvial bottoms skirting the Meikong river, was commenced a few years ago, and is on the increase. The cane thrives exceedingly well there, and yields a large percentage of Sacharin matter. The Colonial Government fosters this cultivation in every possible way, not only by letting planters have lands on easy terms, but by, even, advancing money to good, energetic men. It is, therefore, to be reasonably expected, that, ere long, large quantities of Sugar will be exported from Saigon.
>
> If I were asked, whether the time has arrived when the United States should have a Consul there, I would, unhesitatingly, answer in the affirmative. American ships enter the port of Saigon from time to time, the number increasing during the last two years, and if a market for the sale of American goods is to be created (the commerce of Saigon is more in the hands of German, than French or British firms), we should have a Consular Officer there. I am aware that the appointment would give satisfaction to the Colonial Government.
>
> There is an American, a merchant, at Saigon, by the name of *Andrew Spooner,* of whom the French Consul here, who

> knows him personally and respects him very highly, told me, that he is by far the ablest and most enterprising man in Cochinchina, and has been a member of the Colonial legislature, that he has a large mill for unhulling *all* the paddy (rice) exported from Saigon, and is, otherwise, engaged in large enterprises, that he is very highly respected in the Colony.
>
> I have never been in Saigon, and am not personally acquainted with Mr. Spooner, but, after hearing such a good account of him, as the foregoing, I have formed a good opinion of him.[35]

America did not establish a consular presence in Saigon until close to the turn of the century and did not open a full consulate until the early years of the next century. The establishment was in the context of a general review of American diplomatic and consular presence abroad, in which budgetary provision was made for it.

France and China: A Growing Confrontation

By the middle of the 1870s, our diplomats and consuls in East Asia increasingly focused their attention on the growing tension between China on the one hand and the European powers and Japan on the other. China's alarm grew as it watched the Western powers' and Japan's expanding encroachments both in China itself and in neighboring states over which China had historically claimed suzerainty. The greatest source of tension between China and France arose over the latter's conquest of Tonkin (North Vietnam), on China's southern border.[1]

France's adventures in Tonkin might have occurred earlier were it not for Napoleon III's ill-considered Mexican campaign and France's defeat by Prussia in the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-71. In Buttinger's words:

> While the United States was paralyzed by the Civil War and therefore unable to enforce the Monroe Doctrine, Napoleon decided to intervene in Mexico, where an anti-clerical regime under Juarez had come to power.... As a consequence of the Mexican venture, budget allocations for the war in Indochina were sharply cut.[2]

In the spring of 1875, the American Legation in Peking began reporting on events contributing to the growing tension between China and France over French designs on Annam and Tonkin. Mr. Benjamin Avery, US Minister in Peking, wrote to Secretary of State Hamilton Fish on 12 May 1875:

> With the French already occupying the sea-board of Cochin-China, and promising at no distant day to possess the whole territory, and with the English party established in Burmah, threatening presently to absorb the whole kingdom, and burning to open a trade-avenue through Yunnan, which remote province is held for the Chinese with difficulty against insurgent Mohammedans and aboriginal savages, the Chinese ministers have cause to regard the situation with some uneasiness. The prospect of having the French and English as neighbors on the southwest, while Russia already possesses the great region to the north of them—Mohammedan clans are weakening their hold on the western provinces, and Japan

casts envious eyes upon Corea, on their eastern side—is not reassuring.[3].

Mr. Avery's dispatch enclosed articles from the *China Mail* reporting unsympathetically on the activities of French forces in Tonkin, activities seemingly designed to divide the Annamese from the Tonkinese. One of the articles ended with the following observation:

> The simplest solution would be the annexation of the entire country. Such close relations with a semi-barbaric court, as the position of the French in Cochin-China involves, are simply impracticable. We find the same difficulty every day in Burmah, which is the more settled country of the two. And we cannot but think the extension of both English and French rule to the frontiers of Yunnan would be the simplest and best solution.[4]

Five years later, in September 1880, John Halderman, the US Consul in Bangkok, forwarded to the Department of State two cogent articles from the Hong Kong *Daily Press* regarding current French activities in the region. In forwarding them, Halderman referred to "the proposed armed occupation of Tonquin, by the French."[5] One of the articles included the following passage:

> In the French Budget for the year 1881 there is included an item of 15,000,000 f. to defray the expenses of an armed expedition which the French Government propose to despatch to Tonquin. Considering the importance of the project, it has attracted surprisingly little attention. The "occupation" of the threatened provinces will be the immediate purpose of the enterprise, but no attempt is made to conceal the fact that the annexation of Tonquin and possibly of the whole of Annam is regarded by the French Government as the probable ultimate result. The design is the more noteworthy as it is supported in its entirety by French journals which usually take a strictly economic view of public questions. M. Gambetta's organ, the *République Française*, for instance, reminds its readers that the "neglect" of the French Monarchy in the last century allowed France to lose not only Canada, but the Empire of India, which Duplessis had "conquered" for her long before Clive and Warren Hastings laid the foundation of English domination. An occasion has now presented itself, urges the *République Française*, for repairing the mistakes of a hundred years ago; . . . It is needless to discuss the morality of the project, though in France it is condemned by many as a scheme

> for the acquisition of territory by violent means. The French argue that it is in the nature of things, that if they do not appropriate Tonquin, some other Power will do so.[6]

By 1882, US Ministers to China began reporting frankly and in confidence on the impact in Asia of the French conquest of Tonkin. In May 1882, Deputy US Minister to Peking Chester Holcombe, in forwarding to the Department of State a newspaper article on the French in Tonkin, made the following comments:

> It is generally believed here that this is a preliminary step to the seizure by France of the whole of Cambodia and Cochinchina, and that this action has been determined on, not because the possession of these countries would be of any practical value, but because of their contiguity to the southern line of the provinces of China, the trade of which might be diverted, from its present and natural lines to Canton, through this subjugated territory to a sea outlet at Saigon.
>
> The Chinese Government, which exercises a suzerainty over the countries named, is much exercised at the action taken by the Government of France. The Ministers of the Foreign Office informed me today that they had demanded an explanation from the French Minister, Monsieur Borée, who protested his entire ignorance upon the whole subject, but promised to ask his Government for information.[7]

In March 1883, Consul Halderman in Bangkok forwarded to the Department another news article from the *Hong-Kong Press* about French activities in Tonkin. The article, dated 21 February 1883, reported that 500 French troops had arrived at Haiphong and another 750 men were expected shortly, which would bring the total of French troops in Tonkin to some 3,000. The article went on to say that no bloodshed was expected because both the Annamese and the Chinese seemed to have come to an understanding with the French. Halderman commented that it appeared "all serious difficulties in the way of the French occupation of Tong-King have been effectually removed. . . . The French protectorate of Tong-King, means probably, annexation in due time."[8]

Almost at the same time, John Russell Young, the US Minister in Peking, reported that the Chinese were greatly disturbed by French activities in Tonkin. He noted that news had just been received of a vote by the French Chamber of Deputies to furnish a sum of money for an expedition into Annam "for the advancement of the French colonial dominions." His dispatch enclosed a memorandum of a

conversation on the subject between his deputy, Mr. Chester Holcombe, and the Chinese viceroy in Tientsin the January before. Young commented that from the Viceroy's statements,

> [W]e must draw the inference that the French intend to deal with Annam in their own way, and ignore the claims of the Chinese Government. Thus far the cabinet has not been able to gain any satisfaction from France, either through the French Legation in Peking or the Chinese in Paris.
>
> You will be interested in the Viceroy's declaration that he intends if necessary to send a force to Annam, to protect the Annamese, and maintain the Emperor's suzerain rights over the province. This purpose may precipitate a collision with France. As it is difficult to see how there could be any trouble of this character without seriously interfering with the opium trade, Great Britain will probably have something to say as to the wisdom of a settlement.[9]

Three months later, in June 1883, Consul Halderman submitted a more pessimistic report to Secretary of State Frelinghuysen than he had in March:

> In a *sortie* on 19 May from the citadel at Hanoi the capital of Tongking (Tonquin), the French troops were repulsed, with a loss of eighty officers and men.
>
> Commodore Rivière of the Navy is among the slain.
>
> It would seem, that the French force in Tongking is entirely inadequate, and, that, unless an army is massed there, at an early day, their position may indeed become critical.[10]

At about the same time, Minister Young in Peking reported a deterioration in law and order in China and a growing hostility toward foreigners stimulated by French actions in Tonkin:

> The Legation regards with no little anxiety the growing frequency of manifestations of hostility to foreigners as shown in incendiary placards and acts of open violence. Much of this is due, as pointed out in my despatch number 213, to the present great excitement among the Chinese over recent events in Annam, and the probable rupture of good relations between France and China. For a country so destitute of all modern means of internal communication, news travels with wonderful rapidity, and each new event in Annam, whether favorable or unfavorable to China, provokes among the lower officials and common people new demonstrations of hostility to foreigners of every nationality....

> The Department will readily see that, with a Central Government indisposed to enforce its treaty obligations in any vigorous or efficient manner, and with incompetent or actively hostile local authorities, the present situation in China is critical in the extreme.[11]

Three days later, Consul Halderman reported to the Department on the growing possibility of war and its implications for China in particular:

> It is now difficult to see how war between the two Powers may be averted, unless China recedes from her position.
>
> France has her hand on the plow-handle, and cannot well afford to look back.
>
> Already, with impaired prestige from her Egyptian *contretemps*, to say nothing of Tunis, Madagascar, and the Congo, she may not seek "peace at any price", but only "with honor".
>
> Her own people and the Mandarins of the Flowery Kingdom might say, if she abated one jot or tittle of her claim on Tongking, that "she had been driven therefrom by Chinese bluff,"—that "she had retreated under fire,"—and as a consequence her status in her colonial possessions of Cochin China and elsewhere might be seriously impaired.
>
> Reinforcements have gone forward from Marseilles and Saigon, and rumor has it, that Li-Kung-Chang the great Viceroy of Chihli, has started for the Southern frontier, preceded by an army of 20,000 men....
>
> In the event of a rupture, the Dragon Throne might have to deal with insurrection and rebellion at home, as also to encounter the hostility of powerful neighbors.
>
> Russia, Japan, Portugal, Siam and other Powers have old accounts to settle or new ones to open.
>
> Though she made a long and a formidable stand against Russia, it would seem the climax of folly, for China now to appeal to the sword as against any first class Western Power.
>
> But—her "reserved force" is immense, and under the leadership of skilful commanders, she might attain in War what she has *not* lost in Diplomacy.[12]

Meanwhile, Levi Morton, the US Minister in Paris, cabled Secretary of State Frelinghuysen that the French newspapers were carrying stories claiming the US Navy Department had announced that US

Navy officers would be granted leaves of absence if they wished to enter the Chinese service. Frelinghuysen cabled back the same day, indicating that the stories were without foundation. Morton conveyed this prompt denial to French Foreign Minister Challemel Lacour, who expressed his appreciation.[13]

IV THE UNITED STATES' GOOD OFFICES

The First Attempt: July-August 1883

The growing tension between France and China over Tonkin brought the first abortive American diplomatic effort regarding Indochina on an international plane—abortive because, while the Chinese sought the good offices of the United States three times, the French rejected them as many times. A fourth time, when the French—after bombing Foochow—intimated to the United States that they might consider employing American efforts in their behalf, the Chinese in turn refused. These American actions, however, stemmed not from any American perception of interest in Indochina per se, but rather from a treaty obligation to China and a long history of friendship with France.

In its essentials, the Franco-Chinese dispute over Tonkin revolved around France's colonial ambition to dominate all of Indochina and China's powerlessness to prevent France from fulfilling this ambition. The situation was exacerbated by the desires of the other European powers and Japan to exploit China's weak position in this dispute by furthering their own interests and territorial designs against China. America, too, had its designs on China, and this gave it a feeling of solidarity with its fellow Western powers. It also shared the current European attitude toward what it considered the primitive and backward state of civilization in China, but particularly in the smaller countries of East Asia. However, America's designs on China were wholly commercial; they involved no desire for territorial conquest. The United States felt no need to compete with France and England—or Japan and Russia—for colonial gains in the area. America's principal concern was that if war was to break out between China and France, American commercial prospects might be reduced and American lives endangered.

France's diplomacy in this situation relied heavily on secrecy, shifting objectives, and evasiveness. China's diplomacy sprang from internal weakness coupled with an outdated and unrealistic reliance on traditional perceptions of Asian relationships which held China to be the "Middle Kingdom" to which surrounding smaller countries owed allegiance and tribute. America's diplomacy was typically American: it believed what it was told, both by China and by France; it was prepared to honor its treaty obligations; and its principal

concern in the crisis was the preservation of its commercial position in China.

France kept its military actions in Tonkin as quiet as possible. When Chinese authorities asked for information and clarification on French military moves, French diplomats professed ignorance and offered to seek the views of their government—which they rarely got. Once France achieved its immediate military objectives, it would accuse China of obstructing France's pursuit of its legitimate interests, of encouraging rebellious Tonkinese to kill French soldiers, and of belatedly protesting French treaties with Annam of which, claimed the French, China had been properly notified in good time. On the treaty point, Levi Morton, the US Minister to Paris, commented on correspondence between the French government and the Marquis de Tseng, the Chinese envoy in Paris, that had been published recently:

> This publication has attracted much attention here. It shows the persistency of the two governments in the position they have taken, France contending that the Treaty of 1874, by which the Republic assumed the Protectorate of Annam, was notified to the Government of Pekin, who did not protest, while the Marquis de Tseng asserts flatly that his government did protest against the Treaty and could not recognize its validity. It is remarkable, however, that this protest of the Government of Pekin is not among the documents communicated by the Chinese Minister to the *Times*.[1]

For her part, China awakened rather late to true French intentions south of her border; then, realizing her military impotence, she sought to negotiate and seek the aid of friendly countries including the United States. The American Minister in Peking earnestly urged the Chinese to avoid war at all costs, warning that it would be disastrous for China; he also urged Washington to exercise its good offices between China and France, as the Chinese repeatedly requested. Washington was willing, but would not press against the French refusal to cooperate. As history reveals, the net result of all this was France's conquest of the whole of Tonkin and the completion of its conquest of Indochina.

On 5 July 1883 John Russell Young, the US Minister in China, cabled the Department from Peking, forwarding China's first request for American good offices:

> Negotiations between Li [and] Tricou broken. Li returns Tientsin tonight. Affairs critical. Long conversation, Li requests Government use good offices induce France peace.

> Li says England, Russia consent, but especially anxious America. Have said America only give friendly advice, but suggested China propose France arbitration, like Alabama. Li accepts. France insists absolute concession all demands, threatening forty million dollars expenses expedition.[2]

The State Department promptly conveyed the Chinese request to the French through Minister Morton in Paris by cipher telegram:

> This Government is unwilling to put itself forward actively unless satisfied that its offices are welcome. You will sound Minister for Foreign Affairs as to whether France will admit recourse to our impartial good offices to seek a peaceful solution honorable to both parties, and will assent to arbitration, if necessary, similar perhaps, to Geneva Arbitration."[3]

On 16 July, Mr. Brulatour, the US Chargé in Paris, cabled Secretary of State Frelinghuysen that the French appeared willing to consider the American offer.[4] However, Brulatour sent a less encouraging cipher message the following day:

> French Government thank you for your good will. Would be glad if it could bring about settlement of difficulty with China, but before accepting mode of arrangement suggested desire to know exactly what are the points to settle. China has furnished no information in this respect. France will not consent to put in question the advantages secured to her by treaties and her right to pursue the action presently engaged in Annam. Minister for Foreign Affairs cannot therefore form a correct idea of the questions which the United States would endeavor to settle and asks if you can give him any information in this respect.[5]

Frelinghuysen cabled back his answer in cipher on 20 July:

> It is obvious that the world at large would prefer a settlement between France and China in regard to Tonquin without hostilities. We do not pretend to understand the questions at issue as well as the parties to them. We would in the event of being asked by both parties act with other powers towards maintaining peace and adjusting differences.[6]

The Department then conveyed to Young the French desire for more information about Chinese grievances.[7] Morton cabled back the French reply to Frelinghuysen's message on 24 July:

> I have seen the President and the Minister of Foreign Affairs upon the subject of China's request. Minister declares

> emphatically that he is not aware of any difficulty between France and China. The Chinese are dissatisfied undoubtedly but he does not know positively why they have never stated the cause of their dissatisfaction, nor made any demand or formulated any grievance. There might be a difficulty, if China was sending forces to Tonquin or was countenancing the armed bands of that province, but this the Chinese deny. Minister is therefore ignorant of their aims, and it is for this reason he has asked if we had any information which would enable him to understand what they have in view. It is evident that France desires to leave entirely to China the burden of stating where the difficulty lies and what is necessary to remove it. . . .[8]

Meanwhile, the American Minister in Bangkok reported information received from the new French envoy to Hué, Count Kergaradec:

> He informs me that France has 4000 Land Troops in Tongking, and a fleet of 20 war vessels in adjacent waters. He makes no secret of the French purpose to establish a stringent Protectorate over Tongking and Anam. The former as you know, is not more a part of the latter, than Scotland is a part of England, though it pays tribute to Anam, just as Anam pays tribute to China. . . . It is not generally believed at this Capital, that China will try the fortunes of war with France. . . ."[9]

On 7 August 1883, Chargé Brulatour in Paris reported to Secretary of State Frelinghuysen that the Chinese Minister to France had informed him of the Chinese conditions for an understanding with France. Brulatour said his Chinese colleague wished him to forward these conditions to the French Foreign Minister:

1. France to annex no more territory.
2. Relations of vassalage between Annam and China to remain unchanged.
3. French forces to withdraw from the territory occupied now, certain cities to be opened to foreign commerce.
4. Red River to be opened to foreign commerce up to Toung Ho Kouan.
5. China to use its influence to facilitate commerce and to avoid recourse to force against the Black Flags.
6. Future conventions between France and Annam subject to an understanding with China.[10]

On 11 August, Frelinghuysen authorized Brulatour to convey the Chinese proposals to the French:

> You may add that this Government understands the grievance of China to be that by extending French possession in Annam French and Chinese territory will become coterminous which China objects to. It is understood that China does not oppose French rule in Tonquin but does not wish to see it extended to her own borders. This makes it probable that a compromise may be reached guaranteeing neutrality or practical autonomy of Annam territory outside of French settlement. Say that our presentation of Chinese proposals is to be regarded as showing simply our impartial desire to aid in bringing about a correct understanding between France and China.[11]

Two days later, Brulatour reported that the French Foreign Minister had expressed surprise that the Chinese Minister had not conveyed the Chinese conditions directly to him, "as diplomatic relations were not interrupted between the two countries." Brulatour's report continued:

> To avoid any possible misunderstanding as to the action of the Department I referred the Minister to his letter of July 17 requesting me to say he would be grateful to you for more information as to the claims of China. The Minister seemed to have no recollection of this letter, of which I hastened to send him a copy, none having been kept at his Department. At the request of the Minister of Foreign Affairs I informed Chinese Minister that the former desired to confer with him. He will do so today.[12]

Minister Morton's full dispatch sent nine days later (see note 11) made clear that the French had, in fact, rejected the American offer of good offices between France and China and Foreign Minister Challemel Lacour's request for more information about Chinese grievances was merely a polite way of deflecting that offer. On his return from "taking the waters" at La Bourboule, Morton had called on Challemel Lacour to clarify the situation. Challemel Lacour did so, saying that he had not felt he could reject the US suggestion out of hand, but that he had not seen its relevance to the situation. For this reason, he said he had a need for more information:

> Some time after this first exchange of communications, continued M. Challemel Lacour, the Marquis de Tseng who had almost ceased his relations with me resumed them suddenly; and in his visits to the Foreign Office which became very

> frequent, not only once, but repeatedly did he insist upon the friendly dispositions of his Government towards France, and declared that he had no instruction to make any complaint or to present or suggest proposals in relation to our difficulty in Tonquin. He went so far as to explain this want of information on his part by saying that the Chinese Telegraphic lines were at present in such bad order that the only messages he received through that channel came in such distorted shape that it was impossible to make out their meaning.
>
> You may imagine therefore my surprise when immediately after such a statement had been repeated here, Mr. Brulatour handed me a kind of a paper coming from this Chinese Minister with whom I was in daily friendly communications, enumerating offensive terms of settlement purporting by him to have been framed under instructions from the very Government, of whose intentions he had been pretending to be ignorant and with which even he complained to be unable to communicate. I could not consent for a moment to take into consideration such a paper and I must say with all frankness that it was painful to see the United States whose impartial and friendly disposition is well known to me, made the bearer of proposals so out of place that they could not have been entertained or considered without reflecting upon our sense of honor and dignity....

Morton went on to suggest to Frelinghuysen "that there is no occasion to renew our good offices, unless they should be requested by the French Government."[13] At the end of September, Minister Young in Peking reported that he had read Morton's account "with deep interest."[14]

As background to these diplomatic developments, the US Minister in Peking, John Russell Young, during the summer of 1883 sent home several dispatches remarkable for their grasp of the forces at work in the Tonkin Affair as observed from Peking, their understanding of the personalities involved there, and their lucidity and attention to important detail.

The first of these dispatches recounted conversations Young had had with the Chinese Grand Secretary Li Hung Chang, the former French Minister M. Bourée, and the current French Minister M. Tricou.[15] Young claimed that the previous winter, under instructions from his Government, French Minister Bourée had worked out an understanding with the Chinese, by which "France recognized the

suzerain rights of China over Annam while China did not object to France taking practical possession of the country and opening it for trade." Young continued:

> Two circumstances suddenly changed the situation. The first was the death of the French officer M. Rivière, at the hands of the Annamese, the second was the advent of M. Challemel Lacour to power as the head of the French Foreign Office. M. Bourée was disavowed and recalled, under circumstances which he regarded as a humiliation. M. Tricou was ordered from Japan to China to deliver an ultimatum, a declaration that China had no rights in Annam, that any assertion of right would be taken as an act of war against France and that all Chinamen found in Annam in arms against the French would be shot as bandits. The Chinese Government at once summoned Li Hung Chang from his period of mourning and ordered him to Shanghai. . . .[14]

At this point, Li asked to see Young, who was in Shanghai on personal business. Young's report continued:

> He was troubled about affairs. There seemed to be a conspiracy against China among the Western nations, especially the Europeans. "China," said His Excellency, "had to look the fact in the face, that she had no friends. Here was Russia menacing her on the north. Germany had invaded her territory at Swatow. Japan had taken the Loo-Chow islands. England held Hongkong, and was forcing upon her a traffic in opium that meant the misery and ruin of her people. France was sending an expedition to dismember her empire. The United States had passed an act excluding Chinese from her soil, Chinese, alone, of all the races in the world."

After Young rebutted Li's statement regarding America's Immigration Act, he asked, "Why does not China define her territory?"

> The Viceroy said "that the limits of the empire were well defined. There was China, and there were the tributaries of China. These tributaries were self governing, except in the fact that they owed the emperor an allegiance: which was satisfied by acts of tribute and ceremony. These offices done, the emperor never interfered in the internal affairs. At the same time their independence concerned China, and he could not be insensible to any attack upon it."
>
> I replied, "that in modern times and under the forms of civilization which now prevailed, there were no such institutions

> as tributary states. A colony was as much a part of the empire as the capital. In the United States we have many states and outlying territories, one far away to the north, isolated—Alaska—But if any foreign power placed a soldier in Alaska, with an unfriendly purpose, it would be as much an act of war as landing ten thousand men in New York, and would be so regarded. This is the rule of civilized nations. China should follow it, and save herself embarrassments by consolidating her empire, and having the world know the exact limits of her territory."
>
> His Excellency said, "that he saw no reason why the outside nations should destroy relations that had existed between China and these outlying nations for ages. They had gone on well together, doing each other good, and why should France come in and disturb them? It was an act of aggression, and only convinced him that China had no friends among the nations."

In the same dispatch, Young reported a conversation with M. Tricou, the new French Minister, who set forth the French position:

> The king of Annam, had in 1874 made a treaty with France, in which France treated him as an independent sovereign, as independent as the rulers of Portugal or Spain. There was no question, no suggestion of any suzerainty of China. Having treated with the King of Annam as an independent power, France proposed to deal with him as such, and China would not be considered in the matter.

In response to Young's query as to what mission Tricou could then have in China, Tricou replied:

> I came ... to declare to China our real position, to warn her. I mean to say to the Viceroy, that any opposition to French Power in Annam or Tonquin, which can be traced to Chinese aid or influence, France will regard as an act of war on China's part. Already we feel that we have a claim to indemnity.

Responding to Young's further questions, Tricou explained France's assertion of a claim was based on "the cost of the expeditions and armaments that were now coming to China," which were necessary only because China had given encouragement to Annam—"an act of moral war upon France" for which China should pay. Tricou indicated France would expect "As much as forty millions of dollars, perhaps."

Young told Tricou he had no instructions to enter into discussions of Franco-Chinese relations, "but as one minister of a friendly power talking with another there were some considerations worth presenting. If China had made a mistake in asserting suzerain rights over Annam, was not France as much to blame as China?" Young pointed out that China had negotiated with Tricou's predecessor in good faith on this very question of suzerainty over Annam. He said, "If the King of Annam found encouragement in that proceeding, I did not see how China should be held especially to blame...." Tricou replied that France was unified on,the question, and he intended to say to Li "that any act on the part of China encouraging Annam would be regarded as war, and if any Chinese soldiers were found in Annam they would be shot." Young suggested that for China war would mean revolution:

> "And what better than that?" was the answer. "Has not every war upon China improved the relations with foreign countries? You cannot break down this great wall, that is a barrier between China and the outer world, except with artillery, and if France does it, as France proposes to do, she should have the sympathy and respect of all civilized nations. This you will find the universal sentiment of foreigners in Asia."
>
> I replied, "that the sentiment of foreigners in Asia was inspired by one problem, namely how to make the most money in the shortest time, and if our foreign relations were governed by public opinion in Shanghai and Hongkong, the Western nations would bombard a Chinese town whenever trade was dull.... I was too much interested in France to believe that the country which had won Austerlitz and Wagram would go to war for a question of money. I could see no glory in that."
>
> M. Tricou paused a moment, and said in an impressive half smiling mood, "My dear colleague, do not forget that our assembly is an assembly of tradesmen, and you know that tradesmen are fond of money."
>
> I felt that my question had been completely answered—answered with the sententiousness of Rochefoucauld or Voltaire, and that this one sentence gave a true insight into the inner workings of French diplomacy in China....

In the same lengthy dispatch Young described the impact that French action in Tonkin was having internally in China:

> Beyond this was seen a greater peril, in China herself.— Faction, strife, the want of a government, the intrigues against Prince Kung and the Viceroy, all culminated in a desire for war.... "Why," they say, "cannot China fight France? Where is all this money we have been spending for years, on forts, and gunboats, and torpedoes, and muskets. If Li Hung Chang cannot take these weapons and crush France, why did he buy them? And as to the August Ruler of the Earth whose commission to govern mankind has been so abused, and France cannot be fought, there is only one decree known to gods and men, namely that this false statesman shall lose his head, and China will be at peace...."

Young reported also that he saw much of the Viceroy,

> and I believe he gave me his entire confidence. He came to Shanghai resolved on war, and was angry with me, when after he had expressed this resolution, I unfolded to him, steadily, pitilessly, but as I felt in my conscience with entire truth and friendship towards China all that war meant. Again and again I impressed on him the truth, "that the time to fight was when you were ready, not when your opponent was." As the truth of my arguments were accepted by Li, there was always the shadow in Peking, the thieving eunuch mob, ready with a sword or a bowstring. "What can I say to the Yamen? How can I make face with my government? They expect me to fight France, and how can I satisfy them? It would be much better for me to march an army into Annam and die like a soldier, than be treated as Chung How was treated." I always answered these melancholy reflections by saying "that while it was noble to die for one's country, it was sometimes nobler to live for it, and that he was too strong to dread any cabal, that he was strong enough to do what was best for China."

According to Young, Li adopted a policy of passive resistance in his talks with Tricou, treating him with great civility but insisting that every question Tricou raised had to be taken up with his government in Peking. Then suddenly, Li departed Shanghai for Tientsin, leaving his discussions with Tricou high and dry. Young considered Li's sudden departure a "master stroke." In Young's judgment, Li must have felt his physical safety could be better assured in his home territory should any of his enemies move against him.

In a conversation a few days before his departure for the capital, Li answered Young's query as to whether he had determined in favor

of war by saying, "Under certain conditions—yes!" Asked what those conditions were, Li replied, "If France insisted upon terms that were dishonoring to the empire." After discussing China's lack of preparedness for war with France, "the second military power in the world," Young asked Li whether any Chinese troops had moved toward Annam. Li said they had not yet moved. He said Challemel Lacour, the new French Foreign Minister, had informed the Chinese minister in Paris that any such movement would be regarded as an act of war. If the French were serious, Li continued, they would march on Peking while he was marching on Annam. Young said he thought Li was acting wisely in showing such reserve.

Later in the same conversation, Young observed that Li now had 25,000 men in the northern provinces of China, "armed with American arms and drilled by German soldiers." He went on to point out that if those troops could be moved against Annam within ten days,

> that fact alone would largely influence the counsels of any European cabinet contemplating war. As it is, these troops were useless except to defend Peking. It would take them six months to reach Annam, even if French gunboats did not intercept them at one of the great rivers. They could not go by sea, because of the French navy, which was now coming in force....

In the same dispatch, Young recounts a conversation with M. Bourée, the former French minister who had been disavowed by his government. Bourée told Young he had made the best terms with China "in the interests of peace, and the interests of France. His negotiations were well known to his Government. Two ministries had accepted them, and now they were not only suddenly disavowed by the new cabinet, but an ambassador sent whose message was virtually an ultimatum, a declaration of war." Moreover:

> Mr. Bourrée informed me that his first step was to recognize the ancient claim of Chinese suzerainty. These claims were vapoury and phenomenal at best, and where they were so much a matter of sentiment as in China, they were not worth a quarrel, so long as the practical results of diplomacy remained with France. To win these practical results was the aim of his negotiations with Li. His propositions were virtually these. The Chinese in Annam should return to their own country. France would declare that she had no intention of disturbing the autonomy of Annam. Pao-shen was to be made a treaty port—customs were to be established there, and

> trade was to be invited. China and France were to covenant to protect the northern part of Yuchuan. To make this protection effective, there was to be a neutral zone, say, if I remember right, twenty miles in width, to be as a kind of safe guard boundary between what France claimed, and what was conceded as the just territory of China.

In response to Young's query a to why his Government had disavowed these arrangements, Bourée replied heatedly:

> Because ... the whole business is a mining operation. The Government is at the mercy of speculators. It all means an operation on the Bourse. There are fine mines in this country, and the influences represented by M. Tricou and M. Challemel Lacour are entirely speculative. They wish to plunge France into a war to make money.

Young concluded his long report with an explanation of the reasoning behind his advice to the Chinese Viceroy:

> It was clear, and I think it will so appear from a reading of the Viceroy's conversations, as I have meagrely reproduced them, in this despatch, that the mind of His Excellency, was to use a scientific phrase in the process of evolution. He came to Shanghai bent on war. He was ready to take the field himself. His appointment gave him the military command of the four southern provinces. But the longer he studied the question the more peaceful he became. It is my duty to say to the Department, that seeing the Viceroy as I did every day, sharing so far as I could judge his entire confidence advising with him on every step of the negotiations I urged him to settle the difficulty and have no war. No advice could be more unwelcome, and the duty was a painful one. The Viceroy is a man of arrogant temper, with the pride and ignorance of one who however great he may be in China, is from our point of view a barbarian, and to be told again and again, as I was bound to tell him, in the softest and best rhetoric at my command, that war with France meant the suicide of China, was not easily to be borne. What impelled me to this duty was the fact, that the only Government represented in China, which would give this advice to the Viceroy was the Government of the United States. I have avoided thinking so, but I am bound to accept the fact, that foreign policy in China looks upon war with favour. This is the undertone of the diplomacy in Peking. "War,—war from any source, so long as it breaks down the Great Wall." ... War means revolution, dissolution,

> Russia coming to the Yangtze, France pressing on from the South—England seeing that whatever befalls, her interests are safe. It may be that the end would be a good one. But I cannot see that it would be good for the United States. To us, as the next-door neighbor of China our first concern is her independence. To assist and encourage her, to lead her in her own sure and patient ways to the good that must come from a policy of progress. To shew that nothing can be gained by war, that may not come by the righteous offices of peace.[15]

Minister Young's confidential despatch No. 232 of 16 August 1883 analyzed further the background of his conversation with Grand Secretary Li, including Li's request for America's good offices. Young explained to the Department that after he was able to talk Li out of what Young considered a disastrous Chinese decision to go to war with France, Li "did not see why China as one of the family of nations should not seek the goodwill of some friendly power. He was willing to refer all differences with France to any nation, and above all to the United States. He asked me whether my Government would as a kindness to China undertake the office."

Young told Li he would be "happy to make any communication to the Department, that might lead to Peace." He went on, "In any event a proposal to arbitrate, in good faith, on the part of China, would if France refused without sufficient cause, make the cause of China, stronger in the eyes of mankind."

Young observed to the Department in the same dispatch that he was reluctant to agree to transmit Li's request because he "felt assured that France would, from what I know of M. Tricou's instructions from Challemel-Lacour take a ground that would make arbitration impossible. But my consent seemed such a relief to His Excellency that in the interests of good relations I promptly acceded to his request."[16]

The Second and Third Attempts: July-August 1884

On 30 August 1883, General Halderman, US Minister at Bangkok, hastened to inform the Department that the local French Commissaire had just learned from Saigon that on 25 August the French and Annamese had signed a treaty at Hué:

> providing substantially for a *French Protectorate over Annam and Tongking*, which will carry with it, French Customs Houses, French Residents with military Guards at all the Provincial Capitals, etc., etc.
>
> The Song Hoi is to be kept open to commerce and for this purpose French fortifications are to be erected and maintained wherever same may be needed. One small Annam province will be annexed to French Cochin China. A French Telegraph between Saigon and Hanoi will be established at once.[1]

Two weeks later, John Russell Young, the US Minister to China, telegraphed the Department from Tientsin: "Treaty reported France Annam destroys autonomy latter. Chinese Foreign Office declare will strenuously resist reinforcement."[2]

In early October, both Halderman in Bangkok and Young in Peking forwarded to the Department copies of the published text of the France-Annam Treaty signed on 25 August. Halderman forwarded the text virtually without comment.[3] Young accompanied the text with a confidential dispatch that amounted to a biting indictment of French policy toward China, Tonkin, and Annam:

> The Department will see that the French Government from the beginning has had only one purpose in view, namely to force her authority upon these provinces by arms or by intimidation. It has been a policy of aggression, having no regard either for the rights or the susceptibilities of the Chinese. The statement of the French Foreign Secretary as reported in your despatch No. 155, August 4th, to the effect that France did not know upon what points China asked our mediation, that he did not know any causes of difference between China and France is disingenuous, and either shows an incredible want of knowledge on the part of that statesman, or a want of candour in dealing with you. The points which China was willing

> to submit to the mediation of any friendly government, and more especially that of the United States, are known to all the world, as involved in the question of suzerainty. The fact that China was willing to submit a question affecting an imperial prerogative to the judgment of a foreign power, was a step in the direction of international comity. It was the acceptance by China of one of the most important principles of modern civilization, and in the opinion of the Legation was a marked indication of progress.
>
> The Department will note, in confirmation of my cypher telegram, that the Chinese Cabinet firmly declare that they will never assent to the treaty. In a conversation with LiHung Chang—the Viceroy confirmed this declaration even in stronger terms....[4]

In addition to the text of the treaty, Young's dispatch forwarded a number of other documents which he felt bolstered his assessment. The first was a memorandum of a conversation between his assistant, Chester Holcombe, and two ministers of the Chinese Foreign Office. The conversation took place on 10 September 1883. Holcombe inquired about the results of the conversation which the United States understood had taken place on 16 August between the Chinese envoy in Paris and the French Foreign Minister. The Chinese ministers told Holcombe that nothing had resulted and that "the French Minister laughed at the propositions of Marquis Tseng and said to him: 'What does the American Secretary of State mean by sending you to me with such stuff as that?'" The memorandum continued:

> The Ministers [asserted] that the French Government knew perfectly well what the objections raised by China to its course in Annam were, having been informed over and over again both here in Peking and in Paris. The French Government was pretending ignorance and stupidity in order to gain time to carry out its own plans and to avoid the necessity of openly refusing to accept of the fair proposition of China to submit all questions involved to mediation or arbitration....[5]

Two other enclosures to Young's dispatch were copies of communications between the French and Chinese concerning the French decision to blockade the ports of Annam in order to prevent Chinese ships from delivering arms and supplies to the Annamese. The Chinese response, including reference to an earlier response in 1875, stated:

> Annam was the neighbour of China, and that the conditions under which the subjects of China might or might not carry

> on intercourse with the subjects of this tributary state were not the same in all Provinces of the Empire, and that hence it would be necessary for this office to secure reports from the several provinces, and give these reports careful consideration, before a definite line of action could be taken.[6]

The 1875 communication from China to France, referred to above, had described China's relationship to Annam in greater detail:

> [The] banditti having become as thick as bees in Annam, the Government of that country sent an Embassy to China asking for assistance. The Kings of Annam having for ages received investiture from the Emperour of China, this Government could not be indifferent to this call, and despatched a military force to suppress the bandits. This being accomplished and peace restored the force will be of course recalled.[7]

On 24 October 1883, Minister Morton in Paris forwarded to the Secretary of State a copy of a French "Yellow Book" on the situation in Tonkin that had been distributed the day before in the French Senate and Chamber of Deputies. Morton's covering dispatch contained a summary of the document:

> The ... most important part of the *Yellow Book* deals with the negotiations with China. The French Government state that in the beginning both the Marquis of Tseng at Paris and the Viceroy Li Huang Chang at Shanghai seemed disposed to favor conciliatory measures but that through influences which it is useless to point out at present the Chinese suddenly changed their attitude, declaring that they could not recognize the Treaty of 1874 by which France had assumed a Protectorate over Annam, and made open preparations for war.
>
> From this moment, the official statement asserts, the Chinese have constantly endeavored to delay negotiations and it was only the 18th of August that the Marquis of Tseng presented a memorandum of the terms upon which his Government was willing to negotiate, which terms were substantially the abrogation of the Treaty of 1874, and the evacuation of Tonquin by the French troops.
>
> On the 27th of the same month Mr. Challemel Lacour answered this communication by declining to take it into consideration as it implied the right of China to interfere on matters which only concerned France and Annam and reasserted that the Celestial Government had acknowledged the Treaty of 1874. The only points, says Mr. Challemel Lacour that can be made the object of negotiations between France and China

> are those bearing upon questions of frontiers, of Commerce on the boundary line, of repression of brigandage, etc. etc.
>
> On the 15th of September however, the French Government handed to the Marquis of Tseng a memorandum stating that an agreement might be made upon the following basis:—1. Establishment of a neutral zone in Tonquin extending between the Chinese frontier of Yunnan and a line to be drawn from a point on the coast between the 21 and 22 degrees of latitude to another point on the Red River above Lao Kai. 2. Opening to foreign commerce of the town of Mau Hoa on the Red River in Yunnan.
>
> The Chinese at first made no written reply to these suggestions, but, in different conversations which he had at the Foreign Office, the Marquis de Tseng intimated that his Government would not be satisfied with less than the possession of the Tonquin Province. On the 16th instant, this intimation was officially confirmed by a note from the Chinese Minister stating that his government required either the restoration of the political *Statu quo* [sic] of Annam as it existed prior to 1873, that is to say with the suzerainty of China alone over that Kingdom, or entire and exclusive authority over the Red River. Of these two solutions China would prefer the former, for being proof against all ambition. She would regret being compelled to encroach upon the territory of her Vassal, which she has respected for two centuries. If unable to avoid such painful occupation;—but only in that case, China would consent to consider the proposition of the French Government for the establishment of a neutral zone, provided, however, that this neutral zone be located between Kuang Bing Kuen, the Southern frontier of Tonquin, and the 20 degree of latitude.
>
> In short, China demands now the abrogation of the French Treaties, the evacuation of Tonquin, and the right for herself to occupy the whole of the northern part of Annam....

Morton ended his report with the sardonic comment: "You will notice that no reference is made in this Yellow Book to our proposed mediation."[8]

Ten days later, however, Morton reported that during an interpellation of the French Government in the Chamber of Deputies on affairs in Tonkin, Challemel Lacour had made veiled reference to the American initiative:

> In fact it is only quite recently that the contentions of China have been ascertained. She never intimated until 1880, that

> she was dissatisfied. From that time she began to speak vaguely of titles which were never defined and of rights which were never clearly stated. "After long delays, after having attempted indirect negotiations the opportunity of which we did not understand, and which we had to set aside", the Chinese government at last, on the 18th of August, made known its contentions in writing. You know what they are; China is not trying to obtain a place near us in Tonquin, she wants ours. She does not contest our rights, she simply ignores them. She claims Tonquin, and we must go! It will be known one day at whose suggestion the Chinese have been induced to formulate such strange propositions and how they have been led to believe that we had neither the will nor the means of holding our position in Tonquin.[9]

Morton closed this report with the following observation:

> Referring to the assertion of Mr. Challemel Lacour in relation to "indirect negotiations the opportunity for which he did not see and which he had to set aside," it may not be improper to remark that it was only through these indirect negotiations that France became aware of the true contentions of China, as according to the Minister's own language at the Chamber and the official statement of the *Yellow Book* these contentions were framed for the first time in the memorandum of the 18th of August which was obtained through the good offices of this Legation.[10]

And Morton added: "The confidence asked for was liberally given and the cabinet may now pursue its own policy towards China without fear of any interference on the part of the Chamber."[11]

On 9 November 1883, Young cabled the Secretary of State from Peking:

> Foreign Office inform Legation Emperor issued decree ordering Chinese troops on border Annam resist by land and sea any attempt French enter Chinese territory. Foreign Office assures Legations complete protection foreigners including French. Fear no immediate conflict. Suggest Admiral be instructed concentrate fleet in Chinese waters.[12]

On 14 November 1883, Morton reported from Paris that the US offer of good offices had been referred to by the Chinese Chargé in Paris in a press interview and confirmed by Marquis de Tseng in a subsequent press interview in London.[13]

On Christmas Eve 1883, Young sent in a long analytical dispatch on the deteriorating relations between France and China. Once again, he minced no words regarding France's actions in Annam and Tonkin, and once again he was highly critical of France's policy and its diplomacy toward China. Also in this dispatch he tried to set forth what he believed US interests to be in the whole affair:

> Military affairs in the occupied provinces, have not been so advantageous to the French as was expected by the Paris statesmen, who saw in China, only another Madagascar, and looked with a light heart upon any prospect of war. If the French, when M. Challemel Lacour recalled and disavowed M. Bourée, had been strong enough to have driven out the Black Flags, to have declared and maintained a substantial frontier, and held the passes leading from the disputed provinces to China, it is quite probable that the Imperial Cabinet before this, would have accepted the situation, and retired with sullen acquiescence, as China has been compelled to retire so many times before.
>
> The weakness of France in underrating her enemy, and allowing her first blow to be a nerveless one, has produced grave results.
>
> There is no better illustration of the effect on China of the French want of energy than in the changes noticeable since last summer in public opinion and official action.
>
> In Shanghai during the summer when in conversation with the Viceroy Li there was no one point, upon which His Excellency was more emphatic than this, that what are known as "Black Flags men", in Annam, were an outside, independent, irresponsible body: bandits, perhaps, who had escaped from China at the close of the Taiping Rebellion and were permitted to live in the mountains free from Imperial vengeance for the crime of treason. His Excellency repeatedly declared that for the actions of these men, his Government was in no sense responsible. It is well to remember, however, that if such a disavowal had not been made at that time France would have made in it a cause for immediate war.
>
> I do not think that any of the Legations, and especially the French accepted this declaration as candid, but that it was a pretext to gain time on the part of Li. At the same time there was such an appearance of probability, in the disavowals and the French themselves were so far from readiness that there could be no ground for complaint. The Paris Cabinet was gradually seeing the increasing gravity of the problem.

When the French, as an earnest of the sincerity of China, proposed that the troops of the two nations should unite against the Black Flag men, and extirpate them as "bandits" the Viceroy had so much difficulty, in understanding what the French really proposed, that the suggestion was abandoned.

A confidential despatch addressed by the Viceroy of Canton in cipher to the Yamen is worthy of note. It has been translated, not without difficulty, and forms enclosure No. 1. From this you will learn the most important fact, that the "Black Flags" who during the summer were regarded as bandits by Li, are now received as Chinese troops, and have been reinforced by the orders of the Cabinet, and are so recognized in a secret decree from the throne which I enclose.

The second grave incident is the formal declaration of the Chinese Government, the nature of which I learned, in advance, from outside sources. I hesitated to accept so important a proclamation as true, until I asked the Yamen the question directly. The answer confirmed its truth....

When you compare the tenor of this despatch as avowing the policy of the Government with the guarded, measured and anxious terms of the negotiations with M. Bourée's and M. Tricou's as noted in my despatch No. 230, you will observe a marked advance in the policy of the Imperial Cabinet.

In this communication Prince Kung claims that the rulers of Annam have for two hundred years accepted investiture from the Emperour of China. That in recognition of this Imperial responsibility, former Emperours had sent troops to the aid of the Ruler of Annam, in suppressing revolt and sedition, that these troops had been engaged in that duty for years, at an expense to the Imperial Treasury of many tens of million of dollars. Having given the King his power, China was bound to protect him. Regardless of this relation, and ignoring what the Prince presents as "historical facts" known to all "the world", the French had invaded Annam, and taken possession of its ruler's territory.

The Prince avers that notwithstanding this, China, mindful of the peace of mankind and especially of the stability of commercial interests, was most reluctant to break with France. But how could China have anticipated such an act as France invading the territory of Annam and coercing her ruler, nay more at a time when Annam was in sorrow over a Ruler's death. This France had done, taking advantage of the accession of a new chief magistrate to force upon him a convention

in which the ancient rights of allegiance to China were ignored.

China, continues the Prince, is anxious to be on terms of friendship with France. He was willing to discuss any demand or pretension on the part of France, in the most friendly spirit. But while maintaining this intention he was bound to say, that should France advance upon the positions occupied by the Chinese, it could only be looked upon by the Imperial Cabinet, as a resolve to break the peace. Upon France would devolve the responsibility of that unfortunate deed....

... I know of no other form of rational beings who sees in this adventure of France aught but an enterprise to menace the autonomy of China, and establish the paramount supremacy of France over China. This was seen in the treaty which formed an enclosed to my despatch No. 268 dated 8th Oct., 1883.

This treaty shows the advance made in the pretensions of the French Government since the treaty signed in 1874. Against that treaty, China made a protest which I sent to you in my despatch No. 268 dated 8th October, 1883 clearly affirming the pretensions of the Chinese Emperour to be consulted in all matters concerning the foreign policy of Annam, a right which the Cabinet holds to be as incontestable as that of the American Government to be consulted in the foreign affairs of Texas, or England in the foreign affairs of New Zealand. China, as will be seen from the tenor of events associated with the treaty of 1874, was in no position to contest the claims of France, beyond the protest to which I have referred. There were internal disorders. The nation had not recovered from a long contested and exhausting rebellion..... China in 1874 had no army, only the nucleus of a navy; no internal methods of communication; with a Government weakened by a prolonged rebellion and disabled by dynastic strifes. She would have made any concession rather than invite a war with France.

The treaty of 1874, recognizes the sovereignty of the King of Annam and "his entire independence of all foreign powers whatsoever", proffers assistance in various ways in the development of his kingdom, secures for the Catholic Church the privileges enjoyed by the Annamese, especially the privilege on the part of bishops and missionaries of visiting any part of the kingdom. Residents were established in Annam who were to decide questions between the Annamese and

Foreigners. The treaty of 1883, brushes away any remaining obstacle as to France over Annam and Tonquin, the definitive annexation by France of the province of Binh Thuan in Cochin-China, and that no appointments whatever of local officials shall be made without the consent of the French Authorities. French troops are to occupy towns where there are French residents for their protection. The Customs Service is to pass into the hands of the French, and military post-stations are to be built along the line of the Red River, with the right of establishing fortifications wherever necessary.

In return for the important privileges conceded by this convention, involving the sovereignty of the Annamese ruler, and the extinction of his Kingdom, the French Government, it is said, has conferred upon His Majesty the Grand Cross of the Legion of Honour....

The position of the French in the matter is this, so far as I can understand it. The French claim that the treaty with Annam in 1874, was made with the ruler of Annam alone; that he was as much to them a sovereign power as the ruler of Holland or Belgium; that their war upon Tonquin is necessary to compel the observance of a treaty. This is a point, which it is contended, we must all uphold, because the treaties of other powers stand upon the same ground, as those now "vindicated" by France. We are therefore to look upon France, as taking up arms in "the sacred cause of treaties", and in no way doing a tresspass upon China, Annam or Tonquin, simply compelling from these Oriental nations that respect for treaties, which is essential to all international relations. France therefore, declines negotiations with China upon Annam and Tonquin. Marquis Tseng, as will be seen in Enclosure to the Department's No. 153 had vainly implored from the French Government some conferences on the subject....

While, therefore, the avowed policy of the French has been to ignore China in diplomatic conversations, the practical fact remains, that the issue is with China, and China alone. As the Legation has held in this correspondence with the Department, as I have had occasion to say in this very despatch, the real questions, the only questions are, how far will China be able to resist the advances of the French; and how far will the other Western Powers support or oppose France in the development of her aims.

Thus far the passive resistance of China, has entailed upon France great expense. It was the contingency of this expense,

which led M. Tricou to say to me in Shanghai, that France before she came to a settlement with China would ask an indemnity of forty millions of dollars....

I refer again to the proposed indemnity because if China were assessed in the mind of France last summer as in debt forty millions of dollars, what will be the bill when the expenses of recent expeditions are added? The defeat of the Chinese, as France cannot afford defeat because of her continental prestige, I take to be assured. Actual war between the two powers does not mean military operations in Annam or Tonquin. There in the tropics, the "elements" would be as fatal to a large French army as the elements in Russia, were fatal to Napoleon. It would be mainly a naval war. Canton, Shanghai, Foochow, would be occupied. The Chinese Customs revenue would be sequestered as a security for the indemnity. And as the gross income from that revenue last year was about 21,000,000 dollars you have at once, and within easy reach the guarantee of a large indemnity. Here would be at once a guarantee of at least five percent on an indemnity of $420,000,000....

How far would the European powers go in any course of support or opposition to the French? I do not anticipate interference one way or another until the work is done....

The only advance France has made towards joint action with the other powers, will be found in a despatch addressed to the Foreign Office by Viscount Semalle, French Chargé d'Affaires. In this the Viscount informed the Government that the several foreign powers had undoubted fears that complications might arise, and they had devised "a plan for the protection of foreigners." "Germany" according to the Viscount "proposes that all the vessels of war of foreign powers on the coasts of Canton, shall be placed by said powers, under the command of one officer, with a view to the protection of the persons and property of foreigners". The Viscount goes on further to say, "that the French government accepted the proposition of Germany, and, that if the local authorities of China cannot afford protection in accordance with the terms of the treaties, the naval forces of the Foreign powers will certainly concert measures to secure protection."

I learn that the Prince answered the note of the Viscount by asking him, whether he spoke in the name of the powers represented in Peking. And if so, why had the Representatives departed from their usual custom of addressing joint communications through the Doyen of the Corps.

> As Doyen of the Corps such a duty would devolve upon your minister. I have had no intimation from my colleagues, no instruction from the Department to justify me in making such representation to the Imperial Cabinet.
>
> The rumor in Diplomatic circles is that the United States has accepted this plan. I have had no such advice from you, and not knowing how far the Department in its wisdom may have gone, have only referred to the matter with reserve....
>
> If this arrangement, should one have been made, contemplates joint action in the event of war. Joint action I mean, with the French, it occurs to me China would complain. Our navies would become allies of the French. This is the case at present in Tientsin.... Tientsin is the seat of a large rich French Concession, one of the most attractive and wealthy in China. The French have now the largest fleet on the China Station—forty men of war, if I recall aright our latest information. The French hold this fleet well in hand, and do not send a gunboat to protect their settlement. This work is done by English, German and American vessels. Therefore should war break out in the South during the winter, France would have her naval forces in the open seas, to strike any blow she pleased at China, while the office of defending one of the most important interests of France in China, an interest which China, in the event of war, would be anxious to hold as a war measure, or to capture as a war prize, is in charge of England, Russia and the United States.... Our "joint action" means in this case practically an alliance.

In an apparent effort at objective analysis, Young then followed with a lengthy discussion of the pros and cons regarding the impact of war on the numerous commercial interests in China. He concluded that many commercial interests would favor peace although he recognized that many others would feel there was money in war. In similar fashion, he laboriously discussed the pros and cons of using warfare as a modernizing agent in China to usher in the French civilizing influence. But again he concluded that awakening China could bring revolution and, with it, anarchy: "But is there any power in the world, even the mighty power of France, that would care to govern China in anarchy? And is there not more to be feared, in the sudden awakening of China, to the fact that we live in the nineteenth not the ninth century?"[14] Ultimately, Young concludes:

> Any enterprise, therefore, which would throw China into a war, the end of which no one can foresee, I should regard

with sorrow and concern. Let us suppose that France suddenly environed with home troubles, confronted by a European war, with a power like Germany, and compelled to concentrate her forces on that business would not be enabled to maintain her ground in China. In all my communications to the Department, I have assumed that in a direct war between China and France, France would win. But what would be the effect of a Chinese victory? I cannot imagine a graver problem. The defeat of France, therefore, would mean the defeat of the foreigner, no matter what his nationality. We should be compelled for our very existence to unite and protect foreign interests. However just or unjust the war might be, there would come the duty of self preservation. In this way, the present situation directly concerns the United States. Already as I have said we are protecting the French in Tientsin, and we may have to do so elsewhere. The incalculable advantage attaching to France, that she may go where she will in China, and leave her own people under other flags, knowing that from the very necessity of circumstances they will be safe, wherever there is a Western gun to be fired in their behalf, gives us more than ordinary interest in the events, and the right to be consulted in a policy one of the consequences of which may be naval operations by our own fleet.

Finally, and with this observation, I shall cease to weary you with a long despatch, our first consideration in Asia is the independence of the Asiatic powers. Whatever menaces that independence affects our influence in the East. And in that point I hope I may be permitted to say, we have a right to be heard. We are the next neighbors of China, Corea, Siam and Japan. There is but one sea between us, and a sea which our grandfathers would have regarded as a summer holiday to cross. Already we have defined a policy towards Hawaii, which secures the independence of that kingdom. The Pacific coast must look to the East for an imperial trade, and if, without a protest, we accept any political or commercial policy here, which paralyzed that trade we do ourselves a wrong.

I regret most sincerely, that I cannot give you better assurances as to peace. The Chinese are pushing men to the frontier. The French are voting credits and sending fleets. The war spirit is in the ascendant in Paris. It governs for the present the councils of Peking. Long before you read this despatch, you will in all probability know the result. ...[15]

On 31 December 1883, Young forwarded a memorandum of a conversation between him and two Foreign Office officials which

took place on 19 December. In response to Young's question as to whether China considered itself at war with France, the officials responded negatively but added that "the present policy of China is to make herself thoroughly ready for whatever may arise, and to watch carefully the movements of the French."[16]

On 18 March 1884, Young sent a confidential dispatch in which he concluded from the calm Chinese reaction to France's capture of Bac Ninh in Tonkin that:

> Upon the whole, it hardly seems probable that the French occupation of Tonquin will lead to a rupture between France and China, unless the former should make a demand for a war indemnity. Should such a demand be made, it would be bitterly resented by the Government of this Empire.[17]

Young later forwarded to the Department a dispatch from Consul Charles Seymour in Canton describing the French capture of Bac Ninh and its import:

> Bacninh was captured and occupied by the French forces on the evening of Wednesday, 12th instant, without much of a conflict, the total losses of both sides having been less than one hundred men, and about equally divided.
>
> From all accounts of a reliable nature it seems to have been an empty and unexpectedly unimportant victory for the French, as the total population at and about Bachninh, a week before its evacuation by the natives, numbered over 25,000, all of whom have retired or retreated further into the interior, the first stand being located at Thainguyen, with a more remote and formidable point called Langson, toward which places the French forces are understood to be slowly advancing.
>
> The French flotilla, consisting of the Pluvier, Lynx, Léopard, Aspic, Thrombe, and Caroline, and several launches and junks laden with supplies, etc., found the river barricaded at Langson by stone and sunken junks.
>
> As a distance of 80 miles has to be traversed between Bachninh and the nearest of the two places to which the hostile forces are moving, it is obvious that the French incur the danger and inconvenience of operating very far from their base of operations; but as the natives have not yet manifested any ability to offer any resistance to the French forces, except to impede navigation, possibly the progress of the latter will be undisputed.

> In the mean time there is every reasonable prospect that the Chinese frontier may be the scene of occurrences which will ultimately bring the French and Chinese armies into conflict, which must result disastrously to the Chinese, whose regiments, encumbered with banners, pikes, poles, and spears, and with inferior arms, and destitute of discipline, so far as I could discern during their passage through Canton, are impotent against well-disciplined soldiers of Europe or America.[18]

On 21 March 1884, Secretary of State Frelinghuysen sent Young a lengthy instruction, the essential thrust of which was to reject Young's arguments (Peking despatch No. 308) on almost all counts. The Secretary of State, in effect, assumed a passive stance regarding French actions in Tonkin and Annam and criticized China's "hesitating and formless" policy toward these actions. Frelinghuysen also disputed Young's claim that the position of the neutral powers aided France; Frelinghuysen declared that exactly the contrary was true—that it aided China. He wrote as follows:

> Your despatch ... presents a full and lucid review of the relations between France and China growing out of affairs in Annam and Tonquin.
>
> Since that despatch was written, the fall of BacNinh has left it even more uncertain than ever whether the policy of China was one of determined resistance to French aggression, or merely one of temporizing negotiation and delay looking toward making the best arrangement possible in the end to avert a war with France. It is already stated with some degree of likelihood that the Marquis Tseng has begun negotiations at Paris for a treaty.
>
> The policy of the Western powers toward China has naturally been influenced by the hesitating and formless policy of China itself. While all the neutrals have most positively expressed their aversion to a war, successful mediation or influence to prevent it has been impossible through the consistent and plausible declaration of France that there was no intention of assuming a hostile attitude against China unless forced thereto by Chinese Acts.
>
> The purpose of the neutral powers is primarily the protection of their own interest at the several treaty ports. The foreign settlements at the open ports are singularly abnormal growths. Under no one flag, they are under the protection of all. In whatever concerns their trade, their shipping and their vested interests, they are distinctively foreign to the administrative system of China.

> Hence, as you have lately learned when the possible closing of Canton by the Chinese as a measure of protection against threatened French aggression was seriously contemplated, the other treaty powers felt justified in expecting of France a formal declaration of purpose not to attack Canton. The view of the U.S. as expressed to Great Britain, was that neither China nor France had the right to close the treaty ports, but that if they should be attacked by France, China could not be denied a right of defense to be availed of in any manner legitimate to a state of war.
>
> Your present despatch [No. 308] devotes some attention to an aspect of this question, involved in the action of the treaty powers, in protecting the open ports. Your own impression apparently is that in the general arrangement for protecting Canton, Tientsin and the other ports without French naval concurrence, an alliance with France is practically implied, inasmuch as a portion of the French squadron is released to engage in active operations elsewhere. This is doubtless so, but on the other hand, if the treaty powers can successfully maintain the doctrine of the neutrality of the open ports, China also is relieved from the necessity of defending those ports against French attack, and a considerable force would be thereby released to operate elsewhere. Besides this, the French settlements at those ports would in fact be neutralized, and prevented from becoming bases of operations against China as they might readily be otherwise.
>
> On the whole, therefore, it would seem that the primary obligation of the neutral powers to protect the interests which have sprung up in China under the joint tenancy founded upon the treaties, is no disadvantage to China, but is rather a guarantee that such tenancy, in which France shares, shall not be used against China.[19]

Less than a month later, Frelinghuysen sent Young another instruction on the issue of the threatened obstruction of the Canton River by the Chinese:

> The gravity of the question seems to have been removed in a great measure by the assurance given by the Yamen that a channel of over 100 feet in width would be left in both channels for the convenience of steamers and sailing vessels, an assurance which Chang-ta-jen seems afterwards to have still further extended to 150 feet, as appears from the telegram from the British consul at Canton to Sir Harry Parkes of January 26.

> Even, however, under this favorable modification, the obstruction to the channel at Canton and Whampoa can only be tolerated as a temporary measure, to be removed as soon as the special occasion therefor shall have passed, and under no circumstances to be admitted as a precedent for setting obstacles to open navigation at the treaty ports in time of peace, under pretext of being intended for ultimate strategic defense in the contingency of future war.[20]

Meanwhile, in mid-May, Minister Morton reported that the French Government had confirmed press reports of a preliminary peace treaty between France and China, concluded in Tientsin on 11 May. Morton reported that by this treaty, the substance of which was published in the French Official Journal, France secured "all the political and Commercial advantages she has been aiming at since her establishment in Cochinchina." He listed these advantages:

> 1. Recognition of her Protectorate over Annam and Tonquin and of her right to conclude treaties directly with the Court of Hué.
> 2. Opening to her Commerce of the whole of Southern China, that is to say of the Province of Yunnan, of Zouang Si and Kouang Tung.
>
> The news of so satisfactory a conclusion of the difficulty with China was received in France with a feeling almost bordering on enthusiasm. The opposition papers themselves and such Conservative Republican journals as the *Débats* and the *Temps* in the columns of which the management of the Tonquin affairs had been very severely criticized, now admit that all is well which ends well and congratulate the Government upon its success.
>
> These congratulations are assuredly well deserved. At the outset of the expedition the French government lacked perhaps in decision and promptitude, but it cannot be denied that it saw clearly the object it had in view and quietly and persistently pursued it notwithstanding the clamour of the opposition, the threats of China and the apparent disapproval of most of the European powers.
>
> France is also to be congratulated for having waived any claims to a war indemnity. The old practice of exacting money from those who have suffered defeat on the battlefield is now condemned by most of the writers on international law, and the example given by France in her liberal treatment of China cannot but have great weight in the future.

> Although the Convention of Tientsin gives to France exclusive commercial advantages it seems to be the general understanding that these advantages are to be shared by all other nations. The victory of France will thus have been a victory for the whole world and a triumph for the cause of civilization.[21]

Despite Morton's optimism, in the months that followed, the communications between Washington and Peking over the Franco-Chinese crisis increased greatly in number and, at least on Young's part, in stridency. On 2 June 1884, Young offered the Department a relatively mild, if slightly skeptical, reaction to the Department's position on the crisis as set forth in its Instruction No. 239 of 21 March:

> I have the honour ... to express my thanks for your full expression of the views of the Department in reference to affairs between China and France. I am in hopes that negotiations in Paris between the Representatives of China and France may lead to a result which will dispel any present anxiety as to the security of foreign interests in China and remove the apprehension as to hostile relations between the two countries which have disturbed foreign interests here for the past two years....
>
> I confine myself to a simple acknowledgement of your instruction because further information from the Foreign Office as to the condition of pending negotiations may render it necessary for me to write you more in detail. In the absence of that information any opinion I might express would be entirely within the range of speculation, and as events are crowding upon each other with such rapidity, would be of questionable value.[22]

On 20 July, Young cabled urgently to Washington, conveying China's second request for American good offices:

> French ultimatum demands fifty million dollars indemnity. If not agreed to in seven days France will seize Chinese soil. China refused. General opinion Diplomatic Body war inevitable. Have requested Admiral concentrate vessels in Chinese waters. China yesterday appealed urgently to Legation. Quotes first article treaty Tientsin and invokes American good offices. Answered matter referred Washington. China relies largely upon us to save her from war and Legation trusts possible to take some action.[23]

Secretary of State Frelinghuysen cabled Minister Morton in Paris on 23 July, referring to the US-Chinese Treaty of 1858 and asking Morton to tell the French Foreign Minister:

> that the United States recognizing the obligations placed upon them by that treaty and in the spirit of equal friendship for both governments, will, if agreeable to France, willingly become the medium for restoring more friendly relations between the two countries.
>
> The President in conveying this intimation to the French Government feels that a people which has a history so illustrious as that of France can well afford to be more than patient and more than just in its dealings with other nations of the world.... The French Government will not fail to see the importance not only to France but to all other countries having large Commercial relations with China of avoiding if possible the unhappy complications arising from a condition of War and operating injuriously upon all the interests of Commerce.[24]

On the same day, Morton replied to the Secretary of State:

> Mr. Ferry requested me to thank you for your kind offer and the graceful and friendly manner in which it was made. He appreciates the sentiments which dictated the action of the President but thinks the best way to reach promptly the peaceful solution desired is to let the Chinese know that they were not to expect any interposition between them and France. France is in a position to obtain satisfaction from China. The satisfaction she claims is a just and very moderate one. France has been most forbearing towards China; she proved it by not exacting a war indemnity under circumstances where perhaps any other nation would have done so. Even now she does not insist upon the amount of the indemnity asked for an unjustifiable violation of treaty, but upon the principle that an indemnity is due to France leaving the amount for subsequent discussion. France desires peace and knows the obligations imposed upon her towards the commercial nations of the civilized world. She will respect their rights if war is to come; but it will not come particularly if the United States advises the Chinese that treaties freely consented to, must be respected.[25]

In his comment, Morton said, "I have no doubt the offer would have been accepted, if the French Government had not already been convinced that China was bound to yield. This I had from Mr. Ferry

himself, who, a few days ago, after informing me that the Chinese were yielding, added, with a smile—They will soon come to our terms.' "[26]

Of the exchanges which took place in the next few days, only Morton's reply to Frelinghuysen is available. He said French public opinion would not support the postponement of the deadline for China's acceptance.[27]

On 26 July, Secretary of State Frelinghuysen responded to Young's cable conveying the French position and went on to say that the President did not know the facts well enough to comment on the question of a violation of the treaty.[28]

On 30 July, Young cabled urgently again: to convey yet a third Chinese request for American good offices:

> Long conference with Prince. China asserts that there has been no violation treaty except by France. Presents at length arguments support.
>
> Admits most unequivocal manner that if there has been such violation on her part she should and would pay indemnity accepting that responsibility as principle international law. Anxious avoid war—China again solicits good offices President begging him at once communicate President France. Earnestly hopes France will agree to accept the arbitration President as to facts. This offer communicated formally official note. The accomplishment of this I believe only means averting war.[29]

On 1 August 1884, Frelinghuysen cabled Morton in Paris with the Chinese position along with Young's view that arbitration was the only way to avoid war. Frelinghuysen then continued:

> The President because of treaty obligations—the earnest request of China—and the desire to avert war, is willing if agreeable to France to assume this responsible duty. The President while he would not obtrude his counsels feels that the friendly relations of the two Republics permit him most courteously to suggest to France that her difference with China be submitted to some arbitration and thus avert war—and believes that such action by France would receive the approval of the nations of the Earth.[30]

On the same day, Morton replied:

> The Minister does not believe that there is any occasion for an arbitration in the present difficulty with China. The facts

> are too well established to be questioned and the Chinese have virtually admitted them by proposing to pay an indemnity of three millions and a half of francs, an offer too ridiculous to be accepted. To consent to an arbitration or to accept the good offices of a friendly Government would in this case encourage the Chinese in their delusion. The best way to serve the interests of peace and of Commerce is to furnish no pretext for such delusion. The sooner the Chinese realize that they are face to face with France and that they are not to expect any foreign interposition in their behalf the sooner a settlement will be made. The Minister clearly expressed his conviction that China would yield to his conditions. He was polite and cordial, but at the same time positive in all his utterances. I left him with the decided impression that France was unwilling to accept the good offices or friendly interposition of any third party in the matter.[31]

Young pressed the Department again on 5 August, saying that China was exceedingly anxious for a reply to its request.[32] Frelinghuysen replied succinctly the same day: "France declines."[33]

Again Young cabled the Department on 13 August: "Prince earnestly requests me go Shanghai make best possible settlement with France. China will give any indemnity. Advise shall I make the experiment?"[34]

After consulting the French through Morton once again, the Department responded to Young on 15 August.[35] "France says if China has reasonable indemnity to offer, she must act at once and says indemnity must be nothing like that China first proposed. Unofficially communicate this and transmit reply. Take no other action."[36]

On 20 August Young again cabled the Department:

> Long interview Yamen. Prince send profound gratitude China to President content China having done no wrong will not pay indemnity. Prince orders break off negotiations. General impression war inevitable. Still believe in peace if France shows consideration. War threatens anarchy.[37]

The Fourth Attempt: September-November 1884

On 21 August 1884, Young filed another voluminous dispatch containing further views of the Franco-Chinese crisis and enclosing copies of numerous communications for the record. After reviewing once again the events leading up to the crisis between France and China, Young expressed skepticism regarding the durability of the recently signed treaty between the two countries. He noted in particular that the treaty's precarious status had been further undermined by a serious clash between French and Chinese troops near the Chinese-Vietnamese border:

> The French Legation ... at once addressed itself to the Yamen, saying that France had proof that China had violated the treaty, had retained troops in the conceded provinces, after signing a Convention agreeing to withdraw them "immediately", had made war upon France, and France was compelled to make demands. The first demand was that there should be an Imperial Decree from the Throne, directing the immediate withdrawal of the Chinese troops. The second was that China as a penalty should pay an indemnity of two hundred and fifty million francs. This demand was given as an Ultimatum, to expire on July 31st. If China failed to accept the conditions thus imposed, France reserved entire liberty of action.
>
> The answer of the Chinese Government to the averments of France ... contended that there was no time agreed upon for a definitive evacuation of the annexed territory. The question was remanded to a later Convention. China's explanation ... contains likewise the declaration on the part of China, that should war come, the Chinese must throw upon France the consequences of the war....

Young then recalled that the Tientsin Treaty of 1858 between the United States and China obligated the United States, if any foreign nation should "act unjustly or oppressively" toward China, to exert its good offices, "to bring about an amicable arrangement of the question thus shewing their friendly feelings." According to Young, this provision was the basis for the Chinese request for US good offices in the dispute with France. Young reported that he told the

prince that the President was willing to exercise US good offices at China's request, but that France was unwilling to agree, accusing China of violating an international convention. Young said he went on to tell the Prince he was confident the Prince could explain to the President that China had broken no treaty commitment:

> The Prince in answer ... holds that the Convention was a preliminary instrument that "in the Fifth Article it was declared explicitly, that Plenipotentiaries should be appointed, within a period of three months, who should elaborate a definitive Treaty upon all the various points mentioned in the preceding articles." The natural interpretation of this article according to the Prince, was that all the points raised in the four articles regarding the delimitation of the boundary, commercial questions, and regarding the withdrawal of the garrisons, the points to which they were to be withdrawn, and the points on the border, where trade was to be allowed, all these questions were to be decided in detail by the Plenipotentiaries who were to meet after three months, and could only then be decided and carried out.
>
> It appears further, following the statements of the Prince, that after the signing of the Convention between Captain Fournier and Le Hung Chang; the French Commissioner, proposed that the troops at Liang shan should be withdrawn in twenty days, and the troops at Pao sheng in forty days. To this suggestion Li Hung Chang refused to agree. There is no evidence that the agreement was made. Therefore, according to the Prince, the French in advancing upon Liang shan, were acting in ignorance of the understanding existing between China and France or in violation of it. The assault was made by the French; three hundred Chinamen were killed and wounded—of the French in all forty.
>
> The Prince again said that if in any way China had broken the Treaty, indemnity should be and would be paid. Already by an Imperial Decree, the troops had been removed from Tonquin.... China, in conclusion had made every concession in the interest of peace, but so far as an indemnity was concerned, none was due, and none would be paid....
>
> The question, the only question, therefore was how to rescue China at the least cost. China could not resist the power of France. An indemnity must be paid; pay as little as possible. My impression is that the Grand Secretary Li, took this ground. Sir Robert Hart was sent to Shanghai to see how much the penalty could be reduced. An intimation was

> conveyed to me indirectly from the Prince that China would pay any sum that the Legation would name. Any sum suggested by me China would pay. It would then be said, that China had not paid of her own accord, or under duress from France, but upon the suggestion of a great and friendly power. To use an Oriental metaphor, China would "save her face", and at the same time make peace. The Prince said further, that if I would accept this function, go to Shanghai and see M. Patenotre China would regard it as a most important service, and whatever I advised would be accepted by China....

Young noted that the French capture of the port of Keelung on Formosa (Taiwan) had then occurred, which China regarded as an act of war. Young recorded the Chinese reaction:

> The Prince.... said, that while he was grateful for my willingness to intercede with M. Patenotre, that China did not now propose to pay a dollar....
>
> France had been annoying China for a long time. She had no business in Annam and Tonquin. Having signed a Treaty wherein the rights of China were to be respected, she had compelled the King of Annam to return to the Emperor his patent of investiture. Could there be any greater insult than that? France talks about assurances and guarantees. Did she not last winter give an assurance that she would not attack a Treaty Port without due notice? Yet here she attacks Keelung and prepares to attack Fuchow....[1]

The day after Young put his long dispatch in the mail, he sent a cipher telegram to the Secretary of State: "French Legation withdraws flag. Russia protects French. Prince refuses indemnity. Emperor sends President grateful thanks for good offices."[2]

In a memorandum of a conversation dated 25 August 1884 and enclosed with Young's despatch No. 496 (dated 21 August 1884!), Young's assistant, Chester Holcombe, reported that the Foreign Office had just been informed by the Chinese Minister in Paris that Captain Fournier had told the latter "France was ready to accept the half million taels indemnity offered at Shanghai, or in case China would grant some commercial concessions to French merchants, France would be satisfied with that in lieu of any indemnity." When asked his opinion of the message, Holcombe suggested the Chinese try to find out whether Fournier spoke for the French Government. Holcombe was informed that the Chinese had already rejected the French "offer" on the grounds that

"France seemed to have no mind of her own and was doing one thing, one day, and the next day the opposite."[3]

The next telegram Young sent home was terse: "French bombarding Foo Chow."[4] The same day the *Peking Gazette* published an Imperial decree recognizing that a state of war existed between China and France.[5]

On 3 September 1884, Morton sent a cipher cable to Secretary of State Frelinghuysen reporting at length of a confidential conversation he had had the day before with M. Billot, Director of the Political Department of the Quai d'Orsay, about a dispatch written by Mr. Ferry, the French Prime Minister, to the French Chargé in Washington. According to Morton:

> The aim of the despatch is to intimate that personal good offices might have been accepted had they not been coupled with a proposition of arbitration which, under the circumstances, could not be accepted. To the remark, that the language of the Minister for Foreign Affairs did not convey that impression; but, on the contrary, did convey the idea that France believed she could alone bring China more speedily to terms; and did not desire the interposition of any friendly power; he replied, that the Minister did believe and still believed that France alone can bring China to terms; but that he only meant to decline a proposition leading to *submission* (?) to arbitration facts too plain to be *disputed* (?)....
>
> The day before this communication and conversation took place, the French Minister (Mr. Rousteau) at Washington, D.C., who is here, intimated to me that perhaps France would now accept the good offices of the United States for a settlement with China. He declared, however, that this was simply a suggestion of his own, made without instruction and based upon the fact that the action of the French fleet at Foo Chow had completely changed the situation. Mr. Billot made about the same statement. They both profess to speak without instruction; but they both are clearly of opinion that our good offices would be acceptable now. These *intimations* (?) indicate a change of position on the part of the French Government since their recent victories, for I have no doubt that the two gentlemen, above mentioned, reflect the present sentiments of the President of the Council. I believe that as France has now inflicted a severe punishment on the Chinese for their action at Bac Le, they would listen to propositions which might bring about an amicable settlement....

> I hasten to send you this information in case you should desire to intimate to the Chinese that you might now be able to be of some service to them. I have every reason to believe that such action on your part would be appreciated by the President of the Council. Of course France does not fear the consequences of the War; but a speedy termination of hostilities would gratify the French people and would consolidate the Ferry Cabinet with which we have the best relations and which is doing so much for the permanent establishment, in France, of sound and solid republican institutions.[6]

On 13 September 1884, Secretary of State Frelinghuysen sent Young the following telegram:

> We have reason to believe that a Chinese overture to France through the offices of this Government, on the basis of the execution of the Tientsin Treaty and the payment in ten years of the eighty millions previously asked, would be favourably considered.
>
> While our belief is as stated, we are told that French Admiral has been ordered to proceed with energy. While willing to give our offices serving China as requested, we are not to be understood as proposing the foregoing settlement. We have further reason to believe that France would be willing to receive an equivalent substitute for this indemnity.
>
> Whether we could lend our offices to effect such substitute depends upon its nature.[7]

On 15 September, Young conveyed this information by cipher telegram to General Stahel, Consul General in Shanghai. Convinced that there would be no difficulty regarding the acceptance of the Tientsin Treaty, he instructed Stahel to ask Patenôtre, of the French Legation, what France would regard as an equivalent indemnity. Young told Stahel that if he knew France's alternative, he could "see possible the arrangement of an honourable peace."[8]

Young saw the Chinese the same day to convey Frelinghuysen's message and sent the following cipher telegram report home: "Long interview Prince says China inflexible refused indemnity territory gave your despatch saying would ask definite answer Wednesday, hoping meantime peaceable councils prevail."[9]

Young sent a follow-up report to Washington on 23 September: "China declines indemnity, territorial concession or commercial equivalent France. Insist no treaty violation except on part of France. Three interviews. Prince inflexible."[10]

On 27 September, Young sent another cipher message to the Secretary of State, presumably on the basis of the written confirmation on the Chinese position he had just received:

> Two interviews Viceroy Li Hung Chang. China inflexibly opposed indemnity, territorial concession commercial advantages France. Prefers even prolonged war consequences what they may. Willing reaffirm Tientsin Treaty basis peace. China however, renews her desire for mediation President, should France propose it. Await answer Tientsin.[11]

Young, then, apparently tried to explore directly with the French Minister the possibilities for a peaceful solution to the Sino-French conflict. He sent a cipher message on 30 September 1884 to General Stahel in Shanghai instructing him to carry on such explorations as follows:

> Tell Patenôtre confidentially France America have been communication hoping China would make advances toward honourable peace. Yamen resolute for war. Four interviews Viceroy Li who, while agreeing Yamen determination, finally offered re-affirmation Tientsin Treaty mediation United States. My Govern't having tendered France friendly services without effect declines Viceroy's proposal but will readily mediate if France requests. Tell Patenôtre my judgment is that notwithstanding warlike councils prevail Yamen, France can through America make honourable peace. Suggest armistice six months. France meantime holding Keelung Tientsin Treaty reaffirmed China withdrawing troop beyond frontier. American mediation accepted China sending special mission high rank present case. China meantime ceasing interruption navigation. This my own suggestion. Believe should France consent can induct Yamen. France having inflicted terrible punishment China, secured southern provinces maintained her prestige, can afford remand other questions mediation friendly power. Will not press this on Yamen unless Patenôtre consents and would make proposals as from myself, regarding Patenôtre's consent as strictly confidential. Answer Tientsin.[12]

Stahel cabled Young in cipher on 2 October: "France will not stop operations unless China agree to conditions already proposed or gives satisfactory equivalent, mediation cannot be accepted."[13] Young replied the following day: "What would Patenôtre regard as satisfactory equivalent? If I can urge it on Yamen, regarding peace as paramount, shall do so."[14]

Two weeks later, in a message to Frelinghuysen about a mistransmission of an earlier telegram, Young gave the following brief appraisal of the situation:

> Before the attack on Keelung, the Prince, as reported to you in my despatch No. 496, dated August 21st, 1884, came to me, and left the settlement of the whole affair in my hands, saying that China would pay whatever our Legation recommended. After the fall of Keelung, he withdrew the offer, and since then I have seen no opportunity of reopening the question."[15]

On 10 November 1884, Young received the following cipher telegram from Frelinghuysen:

> Sound China informally and personally as to following suggestions for settlement with France. Answer soon.
>
> One—Ratification of Tientsin treaty and conclusion of commercial convention provided for by that treaty. France, before this is agreed to submitting a project for such convention.
>
> Two—The continuance of the occupation of Keelung and [Tamsin?] as a temporary measure and without cession of territorial sovereignty until the complete execution of the treaty of Tientsin.
>
> Three—China to pay France reparation for failure to execute treaty of Tientsin the sum of five millions of francs. France to hold the Customs and mines in Keelung and [Tamsin?] until this sum is paid or the amount of reparation and nature of security therefore to be submitted to arbitration.
>
> Four—When the foregoing, including project of commercial treaty is agreed to, Chinese troops to withdraw from Tonking and French fleet suspend operations.[16]

Young replied immediately: "Will see Prince immediately. Not hopeful acceptance, but do all I can."[17]

Six days later, Young cabled a more definitive assessment of the Chinese reaction: "Long interview Prince. Think China will accept arrangement basis first-fourth propositions. Second-third declines. Urged compromise interest peace. Prince inflexible. Rumored English overtures mediation."[18]

In the body of a long confidential dispatch dated 9 December, Young went over much of the same ground as he had in his previous analyses. He reported that he had had many interesting conversations with the Viceroy in which he, Young, "kept steadily in view the

importance of peace." Young kept pounding away at his theme: Considering everything, it was difficult to imagine a sacrifice on the part of China not involving national dishonor which would not be preferable to war. There were certain conditions which no friend of China could fail to recognize. France was a powerful nation, representing one of the finest forms of the development of modern civilization. This China had not attained. With her vast territory, rivers, seas and population, her strength was that of an unarmed man. Young noted that the Viceroy had hardened his position against France in response to domestic political pressures. Young lamented:

> I deemed it a loss to the cause of peace, which no one who wishes well to China can fail to have much at heart, that the Viceroy should have experienced a change of mind. At the same time political reasons govern public men in China as much as in Western countries. Before the fall of Keelung, peace could have been arranged on terms most honorable to France, China paying any indemnity that the America Legation would indicate. Since then, a solution of the problem has been most difficult.

Young noted that in these discussions the Viceroy hewed to standard positions, claiming Chinese reasonableness and French unreasonableness. Because of the presence of other Chinese officials in these discussions, Young had reason to believe the Viceroy's arguments were "really intended for Peking as a propitiation of the war party." Young therefore sought a private meeting with the Viceroy, and in this meeting, the two men got down to serious discussion. When the Viceroy sought Young's advice, Young was highly critical of Chinese policy, asserting that it was based on many illusions about France:

> There was the illusion that France was in financial difficulties and could not afford a war. France was rich and strong. There was the illusion that political complications in Europe might compel France to withdraw from China. This was trusting to the chapter of accidents, and nothing was more unsatisfactory or more unfortunate in adjusting the affairs of nations. There was the illusion that foreign powers valued their trade with China so much that they would by diplomatic intervention, or even the force of arms compel France to make peace. England must sell her piece goods and America her petroleum. The trade with China was important, but it was a trade in which China had the advantage and it was assuredly not worth a war. The time had passed, I hoped, when nations

> made war for commercial reasons. England had every industrial and commercial motive for doing so during our civil war, because of the cessation of the cotton supply. The national conscience would not permit it then nor would the national conscience permit it now, even for a trade ten times as large as that with China. There was the illusion that China could defeat France. No friend of China would encourage that belief until there was a radical change in the condition of affairs. I said to H.E. that I did not question his right or his duty to defend his country, but no one could see more clearly that himself the appalling alternatives which must arise in a contest with France.

When the Viceroy asked Young what he would advise, Young declined to speak either officially or personally without instructions from his government. The Viceroy then went on in a more flexible frame of mind than he had in earlier meetings with his colleagues present: What China wanted was a proposition from France. And if this proposition was acceptable, the Yamen might be induced to accept it. In that event a proposition of a reasonable nature would be the basis of peace.

Young, picking up the Viceroy's lead, continued his report to the Secretary of State:

> I said to H.E. that I had reason to believe that France would be willing to make terms on the points contained in your despatch which forms enclosure No. 1.
>
> The Viceroy read the points attentively. I gave him a copy in Chinese text. He was willing to ratify the Tientsin convention and would be willing to consider the question of a commercial equivalent. He could not consent to indemnity or to cession of territory.
>
> At the same time H.E. appreciated the fact that France was not indisposed to peace and expressed an earnest desire to see Mr. Patenôtre or to have communications with him through our Legation. He would invite Mr. Patenôtre to Tientsin provided he knew beforehand that the invitation would be accepted.

The Viceroy gladly accepted Young's offer to approach Patenôtre through the US Consul General in Shanghai. Patenôtre, however, was ill-disposed toward the American Legation, believing that "the Legation was inimical to France." Young regretted this state of affairs and was convinced:

> that a perfect understanding with Mr. Patenôtre even after the fall of Keelung, and when I was in Tientsin in conference with Li, would have resulted in a peace upon better terms than those suggested in your despatch forming enclosure No. 1 and which I understood as representing the views of France.... China has all along been anxious for American mediation. Her statesmen know that the United States can have no interests in China but those of commerce, that we are her nearest neighbor, that our interests are growing and must grow, and that so far as our political relations with Asiatic affairs are concerned, we have no higher consideration, in fact, none other, than the independence and prosperity of China. The first impulse of the ministers was to turn to the United States and it was a bitter disappointment to the Yamen when the overtures of China were refused.

Young continued his report to the Secretary of State, commenting on the Chinese refusal to accept the French four-point proposal, Young said:

> The impression I formed was, that the government had become more aggressive. The naval success of the French had made no impression. There was a change from the temper which prevailed before I went to Tientsin. The Prince said in a haughty way that the only indemnity he was disposed to consider was the indemnity France should pay to China.

Young then recounted that China had apparently sounded out Britain and Japan, and reportedly, the French were more flexible than he had been able to ascertain. At the same time, the Japanese suggested that the Chinese position was hardening. This was confirmed in later conversations between Young and the Viceroy. Young believed that other European powers were urging China to resist France; in particular, he suspected both England and Germany, both of whom would have been content to see France occupied in China. He also thought, however, that France's own vacillating policy and actions had encouraged China to resist. In any case, Young concluded that "affairs must be worse before they are better."[19]

Throughout the rest of December, Young continued to report pessimistically on the prospects between France and China. On 22 December, he reported word of a declaration by M. Jules Ferry to the effect that the time for negotiation had ceased and the French Government "would act with vigour to satisfy the impatience of the country." According to Young, the Chinese said they would

"persist in opposing the pretensions of France." Young concluded: "The general impression is that France will confirm her occupation of Tonquin and Annam, by strengthening her garrisons, holding Formosa, as a permanent possession. The policy of China will most likely be that of passive resistance."[20]

In his confidential dispatch immediately following, Young continued to speculate on China's hardened position. He returned to the thesis—the only one that made sense to him:

> that Western powers, who wish to keep France embroiled with China, have advised the Chinese to a policy of resistance,—and that this advice has come to the Yamen from their representatives in European capitals. We have only to look at events in Europe to see how much it is to the interests of certain powers to have France employed in China. England wishes to keep her out of Egypt—Germany certainly does not care to have her on the Rhine. Russia with ever-extending boundaries to rectify, is always served by complications in Asia.

Young continued his somber analysis:

> China will learn, when I am afraid it will be too late, the value of the opportunity she has thrown away, in not accepting the terms recently offered. In Western wars, events serve contending powers, and intervention may come. But who will intervene in behalf of China? England has the largest commercial interest, but her trade is not advancing and she is developing her tea-culture in India, so as to be no longer dependent upon China. Next to England come American interests, steadily growing and in time to become preponderant. Beyond diplomatic efforts we are prepared to do nothing. The policy of China is in a word a policy of infatuation resting upon hopes she can never realize, or inspired by influences wishing her no good, and willing to profit by her misfortunes, so far as their own purposes are served in other fields of policy and adventure.[21]

In 1884, what may have been the first public analysis of French actions in "Tong-King" appeared in the United States. It was a 45-page tract written by Lt. Sidney A. Staunton, US Navy, based principally on French sources and US Naval intelligence, and it included material on the history and the political and social conditions of Indochina, as well as the recent political, diplomatic, and military developments that were bringing France and China closer to conflict.[22] Staunton's account was relatively dispassionate and informative, not polemical. It was critical of various French actions and

tactical maneuvers, but not of France's overall effort to possess and control Tonkin. Nor was it laudatory of that effort. Its objectivity suggests that Staunton saw that no American interests were involved in Tonkin.

Only on the issue of whether China would fight France over Tonkin did Staunton see an American interest:

> The question has become one of general importance. It is no longer with regard to Tong-King a matter of "protectorate", or "suzerainty," or "occupation," but one of actual possession,—of ownership. Brushing aside the cobwebs of diplomacy, it means that France shall have Tong-King, or that China shall have it. The power of Annam is not now even a presence which may serve to conceal the springs by which it is put in motion.
>
> The commercial interests in the East are great. English, German, and American subjects are engaged in a large and lucrative trade, which would be greatly disturbed by a state of war. A vigorous protest would be made against a blockade of the Chinese ports.
>
> It attracts, perhaps, not less attention from the strictly European point of view. Like the Tunis affair, it reduces the power of France in men and money, without adding to her prestige, or increasing her opportunities of a favorable alliance, and thus diminishes her chances of success in the final struggle which must form the only possible excuse of the present generation to its descendants, for the enormous draughts on future industry caused by the conversion of Europe into an armed camp.[23]

This final passage in Staunton's account, similar to some of Young's broodings, suggests that Staunton expected to see France pursue its interests in Tonkin as long as they did not threaten war with China, in which event American and European interests would be jeopardized to little purpose.

Young's remaining months in Peking were spent for the most part in post-mortems of events of the past year and in continuing his efforts to find any slim ray of hope for peace. In early January 1885, Young reported another conversation he had had with Prince Li. His report contained the following:

> I asked His Highness whether the Imperial Government showed any disposition to recede from the policy which now seemed to prevail, of strenuous and even warlike opposition to France.

> His Highness said that China had made every overture to France, looking towards peace, that was possible, and she must now defend her honor and her dominions. China had no desire to make war upon France or any other nation, but she could not, without protest at least, be compelled ever to submit to injustice.
>
> I expressed my regret at this resolution, not that I permitted myself to question the right of His Highness to defend his country in his own way, but that war was always to be regarded with concern.
>
> The Prince said that China was not making war, she was simply defending herself against injustice and wrong.
>
> I asked His Highness what view the Imperial Government took of the Fournier Tientsin convention, whether events had affected its potency. The Prince replied that France had vitiated that agreement by her conduct in Formosa and at Foochow. China would have made peace on the terms therein conceded to France, yielding to what she knew to be an injustice, in the interest of peace. For this, she would have conceded the coveted provinces of Annam and Tonquin.
>
> Now it is another matter. France is not satisfied with this concession. She wants money, and breaks the peace to extort money. China might even have paid money to secure peace, but since Keelung and Foochow, she would not pay a penny. Moreover, she intended to reassert her sovereign rights in the South, those rights she was willing to have given to France in the interest of peace, and do her best to maintain them. Military operations were in active progress. China would pay no attention to the Tientsin convention. France had killed it.[24]

On 16 January 1885, Young reported evidence "showing the disposition of the Chinese government to accept the warlike alternative in its controversy with France." The evidence was largely in the form of newspaper reports. For example:

> Rewards for the soldiery in Tongking- Twenty thousand taels have reached Lung chow (Kwang-si) as rewards for the soldiers who exerted themselves in the late battle with the French in Tongking.

And again—

> The Chinese in Tongking—The "Hupao" states that a telegram has been received in Peking by the Yamen to the effect that the Chinese troops under the Ts'en Yu-ying and Liu

> Jung-ju have completely invested Hsuan Kuang in Tongking. Huang shou chung has achieved a great victory, and Generals Tseng and Su have already arrived in Bacninh. Chang K'ai-sung, Fu-t'ai of Yunnan, is guarding the frontier of his province.

The same dispatch also forwarded a news article by a special correspondent of the *China Mail*, commenting on the position of the French in Tonkin:

> It is only now that the magnitude of the enterprise undertaken so lightly nearly two years ago in Tongking is understood by France. When a force of some 12,000 troops were collected in the country last December, it was thought that a four months campaign, or military pic-nic, would complete the subjugation of the country, and enable the bulk of the expeditionary corps to return to France and leave the protection of the new colony, or protectorate, to a native auxiliary force with a few European companies as nucleus. Of the 12,000 French troops less than 7,000 now remain, and General Brière now finds it necessary to husband the resources at his command and accept the policy of defending the line absolutely necessary to the protection of the delta. We now hear that 5,000 reinforcements are to be sent at once to TongKing, but in the meanwhile the months best suited for operations in the field will have slipped by, and, unless in the meanwhile terms be arranged with China, the campaign against the hordes from Kuang-tung, Kwangsi and Yunnan will be prolonged until the next rains, during which season sickness will render all operations disastrous and almost impossible. Altogether the outlook is not a brilliant one.[25]

On 14 February 1885, Young reported to Washington that an American firm had sought the assistance of US Consul Wingate at Foo-chow to introduce "giant-powder and other explosives" to the Chinese government. Young reported that he had advised the Consul that, "considering the friendly relations between France and the United States, the legation could not approve of a consul using his influence to supply the Chinese with articles of war to be used against the French."[26]

On 11 March 1885, Young asked: "Chinese object American pilots French men-of-war. Shall I forbid such service? Young." Secretary of State Bayard replied: "Although well disposed, we cannot forbid our citizens serving under private contracts at their own risk. Not prohibited by statutes or cognizable by consuls."[27]

On 26 March 1885, Young forwarded to the Department an article entitled "Sovereignty of China over Annam and International Law," by a Thomas Fergusson of Chefoo. Fergusson's thesis tended to dismiss China's claims that its control over Annam prevented the latter from negotiating agreements with other powers without China's approval.[28]

On 30 March 1885, Young reported that he had advised the US Consul at Ningpo that:

> as China and France are at peace with the United States, as we are officially informed that a state of war exists between the two nations, and as it is our duty to maintain an exact neutrality, he would be justified in refusing to enter or clear any vessels under the American flag supplying either belligerent with contraband of war.[29]

After Young's departure from Peking, US Chargé E. J. Smithers forwarded, on 16 April 1885, the text of a decree or armistice pending discussions of peace terms.[30] On 20 June he sent Washington a translation of the Chinese text of the Franco-Chinese treaty signed at Tientsin on 9 June.[31]

On 24 June, Robert McLane, the US Minister to Paris, also forwarded a translation of the treaty to the Department. As McLane pointed out, the treaty preserved the fiction that China and France had not been at war and sought rather to improve the friendly and commercial relations between the two countries. He pointed out further that, in fact, the treaty materially enhanced France's commercial benefits to compensate for the sacrifices she had made. China was not required to acknowledge explicitly France's protectorate over Annam, rather merely engaged to respect all arrangements made or to be made by France with Annam and to carry on diplomatic relations with Annam through France. Although France waived the indemnity that she had so persistently claimed, she obtained by treaty the whole of Tonkin and exclusive trading rights which "open to her commerce and industry the southwestern markets of one of the largest Empires of the world."[32] Although McLane did not mention it in his brief report, by the Treaty the Chinese also obtained French evacuation of Formosa and the Pescadores.

Breathing Space: Trade and Consuls

With the end of the Franco-Chinese difficulties over Tonkin, US political interests in the area began once again to wane. For a while, Colonel Charles Denby, the new US Minister in Peking, sent to Washington analyses of developments in Tonkin—analyses that expressed skepticism that the French hold on Tonkin was wise, secure, or profitable. These reports became more infrequent as the 1880s wore on and as France consolidated its hold over all of Indochina. Before the end of the decade, growing American commerce with Saigon raised once again the issue of opening a US consular presence there and the Department was persuaded, finally, to establish a consular agency in Saigon.

At the end of 1885, Colonel Denby reported on developments in Tonkin:

> Recent advices received from Paris seem to indicate that the French Government is anxious to restrict as much as is possible its military operations in Tongking, and reports are current that a complete evacuation of the country may soon be decided upon. The pirates, who infested Tongking, and against whom the French operations were originally directed, have reappeared everywhere. . . .
>
> The recent rising in Annam has been of a much more serious nature than was at first thought. . . .
>
> As to the commercial advantages which France expected to derive, by the opening of the Red River and a short route to South Western China, they are of course relegated to the far future. What business there is, is in the hands of Chinese and German houses and it is unimportant.
>
> It is highly probable that China may adopt a system of dilatory negotiations, about the treaty of commerce, with the newly arrived French Plenipotentiary Monsieur George Cogordan, and that in the meanwhile circumstances may so favor her that she will be able to resume her position, in perhaps even an improved condition, as sovereign of Tongking and thus avoid having to make any commercial concession to France.[1]

In February of the following year, Denby sent another report to Washington questioning the ability of the French to hold onto Tonkin:

> The future of Tongking is very much discussed in the Chinese Press. The credit for the Tongking supplies was voted in the Chamber of Deputies by only four majority. To maintain her protectorate France has lost thousands of lives and has spent millions of money. With all this expenditure she has only a foothold on the delta of the Red River. The Marquis Tseng, late Chinese Minister to England, is credited with offering a solution to the effect that China will take back Tongking if France will pay her an indemnity! Another proposition much argued is that Tongking should be ceded to Japan.
>
> Meantime the French Plenipotentiary, Mon. Cogordan, is dancing attendance at Tientsin on the Viceroy Li. The report is that he and his suite will shortly return to Peking. It is impossible to foresee what may be the ultimate result of negotiations. What a contrast the conduct of England presents! She with a small army conquered Burma, dethroned and deported King Thebaw and annexed the country and will now push her Indian RailRoad System to the frontier of China proper.[2]

Three months later, in May 1886, reporting that France and China had signed a commercial treaty on 25 April, Denby commented skeptically that the treaty was not generally considered very satisfactory and did not definitely dispose of all questions pending between the two countries.[3]

Ten days later, Denby forwarded a translation of the treaty with the further laconic comment:

> The endless formalities and restrictions which this Convention throws in the way of trade between Annam and China must crush any commerce which may spring up between the two countries.
>
> With the exception of the neutral zone, which is not mentioned in this convention, it is substantially the same as that which was negotiated by Mr. Bourée in 1882 and which the French Government would not ratify.[4]

Ten days after that, Denby forwarded a British report concluding that French control of Tonkin would not materially affect Canton's trade.[5]

In February 1887, Denby submitted an analysis entitled "Tonquin, its probable value as a French possession":

> In 1884 French colonial possessions in Asia covered 59,967 sq. kilometers. As a result of the Franco-Chinese war the

Republic increased this area, chiefly in Tonquin, to 149,967 sq. kilometers. The native population owing allegiance to the French flag shows an increase also through the addition of Tonquin, of 9,116,642.

This increase in territory and in population has been purchased by France at a cost, as estimated, of nearly 20,000 men and about seventy millions of taels in money. China also contributes to the cost of the lives of almost 100,000 men, lost chiefly by disease, and a sum of money scarcely short of one hundred and fifty million taels.

The natural inquiry arises as to the profit of such acquisitions as compared with the cost. The only results that can be reached are based on conjecture. It is hardly probable that Tonquin, with the poverty and want of civilization of its people and the unsuitableness of its climate to European constitutions, will ever be to France what Holland's possessions in the south have been to her. A comparison with French Cochin China affords the best data for an estimate of the future value of Tonquin as a producer or a market. The last return we have from there is the summary for the first six months of 1886. The import trade, excluding treasure, was worth S7,362,000. Treasure $6,368,000 of which $3,640,000 was on Government account. Of these total imports of $7,362,000 France furnished only $1,033,000 in articles for the use and consumption of foreigners. China furnishes more than one half the remainder and the Straits have a large share. The export trade of the same period was $10,895,000 of which 9/10 was rice. Of this $87,000 went to France. This showing though somewhat in excess of the same period for previous years can not be considered encouraging.

Tonquin has three times the population of Cochin-China and is said to be more fertile. The turbulent character of its people, however, and the proximity to the Chinese provinces will necessitate for a long time to come the maintenance of a large military force and the expenditure of sums of money which will probably make the country a drain on rather than advantage to France. It is claimed that many of the difficulties now met with will disappear on the construction of railroads and that a great trade with southern and western China will follow the Red River to the sea. It is proposed to construct a line of rail from Laokai near Yunnan to Hanoi to obviate the difficulties experienced by junks in the shallow and almost unnavigable headwaters of this stream.

> It is, however, incredible that Tonquin can ever be made a colony creditable to the French ambition for colonization or a profitable investment of the immense sums expended.[6]

In June 1887, Denby reported the completion of the work of the Franco-Chinese Commission for the delimitation of the frontier between China and Tonkin. While at the time the terms of the convention were unknown, Denby understood that France had obtained the privilege of having consular establishments at the capitals of the provinces of Kuei-chou and Yunnan.[7] A month later, Denby forwarded the text of the new convention.[8] In November 1887, Denby reported that according to "a thoroughly reliable source," the post of Governor-General of "the French Indo-Chinese possessions, comprising Cochin China, Annam and Tongking," had been offered to Mons. E. Constans, former French envoy in Peking.[9]

Ironically, while successive US Ministers in Peking continued to criticize French actions in Tonkin and their impact on China, the consolidation of the French position to the south, in Annam, Cochinchina, and Cambodia, was, once again,—in the view of some observers—opening those areas to western commerce. Not surprisingly, this led US consuls in Hong Kong and Singapore to renew the long dormant recommendations favoring the appointment of a US consul in Saigon. In August 1884, John S. Mosby, the US Consul in Hong Kong, for example, argued:

> recent events ... have practically reduced the whole of Tonquin and the Kingdom of Cambodia to the condition of a French province.... American vessels frequently go there [Saigon], and many more will probably visit the place in the future than formerly. There is no doubt that the Commerce of Saigon will be largely increased as the interior of the country is developed by Europeans.[10]

Mosby recommended the appointment of Charles F. Trewlett, an American merchant from Boston living in Saigon.[11]

In September 1888, the State Department reopened the question of a consulate in Saigon, apparently at the instigation of two gentlemen from New York, Messrs. Carleton and Moffatt, who were interested in the growing American petroleum export trade with Saigon. The Department sought the considered views of the American Consul at Singapore (still Mr. A. J. Studer), who had given his views on the subject some fifteen years before (see Chapter III). The Department also asked him to recommend an appointee, should the decision be made to open a consular office in Saigon.[12]

Mr. Studer's response was rambling and detailed. He reviewed his previous correspondence on the subject, recalling that one of the instructions he received from Assistant Secretary Bancroft Davis before setting off for his post in 1871 was to inquire into the commercial status of Saigon and to report on the advisability of establishing a consular office there. He noted that Mr. J. Fray Jewell, his predecessor, had told him that Saigon was "fast becoming a thriving commercial port" and occasionally American vessels laden with coal from England or engaged in coastal trade in the region visited Saigon, usually to take on rice.[13]

Studer observed that until three years before, Saigon had been a free port; the French had mistakenly hoped Saigon would eclipse Singapore as a trading center. Studer had found little in the way of American trade with Saigon, and he estimated that it would begin only when there was someone in Saigon who would interest himself in promoting such trade.

Studer went on to say that in about 1874 or 1875, America began to ship its petroleum to Asian ports and such shipments had gradually increased in frequency and importance. He referred to Messrs. Carleton and Moffat's claim that America started shipping petroleum directly to Saigon in 1884 and such shipments had also increased, but he said that while this information was no doubt reliable, he had no evidence that many American vessels were employed in carrying such cargo. Studer noted that the number of American vessels in the coal trade from England had fallen away virtually to nothing by 1885. He felt certain that had an American consular post been created at Saigon before 1885, American products would have found a market; however, this was much less the case since 1885, except perhaps with petroleum.

Studer pointed out that since 1885, France had imposed tariffs to keep out all goods which competed with French or local products. He suggested that if there were few American goods that found their way to Saigon before the tariffs were imposed, the prospects for American trade with the tariffs were even smaller. He discounted Carleton and Moffat's claim that considerable quantities of American goods were reaching Saigon via Europe, and he said that as far as he was concerned, petroleum was the only American product in trade with Saigon "worth talking about."

On this point, he agreed with Carleton and Moffat that direct imports of American petroleum into Saigon had indeed become large,

and he gave credit for this to the French firm of Denis Frères, which was the first to initiate direct imports of petroleum from the United States. Studer described Denis Frères as the most important firm in Saigon. But he also noted that just about the time Messrs. Carleton and Moffat were writing to the State Department about the growing American petroleum trade with Saigon, a shipment of Russian petroleum arrived there, and that the Batavia Oil Company had also established an agency there. Studer thus concluded that America's petroleum trade with Saigon had received a significant check, at least for the time being.

Studer predicted that American oil would continue to flow to Saigon, and he suggested that if this oil were carried in American bottoms, it would be desirable to have an American consular office in Saigon. Even if American oil were carried largely in foreign chartered vessels, Studer thought it would be best to open a consular office in Saigon. He agreed with Moffat and Carleton that such an office would permit the gathering of trade statistics as well as the promotion of American trade itself. He foresaw that the French would have to lower their tariffs, but he also noted that the French would receive favorably American intent to establish a consular office in Saigon. He added that neither Hué in Annam nor Haiphong in Tonkin had progressed to the point where American consular offices would be required in those ports. He envisaged, however, the possibility of establishing a full consulate in Saigon with consular agencies in Hué and Haiphong under its jurisdiction.

Studer recommended that Mr. Aimée Fonsales, managing partner of Denis Frères and President of the Chamber of Commerce, be considered for appointment as US Consular Agent. Studer also mentioned two respectable German firms but suggested it would not be desirable for the United States to be represented in a French colony by a German firm. Studer referred to Hale & Co., formerly an American rice-exporting firm, and its manager Mr. Charles Trewlett, but he recommended strongly against appointing Trewlett because he had promoted British rather than American trade in Saigon.[14]

The microfilm copy of Studer's dispatch in the National Archives includes the following notations: a) A note to "Dr. St. Clair" which says: I concur generally with Mr. Studer. I think that we ought to establish a *Commercial Agency* at Saigon, and that Mr. *Aimée Fonsales* should be appointed if he will act. I think he has told Carleton & M. that he would. See their letters. Send copy of this

desp. to them & inf. them of these conclusions. Write to Mr. Fonsales. GWE. 31 Dec 1888. An inscription on the cover of the dispatch: "Instruction complied with Jan. 7, 1889."

The Department apparently sent a parallel request to the US Consulate General in Bangkok. The reply of C. J. Child, the Vice Consul General in Charge, was brief, to the point, and negative:

> In reply to your despatch No. 82, Consular Series, dated September 6, 1888, in reference to the appointment of a Consul at Saigon, I have the honor to state, that it is my opinion, that neither the business of that post nor the number of vessels annually arriving at Saigon, justify me in advising the establishment of a Consulate there; but, if a Consular office should be established there, I know of no better person than the gentleman mentioned, Mr. Fonsales, who is now acting as Siamese Consul, for the position.

The microfilm copy of the Bangkok dispatch carries the handwritten notation: "The Saigon matter has been disposed of."[15]

On 25 February 1889, Consul Studer forwarded the following dispatch from Singapore:

> I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of Department despatch No. 276 of the 5th ultimo, informing me, 1) of the receipt of my despatch No. 742 of November 7th last recommending the establishment of a Consular Office at Saigon, and naming Mr. Aimée Fonsales as a suitable person for appointment to the post there to be created, and, 2) that in compliance with my recommendation it had been determined by the Department to establish a Commercial Agency at Saigon, and that the appointment of Commercial Agent of the United States at said place had been tendered to Mr. Aimée Fonsales on the day of the date of the aforesaid despatch.
>
> I am highly gratified to receive this information, finding that the Department honored my recommendation,—a recommendation which I have no reason whatever to regret, either as regards the establishment of said consular post, or the gentleman named to the Department as fit and suitable for appointment; and, believing that this creation will result in great good to American commerce and navigation, if not at once—in the immediate future, in the course of time, all depending on political events.
>
> I hope Mr. Fonsales will accept the honor and appointment tendered to him by the Department gladly and without much delay.[16]

Fonsales informed the Secretary of State on 10 March 1889 that he accepted appointment as US Consular Agent at Saigon.[17]

A month earlier, Charles Denby, US Minister to China, in summing up the stewardship of the Chinese Empress Regent, who was to retire the following month, included in his report the following paragraph:

> In 1884 difficulties originated between the French and China over the French occupation of Tonquin and Annam. A desultory war ensued, during which the French destroyed the shipping and ports at Foochow. They also occupied Keelung, in Formosa, but there were beaten at Tam-suc. In 1885 the French were beaten at Langson. Then peace was made. China recognized the French protectorate over Annam and the possession of Tonquin, but paid no indemnity.[18]

In August 1889, Denby reported from Peking that the Song-hoi, or Red River in Tonkin was open to trade and customs houses established. Denby noted that by the Franco-Chinese trade regulations for the Annam frontier jointly worked out in 1886, two places should be opened for trade, one north of Langson-Lungchow, in Kwang-si Province in China, and the other above Laokay-Mengtsu in Yunnan Province in China. He noted further that in 1887, a third place should be opened to trade: Manghao, between Laokay and Mengtsu—and that France had now established a Consul at Mengtsu, also as provided for in the agreed regulations.

Denby pointed out that these three trading sites were all on the Red River above Hanoi and despite predictions that little trade would result, the first French steamer was at that moment on the way back from Laokay with a cargo. Denby reported also that Chinese customs houses had been established at the three ports and "regular trade will commence."[19]

In March 1890, Charles Seymour, American Consul in Canton, reported on conditions in Tonkin. He drew a graphic picture of the lawless conditions of piracy and brigandage that held sway on land and nearby seas, enclosing various newspaper articles to illustrate his point further. Seymour made numerous observations on this state of affairs:

> If these things prevail to such an extent as to be sources of danger in the vicinity of populous places guarded by soldiers and police; it is not surprising that in Tonquin, where the "Black Flag" experiences of 1883, 1884, and 1885,

> disciplined many thousands of armed natives in marauding hostilities and plundering raids, there should be, along the coast, and in the interior, desperate pirates and brigands; who, with perfect knowledge of the waters and country, and with entire control over the population to insure secrecy if not cooperation, commit depredatious crimes so frequently as to well nigh baffle "the authorities"; and effectively prevent the immigration of foreigners to engage in the business enterprises which might otherwise attract talent and capital from other countries.... It shows conclusively that "law and order" are not yet established in Tonquin; which may yet prove to be a very expensive and troublesome Colonial Elephant for France. China has acted kindly and friendly toward France since the Treaty of 1885; or both Tonquin and Annam would be too uncomfortable for occupation by French officials.
>
> The great and invincible leader of the "Black Flags" forces in Tonquin was brought to Canton, and has been in the service of the Chinese Government in this Province of Kwangtung where he is recognized as a hero, who would gladly return to his former field of operations in Tonquin. And the Ex-King of Annam was so formidable an element of danger to the French authorities, that, in accordance with a requisition upon the Chinese authorities, the Ex-King was induced to return to the place of his nativity in Kwang Si Province or perhaps on the border of Kwangtung Province, there he remains under surveillance and keeping of Chinese officials, to prevent his action in Annam....[20]

In 1893, Fonsales informed the State Department he was departing for Europe and leaving Vice Commercial Agent Schneegans in charge. Fonsales' reporting during his four-year tenure was marked principally by monthly reports of Cochinchinese rice production.[21]

Schneegans was promoted to Commercial Agent a year later. During his three years in that post, he increased the frequency of rice reports to every two weeks and reported the goings and comings of US vessels. In 1894, he reported that American kerosene oil was being imported into Saigon "on an extensive scale concurrently with Russian oil." He said American oil was preferred and brought a better price.[22] Three months later, Schneegans submitted a report on imports of US flour.[23]

Schneegans departed for Europe for reasons of health in early 1896. Washington accepted his proposal that Lauritz Stang be

appointed to act in his absence, and Stang was named Vice Commercial Agent.[24]

At the end of September 1898, Mr. E. Spencer Pratt, US Consul General in Singapore, reported meeting M. Paul Doumer, Governor-General of French Indochina, at the latter's request. Mr. Pratt noted that Doumer was on his way to France to seek authority for extensive railway and other improvements in the colony, "which has already, it would appear, greatly benefited under his wise and progressive administration." Pratt also reported Doumer's interest in "affairs in Manila" (Admiral Dewey's capture of the Spanish fleet) and said "he would be glad to encourage trade between that and many other ports in our possession in the Philippines and Saigon."[25]

The next day's confidential dispatch from Pratt reported that the French consul in Singapore had cabled Paris: "it would be the interest of France in the Far East, especially as regards the trade of Indo-China, that the United States assume control or protection over the Philippines rather than that these islands be returned to Spain."[26]

In July 1901, Mr. Hamilton King, the US Minister in Bangkok, sent the Department a thoughtful analysis and commentary entitled "Siam in the Politics of the Far East." The confidential dispatch detailed developments in French Indochina:

> Mr. Doumer, Governor General of Indo-China, has been received with favor in Paris, his plan for the development of Indo China, so far as results to him, has been approved by the French Government, his scheme for a Rail Road from Tong King to Yunan Fu has been commended and the amount needed for the venture has been secured. It is proposed to connect this Rail Road on the south with one to Hué and Saigon and to tap this rice territory on the upper Yangtsze on the north, before the British can organize a company and penetrate the difficult mountain region on the Burmese frontier. It is also purposed to develop the French Rail Road consessions [sic] already secured from Tong King to Pakhoi and further east, and on to the Yangtsze on the north. Pronounced activity is reported in the improvement of the harbor at Saigon and the general scheme includes the improvement of the harbor at Haiphong. The Danish Russian cable now at Amoy is to connect with Hanoi and Saigon and furnish communication independent of all outside lines.[27]

As the twentieth century dawned, the situation in Indochina apparently reached a kind of status quo, at least in official American

eyes. Washington received very few reports on Indochina from American diplomatic and consular posts. At the century's close, US official interest in Indochina itself was hardly greater than it was when Captains Jeremiah Briggs and John White made their unsuccessful forays there in search of cargo. However, there were significant new factors: French possession of Indochina was leading to a growing US trade with Saigon, and this in turn led the US Government to open a commercial agency there. The US victory in the Spanish-American war led to an American presence in the Philippines, a factor that was to have major consequences for US interests in the region in the decades to come.

V THE UNITED STATES AND JAPAN: PRELUDE TO CONFRONTATION

American Beginnings in Indochina

US diplomatic correspondence for 1907 contains the first harbinger that Indochina might once again get caught up in great power struggles. On 10 May of that year, the French Embassy in Washington informed the Department of State that the treaty France intended to sign with Japan following the Russo-Japanese war, while protecting French interests in Indochina, would contain "nothing but clauses favorable to general peace and the interests of all powers in eastern Asia." The French memorandum went on reassuringly: "Far from having any cause of anxiety in this respect, the United States, to whom we are bound by a tried and faithful friendship, can only approve of it."[1]

In further explanation of Franco-Japanese aims, American Ambassador Luke E. Wright in Tokyo reported a month later that France and Japan

> declare also that they have a special interest to have order and a pacific state of things preserved in the regions of China adjacent to the territories where they have the rights of sovereignty, protection, or occupation, and they accordingly engage to support each other to assure the peace and security of these adjacent regions of China, with the object of maintaining their own respective situations and territorial rights in the continent of Asia. . . .[2]

Wright suggested that France's and Japan's "actual engagement included in this agreement is accordingly very limited in scope."[3]

Despite Wright's optimism, W.W. Rockhill, the American Minister in Peking, cabled the State Department in August that China had formally protested to France and Japan, saying that the matter of peace and order in the parts of China adjacent to their territories was China's business alone.[4] A few days later, Mr. Rockhill informed Washington that France had explained "most fully and satisfactorily" the agreement and nothing in it was to be understood as derogatory "to the majesty of China or infringing on its sovereign rights."[5]

Less than a year later, on the occasion of the visit of three Japanese war vessels to Saigon, American consul Jacob E. Connor

reported, "The readers as well as the writers of news articles in Indochina generally would like to see a war between Japan and the United States."[6] Connor went to say: "I am satisfied, too, that they would be quite impartial spectators. I do not discover the slightest attitude of neighborliness toward us in connection with the Philippines."[7]

In May 1908, the US cruiser *Chattanooga* and the US torpedo boat destroyer *Chauncey* paid visits to Saigon from Manila. Connor reported that "The courtesies shown the officers and men of the Chattanooga, and incidentally to me, were, in the opinion of the Captain and myself in excess of official requirements."[8] In his report Connor repeated his view of three months before that the local French "would be delighted to see a war between ourselves and Japan" and that "they would be impartial spectators, indifferent as to the outcome."[9]

Connor concluded his report on a somewhat personal note:

> This visit has done me much good both personally and officially. It is a long time, I don't know how many years, since an American war vessel entered this port, and the reappearance of the flag in the harbor on vessels which were something more than Philippino cargo boats, was hailed with some curiosity, and some cupidity born of the hope that the great fleet will call and spend much money here; but aside from momentary considerations, the American Consulate in Saigon means more to the Saigon public than it did before the visit. And though the additional expense bears heavily on a small salary I am glad to welcome such events. I must add in this connection that the visitors took every precaution not to make it expensive to me.[10]

In October of that year Connor submitted to Washington a confidential assessment "occasioned by the arrival of the American fleet in this region, and by several other connected events."

> [S]ome events have occurred since the three Japanese cruisers were here last winter, to effect a slightly different attitude, an attitude which may be described as several degrees warmer than upon the former occasion. The anticipated war between the United States and Japan is not regarded so indifferently just now. Possibly this is in a measure due to a reflection of the warmth of the reception given by the Australians, the subjects of France's ally.
>
> But Indo China has reasons of her own for dreading Japanese influence. Considerable unrest has been manifested by the

> Annamites during the last half year, and this is attributed in a large measure to their influence, either indirectly through their example in successfully resisting a European power, or directly among the people. True, there are only a few hundred Japanese in all this country, but they arouse suspicions it seems just because the Annamite men occasionally have their hair cut short, Japanese fashion, instead of wearing it long like their women in the native fashion. Since the Annamite customs are pretty much the same as those of the Chinese there may be more in this than appears on the surface. Japanese influence was blamed, perhaps quite undeservedly so, for the émeute in Tonquin last summer.[11]

In the following year, Washington heard that J. G. White and Co. was interested in constructing an electric railway from Saigon to Cholon, the nearby Chinese community.[12] But Joblin, the new American Consul, could find no evidence of interest in such a project. He noted that the American company was unlikely to be considered because "the French idea of Colonisation is to exploit the colonies for the benefit of their French interests."[13]

Over the next fifteen years, correspondence between American consuls in Saigon and the State Department in Washington reflected some interest in the potential for American capital investment in Indochina and for American banking facilities.[14] But the laws and regulations of Indochina were expressly inhospitable to anything but French investment. Perhaps more important, there seemed to be little sustained American interest.

Coming Confrontation

Admiral Dewey's lightning conquest of the Spanish fleet in Manila Bay in 1898 and Japan's solid victory over the Russians in 1905 following the Sino-Japanese war of 1895 brought America and Japan into the great power class and onto a collision course. Both Japan and the United States had acquired Pacific territories over a number of years. The United States had acquired Alaska and the Aleutians Island chain in 1867, and two islands of Midway that same year. America's victory over Spain in 1898 brought under US sovereignty Guam and Wake Islands, the Philippines. Hawaii was annexed in 1898 and within five years Samoa was added to the US Pacific possessions.

Similarly, Japan took possession of the Kurile Islands in 1875, got the Bonins the following year, and then added Formosa, the Pescadores, and Ryukyus in 1895 after defeating the Chinese. Then in 1905, after defeating Russia, Japan acquired southern Sakhalin. In addition, after World War I, Japan received the Carolines, Marshalls, and Marianas as mandates under the Versailles Treaty.[1] The pressure of this gathering confrontation in the Pacific, intensified by the disequilibrium resulting from the first World War, led to the nine-power Washington Conference on the Limitation of Armaments in 1921-1922.[2]

The confidential briefs on Far Eastern affairs prepared for the US delegation of the 1921-1922 Washington Conference showed little American interest in Indochina.[3]

- An historical treatise on Western interests and intervention in China contained a brief description of Franco-Chinese difficulties over Tonkin in the mid-1880s (see Parts III and IV). The treatise did not mention America's unsuccessful good offices at the time.[4]
- A paper on foreign economic interests in the Far East contained a brief section on French Indochina which began: "France's territorial possession in the Far East is largely of local significance, although Japan depends upon it for rice."[5] The paper noted that Indochina's principal products were rice and coal; its mineral and industrial resources were not highly developed; in 1918, 218 concessions were

granted, "but these were minor;" and practically all enterprises, mining and commercial, were French or under French control.[6] Noting that US exports to Indochina mostly went via Singapore and Hongkong "although direct shipping lines from American ports were recently established," [7] the paper assessed the trade and shipping of French Indochina as of "relative unimportance."[8] While France was Indochina's principal trading partner, since the recent World War, an increasing share of Indochina's imports were coming from the United States and Japan.[9] Rice constituted 70 pecent of Indochina's exports, nearly 1.5 million tons of which were shipped in 1918, mostly to Japan, and that this was Japan's chief foreign food supply.[10]

- In a paper on critical mineral resources in the Far East, Tonkin is listed as having "less extensive" coal fields than Siberia, Japan, and China.[11] The paper noted that Tonkin's zinc deposits were "the largest and most promising of those now known and are of a type easily treated."[12] It mentioned that Tonkin also had deposits of lead arsenic, antimony, and tin.[13] And, finally, there was petroleum: "In Indo-China, Siam and other countries rocks occur which elsewhere under favorable conditions yield oil and gas, but too little is yet known to warrant lively anticipation of finding unusual fields."[14]
- In a long section on American "cultural interests" in the Far East, there is not a single mention of Indochina (in contrast to neighboring Siam, for example).[15]
- A discussion of the Western powers' scramble for territory and training advantages among the Pacific Islands in the late nineteenth century and the resulting strategic implications referred to a French statement concerning the approaching Washington arms limitation conference: "The Pacific islands under the French flag are of growing importance—especially New Caledonia. France cannot abandon them and Indo-China and the neighboring province of Yunnan to the economic influence of England and America."[16] No mention was made of Japan in this strategic context.

In 1931-32, Japanese forces annexed southern Manchuria, creating, in effect, an undeclared war against China. The United States

took the side of China and began nearly two decades of military, economic, and political support for China, first against Japanese aggression and then against growing Communist Chinese pressure.

US military supplies to China in the early stages of this conflict were in part shipped into Yunnan Province in southern China via Haiphong in French-protected Tonkin. In January 1932, relations between France and the United States were strained when local French authorities in Tonkin attempted to block the transshipment of six American trainer aircraft ordered by the Yunnan authorities. The French consul in Yunnanfu had advised these authorities to buy military aircraft offered by the Indochinese Government instead.[17] On 27 February 1932, American Ambassador Edge reported from Paris to Washington that the French had authorized transshipment of the aircraft after verifying their commercial character. There was an absolute prohibition against the transit of all war materials and each case was be decided "according to consideration of public order."[18] A month later, the US Consuls in Haiphong and Yunnanfu reported that the six planes were being delivered and, despite Paris' claim of an absolute prohibition, large shipments of arms and ammunition were arriving from Indochina.[19]

The matter of arms transshipments through Indochina to China continued to be an irritant in French-US relations over the next several years. American diplomats reported growing evidence of Japan's expansionist aims to Washington. On 17 March 1933, Marriner, the US Chargé in Paris, reported that the French General Staff "expects Japan to pursue a policy of expansion in the Pacific, and that that country may not stop short of an attempt to take the Philippines." However, Marriner reassured Washington that the General Staff believed that "from a military point of view, Japan's lack of modern military science ..., military material, and capital, would not permit her, with any reasonable chances of success, to engage in a war with any first-class European power, or with the United States."[20]

On 12 June 1933, three months after Roosevelt took office and faced the massive problem of America's deep economic depression, Johnson, the US Minister in Peking, was less reassuring in a report home:

> It is my personal conviction that northern Asia, densely populated as it is in all of its habitable parts by Chinese, will never satisfy the needs of the Japanese in so far as colonization and relief from pressure of population are concerned, and that the departure of the United States from the Philippines will be the

> signal for the beginning of a Japanese advance southward. Therefore, American policy as regards the future of the Philippine Islands is a matter of first importance to the British and the French, and also to the Dutch, who hold valuable colonies in that area.... Great Britain and France, and also the Netherlands, must be prepared either to align their policies with that of the Japanese, or to resist Japanese advance southward....[21]

Sporadic reports from American diplomats throughout the ensuing year gave evidence of Japanese expansionist aims that could affect Western interests in Southeast Asia. American and other Western diplomats expressed concern that Japan sought to create an "Asiatic League of Nations," with the aim of liberating Asian colonies from "European and American bondage."[22]

At the end of 1934 and again in early 1935, following the termination of the unsuccessful London Naval Conversations, Joseph Grew, the US Ambassador to Japan, submitted analyses of Japanese intentions and fears. Grew saw the United States was faced with two main alternatives in East Asia: one was to withdraw "gracefully and gradually perhaps," but no less effectively in the long run, "permitting our treaty rights to be nullified, the Open Door to be closed, our vested economic interests to be dissolved and our commerce to operate unprotected." The other alternative was to "insist, and to continue to insist, not aggressively yet not the less firmly, on the maintenance of our legitimate rights and interests in this part of the world and, so far as practicable, to support the normal development of those interests constructively and progressively.... There has already been abundant indication that the present Administration in Washington proposes to follow the second of these alternatives...."[23]

In the same dispatch, Grew noted that the aim of certain elements in Japan

> is to obtain trade control and eventually predominant political influence in China, the Philippines, the Straits Settlements, Siam and the Dutch East Indies.... When Japanese speak of Japan's being the 'stabilizing factor' and the 'guardian of peace' of East Asia, what they have in mind is a 'Pax Japonica' with eventual complete commercial control, and, in the minds of some, eventual complete political control of East Asia....[24]

Six weeks later in another dispatch, Grew added another perspective.

> Japanese industrialists are finding their expansion meeting with opposition in many countries, especially in the regions such as British India and the Netherlands Indies, which have been considered in the past by Western industrial nations as constituting more or less exclusive markets for their own products. In addition to definite barriers to further expansion of their overseas trade, the Japanese see vast economic blocs being formed, such as those of the British Commonwealth of Nations, France and its colonies, the Netherlands and its colonies, and the United States and its insular possessions. To the extent that such blocs are successful in giving preference to trade within the group forming the bloc, Japan's opportunities for trade expansion are reduced.[25]

Arms Shipments, High Diplomacy, and Commercial Considerations

In the Fall of 1937, the Japanese occupied Pratas Reef some distance southeast of Hong Kong. French reluctance to allow arms and ammunition into China through Indochina increased as the other powers remained unwilling to guarantee Indochina's protection. The French themselves were unwilling to devote more resources to Indochina's protection because of Germany's looming threat in Europe. For its part, the United States refused to act in concert with other Western nations.

Ironically, France tried to invoke the Nine-Power Brussels Conference, about to convene, and the Four-Power Treaty signed in Washington fifteen years before to link those governments, especially the United States, to the protection of Indochina against the Japanese advance southward. This common action was to be the price for French cooperation in continuing to allow arms shipments to China through Indochina. France had been flattered to be asked (at US initiative) to join the Washington Four-Power Conversations in 1922 aimed at preserving the status quo in the Pacific. Now, France was calling Washington's bluff. The United States, however, refused to be drawn in.

On 18 August 1937, the Department of State informed Ambassador Bullitt in Paris, in response to a query from the French Government, that the hostilities in China between Chinese and Japanese forces did not appear clearly to constitute war between two nations; thus, the embargo provisions of the Neutrality Act were not triggered. The Department noted, however, that President Roosevelt had said the day before that it was not possible to say when the situation might change.[1] In that same week, Ambassador Grew reported from Tokyo that a senior aide to the Japanese Navy Minister had told Grew's naval attaché that Japan had to find a way to stop shipments of arms to China.[2]

A week later, French Foreign Minister Delbos told Bullitt the interests of England, France, and the United States were identical in the Far Eastern conflict. Delbos argued that if Russia did not intervene, the Far East would become a Fascist area; on the other hand, if Russia did intervene and defeat Japan, the entire Far East could

become Bolshevik. According to Delbos, therefore, the war in China had to be stopped as quickly as possible: "France was ready to cooperate in any maneuver that might be invented by either Great Britain or the United States, even though it might involve the use of force."[3] The Department of State immediately informed Bullitt that the United States did not intend to initiate a concerted effort against Japan, that it preferred approaching the problem through "independent but parallel lines."[4]

In mid-September, the British expressed concern over the Japanese occupation of Pratas Reef and over "strictly secret" information that Japan intended to occupy Hainan Island in the Tonkin Gulf. Both the British and the French were apprehensive that the Japanese would attempt to occupy the Paracel Islands in the South China Sea, islands which commanded "the eastern approaches to Indo-China" and which had long been disputed between France and China. The British informed Johnson, the American Chargé in London, that they and the French would make a joint démarche in Tokyo regarding these developments, and they asked what, if any, action the United States proposed to take in the matter.[5]

Washington responded by referring to identical notes it had sent to the Chinese and Japanese Governments in January 1932, five and a half years before, declaring its intent not to recognize any situation brought about by means contrary to the covenants and obligations of the Kellogg-Briand Pact of 1928. Washington also referred to its public statements of 16 July and 23 August 1937.[6] Finally, Washington indicated it was instructing Ambassador Grew in Tokyo to confer with his British and French colleagues and in his discretion to make an appropriate approach to the Japanese over the seizure of the Pratas Reef.[7] In so instructing Grew, the State Department authorized him to refer to previous Japanese statements that Japan had no territorial ambitions in China and to point out to the Japanese the distance of the Pratas Reef from China.[8]

In mid-October, President Roosevelt communicated directly with French Prime Minister Chautemps over France's renewed refusal to allow Indochina to be used as an arms transit route to China. Ambassador Bullitt had received reports, particularly from Chinese Ambassador to France Wellington Koo, that the French Cabinet had decided to prohibit arms shipments through Indochina destined for China because of the threat of Japanese retribution against the French-owned Tonkin-Yunnan railroad and perhaps

against Indochina itself. When Bullitt had an opportunity to raise the matter directly with the French Prime Minister, Chautemps confirmed that the reports were true; the French Government had forbidden all shipments of munitions of war through Indochina to China, but he said that the decision "was subject to revision" if the forthcoming meeting of the Nine Power Conference in Brussels, called in an effort to end the conflict in China, should prove that alteration was feasible.[9]

Bullitt reported to Washington that Chautemps:

> Went on to say that the French action had been taken for two reasons. In the first place the railroad from French Indo-China to China was owned by Frenchmen and the Japanese had threatened to bombard that portion of the railroad within Chinese territory unless shipments of munitions to Chiang-Kai-shek should be stopped at once. Furthermore the Japanese Ambassador in Paris had called on him and "in a most polite way but letting him feel they were inexcusable ..." had pointed out to him that in case France should be engaged in a European war, French colonies in the Far East would have no means of protection and that the Japanese were a people who remembered those who had been friendly and those who had been unfriendly and that it would be a very good thing for France to have a friendly Japan in case she should be at war in Europe.
>
> Chautemps then went on to say that the French Government would be prepared to reverse its decisions with regard to shipments of munitions across French Indo-China (adding that he knew it was a matter of life and death for Chiang-Kai-shek to receive munitions by this route) provided the Nine Power Conference in Brussels should decide on such joint action as to make the position of French Indo-China safe. France herself had no means whatsoever of protecting herself.
>
> I asked him what action he envisaged and he replied that any action depended entirely on the United States. The United States alone of all the great powers was in a position to apply both its moral influence and force in the Far East. Whether the Nine Power Conference did anything or not would depend entirely on what action the United States was prepared to take in the Pacific. So far as he was concerned he had been giving very little thought to the Far East which was extremely remote from France.... France was so occupied by grave problems in Europe that she could not occupy herself today with the remote problem of the Far East.

> Chautemps did not ask me what action if any the United States would propose at the Brussels Conference and I of course made no statement whatever on this subject. He asked me however if the oil and rubber supplies of the Dutch East Indies would be sufficient to keep Japan adequately supplied with oil and rubber if the Japanese should attack and capture the Dutch East Indies. I said that it was my impression that these supplies would be adequate. He then said that would mean that before the Dutch could join in any action displeasing to Japan they would have to be assured that the American Fleet would protect their colonies in the East Indies.[10]

Acting Secretary of State Sumner Welles sent Bullitt an immediate response: He had spoken that day "by direction of the President" to French Chargé d'Affaires Henry. According to Welles,

> I told him that the President wished Chautemps to know that while, of course, he desired to make it clear that he intended in no way to touch upon questions involving the national defense policy of France, he feared that the measures under reference might result in the creation of a situation prior to the opening of the Brussels Conference which might be prejudicial to the successful achievement of that solution by agreement which this Government earnestly hopes may be obtained in the conference.[11]

Henry told Welles he would send the message solely for Chautemps, and Welles told Bullitt not to record the message in his ordinary files.[12]

The following day, 22 October 1937, Bullitt pursued his exploration of the French position with French Foreign Minister Delbos. Bullitt reported his conversation:

> Delbos said that yesterday afternoon there had been another discussion of this question in a small gathering of the most important members of the Government. Certain members of the Government had desired to lift the ban altogether but he had insisted that it should be maintained until the meeting of the Brussels Conference. His reasons were that the Japanese had threatened not only to destroy the portion within China of the railroad leading from French Indo-China but also had threatened to seize the Chinese island of Hainan in the Gulf of Tonkin and also the Paracel Islands. He said that these islands had long been in dispute between China and France. Japan now was claiming that the Paracel Islands were

> Chinese territory and that Japan therefore had a perfect right to seize them.
>
> Delbos went on to say that if all the nations represented in the Brussels Conference should decide to supply China via their territories with munitions, France would be disposed to collaborate and permit shipments via Indo-China on condition that if Japan should attack French Indo-China France would receive physical support from the other members of the Brussels Conference in protecting Indo-China. He added that he was not at all sure that if the matter should come to actual conflict Siam would not cooperate with Japan. Both Japan and Italy had great influence at the moment with the Siamese Goverment.
>
> Delbos added that he feared that Indo-China soon would be the only route of supply open to China and that therefore Japan would act against Indo-China. . . .[13]

That same evening, Bullitt dined alone with Léon Blum, France's Deputy Prime Minister, who shed further light on the small Cabinet meeting Delbos had referred to and on the French decision to prohibit arms shipments to China through Indochina:

> Blum . . . had suggested that at least until the meeting of the Brussels Conference, shipments through Indo-China should continue to be permitted. There had been objection that both the Chinese and Japanese Governments had been informed that the French Government had decided to forbid these shipments. Blum said that he had insisted, and finally it had been agreed that without any further statements to the Chinese and Japanese Governments all shipments now enroute would be allowed to pass through French Indo-China to China.
>
> Blum went on to say that it was obvious that if the war in China should be prolonged French Indo-China would be the one route by which China could receive munitions. This would almost certainly lead Japan to destroy the railroad within Chinese territory and might lead to a Japanese attack on French Indo-China. He also referred to the possibility that Siam might cooperate with Japan.
>
> Blum went on to say that this would leave France in a most exposed position and that if the Brussels Conference should decide that all the nations represented should supply China with munitions according to their ability and should encourage France to keep open the route via Indo-China it would be essential that at the same time they should promise France not

> to leave France alone to defend Indo-China in case of Japanese attack. He added that he believed that if England, France, the Soviet Union, and the United States should take a strong line unitedly there would be no danger whatever of Japan attacking any one of them.
>
> Blum went on to comment: The present ironclad position seems to be that while the Government has informed both the Chinese and Japanese Governments that France has forbidden shipments through French Indo-China to China; in reality, these shipments will continue to go through until the question has been discussed at the Brussels Conference.
>
> I asked Blum what he thought might be accomplished by the Brussels Conference. After a long silence he said that he through the Conference would accomplish nothing unless the United States should be prepared to guarantee with force French Indo-China and the Dutch East Indies....[14]

The following day Delbos asked to see Bullitt again to give him Chautemps' reply to the President. Bullitt's report for Welles' eyes alone recounted the conversation:

> He said that Chautemps had asked him to see me at once because of the message from the President to Chautemps which had been transmitted through you and Henry. He hoped that I would explain to the President that the French Government had had no desire whatsoever to prejudice the possibility of solutions by agreement at the Brussels Conference. He felt that he was as idealistic in his attitude toward foreign affairs as anyone in the world; but it was necessary to measure one's idealism against the hard facts of any situation....

Referring to the French railroad between Tonkin and Yunnanfu,

> Delbos went on to say that this railroad was the most expensive railroad per mile that had ever been built. It was a constant succession of tunnels and bridges and all traffic on it could be interrupted comparatively easily by bombardment from the air. The Japanese statements therefore had not been idle threats. The new railroad from Tonkin to Kwangsi had not been completed but was being used as a motor road over which shipments of munitions of France were being sent in trucks. This road ran much closer than the railroad to Yunnanfu to the position that the Japanese had already occupied in Kwangtung and it would be possible to bombard it even more easily than the railroad to Yunnanfu. Moreover the

> Japanese Government had intimated politely that at some future date an attack on French Indo-China might not be out of the question. The fact was that France had no means of defending French Indo-China today. It was impossible to send the entire French Fleet from the Mediterranean to Indo-China at the present time.
>
> The French Government had reconsidered the question of shipments through French Indo-China at a meeting of leading members of the French Cabinet yesterday afternoon. It had then been decided that in spite of the decision of the French Government to stop this traffic, which decision had been communicated to the Chinese and Japanese, the French Government would in fact continue to permit shipments of munitions through French Indo-China to China if those munitions had already been ordered and were on the way. Delbos asked that this decision of the French Government should be held as an absolute secret. It would have the effect of permitting the continuance of shipments through Indo-China until the Brussels Conference had had a chance to meet and consider this question.
>
> If at the Brussels Conference the other signatories of the Nine Power Pact should decide that they should all continue to support China by shipment of munitions and by permitting the transit of munitions the French Government would gladly agree to continue shipments through Indo-China but on condition ... the other parties to the Nine Power Pact should agree in case Japan should take reprisals against French Indo-China that they would take similar reprisals against Japan.[15]

On 25 October, Secretary of State Cordell Hull cabled Bullitt that instructions for the US representative at the Brussels Conference did not advocate any concrete course of action: "I see no line that you could take usefully in your conversations."[16] On 10 November, Under Secretary of State Welles recorded a memorandum of a conversation with Mr. Henry, the French chargé in Washington, who conveyed Chautemps' views as Delbos had conveyed them to Bullitt in Paris. Welles sent a copy of this memorandum to the President, adding: "I assume that you will not feel it necessary to make any reply to this message, at least for the time being."[17]

Cordell Hull notes in his memoirs that when Norman Davis, the American representative to the Brussels Conference, reached Paris, Bullitt told him that "the French and British Governments, especially the French, were bent upon organizing an effective front of the

democracies in which special responsibilities and burdens might be placed upon the United States." Bullitt went on to note that "If this were not possible France would try to obtain a guarantee for French Indo-China, and if this too were not possible she would probably lose interest in the conference." Hull observed drily: "This prospect later became a fact."[18]

American diplomatic correspondence during 1938 that touched on Indochina continued to reflect concern with French prohibitions—or lack thereof—on munitions and arms shipments to China through Indochina in response to Japanese threats of reprisals against such shipments. The correspondence reflected concern in Washington more at the stoppage of American trade as a result of French action than at what might happen to Indochina—or China—as a result of Japanese attacks. Incidentally, State Department studies of that year indicated that Indochina ran a poor second to Hong Kong as an arms transit route to China.[19]

Meanwhile, France continued to temporize on the question of arms shipments transiting Indochina to China, trying to pick its way 'between Washington's unwillingness to join in concerted action of any kind, France's own fear of Japanese reprisals against Indochina and other French interests, and its desire not to contribute to China's weakness by depriving it of arms to fight Japan. Thus, regarding the transshipments, France said and did different things to different interested parties at different times. And Japan, of course, moved inexorably toward its ultimate conquest of Indochina. Washington, for its part, limited its efforts to direct assistance to China.

In Feburary 1938, both Ambassador Grew in Tokyo and Ambassador Johnson in Hankow, China, predicted that even a declaration of war by Japan, in response to any arrangement among Great Britain, France, and the Soviet Union, would not prevent arms from reaching China. Grew suggested that if the Hong Kong route were closed, traffic would merely be diverted to other routes. Johnson said:

> A declaration of war ... will have its effect upon trade through Hong Kong and possibly Hanoi, but it will not lessen the necessity for Japan to continue the present heavy expense and future military operations. It will not close China's back doors through India, Burma and Turkestan....[20]

On 4 March 1938, in a cabled report to Washington from Moscow, Ambassador Davies returned to a more strategic theme:

> In a conference which I had with Litvinov (Soviet Commissar for Foreign Affairs) yesterday, he described a meeting of Eden, Delbos, Wellington Koo and himself, held in Geneva last month in which the Japanese situation was discussed. He said that the discussion had to do with renewed efforts along the lines of the Brussels Conference; that Delbos would take no definite stand without England's express backing on account of the fear for Indo-China; that Eden would take no stand without assurance of parallel action by the United States; that the situation was left with the understanding that Eden would explore the situation with Washington; that it was recognized that the United States Government would participate in no alliance but hope was had that something might be accomplished through parallel action; that what specifically was considered was not military or naval action but the imposing of sanctions. . . .[21]

The American Embassy in Paris continued to report French vacillations regarding the transit of arms to China through Indochina. On 2 April, Chargé Wilson reported information from a French Foreign Ministry official that French policy in this regard remained unchanged—applications had been approved for shipments ordered before the previous August and started before October. According to the Quai official, some subsequent shipments had evaded this control, and some shipments originating in Indochina had not been made subject to it. However, because of France's own military needs, French military supplies destined for China had considerably diminished. The French official continued to reflect the French fear of Japanese reprisals against the French railroad– probably only that portion in China—and thus France's desire to "avoid giving provocation."[22]

Three days later, Chargé Wilson reported that according to Wellington Koo, the Chinese envoy, France had eased up on arms shipments through Indochina since the Blum Government had come into office three weeks before:

> The Ambassador said that he had always had trouble with the Foreign Office here in obtaining permission for shipments to pass through Indo-China but since the formation of the second Blum government with Paul Boncour at the Foreign Office his task had been much easier. He said that the French Government was still apprehensive about permitting shipments to go over the railway but that he had recently been given permission to have important shipments of war material

> which had been held up in Indo-China transshipped and transported through territorial waters of Indo-China to Southern China...."[23]

Despite these relatively favorable reports, an American military observer on the Chinese side of the border reported that an embargo had been established on all non-French munitions shipments since 7 February and that as of 1 March, this embargo had been broadened to include French munitions as well. According to this observer, the embargo appeared to have been imposed locally because of the Governor General's fear of Japanese reprisals. Nevertheless, the American noted that the embargo did not apply "to articles which can be classed as commercial. Under this liberal interpretation, airplane engines, engine parts, gasoline, oil and many other articles may be shipped...." Meanwhile, the same report that incorporated the military observer's information also noted that the American consul in Yunnanfu reported in late January the arrival there of some "32 light tanks, 6 or 8 airplanes, and 1,800 tons of explosives, mostly bombs." The Consul reported further that "another shipment of 1,500 tons" was understood to be at Haiphong awaiting transport.[24]

In early May, there was yet again another French government, this one headed by Edouard Daladier, and once again French policy veered favorably toward the transit of arms through Indochina. On 9 May, Ambassador Bullitt reported a conversation with Daladier.

> Daladier said that ... As soon as he had become Prime Minister he had given orders to the French authorities in Indo-China to open the railroad completely to all shipments of planes and munitions to China. The Japanese had protested frequently and vigorously, and a Japanese Consul in Indo-China had gone so far as to say to the French General there that if the shipment of munitions through Indo-China should not be stopped Japan might have to make war. The French General had replied: "Come on and see what happens to you!" This had produced a very salutary effect. The Japanese Consul had left at once for Japan and had not returned.[25]

By mid-June, there was evidence of renewed Presidential interest in the question of arms supplies to China. On 15 June, Acting Secretary of War Johnson responded to earlier requests from the Secretary of State that data on the volume of military supplies entering China via Lanchow, Kansu, and Lungchow, Kwangsi be secured for the President's information. Johnson's letter summarized the latest

information, indicating that 75 percent came via Hong Kong, with French Indochina next in importance.[26]

At June's end, the State Department informed Ambassador Grew in Tokyo of a *New York Times* report of 28 June that Mr. Butler, the British Under Secretary for Foreign Affairs, had stated in the House of Commons:

> His Majesty's Government and the French Government, through their Ambassadors at Tokyo, have made clear to the Japanese forces and Government that they would regard any occupation of Hainan by the Japanese forces as calculated to give rise to undesirable complications.
>
> Should any complications unfortunately arise, His Majesty's Government and the French Government would no doubt afford each other such support as appears warranted by the circumstances.[27]

A week later, on 7 July, Ambassador Bullitt reported from Paris a discussion with the French Foreign Minister on the action of the French Government in landing troops on the Paracel Islands and the action restricting Japanese exports to France.... Bonnet said that these two actions did not indicate any change in French policy vis-à-vis Japan and that they were not in any way related....[28]

On 11 July, Grew reported on growing Franco-Japanese tension as seen from Tokyo.

> The Japanese furthermore complain that there has been a marked increase in the shipment of arms and munitions to China through Indo-China.... Mr. Sugimura, Japanese Ambassador at Paris, is reported to have protested to the French Foreign Minister against the use of the Yunnanfu Railway for this purpose and to have deprecated the alleged agreement concluded between the French and the Chinese governments for the construction of a new railway from Chennankwan, French Indo-China, to Nanning in Kwangsi Province, China.
>
> In a conversation between the Counselor of the French Embassy and a member of the staff of this Embassy, Baron Fain remarked that the contract for the construction of this new railway had actually been signed prior to the outbreak of the present hostilities, that it was a purely private business enterprise in which the French Government felt it could not interfere, and that it would in any case be at least two years before the construction would be completed. Continuing the

> conversation the Counselor said that such arms as were at present being shipped over the railway to Yunnanfu represented the fulfillment of regular contracts for the sale of arms to China which had likewise been entered into before the outbreak of hostilities. He maintained that there was no smuggling of arms or munitions across the Indo-China frontier....
>
> Other irritants in the question of Japanese-French relations have been the increasing French concern in the possible occupation by the Japanese of the island of Hainan ... and the landing by the French of ten Annamite policemen and the establishment of a lighthouse and a wireless station on the Paracel Islands....

Grew went on to say the Japanese protested the latter moves to the French, who rejected the protest: the Paracels were disputed between France and China. France claimed the Paracels belonged to Annam by an Annamese-Chinese treaty. The Japanese claimed right to the islands because they were Chinese.[29]

On 23 July 1938, John Carter Vincent, of the State Department's Division of Far Eastern Affairs, wrote a memorandum which was approved by both Secretary Hull and Under Secretary Welles and contained the following passage:

> I hope that, should Japanese aggression subsequently be directed against British, Dutch, or French possessions in the Far East, or against the Soviet Union, we would be able to avoid involvement. However, I restate that in my opinion the chances of our involvement, were Japanese aggression in China to prove successful, would be measurably greater than would be the chances of our becoming involved in the present conflict were we now to render reasonable assistance to China....[30]

On 13 October 1938, after the Japanese had landed troops on the South China coast, presumably to block arms shipments into China, Chargé Wilson reported from Paris a long conversation with Henri Hoppenot, the head of the Far Eastern Division of the French Foreign Office.

> Hoppenot expressed the opinion that the only hope of preventing the situation in the Far East from steadily deteriorating would be for the United States to express its views strongly to Japan on the necessity of reasonable behavior by the latter. I asked if he felt that French interests were menaced by this new Japanese invasion. He said that he feared there would be

> difficulties concerning the French Concession at Canton and also that the Japanese might seize Hainan. I asked what the French would do in this latter case. He said that France would protest. France would certainly not go to war with Japan over Hainan.
>
> Hoppenot said that the Japanese had charged that shipments of war material to China were continuing to pass over the French railway in Indo-China. The French Government had replied that for the past 2 months not a single rifle had been carried on this railroad and had asked the Japanese Government to produce facts to substantiate its charges. The Japanese had insisted that shipments were going forward all the time and that it would be beside the point to present detailed information. I asked Hoppenot if it were really true that the French were not letting any shipments of war material go over the railway to Yunnan. Hoppenot said that this was absolutely true. . . .[31]

In late October and early November, the Japanese renewed their protests against alleged continued shipment of arms and munitions to China over the French railway from Indochina. The French denied the allegations and expressed the view both to Chargé Wilson in Paris and Ambassador Grew in Tokyo that the Japanese were building a record that would justify military action against Hainan or the French railway in China.[32] After a number of exchanges on the subject, the Japanese apparently expressed themselves as satisfied with French explanations.[33] But the Chinese then protested that the French suspension of arms shipments via Indochina represented "a form of sanctions against China."[34] On 16 November, Wellington Koo, the Chinese Ambassador in Paris, expressed the view to Chargé Wilson "that the French Government was frightened that the Japanese would make reprisals if the French relaxed control over the railway. He had asserted to Bonnet, the French Foreign Minister, that the Japanese were in no position to risk an attack on French possessions in the Far East. Bonnet, however, insisted that France could not act alone and that only if France were guaranteed the support of the United States and Great Britain could she risk offending the Japanese. . . . Koo said that he had the definite impression that Bonnet was so concerned with the European situation and with domestic affairs in France that he paid but slight attention to Far Eastern questions and left them to others in the Foreign Office."[35]

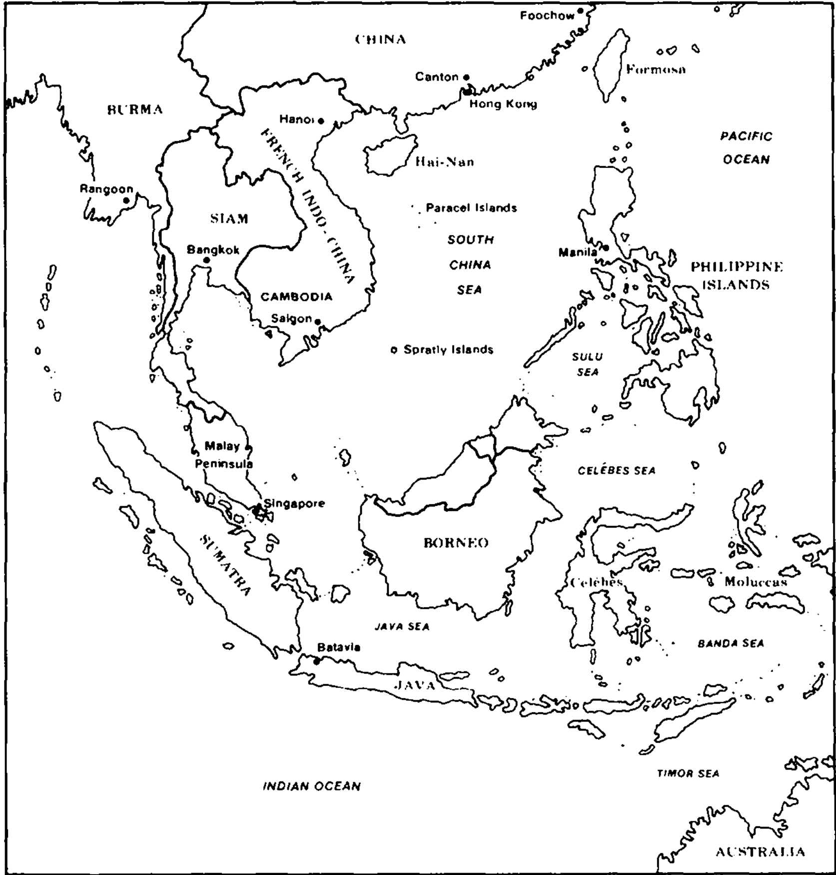
On 1 December, Grew reported from Tokyo that British Ambassador Craigie had proposed joint US-British action (preferably with

French cooperation) to "maintain our position, rights and interests in the Far East." Among the measures Craigie proposed was the "raising of the French embargo on the passage of munitions through Indo-China." Grew declined to join in Craigie's recommendations.[36] On the same day, the State Department, at the request of Ford Motor Company and the Rubber Export Association of Akron, Ohio, instructed Chargé Wilson in Paris to object to the alleged French embargo against the shipment of trucks into China from Indochina:

> This Government deprecates the placing of restrictions on trade involved in the reported action of the French authorities. We perceive no warrant for discrimination by the French authorities, in the matter or transit, between American cars or trucks and French cars or trucks....[37]

On 5 December, Chargé Wilson reported that the French denied that motor trucks were prohibited.[38]

VI JAPAN'S SOUTHWARD ADVANCE



EAST INDIES BEFORE WORLD WAR II

Japan's Southward Advance Accelerates

The Japanese occupied the island of Hainan in early February 1939 and thereby gained control over access to the Tonkin Gulf in the South China Sea.

Grew commented on this development from Tokyo on 10 February:

> This Island will dominate the whole coast of the mainland between Hong Kong and the southern tip of the Indo-China peninsula. Its holders can check all traffic into and out of Hanoi if a blockade were desired and possession of it by the Japanese would have a great effect on the matter of control of the South China Sea between the mainland and the Island of Luzon as well as limiting the sphere dominated by Singapore.
>
> A further possible consideration is the relation which the occupation of Hainan may have on the Japanese southward advance policy.
>
> In examining the political aspects of the occupation of Hainan, this action while it may be an exaggeration to look upon it as a direct reply to the American, British and French notes of October and November last, can be considered as a perfectly sure indication of the indifference with which the Japanese regard the recent rumors of Anglo-American joint action against Japan..."[1]

Ambassador Bullitt reported from Paris the following day that the French had been completely surprised by the Japanese action. He went on to say:

> Hoppenot [French Foreign Office official] referred to the informal understanding of over a year ago between the French and the Japanese which contemplated a *status quo* in Hainan on condition that the French would not permit the shipment of munitions over the Indo-Chinese Railroad to China. Hoppenot maintains that the French have faithfully observed their obligation under the arrangement and that there has been no shipment of munitions to the Chinese of any importance via Indo-China during the intervening months. Under the circumstances the French obviously regard the agreement with Japan concerning the transit of munitions across Indo-China

> as terminated. He believes that the Japanese action was taken at this time principally to rekindle the waning enthusiasm in Japan for the continuance of the war in China... He said that the French Embassy in Tokyo is being instructed to submit an energetic protest and that similar action will be taken by the British... Other than this diplomatic step, no other *démarche* is contemplated at the moment....[2]

On 12 February Chargé Peck in China reported that Chiang Kai-shek said in a press conference that "Japan has in mind three important strategic points in the Pacific—Saghalien Island in the north, Hainan Island in the west, and Guam in the east...." He said if Japan established a naval base on Hainan, "Even if France should then wish to establish a naval base in Indo-China, and the United States of America should desire to defend Guam, I fear that they would not have the needed time for doing so...."[3]

Two days later, Grew reported that in response to a joint démarche by the British and French Ambassadors concerning Japan's occupation of Hainan, the Japanese Foreign Minister said that "the purpose of the occupation was to intensify the blockade of the South China coast, that the character was military and that the duration would depend upon military considerations." The minister added that the occupation would not be permanent.[4]

The State Department instructed Grew on 15 February to relay to the Japanese this message:

> ... With reference to the recent announcement of Japanese occupation of the Island of Hainan, attention is invited to the fact that there are substantial American missionary and educational interests and numerous American residents, chiefly missionaries, in the Island and that the American Government maintains no consular representation in Hainan. In view of these circumstances and having in mind also the general question of the relationships among the powers, including the United States, which have important interests in and with reference to the Pacific area, relationships which have formed the basis of various international agreements, the Government of the United States would be glad to be informed as to the intentions of the Japanese Government in connection with the occupation of Hainan.[5]

The next day, Bullitt confirmed from Paris:

> since the occupation of Hainan the French Government had modified somewhat its instructions regarding the passage of

> supplies over the Indo-China Railway and that certain material which had hitherto been held up was now going forward.
>
> Chauvel [French Foreign Office official] said that upon hearing that a United States destroyer had left Hong Kong to investigate the situation of American missionaries in Hainan, the French had proposed to the British that they should each send a vessel as well, believing it helpful to show "the three flags" there at this particular time. No reply has yet been received from the British.[6]

Grew reported the Japanese response to his request for clarification on 17 February:

> The Minister said that the purpose of the occupation of Hainan Island is to strengthen the blockade of the South China coast and to hasten the suppression of the Chiang Kai Shek "regime." Arita repeated the former statements of the Japanese Government that Japan has no territorial ambitions in China and added that the occupation "will not go beyond military necessity."[7]

Hull in his memoirs notes that he and his colleagues received this explanation "with lively skepticism."[8] Despite a report from Chargé Peck in Chungking on 18 February that the French continued to discriminate against American and other non-French arms shipments to China,[9] Bullitt reported from Paris on 22 February that the Minister of Colonies "stated to me last night that at the present time there were no restrictions whatsoever on shipments of any sort over the railroad through Indo-China."[10]

Bullitt's information appeared to have been confirmed by an early March report from the US consul in Saigon: "Chinese Government representatives in Indo-China have been advised confidentially and officially that all merchandise including munitions will be given unrestricted transit through Indo-China. . . ."[11]

On 31 March, Grew reported from Tokyo,

> The Japanese Government has just announced to the press that Spratley Islands, lying between Indo-China and the Philippine Islands, have been placed under the jurisdiction of the Governor of Taiwan. This step appears to be tantamount to annexation. . . . The report is current but not substantiated that the Paracel Islands are also about to be occupied by Japanese forces.[12]

The next day, Bullitt reported from Paris, "Officials of the Far Eastern Division of the Foreign Office with whom we talked take a

serious view of the matter. It is the first time the Japanese have formally occupied French territory. . . ."[13] On 6 April, five days later, Bullitt reported that the French had protested energetically, but that Chauvel had stated, "There is no indication yet that the Japanese intend to occupy the Islands effectively and construct seaplane and submarine bases there."[14]

On 11 April, Mr. Hamilton, the State Department's Chief of the Division of Far Eastern Affairs, recorded the following conversation with the French Ambassador:

> The Ambassador inquired whether we were going to take any action in the matter. I replied that we still had the matter under study.
>
> The Ambassador then asked what basis there would be for action on the part of the American Government in case the Japanese should take French Indochina or Hong Kong. When I replied that it seemed to me that the same considerations which would influence the Government in regard to forceful acquisition of territory in Europe would apply to the forceful acquisition of territory by Japan such as Hong Kong or French Indochina, the Ambassador raised the question whether there was any distinction between seizure by Japan of Hong Kong or French Indochina and seizure by Japan of the Spratley Islands. I replied that it seemed to me that there might be a distinction in that there was no question as to British ownership of Hong Kong or as to French ownership of French Indochina, whereas there were two claims, a French claim and a Japanese claim, to ownership of the Spratley Islands. . . .[15]

On 18 April, Ambassador Bullitt reported a conversation with Léger of the French Foreign Office:

> I . . . suggested to him that it was most unfair for the French Government to continue to place a transit tax of 4% on goods destined for the Chinese Government in transit through French Indo-China. . . . He agreed this was stiff; but added that the justification for it was that Indo-China was compelled at the moment to rely on its own revenues for its defense.
>
> Léger added that the French Government had cut off all deliveries of iron from French Indo-China to Japan after the seizure of the Spratley Islands by Japan. This measure was proving to be ruinous to the finances of Indo-China and to the welfare of the local population. Moreover, the Japanese were

> obtaining the iron they needed from British possessions in the Malay Peninsula.
>
> The French Government therefore had proposed to the British Government that this source of supply to Japan should be cut off. The British Government had replied that this could be done easily by raising the export tax on this iron but had added that it could see no utility in cutting off exports of iron from these French and British possessions so long as Japan could obtain all the supplies of iron she might need from the United States.
>
> Léger said that he had been informed that the British Government was about to ask the Government of the United States if something could not be done to cut off supplies of iron from the United States to Japan. . . .[16]

Mr. Moffatt, the Chief of the Division of European Affairs of the State Department, immediately called in Mr. Mallett, the Counselor of the British Embassy, to head off any British approach on cutting off iron exports to Japan:

> The purpose in asking Mr. Mallett to call was to suggest to him that it might be inadvisable for the British to make such an approach. In the first place, we would have to reply that the matter would receive study from the point of view of our own independent interests; that we had always pursued an independent course, which though it often happened to parallel the course of other Powers, could not be in the nature of joint action. More important, however, was the fact that if, as seemed probable, legislation looking toward an embargo of certain types of steel and iron scrap were introduced by Senator Pittman it would be helpful to this Department to be able to say that it had not been approached on the matter by Great Britain or any other foreign power.
>
> Mr. Mallett replied that he had heard nothing whatsoever about the matter, and was inclined to doubt whether the British were planning to make us this request. However, in view of the intimation I had just given him, he would see that it were stopped, as the last thing the British Government wished to do at the moment was to embarrass us in any way.[17]

Several days later, after learning from Bullitt in Paris that the French might ask the United States to cut off iron exports to Japan from the Philippines,[18] the Department instructed Bullitt to discourage such an approach using the same arguments that had been used with the British earlier.[19]

On 17 May, six weeks after Japan annexed the Spratly Islands, Secretary Hull addressed a note to Japanese Ambassador Horinouchi rejecting as without international validity Japan's claim to sovereignty over all the islands and reefs delineated in an earlier Japanese note:

> In 1933 the Government of the United States was informed by the French Government of its claim to sovereignty over certain islands situated along the western side of the area described in the Japanese memorandum. Recently this Government has been informed by the French Government that on February 27, 1939, it had suggested to the Japanese Government that the difference between France and Japan on the subject of the sovereignty of the islands be submitted to the Permanent Court of Arbitration at The Hague. Apart from any question as to the merits of the conflicting claims of France and Japan, it may be observed that, as the Japanese Government is aware, the Government of the United States advocates adjustment of problems in international relations by processes of negotiation, agreement and arbitration.
>
> The Government of the United States does not consider that all islands or reefs which might be situated within the extensive area delimited in the Japanese memorandum, and especially within that considerable part of the area lying to the eastward and southeastward of any of the islands named in the Japanese memorandum, can properly be treated as one island group, nor does this Government consider that the action of Japan in blanketing within the territory of Japan islands or reefs, either known or unknown, with respect to which the Japanese Government has heretofore exercised no acts which may properly be regarded as establishing a basis for claim to sovereignty, has any international validity.[20]

Referring to this note in his memoirs, Hull states that the US Navy Department had made surveys in the Spratly Islands area and reported that "the eastern two-thirds of the area, adjacent to the Philippines, contained useable coral lagoons affording anchorage for light naval forces and aircraft." Hull cited this report as the basis for rejection of Japan's claim to the Spratlys.[21]

On 18 May, Ambassador Grew reported a conversation with the Japanese Foreign Minister that morning:

> The Minister on his own initiative then turned to the subject of the so-called "South Sea advance" and made to me the following confidential oral statement:

> "We understand that, since the military occupation of Hainan Island by Japan and the placing of the Sinnan Gunto (Spratly Islands) under the jurisdiction of the Formosan Government General, rumors have spread, giving the impression as though Japan entertained some territorial designs toward the South Seas; that as a result certain interested countries are apprehensive, and that even some Americans have a similar apprehension with regard to the Philippines. The Japanese Government consider it regrettable from the standpoint of Japanese-American friendship that such apprehension has been aroused. They are, therefore prepared, if the United States Government should desire that some step be taken by the Japanese Government for the purpose of dispelling such apprehension, to enter into conversation with the United States Government."[22]

On 23 May, Bullitt reported he was informed by the French that after further consultations with the British, the French had decided to lift the embargo on iron exports to Japan from Indochina, but they would try to use this as a bargaining point in negotiating a new commercial agreement with Japan. The French were also informing the Chinese they intended to remove transit duties on supplies transiting Indochina for China.[23] Two weeks later, the French Ambassador explained to Hamilton, Chief of the State Department's Far Eastern Affairs Division, that his Government had removed the embargo because it had "observed that Japan's inability to obtain iron from French Indochina had caused Japan merely to deflect its purchases to British Malaya and to some extent to the Philippine Islands. . . ."[24]

In early July, Chargé Chapman in Bangkok reported that the Siamese were leaning away from a neutral position toward siding with Japan.:

> I am convinced that departure from policy of strict neutrality by Siam in favor of Japan might be disastrous for Siam and would be inimical to American interests. . . . I earnestly and respectfully suggest that a useful purpose might be served if the Secretary were personally to inform the Siamese minister substantially that great sympathy exists in the United States for democratic governments and for the cautious role of Siam, that any departure therefrom would not fail to cause concern in the United States and that communication of these views to his Government by telegraph would be appreciated.[25]

On 25 July, Assistant Secretary of State Sayre, "in pursuance of instructions from the Secretary," told the Thai minister that he had

heard certain disquieting reports about the possibility of the Thai Government abandoning its traditional policy of detachment and strict neutrality and told him "of my concern lest pressures emanating from Japan should become so strong that Thailand might become involved in the struggle now in progress between Japan and China...." In reply, the Thai Minister told me that so far as his advices are concerned he believed the reports to be ill-founded....[26] Chargé Chapman reported from Bangkok on 11 August that Thailand denied it was forsaking neutrality.[27]

Meanwhile, on 12 July, Secretary of State Cordell Hull sent Chargé Dooman in Tokyo a report of his conversation with the Japanese Ambassador.

> The Ambassador said also that he would be interested in anything that I might have to say in regard to this Government's concern over the possible detriment to American interests arising from possible Japanese policies for permanent control over China and in regard to the reported apprehension of this Government that the Japanese occupation of Hainan is part of a plan of permanent military conquest.... In regard to the first point I referred to the fact that for 6 years I had been urging upon his Government the view that the world was large enough for all nations and that great progress of the whole world would flow from cooperation along progressive and mutually helpful lines.
>
> In regard to the second point I said that while existing American rights and interests in the Far East are very important a paramount consideration was whether all of China and the adjacent islands were to be disposed of by Japan as was Manchuria, with the observance of treaties abolished, international law destroyed and the door shut and locked except as to preference for Japanese subjects. I said that I need not speculate upon how Japan would feel if it were announced that the western hemisphere and a part of Europe were to be foreclosed against Japan in a similar way. I observed that the interference which was taking place beyond all possible military requirements with the rights and interests of third power nationals all over China aroused resentment of the governments whose nationals are thus affected, that Japanese businessmen were being permitted to step in to the places of American and other businessmen who were being obliged to abandon their business, and that it was these circumstances and indications which gave rise to American apprehension that, as the "Manchuria-izing" of all China proceeded,

American rights and interests might be permanently jeopardized or held in abeyance by Japan.

I also pointed out, speaking from my viewpoint, that efforts by any nation to dominate a large part of the world could result only in disaster to all and that I had endeavored for 6 years to urge this general idea upon Japanese statesmen.[28]

Nine days later, on 21 July, Under Secretary of State Welles recorded a conversation with the French Ambassador in which the Ambassador informed Welles orally and in great confidence of the French Foreign Office's note replying to a British inquiry a month earlier.

The French Government points out that the most effective means of rendering assistance to China at the present time is through the furnishing of arms and ammunition.... If transshipments through French Indochina are to be undertaken, France insists that such opening of French Indochina to transshipment must be recognized by Japan as the result of an agreement in this regard on the part of the several powers most concerned in order that Japan will clearly recognize that such a policy on the part of France is undertaken only with the assurance of support from Great Britain and the United States. It is emphasized repeatedly in the note that France will not agree to any measure of this character nor to any measure of retaliation or reprisal against Japan without assurances from the United States. The French Government states that this is a *sine qua non*.... I said that I should like to give these questions very full consideration before giving him any reaction of any kind. I said, however, that in consideration of these questions I would desire to have very clearly from him his interpretation of one feature of the note which he had read to me. I asked him if I was correct in understanding that the note implied that the French Government would not undertake any measures of retaliation against Japan in the nature of commercial or financial embargoes unless such measures formed a part of a common agreement between several powers to which the United States must necessarily be a party and further, unless the Government of the United States were willing to give guarantees to France that it would take part in the defense of French Far Eastern colonial possessions should the latter be attacked by Japan as a result of the measures taken.

The Ambassador stated that my understanding was entirely correct.

> I said that, of course, the Ambassador must fully recognize that such an agreement on the part of the United States would be tantamount to entering into a defensive alliance of a military and naval character with France and that no such alliance could be concluded without the ratification of the United States Senate. I also reminded him that this Government had made it plain from the outset of the hostilities in China that this Government was taking and would take an independent course, depending upon the fundamental interests of the United States and as they might be affected by the course of events and that while for obvious reasons we had frequently taken action parallel to that of France and of Great Britain during the past three years, nevertheless such action had been taken because in our judgment circumstances at the moment warranted it and our action at no time had been the result of prior agreements or commitments entered into. The Ambassador said he fully recognized that this was the case....[29]

At the end of July, Ambassador Bullitt was informed by the Quai that:

> Both the French and British Governments had decided to withdraw from every position and possession that they held in the Far East if necessary to avoid war with Japan. In view of the situation in Europe they could not take any other attitude unless they could count on the active support of the United States in the Far East. Their attitude would depend on the degree of cooperation and collaboration that the British Government might be able to establish with the Government of the United States.... I then asked him if shipments through Indo-China were being continued as heretofore. He replied that they were being continued. I asked if they would be continued in the future even though Great Britain should forbid passage of supplies to the Chinese Government via the Burma Road. He answered that in that case the French Government would be obliged to follow the lead of the British Government and forbid shipments of military supplies by way of Indo-China.
>
> Léger made it entirely clear the French Government would follow the lead of the British Government in respect of policy in the Far East.[30]

On 1 September, Hitler invaded Poland, and Britain and France declared war against the Third Reich.

In the first volume of his six-volume work on World War II, Winston Churchill recorded his strategic thinking as a newly

appointed member of Chamberlain's War Cabinet and head of the Admiralty as Britain declared war on Germany.

> It did not seem possible to me that the United States could sit passive and watch a general assault by Japan upon all European establishments in the Far East, even if they themselves were not for the moment involved. In this case we should gain far more from the entry of the United States, perhaps only against Japan, if that were possible, than we should suffer from the hostility of Japan, vexatious though that would be. On no account must anything which threatened in the Far East divert us from our prime objectives in Europe....[31]

On 6 September, Ambassador Johnson reported from Chungking:

> The point that caused him, Chiang Kai-shek, most concern for the time being was fear that they (the British and French) might be persuaded by Japan to close routes of communication through Burma and Indo-China; he argued that by closing these routes and thus making impossible the continuance of China's struggle for independence they would be violating the Nine-Power treaty in a flagrant manner."[32]

The same day, Ambassador Johnson sent another report:

> There is widespread apprehension that Great Britain and France are endeavoring to arrive at a compromise with Japan, at the expense of China, in order to safeguard their interests in East Asia.... British and French measures looking to cooperation with the Japanese in the occupied areas and prohibition of the shipment of arms through French Indo-China and Burma to China are thought to be possible and if carried out would affect China's capacity to continue effective resistance....[33]

Two days later, Secretary Hull requested assurances from the British and French that shipments from the United States consigned to China would not be detained on British and French territory.[34] Bullitt promptly reported that the French had given the necessary assurances "provided these shipments did not comprise arms and munitions as narrowly defined in the Geneva Convention of 1925...."[35] The Department of State replied to Bullitt that the French assurances were "of no practical value whatever," since the Geneva Convention definition was even broader than the President's embargo proclamation. Moreover, the Department pointed out that

the Geneva Convention had not been ratified by enough states to enter into force.[36] Bullitt responded tartly: "I can assure ... you that shipments from the United States consigned to China will not, in fact, be detained in Indochina or other French territory provided they are labelled on the principle that a rose by any other name would smell as sweet...."[37] The Department quickly assured Bullitt that no further explanation was necessary.[38]

On 30 September, a month after war had broken out in Europe, Bullitt reported:

> Léger ... believed that our Government was much too optimistic with regard to the attitude of Japan. He believed that the moment that a German attack should be launched against France, Japan would drive the French and British completely from the Far East....[39]

Three months before, in June 1939, Ambassador Johnson apparently had recommended to the Department that it assign a consul to Hanoi, presumably to monitor the vexing and elusive matter of French prohibitions, or lack thereof, regarding the transshipment of arms and munitions to China through Indochina. Consul Reed arrived in Hanoi in mid-September and sent his first substantive dispatch on 3 October reporting on his first round of conversations.

> In these conversations, Governor Georges Catroux expressed the fear that, with the outbreak of war in Europe, Indochina would have to rely on cars, trucks, and other essentials imported from the United States since France would no longer be able to supply them. Catroux went on to say that every facility will be given to American interests in Indochina. Insofar as French-Chinese relations are concerned, it will be necessary to review these in detail and to make such changes as are called for by the altered conditions in Europe. He explained that France is generally sympathetic to the Chinese cause, although the Chinese have not shown a reciprocal understanding of French desires, but that France cannot afford to jeopardize Indochina and will accordingly follow a policy of purely political expediency. He referred openly to the danger of Japanese aggression, from bases at Hainan and on the Spratley Islands, and stated that this possibility is a factor which enters into the question of the establishment of a new policy toward Chinese affairs. In any event, he concluded, his personal opinion was that the Sino-Japanese conflict will be liquidated in the not too distant future.... All

> officials ... commented that the transit of goods to China is the subject of Japanese suspicion and that the unprecedented accumulation of cargo at the port of Haiphong does nothing to dispel this suspicion. Consequently, some limitations must be placed upon the transit of goods in order to remove this accumulation and to remove at least a modicum of Japanese suspicion. The Director of the Economic Section of the Government General, Mr. Louis Marty, was especially categorical in blaming the Chinese for the confused situation at Haiphong and thus attracting Japanese attention.... French officials, especially the Director of the Political Section, Mr. Mantovani, do not consider Governor Lung Yun of Yunnan a particularly faithful ally of the National Government. Instances were cited purporting to show that the Lung Yun regime is paying enforced lip service to the National Government, but with independent ideas as to what should and should not be done, particularly as regards financial matters. Mr. Mantovani opined that a revival of the Southwestern faction, including Yunnan, is not a too far-fetched possibility. I have been told that Indochina would view with pleasure the establishment of a buffer state comprising Kwangtung, Kwangsi and Yunnan....[40]

On 13 October, a message from Consul Reed in Hanoi transited Hong Kong for Washington:

> From recent conversations in Hanoi and Haiphong it would appear that for the present the Indo-China Government is disposed to give favorable consideration to shipments to the Chinese Government, especially goods of American origin, but that there is an understandably strong desire to avoid complications with the Japanese, so strong as to warrant the apprehension of restrictions upon the transit of the abovementioned goods to China if and when Japanese pressure becomes urgent.[41]

On 20 October, Ambassador Bullitt reported from Paris:

> My informant, Li Yu Ying ... said that he was at Hanoi when the French Governor General had summoned the Chinese Consul and informed him that no more shipments would be permitted over the French railroad. Two days later, however, the French Governor General had summoned the Chinese Consul and had informed him that trucks and gasoline could go through as heretofore....

> Li Yu Ying added that on arrival in Paris he had called at once on Mandel, Minister of Colonies, and had received a full and satisfactory explanation, which indicated that the same goods would continue to go forward over the French railroad through Indo-China as had been going forward in the past over that line.
>
> He asked me if I was under the impression that the French Government intended to change its policy via-à-vis China and Japan adding that Chiang Kai Shek had requested him to obtain my personal opinion on this point.... I did not ... consider that there was any immediate danger of a fundamental change in French policy vis-à-vis China and Japan...."[42]

On 3 November, Reed sent another reassuring message from Hanoi via Hong Kong which confirmed the removal of restrictions on shipments.[43]

This preoccupation once again with French intentions regarding the transshipment of goods through Indochina gave way to a more somber and profound issue raised, on 21 November, by the British Ambassador with Acting Secretary of State Sumner Welles:

> the Ambassador said he wished to drop for the moment his official character and speak to me very frankly about a matter that was giving him great concern. He stated that the way things were now going in the Far East, it seemed to him evident that the maintenance of western interests in the Far East would be dependent entirely upon the determination which the United States might make. He said that if the Japanese Government determined to wipe out British and French interests in China, or even to take over their colonial possessions, neither the British nor the French governments under present conditions could weaken their naval forces in the Atlantic or in the North Sea, or, for that matter, in the Mediterranean because of their uncertainty as to the course which Mussolini would pursue. He said that for this reason it was clearly in the interest of Great Britain to attempt to reach an understanding with the Government of Japan which would obviate this danger and that he was fearful lest there be a recurrence of the 1931 situation as a result of which American public opinion would believe and maintain that Great Britain had sold out and had left the United States "holding the bag." He was very much concerned lest any negotiations undertaken between Great Britain and Japan under present conditions should be regarded by the American public as a deal against

> the interests of the United States and as a cynical and callous selling-out of China.
>
> The Ambassador went on to say that it seemed to him in the interest of the western powers, and particularly in the interest of the United States, for every effort to be made to further a direct understanding between China and Japan on a basis which would be fair and equitable to both sides, but with the realization on the part of both China and Japan that each side would have to make concessions. He inquired whether I shared his view.
>
> I replied by saying that I would have to make very wide and ample reservations to the opinions expressed by the Ambassador. I said that in the first place I could not at this moment conceive that there was a real likelihood of a formal agreement being reached between the Soviet Government and Japan for the partitioning of China, and in order to make it possible for Japan to undertake offensive measures against British and French possessions in the Far East or even against the Netherlands East Indies. I said that, of course, anything under present conditions was possible, but it seemed to me fantastic to believe that the Japanese Government, from its own selfish standpoint, would undertake an adventure of this character, knowing perfectly well that Russian policy in the Far East was inevitably antagonistic to Japanese policy and knowing equally well that no reliance could be placed by Japan upon any agreement which might be proffered by the Soviet Government. I said it seemed to me far more likely that Japan would consider it in her best interests to try and work out some basis of understanding with the United States and with Great Britain and France before she would give any serious consideration to Russian proposals. . . .[44]

On 27 November, the Consulate General in Hong Kong forwarded another message from Consul Reed in Hanoi:

> November 21, 5 p.m. Rumors as yet unconfirmed about the capture of Nanning greatly concern the attention of everyone here interested in the shipment of supplies inland to China. It is apparently certain that an important section of the road from Indo-China to Nanning has been destroyed with the result that all traffic has been stopped. There is great pessimism, among other immediate reactions, as to the future of transit via Indo-China to China.[45]

On 29 November, Mr. Salisbury, of the Division of Far Eastern Affairs in the State Department, wrote an interesting if equivocal analysis regarding the prospects for Japanese southward expansion:

> The possibility that circumstances might so develop as to increase the likelihood of Japanese expansion southward raises the question whether the present policy of the United States toward Japan should be modified in any way. Present American policy in the Far East is the outgrowth of belief in a number of fundamental and traditional principles with particular reference at this time to the application of those principles to the situation in China. It would, of course, be a matter for regret if adherence by the United States to the policy of continuing to support the principles to which this country is committed should result in the taking by Japan of any forthright action which might adversely affect the interests of other powers, such as the effecting by Japan of a *rapprochement* with the Soviet Union or the seizure of the Netherlands East Indies. The possibilities of Japan taking such action, however, would not seem to be sufficient warrant for the United States to compromise on matters of principle or to abandon a policy which in its essentials is designed in the long run to demonstrate to Japan that that country cannot with impunity continue to violate those principles for her own advantage and to the disadvantage of other powers. The question is a long-range question.[46]

On 30 November 1939, Ambassador Bullitt reported from Paris:

> I discussed with Mandel (French Minister of Colonies) last night the situation in China. He said that he was intensely disturbed by the Japanese capture of the suburbs of Nanning. He stated that the Japanese advance had destroyed the possibility of continuing shipments of supplies by truck which has been going from Indo-China to Nanning over the new road. . . . Just previous to the Japanese advance on Nanning he had received from China what appeared to be authoritative information to the effect that the Chinese Government was absolutely confident of its ability to maintain the Chinese military positions protecting the road from Indo-China to Nanning. . . .[47]

The following day, Ambassador Grew in Tokyo was informed by the French Embassy that the Japanese had handed them a "courteously phrased" protest against the continued shipment of munitions to Chiang Kai-shek from Indochina and stated that the Pakhoi campaign had been undertaken by the Japanese in order to prevent arms

from this source from reaching the Chinese forces. At the same time the [Japanese] Foreign Minister disclaimed any Japanese designs against Indochina. He likewise explained that certain Japanese planes which have recently flown over Indochina territory had done so unintentionally on account of poor visibility.[48]

Ambassador Bullitt reported the same day from Paris that "the use of the roadbed from Indo-China to Nanning for the truck transport was now impossible and that it seemed to him [Chauvel of the Quai d'Orsay] inadvisable for the French Government at the present moment to send rails for the completion of the railroad on the existing roadbed."[49]

The State Department seemed remarkably unconcerned at this latest development. On 2 December, it responded to Bullitt:

> Even if the Japanese should continue to occupy Nanning, we do not regard that loss as disastrous to the Chinese. In the southwest there remain open two important external channels of supply (the Burma road and the Tonkin-Yunnan Railway); also, a main interior route (the highway from Yunnanfu to Chungking) remains open; and a new highway (Yunnanfu to Luchow, Szechwan) is about to be opened. It would accordingly seem that the loss of the Nanning route should not cause a cessation of transportation of supplies. . . .[50]

Japanese Forces Occupy Tonkin

As events in Europe moved inexorably from twilight war to blitzkrieg in the spring of 1940, the United States was constrained by domestic political realities from actively opposing Japanese expansion in Asia. Because of these realities, the European colonial powers were little encouraged that the United States would support their efforts to protect their possessions in the Far East. The European colonial powers themselves were obliged to give priority to the defense of their homelands against Germany, and they hoped they could count on the United States to take more initiative against Japan.

With respect to Indochina, Washington was deeply critical of Vichy's premature compromise which allowed Japanese forces to be stationed in Indochina and to use certain military facilities there. It was also critical of France's refusal, under German pressure, to ship 90 US-built aircraft caught in Martinique at the fall of France for use in Indochina. By the time the Germans were willing to permit such shipment, the United States feared the equipment would fall into Japanese hands and be used against Western interests.

In sum, the inability or unwillingness of the United States to oppose Japan's southward expansion discouraged the European colonial powers from devoting a higher priority to protecting their colonial possessions in the Far East, especially in the face of the German menace against to Europe. This made the Japanese conquest of Southeast Asia virtually inevitable. The Japanese gave fresh evidence of expansionist intentions toward Southeast Asia in the spring of 1940. In January and again in March, the American Embassy in Tokyo called the Japanese Foreign Office's attention to the injury to American commerce and danger to American lives caused by Japanese bombings of the portion of the Haiphong-Yunnanfu railway in China. In its March note, the Embassy said the US Government "hereby makes full reservations of its rights and of the rights of its citizens in the matter."[1]

Hull, in his memoirs, records that, "less than one week after Hitler invaded Norway, Japanese Foreign Minister Arita issued a statement on April 15, 1940, contending that Japan was economically bound in an intimate relationship with the South Seas regions, especially the Netherlands East Indies...."[2] The next day, Hull

Paris that the British, French, and American Ambassadors bring to Arita's attention the Four-Power Treaty of 1921 "in connection with which Britain, Japan, France and the United States promised to respect the rights of The Netherlands in relation to their Pacific possessions."[3]

Hull notes that he did not believe a joint *démarche* would be as effective as individual action by each government. So the following day, 17 April, with the President's agreement, he stated the US position "emphatically and publicly":

> The Netherlands Indies are very important in the international relationships of the whole Pacific Ocean. The islands themselves extend for a distance of approximately 3,200 miles east and west astride of the Equator, from the Indian Ocean on the west far into the Pacific Ocean on the east. They are also an important factor in the commerce of the whole world. They produce considerable portions of the world's supplies of important essential commodities such as rubber, tin, quinine, copra, et cetera. Many countries, including the United States, depend substantially upon them for some of these commodities.
>
> Intervention in the domestic affairs of the Netherlands Indies or any alteration of their *status quo* by other than peaceful processes would be prejudicial to the cause of stability, peace, and security not only in the region of the Netherlands Indies but in the entire Pacific area.

Hull's statement went on to note that Japan had declared itself in favor of the status quo in the Pacific region in notes exchanged with the United States in 1908, and reaffirmed in notes sent to the Dutch Government in 1922.[4]

Two days later, the French Government welcomed the Hull statement but urged the US Government to go further in concert with the French and the British. In a note to the State Department, the French Government suggested the following steps:

> 1. The American, British and French Governments, referring to the recent Japanese declaration, would instruct their Legations at the Hague to assure the Netherlands Government of their loyalty to the principles enunciated in the notes of February 1922.
> 2. The same Governments would make known to the Japanese Government, through the medium of their Embassies at Tokyo that they interpret Mr. Arita's declaration as confirmation of the assurances contained in the

> note transmitted February 5, 1922, to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands by the Minister of Japan....[5]

On 20 April, Under Secretary Welles replied to the French, turning their suggestions aside:

> It seems to us that, in the light of the statements which have been made during the last few days by or on behalf of the French, the British and the American governments respectively, and of reports which have appeared regarding the reaction of the Japanese Foreign Office thereto, there would seem to be no need, for the present at least, of the taking of formal steps such as your Government has suggested.[6]

Less than a month later, on 10 May, as Germany invaded the Netherlands, Belgium, and Luxembourg, Hull seemed inclined toward a more active diplomatic stance on the Dutch East Indies. He put a question "—not a request or a suggestion even—" to the British Government through its Ambassador, Lord Lothian,

> as to the idea of this Government approaching the Government of Japan and saying to it that the British Government advises me that it stands unequivocally for the maintenance of the *status quo* of the Dutch East Indies just as it did before the invasion of Holland; that the United States Government likewise stands unequivocally for the maintenance of the *status quo* of the Dutch East Indies just as this Government along with the Government of Japan some days ago announced this as their definite and unequivocal position and attitude; that in these circumstances I desired to inquire of the Government of Japan if it is disposed to continue its position as heretofore announced by it some days ago of maintaining the *status quo* of the Dutch East Indies and its integrity in every way....[7]

On 16 May, Under Secretary Welles received Australian Minister Casey, who conveyed a message from the Australian Government to the effect that it would be "most beneficial and welcome" if the United States Government were to declare that it was "not prepared to entertain any attempt at intervention in the Dutch East Indies...." Welles' record of the conversation contains this reply:

> if I interpreted this message correctly, it was tantamount to a public declaration by the United States that if any other government attempted to intervene in the Netherlands East Indies, the Government of the United States would resist such

> attempt by force. I said that this Government was not prepared at this time to make such a statement.
>
> I reminded the Minister of two public statements made by the Secretary of State in recent days with regard to the interest of the United States in the maintenance of the *status quo* of the Dutch East Indies, and similar declarations to the same effect subsequently by the British and Japanese Governments. I said that the Japanese Government was fully aware of the point of view in this regard of the Government of the United States and that for the moment this Government had nothing further in contemplation. . . .[8]

On 10 June, five days after Germany invaded France, Japanese Foreign Minister Arita complained to Ambassador Grew that the continued stay of the US fleet in Hawaiian waters:

> constitutes an implied suspicion of the intentions of Japan via-à-vis the Netherlands East Indies and the South Seas, and he desired categorically to assert that Japan entertains no territorial ambitions. Quite to the contrary, he added, Japan is exerting her best efforts to promote good relations with her neighbors, and he cited as an example that a non-aggression pact is to be signed within a few days with Thailand.

Grew's report continued with this prophetic observation: "The emphasis which the Minister placed upon this matter is an indication of the important effect on Japanese consciousness of the stay of our naval forces in Hawaii. . . ."[9]

Three days later, Welles told the Netherlands Minister:

> the Secretary of State and I had given very careful consideration to the request advanced by the Minister in his conversation with me on June 11, namely, that contact be established between the naval forces of the Netherlands East Indies and the Asiatic squadron of the United States. I said that we had regretfully come to the conclusion that it was impossible for us to comply with his request since we saw no practical way in which such a contact could be established, and, secondly, because of the fact that steps of this character would unquestionably give rise immediately to very great suspicion on the part of Japan which could only result in prejudice to the best interests of the Netherlands and East Indies. . . .[10]

The collapse of France in June and July 1940 put America's response toward Japan's growing encroachments on Indochina in a different perspective: Vichy France in part blamed American reluctance to assist Indochina for its own inability or unwillingness to

stand up to Germany or Japan on issues affecting, in particular, Indochina's ability to defend itself. However, by the time Washington was genuinely concerned about the strategic consequences of Japan's control of Indochina, the United States quite rightly believed any aid to Indochinese authorities would merely be captured by the Japanese and used for Indochina's conquest rather than for its defense.

Hull records in his memoirs:

> On June 17, 1940, as the French Government of Marshal Pétain was sueing for an armistice, Japan demanded that the French cease shipping materials through French Indo-China to China. Within three days the French gave in and also agreed to the stationing of Japanese inspectors along the French Indo-China railroad to see to the carrying out of the agreement.[11]

On 20 June, French Ambassador Saint-Quentin told Stanley Hornbeck, State Department Adviser on Political Relations, the Japanese had requested that the Indochinese frontier with China be closed by the following day, and that the Governor General of Indochina had decided to close the frontier immediately. Saint-Quentin noted that, while the French Ambassador in Tokyo strongly favored this step, he could not guarantee the closure would prevent the Japanese from invading Indochina, for the pressure of Japanese Army elements on the Japanese Government was great. Saint-Quentin asked if the United States thought it could give "friendly advice" to the Japanese to refrain from such aggression, and Hornbeck said he would try to get Saint-Quentin the earliest possible answer.[12]

As German troops raced across France, Japan pressed to take advantage of the Western powers' weakened position in Southeast Asia. The United States, however, continued to follow its course of "principled non-involvement." It tried to open talks between Ambassador Grew and Foreign Minister Arita in Tokyo "designed, if possible, to improve Japanese-American relations ... and ... if at all possible, to prevent the Orient from falling further into chaos at the same time...."[13] On 22 June 1940, Secretary of State Hull instructed Grew to explore confidentially with Arita the possibility of an exchange of notes guaranteeing the status quo of the Pacific Ocean possessions of the European belligerents. Hull notes in his memoirs that this proposal was the sole result of a thorough review of ways in which United States-Japanese relations might be improved.[14]

Hull's instructions to Grew of 22 June read:

> Unless you perceive any objection, it is my desire that at an early moment you call upon the Foreign Minister and in strictest confidence explore with him in continuation of your conversations of June 10 and June 18, the question of possibly arriving at an understanding between the American Government and the Japanese Government through an exchange of notes along the following lines:
>
> The interest of both countries in keeping to a minimum the adverse effects of the war in Europe is the basis upon which the understanding would be premised. The understanding would refer to this interest. In the proposed notes there would be expressed the agreement between the Government of the United States and the Japanese Government that they have a common desire that the *status quo*, except as it may be modified by peaceful means, be maintained with regard to the possessions and territories of belligerent European powers in the Pacific area. There might also be in the proposed notes a provision for consultation between the Governments of the two countries should any question arise involving the *status quo* in respect to the Pacific possessions and territories of belligerent European powers which renders consultation desirable in the opinion of either the Japanese Government or the Government of the United States....[15]

Grew offered the proposal to Arita in a meeting on 24 June. Arita promised to study it but observed that "unless a number of the many outstanding differences between the United States and Japan were first solved, he, offhand and in his own opinion, thought that the suggestion might be difficult to accept...."[16] Four days later, Arita rejected the proposal, saying

> that in consideration of the fact that neither Japan nor the United States is a belligerent, the carrying out of the suggestion for an exchange of notes concerning the maintenance of the *status quo* in reference to the possessions and territories in the Pacific area of belligerent European powers would in his opinion be a somewhat delicate matter.[17]

In his memoirs, Hull observes, "Behind all his reasons, however, lay the obvious one that Japan did not want to tie her hands through such an exchange of notes at the very moment when the door appeared to be swinging wide open to numerous possibilities for expansion."[18]

On 26 June, Secretary Hull cabled Ambassador Johnson in Chungking to request him to assure Chiang Kai-shek that he was

following Indochinese developments personally and giving them "most careful consideration." Hull referred to his 22 June press conference in which he mentioned his earlier statements of 17 April and 11 May concerning the status quo in the Dutch East Indies.[19]

On 5 July, the British Ambassador told Hull Japan was seriously threatening war against Great Britain and asked for any comment on the situation. Hull replied that he "would not undertake to offer advice," but "one way of dealing with the threatened attack would be to devise parleys and protract the situation, adding that this was as a rule entirely feasible."[20]

On 11 July, the day after France fell before the German onslaught, Ambassador Grew, in a further conversation with Japanese Foreign Minister Arita, returned to the subject of an exchange of notes on the status quo in the Pacific. He hoped that the Japanese Government agreed that

> procedures which tend to prevent situations from deteriorating have within them the germ of contributing materially toward improving situations; that this procedure, if adopted, would tend to dissipate suspicion and curtail inflammatory discussion, thereby turning public thought toward peaceful and constructive processes. It would not only solve the specific problem for which designed, but in addition it might facilitate a solution of some of the other problems between the two Governments.[21]

On 6 August, the American Government was confronted for the first time with evidence that Japan actually intended to alter the status quo of Indochina. James Clement Dunn, the State Department's Adviser on Political Relations, reported to Acting Secretary Sumner Welles his conversation with the French Ambassador that morning on Welles' instruction, replying orally to the Ambassador's *aide mémoire* of the same day. The French *aide mémoire* concerned:

> [T]he demands made by the Japanese Government upon the French Government with regard to authorization to send troops across Indochina, to use the local airfields in Indochina, to station forces at the air fields for the purpose of assuring their security, and to send planes, munitions, and all necessary material through Indochina destined to the Japanese Army.
>
> I told the French Ambassador that we have been doing and are doing everything possible within the framework of our established policies to keep the situation in the Far East stabilized; that we have been progressively taking various steps,

> the effect of which has been to exert economic pressure on Japan; that our Fleet is now based on Hawaii, and that the course which we have been following, as indicated above, gives a clear indication of our intentions and activities for the future. I also raised with the French Ambassador the question whether it would be practicable for the French to delay discussions with the Japanese with respect to Indochina for a period. . . .
>
> Count de Saint-Quentin stated that he felt that this reply to the French request for assistance and support in her negotiations with Japan would very probably not be considered by his Government as sufficient prospect for support to enable them to withstand the pressing demands made by the Japanese Government for the establishment of certain rights in Indochina in addition to the economic demands accompanying the former. He said that he did not think it would be practicable for the French Government to delay the negotiations because the Japanese had themselves stated at the time of making the demands that if the French Government did not acquiesce in the granting of these rights, the Japanese Government had every intention of taking the necessary action to acquire them. He went on to say that in his opinion the phrase "within the framework of our established policies," when associated with the apparent reluctance of the American Government to consider the use of military force in the Far East at this particular time, to mean that the United States would not use military or naval force in support of any position which might be taken to resist the Japanese attempted aggression on Indochina. The Ambassador asked me to convey to you thus his construction of your oral reply conveyed to him through me this morning and his fear that the French Government would, under the indicated pressure of the Japanese Government, be forced to accede to the demands set forth in his *aide-mémoire*.[22]

On the same day, Acting Secretary Welles instructed Ambassador Grew to convey to the Japanese American concerns:

> News agencies have carried reports that Japan has made secret demands on France regarding French Indochina. As reported, these demands include right on part of Japan to move armed forces of Japan through that French possession, the right of armed forces of Japan to use air bases at certain points there, etc. . . . This Government is seriously perturbed, therefore, over the *démarche* which it is reported that the Government of Japan has made to the French authorities. . . .

> [I]t is my desire that at your earliest convenience you call upon the Minister for Foreign Affairs and that you express to him, as under instructions from your Government and along the lines above indicated, the concern felt by the Government of the United States regarding the reported developments.''[23]

Soon afterwards Grew was told confidentially by the minister that the French Government had already accepted the Japanese demands in principle.[24]

Washington felt obliged by events to reiterate more widely its concern for the status quo in Indochina. On 17 August, US Minister Grant reported from Bangkok that the Thai Prime Minister had stated to him ''categorically that while the Thai Government will be satisfied with the *status quo* in Indochina, if a third party, Japan for instance, should attempt to seize control, which appears likely, it wants a return of the provinces ceded to France. . . .''[25] Four days later, Grant cabled again that he had the ''most reliable and confidential information'' that the Thai Prime Minister had asked of the Vichy Government that ''all of the provinces ceded by Thailand to France in Indochina be omitted from any settlement arising from capitulation of the Vichy Government to any demands relating to Indochina.'' Grant reported the Prime Minister had indicated the Japanese had not already taken direct action regarding Indochina because of ''(1) the uncertain internal situation in Japan, (2) the attitude of Germany, and (3) the attitude of the United States.''[26] The same day, Acting Secretary Welles instructed Grant to urge the Thai to attempt peaceful negotiation and agreement. Grant was also asked to question whether ''under the present disturbed conditions of the world there would be a prospect of reaching at the time an equitable settlement of this matter on a lasting basis.''[27]

Nine days later, on 26 August, twenty days after the French Ambassador had expressed his doubts to Political Adviser Dunn that the American position would persuade his Government to resist Japanese pressures, and after the Japanese Foreign Minister had told Grew the French had already accepted their demands in principle, the State Department instructed H. Freeman Matthews, US Chargé at Vichy, to see Chauvel of the French Foreign Office:

> and state that the granting by the French Government to the Japanese Government of concessions of the nature and scope described above would create an unfavorable impression in this country and that this Government hesitates to believe

> that the French Government has actually made such concessions.[28]

The instruction went on to say that if Chauvel gave unsatisfactory clarification, Matthews should seek an interview with Marshal Pétain since the Department preferred he not see Baudoin, the Foreign Minister.[29] According to Hull's memoirs, the French replied that "no agreement had yet been reached with Japan, that Japan had not demanded the use of military bases but solely the passage of Japanese military forces through Indochina, and that the French Government had taken the position there should be no military occupation of their colony."[30]

On 3 September, the State Department instructed Grew in Tokyo to make a parallel démarche to the Japanese, saying

> ...The Government of the United States is reluctant to believe these reports, and it wishes to point out the unfortunate effect on American public opinion from the point of view of Japanese-American relations if these reports prove to be correct. Especially will this be true in view of statement which the press attributed on June 19 to a representative of the Japanese Foreign Office which said, in effect, that Japan attached importance to maintaining the *status quo* in French Indochina.[31]

Nevertheless, say Hull's memoirs, on 5 September, Vichy informed the United States that on 30 August, Japan and France had signed an agreement which not only gave Japan right of passage through Indochina and the use of bases there, but recognized the predominant interest of Japan in the Far East.[32] On the same day, Minister Grant reported from Bangkok that the Thai leaders were determined to reclaim their so-called 'lost provinces' in Indochina "in the event of any change in the status quo unless a very heavy restraining hand was applied by Great Britain and the United States...."[33] The State Department immediately cabled back: "Department desires that you keep in mind the importance of your using, discreetly, when and as opportunity offers, you influence in the direction of discouraging action by the Thai Government which, if taken, might tend to complicate the already disturbed situation in southeast Asia."[34] On 11 September, Minister Grant in Bangkok was told the Thai Minister in Washington has been informed:

> The Government of the United States is much concerned over reports that the Thai Government is contemplating the

> sending of its military forces into French Indochina for the purpose of reclaiming by military action territory which now forms a part of French Indochina. The Government of the United States earnestly hopes that these reports have no foundation in fact. If it should become known that the Thai Government intended to take advantage of the present weakness of the French Government by sending a force into French Indochina, such information would tend to encourage or to precipitate other aggressive action against French Indochina and thus inevitably result in a further spread of hostilities which this Government feels would ultimately be disastrous to Thailand and would certainly impair the friendly relations which this Government has happily so long enjoyed with the Thai Government and people.
>
> This Government has already made known to the Thai Government its deep interest in preventing the spread of hostilities in the Pacific area and its belief that the adjustment of problems in international relations should be reached by peaceful negotiation and uncoerced agreement. This Government again expresses its earnest hope that the Thai Government will, as in the past, adhere to the universal principles of fair dealing and good neighborliness to which this Government stands committed."[35]

On the same day, two days after the Department had sent a similar instruction to Chargé Matthews in Vichy,[36] in conversation with the French Ambassador, Secretary Hull strongly criticized Vichy France's seemingly easy acquiescence in Japanese designs on Indochina:

> ... I said that this was another one of several occurrences which caused the American people to think that the French Government at Vichy was not keeping up those extremely important relations between our two countries as heretofore; that the Government of the United States had contested in every way short of military activities every inch of the Japanese movement of aggression, which is intended to cover every square foot of land and sea from Hawaii to Siam for the purpose of the most drastic military, political and economic domination on the sole theory of enriching Japan and Japanese citizens at the expense of the natives everywhere, while all foreign nationals would be driven out and could only return to the Pacific area by paying sky-scraping preferences wherever a preference would be of any value to the Japanese interests; that this invasion contemplates the destruction of all international law, treaty obligations, sovereignty of other

> nations and liberty of their citizens, together with Japanese economic and financial monopolies of any and all kinds, as well. It was in these circumstances, while the United States was thus denying the right of Japan to assert such domination and insisting on the principle of equality of all commercial, industrial and other worthwhile relationships among nations, that the French Government in Indochina, presumably under the direction of the Government at Vichy, has taken the opposite position as to these principles and doctrines and freely conceded to Japan superior and exclusive influence and control in the Pacific area and preferences of all kinds such as must be combated unless two or three nations are to monopolize the world economic and political situation; that to clinch this position the French Government in Indochina agreed to negotiate away the broadest and most vital phase of our contention and our opposition to Japanese intervention in such countries as Indochina, the Netherlands East Indies, et al; that a few weeks ago Japan had solemnly pledged to keep the *status quo* with respect to all these areas, and the French Government cannot imagine our surprise and disappointment when it took this step without any notice whatever to us.
>
> The Ambassador repeatedly assured me that he would take this matter up at once with his government, but, of course, it would seem now to be too late.[37]

Still the same day, Chargé Matthews reported his conversation with Chauvel:

> I . . . endeavored to emphasize the unfortunate effect which present French policy in the Far East is having in the United States. Chauvel was visibly impressed. . . . The French Government, he said, when the question first arose in June had through Saint-Quentin informed us of its critical position in the hope that our Government might then make some *démarche*. As he recalled it, Saint-Quentin had telegraphed that he had been informed by the Department that we were unable under the circumstances "to assume any additional responsibilities in the Far East." Faced then with "this indication that we could render no tangible assistance" and the fear that a firm attitude on the part of France in the Far East would result in the loss of a few more departments in metropolitan France by action at Wiesbaden, the French, "alone and helpless" had decided to admit in principle the possibility of Japanese troop passage through Indochina in the hope of restricting the scale and duration of facilities to a minimum. . . .[38]

On 16 September, Secretary Hull spoke with the British Ambassador and Australian Minister:

> I proceeded to set out the chief acts and utterances of this Government heretofore in its efforts to discourage and deter Japan from aggressive steps not only in China but in Indochina and the Netherlands East Indies in particular. I need not here recount each of such acts and utterances. They are a part of the well-known history of our disturbed relations with Japan during recent years, including oral protests, protests in writing, protests in public statements and various moral embargoes, as well as the discontinuance of our commercial treaty and the stationing of our Navy at Hawaii. I said that there are, of course, real difficulties in attempting to aid provinces to resist Japan seriously by military efforts when the mother countries, as in the case of France, the Netherlands and even Great Britain herself, are known not to be in a position to render any material aid to their dependencies; that in these circumstances, this Government has gone almost to the limit of resisting step by step Japanese aggression without the very serious danger of a military clash. I then added that we have encouraged countries like Indochina, just as we did the British, to delay and parley and hold out to the last minute against Japanese demands, and that in all probability Japan would not dare make a military attack. I said that this Government expects to continue its protests and its opposition to Japanese aggression, and to this end it plans to render further financial aid to China and to impose more and more reprisals or retaliation of a commercial and economic nature on Japan. I expressed the view that it would not be wise even from the British standpoint for two wars to be raging in the East and the West at the same time; that if this country should enter any war, it would immediately result in greatly cutting off military supplies to Great Britain, which she can ill afford to do without; and furthermore most of us are of the opinion that the fate of both the Eastern and Western world will be tremendously affected by the success or failure of the resistance of Great Britain to the threatened and attempted German invasion of the British Isles.[39]

On 18 September, the State Department instructed Grew to see the Japanese Foreign Minister at an early date to point out

> that where two countries are engaged in hostilities insistence by one of those countries, in order to attack the other, of the right of passage of its troops through and the use of airdromes

> in a third country which is not a party to the conflict cannot but seriously affect the *status quo* of such third country and that stipulations of this nature which the Japanese Government are now making of the authorities in Indochina would seem to be inconsistent with the announced desire of the Japanese Government that the *status quo* in the Pacific area be maintained.... It is suggested that you point out that this Government's attitude and policy regarding the unwarranted use of pressure in international relations is global and that we urge upon all governments the employment of none but peaceful means in their relations with all other governments and regions....[40]

That same day, a French diplomat asked a State Department official whether the shipment of some aircraft in Martinique to Indochina for possible use there "would be countenanced by this Government...." The French diplomat thought it was almost idle to ask, "since naturally the planes would have to be shipped and conveyed by a French man-of-war." The State Department official replied that this appeared to be only an academic question.[41] Still the same day, the Department cabled Consul Reed at Hanoi that it was holding conversations with members of an Indochina purchasing mission and the Department was considering ways of "assisting them toward attaining productive results." The Department went on to ask Reed to expand his reporting, especially regarding "the character and status of the relationship between the Government General and the French Government at Vichy...."[42]

The next day, Chargé Matthews was instructed to learn what he could from French authorities in Vichy about a French-Japanese political agreement of 31 August 1940. Matthews was to find out all he could:

> as to the nature and scope (in detail) of Japanese demands and of the negotiations now understood to be proceeding between Japanese military and French authorities in Indochina ... and ... any other engagement which the French Government may contemplate entering into with the Japanese Government....[43]

The Department simultaneously instructed Grew in Tokyo:

> The Consul at Hanoi has informed the Department that the Japanese commanding general has presented demands to the Governor General of Indochina for occupation of Hanoi, Haiphong, and five airports by the armed forces of Japan.

> According to Mr. Reed, General Mishihara has stipulated that unless Japan's demands are accepted, invasion of French Indochina by Japanese armed forces will start on September 22 at 10 p.m.
>
> Please try to see the Minister for Foreign Affairs at earliest moment possible; inform his of the report which the Department has received; and express to him, as under instructions from this Government, the great surprise of the Government of the United States that in the light of all the circumstances, among which is Japan's voluntary pledge previously expressed to maintain and to preserve the *status quo* in the Pacific area, the Japanese authorities in French Indochina should have taken action giving rise to this report. You will also say that the Government of the United States assumes that the report which it has received, if it is based on fact, reflects action taken locally exceeding the instructions of the Government of Japan, as was reputedly the case when a previous ultimatum was presented by Japanese military authorities.
>
> You will further say to the Foreign Minister that the American Government would appreciate receiving assurances from the Government of Japan that the reports which have come to the Department are not warranted and that they represent the intentions neither of the Japanese military authorities at Hanoi nor of the Imperial Government....[44]

The same day, Chargé Matthews reported a conversation with Chauvel in Vichy during which Chauvel handed him a seven-page memorandum in defense of French policy in the Far East since that June. The memorandum pointed out that even before the fall of France "the possibilities for the defense of Indochina were very uncertain.... The only effective help would have been that of the United States....." The memorandum noted that the Japanese threat of invasion against Indochina had been made on 13 June and again on 2 August and stated: The 18th and 19th of June, informed of the situation by the French Ambassador and asked as to the attitude which the American Government would adopt in case of Japanese aggression against Indochina, the Under Secretary of State replied that the United States, not believing it in its power, given the general situation, to enter into war with Japan could do nothing. In the course of the conversation M. de Saint-Quentin mentioned the possibility of closing the frontier. Mr. Sumner Welles showed with respect to this suggestion neither surprise nor any particular emotion....

The memorandum continued:

> [P]laced *au courant* on the 5th of August by the French Ambassador of the Japanese demands with respect to Indochina and advised of the fact that French resistance to these demands would depend in large measure on the nature and effectiveness of the possible support given by the American Government, the Department of State handed on August 6 to Monsieur de Saint-Quentin a reply which recalled the position of principle adopted by the Government of the United States with respect to developments in the Far East but which made no mention of practical measures designed to give to that position concrete results in the presence of an immediate threat.
>
> This negative indication was several times later reiterated. The 17th of August the Minister for Foreign Affairs having summoned the Chargé d'Affaires of the United States to inform him of the Japanese demands and even the terms of the instruction given M. Arsène-Henry on the entire negotiation, Mr. Murphy stated that in the present circumstances it would be vain to expect from the American Government anything other than a verbal condemnation of Japanese initiatives. On the 21st of August Mr. Sumner Welles informing M. de Saint-Quentin of the report of this conversation made by Mr. Murphy stated that the Department of State understood the position of the French Government and since the United States was in no position to come to its aid, it did not believe that it had the right to orient [reproach] the French Government for according military facilities to Japan.
>
> Convinced that henceforth it could not expect practical assistance from Washington which would permit it to resist Japanese aggression, the French Government devoted its efforts to finding a formula designed to avert the threat without compromising any of its rights.[45]

The following day, 20 September, Under Secretary Welles spoke to the French Ambassador:

> The Ambassador said that he believed that the local authorities in Indochina would resist any attempt at invasion by the Japanese, and while he was not authorized to say so officially, he expressed his personal opinion that they would in fact do so.
>
> I asked the Ambassador if he could explain to me the policy which the German Government was pursuing in this regard. I

> asked him if he did not consider it improbable that under present conditions the Japanese Government would now be preparing to occupy French Indo China without at least the tacit approval of the German Government.
>
> The Ambassador said that his own opinion was, resulting from the information he had received in France prior to his departure for the United States, that during the earlier period the German Government had hoped to take over France's colonial possessions in the Far East and it objected strongly to any indication from Japan that Japan herself would like to take such action. However, the Ambassador said he had reached the conclusion that Germany desired the Japanese to immobilize the United States Navy in the Pacific and that in return for an agreement on the part of Japan to pursue a policy which would bring this about, had found herself obliged to give Japan in return the go-ahead signal for the occupation of French, Dutch and British possessions in the Pacific.[46]

In the same conversation, or in a second conversation the same day, the French Ambassador told Welles that his Government could agree neither to return the aircraft in Martinique to the United States nor to ship them to Indochina for use there. According to the Ambassador, either action would require the German Government's approval, which would not be forthcoming. Welles reacted as follows:

> I took occasion to say that it seemed to me in the highest degree ludicrous that the French Mission from Indo-China should now be imploring the Government of the United States, with the support of the French Embassy, to furnish munitions, and particularly airplanes, to French Indo-China, when at this very moment 90 new planes, manufactured in the United States and the property of the French Government, were rotting on the hill sides of Martinique.[47]

That day, too, Grew reported from Tokyo that the Japanese confirmed that an ultimatum had been presented to the Governor General of Indochina.[48]

On 20 September 1940, Under Secretary Welles recorded a conversation with the Japanese Ambassador:

> I said that the Ambassador was undoubtedly aware of the information which had reached this Government that the Japanese military representative in French Indo China, General Nishihara, had been instructed yesterday to present an

ultimatum to the French Governor General making demands which were tantamount to a demand for the complete occupation of French Indo China, with the threat that if these demands were not accepted before ten p.m. Sunday, September 22, the Japanese military forces should at once invade Indo China. I said the Ambassador was likewise in all probability further informed that the French Governor General had refused the demands in question. I said that therefore the civilized world was confronted with a spectacle which in all probability meant that in the immediate future the Government of Japan, in addition to the acts of aggression which it had committed against the Government of China during the past nine years, especially during the past three years, was now about to commit an act of aggression on a colonial possession of the Government of France....

I said that here was once more presented a flagrant case where the official announcements of the Japanese Government were completely counter to the policies and acts of its military authorities, and I concluded by saying that I was, of course, fully aware that the Japanese Ambassador himself could be under no misapprehension as to the very serious disquiet and very open opposition which the action threatened by the Japanese Government would create in the minds of the members of the United States Government and on the part of public opinion in general in this country.

The Japanese Ambassador at first attempted to say that all that the latest demands made by General Nishihara amounted to was compliance with the agreement reached on August 30 between the Vichy Government of France and the Japanese Government. I immediately stated that this obviously was not the case since the demands had been rejected by the French Governor General of Indo China on the specific ground that they were entirely outside the scope of the agreement of August 30. The Ambassador then said that he had not been informed of the exact terms of the ultimatum presented and that he had not been advised of the confirmation of this information which had been given to Ambassador Grew by Foreign Minister Matsouka the night before.

To this I said that it would seem to me obvious that if the Japanese Government found it necessary, for reasons of which we were not aware, to consider taking precautionary measures as a means of preserving, rather than disrupting, the *status quo* in the Far East, this Government would not only have been willing, but glad, to discuss these possibilities with the

> Japanese Government since, as I had said before, it had repeatedly been stated by this Government as its considered policy that it would support the whole structure of international treaties and agreements covering the maintenance of the stability and the *status quo* in the Far East, except in so far as modifications thereto might be agreed upon through negotiation and peaceful processes. I said that I could hardly accept with any sincerity the argument that Japan was now occupying French Indo China solely in order to prevent Germany from undertaking such occupation....
>
> In conclusion I said that I felt it necessary for me to remind the Ambassador of the policy which this Government had publicly announced as the policy which it would pursue with regard to Great Britain, namely, a policy of furnishing to the utmost measure of its ability all material supplies, munitions, et cetera, to Great Britain in order to assist the latter nation to defend herself against the aggression of Germany and her allies. I said that in the Pacific region where this Government likewise desired in its own interest to see peace maintained, the United States was confronted by a series of acts of aggression committed by Japan against her neighbor China, and now in all probability, against the adjacent colony of Indo China. I said that I would be lacking in candor if I did not make it clear to the Ambassador that, consistent with its policy with regard to Great Britain, the United States would likewise feel it necessary to furnish such means of assistance in the way of supplies, munitions, et cetera, for these victims of aggression in the Pacific area as might be required. I said that in view of the violation by Japan of the structure of international law in her dealings with her neighbors in the Far East and her infringement of the legitimate rights of the United States and of American nationals, the Government of Japan could certainly have no ground for complaint because the United States lent assistance of the character I had indicated to China, and to Indo China in the event that the latter was attacked.[49]

On 23 September, the State Department issued a press release which said:

> Events are transpiring so rapidly in the Indochina situation that it is impossible to get a clear picture of the minute-to-minute developments. It seems obvious, however, that the *status quo* is being upset and that this is being achieved under duress. The position of the United States in disapproval and

> in deprecation of such procedures has repeatedly been stated. . . .[50]

The next day, on 24 September, Sumner Welles again braced the French Ambassador with the "absurd" situation regarding the ninety US aircraft in Martinique. After the French Ambassador had informed him that the Japanese had invaded Indochina near Langson and that the Indochinese authorities were determined to resist to the last man:

> The Ambassador asked if it were not possible for the United States to give some assurance that the Indochinese Government could obtain munitions and aviation materiel in the United States. I said to the Ambassador that as a matter of policy the Government of the United States would furnish, so far as might be found possible, material assistance to the victims of aggression in the Far East but that when he made this request of me I was forced to remind him of the fact that at the very moment he was requesting us to sell our planes to Indo-China, ninety airplanes which the French Government had purchased from the United States were fast deteriorating on the hills of Martinique. I said this was an absurd situation which the Ambassador would readily comprehend. The Ambassador again stated that he had done his utmost to persuade his government to send these airplanes to Indo-China. He stated that in response to his very vigorous telegrams to his own Foreign Office on the subject he had received only negative replies which had, in fact, shown great irritation with him because of his insistence. . . .[51]

Two weeks later, on 7 October, Gaston Henry-Haye, the French Ambassador, expressed surprise to Under Secretary Welles that his Government had informed him that

> [T]he German Government had given permission to the French Government to purchase munitions in the United States for the use of the authorities in Indo-China and that he had, consequently, been instructed by his Foreign Minister to take up the negotiations recently conducted by Colonel Jacomy on behalf of the Indo-China Government and to ascertain whether the munitions for the French authorities in Indo-China could now be obtained in the United States. The Ambassador said that upon receipt of this message he had sent a telegram to his Government inquiring whether this implied that the German Government would permit the shipment of the planes now in Martinique to Indo-China. He said

that he had not received any reply to this inquiry as yet. The Ambassador thereupon inquired whether this Government would be prepared to facilitate the purchase by the French authorities in the United States of munitions for Indo-China.

I said to the Ambassador that it must be as evident to him as it was to me that the situation had changed completely since the time some weeks ago when Colonel Jacomy had been informed that this Government would permit the sale of such munitions as might be available to the Government of French Indo-China. I said that since that time the Japanese forces had occupied many points in Indo-China and that it would be the obvious thing for this Government to want to know what practical assurances could be given that the munitions that might be bought here, or the planes that might be sent from Martinique, would not fall into the hands of the Japanese authorities. I said, furthermore, that in as much as all evidence of French resistance to the Japanese occupation had ceased, what reason could now be evidenced by the French Government that the dispatch of the munitions or aviation materiel was of any practical or urgent need.

The Ambassador replied that Indo-China would not only resist further aggression on the part of Japan, but would also probably soon be forced to resist aggression on the part of Siam.

I said that I was sure that the Ambassador must possess the feeling that any action taken by Siam under present conditions must be action taken at least with the tacit acquiescence of Japan. I asked, consequently, whether the Ambassador could for a moment believe that Japan would permit the French Government in Indo-China to acquire munitions at this moment which might be utilized either in resisting Japan or in resisting Siam. I also asked what explanation the Ambassador could give me as to why the German Government should accord permission for the purchase of these munitions at this particular moment when the French Government had been either unable or unwilling to obtain the acquiescence of the German Government six weeks ago to sending perfectly new and powerful airplanes to China before the actual occupation by Japan had begun. To all of these inquiries the Ambassador had no ready reply, and merely stated that he would give me further information as to the situation in Indo-China as a result of an inquiry which he would address to Admiral Decoux, the Governor General.... The Ambassador then said that this made a "very grave situation."

> I said that if he referred to the relations between the two countries, as I assumed he did, and had made this remark on the pretext that this Government was not giving friendly consideration to all the requests of the French Government, I might remind him that public opinion in the United States and the opinion of this Administration had been profoundly affected in a manner adverse to the present French Government by three things: first the disposition of the French fleet; second French refusal to return planes in Martinique to the United States; and third, the negotiation by the Vichy Government of an agreement with Japan which provided for a change in the *status quo* in the Pacific by the occupation of Indo-China, although it was well known to the French Government that the maintenance of the *status quo* in the Far East was a matter of peculiar concern to the United States. . . .[52]

On 9 October Welles had another conversation with the French Ambassador:

> The Ambassador said . . . another telegram . . . set forth that the French Government earnestly desired to obtain for Indo-China munitions in the United States, and even suggested that the American planes which had been destined for Siam and which had been held in Manila by orders of the United States Government be transferred to Indo-China instead.
>
> I stated that with regard to this entire subject I had, of course, nothing whatever to say to the Ambassador until he could inform me what assurances the French Government had to offer as to the safe delivery of any munitions purchased here.
>
> The Ambassador then went on to say that he was further instructed to say that the Italian Armistice Committee had granted permission to the French Government to transport Senegalese troops with munitions and armaments from Djibouti to Indo-China on the French ship *Espérance*. These troops, the Ambassador said, were already en route to Indo-China when the vessel was seized by the British.
>
> The Ambassador said he was further instructed to state that the French Government had obtained permission from the German Armistice Committee to transport troops and armament from France to Indo-China either by the Cape of Good Hope or by way of the Panama Canal. The transports on which these troops would go would be accompanied by two French submarines.
>
> The French Government desired the assistance of the United States Government in obtaining from the British Government

> permission for these troops to leave for Indo-China and also to obtain from the British Government the release of the *Espérance* so that the troops on board might proceed as rapidly as possible to Indo-China for defense purposes.
>
> I told the Ambassador that I would merely commit myself at this stage to stating that I would inquire of the British Government through the British Ambassador what the facts might be with regard to the *Espérance* and that I would reserve any decision as to the policy which this government might follow with regard to asking the British Government to grant the permission desired by the French Government.
>
> I then said to the Ambassador that I would be grateful to him if he could explain to me the reason for the strange anomaly which seemed to be presented by the German and Italian Governments granting permission to the French Government to transport large numbers of troops and quantities of munitions to Indo-China, apparently for defense purposes against the Japanese, at the very moment when the German and Italian Governments had entered into a far-reaching alliance with Japan and when there was every reason to presume that the occupation of Indo-China by Japan had been undertaken only with the full consent and approval of the German and Italian Governments. . . .[53]

On 23 October, the State Department informed Minister Grant in Bangkok that it was suggesting that women and children and men not engaged in essential tasks leave disturbed areas in the Far East, including Indochina.[54] Six weeks later, on 9 December, Robert Murphy, US Chargé in Vichy, reported a conversation with Prime Minister Pierre Laval:

> He hoped that the Secretary would understand from the reply he personally drafted that he is motivated by no desire to play Germany's game but merely to protect French interests and to retain intact France's Colonial Empire. . . . At this point I referred to the reference made by the Secretary that he felt frequently that Laval had failed to keep our Government advised of his policies and his negotiations especially those relating to matters of direct mutual concern such as Indochina. . . . At this point I mentioned to Laval the interest which so many elements in the United States attach to the North African situation, Martinique and to Indochina.
>
> Laval replied that that brought him to something of importance which he wished to convey to the Secretary. Japan, he

> said, has offered its arbitration to settle the present difficulties between Thailand and Indochina. Laval said Arsène-Henry (French Ambassador in Japan) would inform the Tokyo Government in 48 hours that France prefers to settle the difference directly with Thailand or if necessary resort to the good offices of the United States. Laval would also request Henry-Haye to inform the Secretary fully in this connection.
>
> Laval said that he wishes by this action to make plain to the Secretary that he is fully conscious that the power of the United States is the bulwark protecting Indochina against Japanese aggression. At the same time he said that he thought our Government should support the French demand that colonial troops be allowed to proceed to Indochina from Djibouti, this demand having been rejected by Britain without any intelligent reason. Laval added that he hoped that aviation equipment could be sent from the United States to Indochina to strengthen the French position. I asked at this point whether he had ever seriously considered sending the modern planes of American manufacture now in Martinique to Indochina as would be the French right under the armistice convention.... Laval said that he was glad I had mentioned the matter—he would like to see it done and would bring up the question again after a discussion with his colleagues. Personally he saw no objection and did not believe the Germans would oppose....[55]

On 11 December, Under Secretary Welles told the French Ambassador "quite bluntly":

> after full consideration by the appropriate authorities of this Government it had been found impossible to permit the exportation to Indochina of the various categories of munitions listed in the memorandum which he had left with me some ten days ago.
>
> The Ambassador took this without any argument. He then read to me a telegram he had received from the Governor General of Indochina urging that the United States be requested to sell to Indochina the ten airplanes which had been destined for Thailand but which had been held up in the Philippines.
>
> I told the Ambassador that there would be no question of selling these airplanes to Indochina since they were going to be utilized by the United States Army, and that if it were found that any old planes now in the Philippines could be spared, they would be sold to China. I took occasion to state that it

> seemed to me amazing that the French Government would continue to permit the 100 new military planes purchased in the United States to go to pieces in Martinique when these planes would be of enormous value to Indochina in resisting aggression either on the part of Japan or on the part of Thailand. I said I had been very much interested in Mr. Laval's comments on this possibility in his conversation with Mr. Murphy US chargé at Vichy.... The Ambassador thereupon burst into a state bordering upon frenzy. He shouted that he had sent ten telegrams to his Government on that subject insisting that the terms of the armistice made possible the shipment to Indochina of the planes in Martinique and that each time he had been turned down flatly with the statement that the terms of the armistice would not permit. Now he was informed that Mr. Laval was taking a contrary view. He said he would immediately telegraph his Government and insist that steps be taken at once to ship these planes to Indochina.[56]

On 19 December, Chargé Matthews cabled from Vichy a report of his conversation with Chauvel of the French Foreign Ministry, in which Chauvel sought clarification of US policy regarding selling equipment to French Indochina:

> It seems to him either that we are interested for our own reasons of policy in seeing the French maintain the integrity and independence of Indochina or we are not. If we are he hopes we can ... [garble: see our way clear?] to selling the 30 or 40 airplanes, antiaircraft, and antitank guns requested immediately. If we are not in position to give this assistance the French will have to modify their policy, possibly accepting the Japanese offer of mediation which has just been rejected.... But they do want to know where they stand....[57]

The Department of State instructed Matthews two days later to bear in mind that US war production was not yet sufficient to meet both US needs and requests from foreign governments. The Department noted that decisions in this regard were made on a case-by-case basis and that French Indochina was being supplied with a number of items. However, the Department observed to Matthews, the US Government thought it only natural that France in requesting from the United States aircraft and other war material for Indochina, should first use the planes and other material it already had available in Martinique and elsewhere in its colonial empire. The Department saw no evidence that France was prepared to do that.[58]

Exploratory US-Japanese Conversations Begin

As 1941 opened, events and issues piled one upon the other. With the direct threat of Japanese aggression against Indochina, that country finally got the attention of American officials. Even then, however, the Americans were concerned more on the one hand at Japan's growing power in the Far East and on the other at the direct threat Japan's occupation of Indochina would pose to the commodity-rich Dutch East Indies. Indochina itself was not a prize.

On 7 January, regarding the French Embassy's proposal that commercial negotiations be undertaken directly between the United States and Indochina, Mr. Culbertson, Assistant Chief of the State Department's European Affairs Division, recorded his view:

> "His [the French Embassy's financial secretary] oral offer was so presented as to make it appear that acceptance would imply the giving of favorable consideration to the proposal for trade agreement discussions between Indochina and the United States. The possibility of such an arrangement being reached with Indochina seemed so remote to me that I did not wish to accept an offer with strings attached to it...."[1]

The same day, the British Chargé handed Under Secretary Welles an *aide-mémoire* which contained the following passage: "His Majesty's Government have noted Mr. Welles' view that any cessions of territory made by the French to the Thais in present circumstances would be virtually concessions to blackmail with possible repercussions elsewhere...."[2]

Three days later on 10 January, the Department replied to the British on Thailand:

> This Government shares the view of the British Government that it would be desirable that the dispute between Thailand and French Indochina be settled peacefully and without delay....
>
> The Government of the United States recognizes the value of endeavor by diplomatic processes to influence the course of events in directions consistent with this Government's principles and objectives. This Government concurs in the view of

> the British Government that a proposal of open mediation by the United States and the British Government would be unlikely to succeed. In view of this belief ... this Government does not perceive what useful contribution along the lines of mediation it could make at the present time. Should negotiations between the two parties be undertaken directly or otherwise and should a situation develop in which the parties might consider that this Government could to advantage offer friendly counsel, this Government would, of course, be prepared to consider such proposal in the light of the attendant circumstances.[3]

The same day, Under Secretary Welles recorded a conversation with the French Ambassador, who opened the meeting by reading to Welles a telegram from Admiral Decoux, Governor General of Indochina, describing hostilities on the Thai border and appealing urgently for munitions:

> The Governor General concluded his message by stating that as a result of the recrudescence of hostilities along the frontier of Thailand, the French troops had lost two officers and thirty non-commissioned officers who had been killed, and six officers and some fifty non-commissioned officers who had been wounded. The Ambassador made this the basis for a very urgent appeal that munitions be supplied immediately to the Government of Indochina by the unfreezing of sufficient of the blocked balances of the Indochinese Government to purchase the munitions required. I told the Ambassador that I would again ask that full consideration be given to this request but that I must state to him again very emphatically that there was no way by which this Government considered it could release to the Government of Indochina any airplanes until and unless the French Government had agreed to ship the airplanes at Martinique to Indochina.
>
> The Ambassador then asked urgently that this Government intervene with the Government of Thailand so that United States influence might be exercised to prevent the outbreak of open warfare between Thailand and Indochina.
>
> I told the Ambassador that I had two statements in this regard to make to him. First, I stated that the Secretary of State himself would see the Minister of Thailand tomorrow morning and communicate to him the views of the Government of the United States with regard to the situation which was developing between Thailand and Indochina. The opinion of the United States would be expressed that Thailand was

> permitting itself to be maneuvered by Japanese influence into such a position that it would soon find itself completely under the hegemony and domination of Japan and would be reduced to a state of outright vassalage.
>
> Secondly, I stated to the Ambassador that the British Government had agreed in principle and upon certain conditions to interpose no objection to the shipment of airplanes from Martinique to Indochina. I added that since this was the case, I assumed that the Ambassador would now carry out the plan which he had mentioned to me in our previous conversation and urge his Government obtain immediately the authority which it apparently believed necessary under the terms of the armistice with Germany in order that these planes might be shipped to Indochina.
>
> The Ambassador expressed great gratification for these two statements which I had made to him and said that, with regard to the second, he would urge that his Government take immediately the action suggested.[4]

On 13 January, Secretary Hull called in the Thai Minister, Seni Pramoj (who later became Prime Minister of Thailand). After opening courtesy remarks about America's "friendly interest" in the people of Thailand, Hull suggested they exchange information on the situation in Thailand and in "that area of the world generally." The Thai Minister said:

> his country had been accused of taking unfair advantage of Indochina and France by raising the question of a return of territory to Thailand at a time when Indochina and France were in grave distress. He then said that, if his country had had any desire thus to take advantage of France, it would have done so in June just after the fall of France, whereas in fact it was not until after August, when the situation was very disruptive, that Thailand proceeded to make its demands for a return of territory, and then limited it to two narrow strips of land instead of the large area that was taken by France, but without results. The Minister denied that his Government at that time was acting in any way in concert with Japan. He indicated that his country, being in a serious position and not receiving aid or comfort from other nations, it was not unnatural that it received Japan's overtures of cooperation favorably and permitted Japan to become closely associated with the Thai situation. He protested earnestly that Japan was not to have any special favors or favors of a discriminatory nature in return and that they had confidence that she was

> acting more or less altruistically. This was the substance of his remarks.
>
> I said that I was glad to have the benefit of his statements ... that this Government for the past eight years in particular has striven in every possible way to prevail on Japan to pursue a course based on law, peace and justice, and fair dealing and fair play instead of pursuing the opposite course of lawlessness and conquest in her efforts to gain control of the entire Pacific area extending as far as India, according to the usual interpretation of the term Eastern Asia. With respect to financial aid for China in particular, we had endeavored to bring about every kind of friendly relations and other methods of mutually desirable cooperation, et cetera, et cetera, but at all times the Japanese military group in control steadfastly refused to accept our overtures and pleas, but instead deliberately pursued a course of lawlessness and invasion which has been extended throughout most of China together with the occupation of countries farther south, such as Indochina and important harbors there. The French Government at Vichy at the instance of someone agreed for the Japanese to send 6,000 troops and airplanes into Indochina without material resistance. I then said that the Japanese, of course, made their appearance in Thailand at a psychological time and posed as genuine disinterested and unselfish friends, as they had on similar occasions in other countries and as Hitler had in many countries of Europe before absorbing them. I added that the military group in Japan is undoubtedly out for general domination in that entire southern area, a fact they really avow rather than disavow, and that probably in due course both Indochina and Thailand will be brought under the sovereignty of Japan just as Manchuria in Asia, and Norway and Holland in Europe and other countries as well have been brought under the domination of the Japanese or Hitler as the case may be. I said that I would not be a true friend of the people or government of his country unless I frankly expressed this view and that in any event I desired to make a record of it. He showed no disposition to question what I said but expressed his appreciation.[5]

The same day the State Department instructed Ambassador Leahy at Vichy to make an early approach to the French Foreign Office:

> The Government of the United States is perturbed at the renewed reports of the intensification of border fighting

> between Indochinese and Thai forces. It seems obvious to this Government that the fundamental factors in this situation are the activities and aims of aggressor nations which are alert to seize upon conditions of strife to further their own purposes. This Government believes that it is highly important that both the French authorities and the Thai authorities recognize these fundamental factors and pursue courses which take them fully into consideration with the object of averting developments which sooner or later are likely to result in domination by aggressor nations of their territories in one form or another—economic, political, or military....[6]

On 21 January, the Department instructed Grew in Tokyo to inform the Japanese Foreign Office that "this Government is not aware of any right on the part of the Japanese forces in French Indochina to engage in procedures of confiscation or to require or to request that American firms produce evidence of their ownership of merchandise in that country, in connection with exports or otherwise...."[7]

The following day, Secretary Hull recorded a conversation with the British Chargé, who said:

> the British Minister at Bangkok had informed him and his Government that the Government of Thailand was pleased with the conversation I had with the Thai Minister some days ago relative to the controversy between Thailand and Indochina and the probability that Japan would swallow up both countries in due course. I replied that ... I was not sure whether this Government would be able to do anything more in the matter than what it was now doing; that Japan probably is directing and controlling the course and attitude of Thailand toward the Indochina situation and that in these circumstances it may be very difficult to get the ear of the Thai Government.[8]

About this time, following conversations with British Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden in London, Presidential assistant and confidant Harry Hopkins recorded in a private note views he felt he could not put in his report sent through official channels:

> Eden asked me repeatedly what our country would do if Japan attacked Singapore or the Dutch East Indies, saying it was essential to their policy to know. Of course, it was perfectly clear that neither the President nor Hull could give an adequate answer to the British on that point because the

> declaration of war is up to the Congress, and the isolationists and, indeed, a great part of the American people, would not be interested in a war in the Far East merely because Japan attacked the Dutch.[9]

Robert E. Sherwood, Roosevelt's friend and biographer, comments, "These urgent questions by the British as to American intentions in the event of further Japanese aggression in the Far East were repeated many times during subsequent months but they remained unanswered until the day of Pearl Harbor."[10]

Hull, in his memoirs, justifies American policy and claims that its firmness obliged the Japanese to pause in their aggressive policies, which gave the British time to grow stronger with US help:

> Having occupied a few bases in French Indo-China and dispatched troops into China through the French colony, she [Japan] refrained from the full-scale military occupation that the Nipponese Army had had in mind. She tried to obtain sweeping economic concessions in the Netherlands East Indies, but postponed any project of occupying them militarily.
>
> If our policy had shown any signs of weakness or wavering, Japan would not have hesitated to take over all Indo-China and the Netherlands Indies, and perhaps Malaya as well.[11]

On 27 January, Ambassador Grew cabled Hull from Tokyo that his Peruvian colleague had told him he had heard from several sources, including a Japanese one, "that a surprise mass attack on Pearl Harbor was planned by the Japanese military forces in case of 'trouble' between Japan and the United States; that the attack would involve the use of all the Japanese military facilities...." Hull notes laconically in his memoirs that "On the following day we communicated the contents of the cable to the War and Navy Departments."[12]

On 30 January, the State Department addressed an *aide-mémoire* to the French Embassy responding to the French proposal earlier in the month that the United States enter into trade negotiations directly with Indochina:

> This Government is continuing to study the possibilities of entering into negotiations with respect to a general trade agreement, and, in the meantime, would find it useful if the French Government, as suggested in its *aide-mémoire*, would request its Ambassador at Tokyo to furnish the American Ambassador there with information relative to the progress of the commercial conversations between Indochina and Japan.

> This Government has regularly given full consideration to offers to sell with respect to such commodities as rubber, tin, tungsten and antimony which have been transmitted to this Government by the Government of Indochina. This Government is prepared to continue its policy of considering, with a view to purchase, offers with respect to the above-named or similar commodities which the Government of Indochina may make.[13]

On 4 February, Under Secretary Welles spoke with the French Ambassador at the latter's request. The conversation was spirited:

> The Ambassador spoke in the most dejected way and was evidently suffering from the impact of information which he had received regarding the recent developments in Vichy.
>
> The Ambassador brought up again the question of Indochina and attempted to prove that the reason why the French Government had given in to the Japanese demands and to the Japanese offer of mediation between Indochina and Thailand was the fact that the United States had not permitted the sending of munitions to Indochina. I told the Ambassador that I could not accept this contention; that, as I had frequently said to the Ambassador the sending of aviation materiel to Indochina was contingent upon the willingness or ability of the French Government to transfer perfectly good modern combat planes now in Martinique to Indochina. I said that the Ambassador had informed me that the German Government had refused to agree to such a transfer and that I did not see how the United States could be held responsible in the slightest degree for this decision. I said further that with regard to the shipment of other kinds of munitions, the Ambassador was fully aware of our own rearmament problem and of our policy with regard to assisting the British. I said that if, within the limitations of these requirements, other munitions had been shipped to Indochina, it would have been on such a very small scale as to render no material assistance whatever to the authorities in Indochina and might of course, in view of the situation now, have fallen into the hands of the Japanese.
>
> The Ambassador then seemed to change his argument to the complaint that the British had not permitted four transports of Senegalese troops to proceed by way of the Red Sea to increase the garrison in Indochina and that the United States could have brought pressure to bear upon the British to bring about the release of these transports. I stated that as the Ambassador well knew, I had brought the Ambassador's

> requests in this regard upon two occasions to the attention of the British Embassy in Washington and that these requests had been referred to London. I said that, of course, the United States could not decide for the British what their decision in matters of war policy of this character should be.[14]

On 8 February, the State Department instructed Grew in Tokyo to again request immediate cessation of unwarranted Japanese interference with the movement of American-owned merchandise in Indochina, noting that Japanese refusal to allow American companies to re-export goods from Haiphong was directly contrary to earlier Japanese assurances.[15]

That same day, the State Department instructed Ambassador Leahy to receive any such commodity sale proposals offered by the French Government, and addressed a parallel *aide-mémoire* to the French Embassy:

> The Government of the United States, in pursuance of its policy of acquiring stock piles of essential materials, desires at the earliest possible moment to conclude contracts with the Government General of Indochina for the purchase of rubber, tin, tungsten, antimony and similar commodities.... Noting the French Government's desire that the necessary commercial conversations be carried on in Vichy, this Government has instructed its Ambassador to France to receive any proposals which the French Government may have to make with respect to contracts for the sale of commodities in question by the Government General of Indochina to agencies of this Government....
>
> [I]t is pertinent to point out that the Government of the United States had been informed that the Government at Vichy, has prohibited all sales of rubber pending the establishment of a government purchasing bureau for rubber now being organized; that exporters at Saigon have endeavored without success to have the Government General request authority from Vichy to make another contract with the Rubber Reserve Company, an agency of this Government; that the entire January and February production is to be shipped to France; and that it is not possible at the present time to make a new contract with the Rubber Reserve Company. It is also pertinent to point out that it has been reported to the Government of the United States that a joint German-Japanese concern has arranged to purchase 25,000 tons of Indochinese rubber, more than half of which is to go to Germany. There

> appears to be an inconsistency between the desire of the French Government to enter into immediate commercial negotiation with the United States concerning rubber and other commodities, the refusal of the Government General of Indochina, under instructions from the French Government, to enter into further contracts with the Rubber Reserve Company, and the apparent willingness of the Government General of Indochina to make available a large amount of Indochinese rubber to a joint German-Japanese concern.[16]

Three days later, the State Department renewed its earlier instructions to American posts in Tokyo, Peiping, Hong Kong, and Indochina to quietly advise American citizens, especially women and children and men performing inessential tasks, to "withdraw to the United States." In doing so,

> the Embassy and consulates are to understand and should explain to American inquirers that this Government is making no assumption that a situation of acute physical danger to American nationals in imminent, but that this Government, in the light of obvious trends in the Far Eastern situation, desires to reduce the risks to which American nationals and their interests are exposed by virtue of uncertainties and, through the process of withdrawal of unessential personnel, to improve its position in relation to problems which may at any time be presented of affording maximum appropriate protection to those persons who are not in a position to withdraw, those interests which cannot be abandoned, and those principles and those rights to which it is the duty of the American Government to give all appropriate support at all times....
>
> The Department does not contemplate sending a special vessel or special vessels to assist in the withdrawal and American nationals who make inquiry in this particular connection should be advised to take advantage of such transportation facilities as may be currently available....[17]

In early February 1941, Kichisaburo Nomura, a new Japanese Ambassador, arrived in Washington. Prior to Nomura's arrival, Hull reviewed with the President all aspects of United States-Japanese relations. According to Hull, they both concluded that with the risk of war constantly growing in the Far East, the gravity of the situation in Europe and on the Atlantic, and the need for time to build up American and allied defenses, the United States should do whatever it could to bring about a "peaceful, fair, and stabilizing settlement of the whole Pacific question.... But we also agreed that, while

carrying no chip on our shoulders in our negotiations with Japan, we could not sacrifice basic principles without which peace would be illusory."[18]

Nomura paid his first call on Hull on 12 February. Two days later, they both called on the President, and the latter suggested that Nomura sit down with Hull and his colleagues to review all aspects of United States-Japanese relations to see if those relations could be improved. Subsequently, in Hull's first substantive conversation with Nomura, when Nomura said several times that Japan was not committed to a course of conquest, Hull replied:

> As long as Japanese forces are all over China, and Japanese troops, planes, and warships are as far south as Thailand and IndoChina, accompanied by such threatening declarations as Japanese statesmen are making week after week, there can only be increasing concern by nations vitally interested in halting world conquest by force and barbaric methods of government.[19]

Two or three times, Hull asked Nomura if he wished to pursue the President's suggestion that United States-Japanese relations be reviewed in detail in an effort to settle differences between the two countries. Nomura professed interest but had no suggestions to offer. On 14 March, Hull and Nomura met again with Roosevelt. During this discussion, Hull reiterated his view of the situation:

> Of course, with Matsuoka [Japanese Foreign Minister] astride the Axis on his way to Berlin and talking loudly as he goes and with Japanese naval and air forces in the vicinity of Indo-China and Thailand, with no explanation but with serious inferences concerning their presence there, you must realize how acute the feeling in this country has become. Since Japan has departed from the course that most other countries have been pursuing, the initiative and responsibility are hers to suggest what, how, and when she is willing to undertake serious discussions with us. Above all, she must make it clear by words and acts whether her intentions in this direction are serious.[20]

Meanwhile, Japan mediated the border dispute between Indochina and Thailand and awarded the latter "a liberal slice of territory."[21] On 9 April, Hull received some proposals for resolution of United States-Japanese differences developed through informal channels between private Americans and Japanese representatives, including Ambassador Nomura. Although Hull found these proposals

disappointingly one-sided, he concluded that some of the points might be accepted and still others might be negotiable, and that no opportunity should be overlooked that might lead to serious conversations with Japan. Hull met with Nomura and handed him a set of principles which, if Japan accepted and if the Japanese Government approved the informal proposals and instructed him to present them to the United States, could form the basis for starting conversations. Nomura, after some further discussions, sent the 9 April informal document to Tokyo along with Hull's four principles and other observations, and, as Hull records, "we sat down to await the Japanese reply."[22] On 12 May, after several efforts by Nomura to probe for softness in the American position, he handed to Hull Japan's official proposals and, as Hull says, "A basis was laid, as of May 12, for the discussions that went on, with one interruption, up to Pearl Harbor."[23]

Hull set forth in his memoirs the considerations that led Roosevelt to decide to proceed with the discussions:

> As I communicated to the President our impressions of the draft agreement, we had to decide whether to begin the conversations with the Japanese. As the document stood, it offered little basis for an agreement, unless we were ready to sacrifice some of our most basic principles, which we were not. Nevertheless, it was a formal and detailed proposal from Japan. To have rejected it outright would have meant throwing away the only real chance we had had in many months to enter with Japan into a fundamental discussion of all the questions outstanding between us.
>
> The President and I figured that if there were the slightest possibility of inducing Japan to withdraw from the Axis alliance, we should pursue it, for this would be a sharp blow to Hitler and a fillip to the Allies. Even a gradual withdrawal of Japan would have its worth.
>
> Consequently, we decided to go forward on the basis of the Japanese proposals and seek to argue Japan into modifying here, eliminating there, and inserting elsewhere, until we might reach an accord we could both sign with mutual good will.[24]

Hull's conversations with Nomura, and later with Nomura and Kurusu, were reminiscent of John Russell Young's conversations with China's leadership nearly sixty years before, which sought to avoid war between China and France over the latter's occupation of Tonkin (see Part IV). In both cases, the conversations lasted over an

extended period of time; they were broad-ranging in scope and content; they reflected contact between vastly different cultures; and ultimately, they failed and were supplanted by the use of force. Also, in both cases, American concern stemmed largely from American interests in China, which were thought threatened in the first instance by French intervention in Tonkin and in the second instance by Japanese intervention in the same area. There were differences too. Young's conversations with the China were between friends; Hull's conversations with the Japanese were adversarial.

While Hull's broad discussions with the Japanese envoy were going on, normal diplomatic discourse continued as well. On 28 May, the State Department instructed Leahy at Vichy to protest the fact that French Indochinese authorities in Hanoi, under pressure from the Japanese military, ordered American representatives of the United States Far Eastern Trading Corporation and the North American Syndicate to hand over keys to the warehouses of the two companies "in order that the Japanese might seize and remove from the warehouses merchandise in most of which there is a definite American interest, both official and private." Leahy was to state that the US Government reserved "in its own behalf and in behalf of such of its nationals as may be interested all rights in the matter."[25]

The same day, the State Department instructed Grew to protest vigorously to the Japanese authorities, stating that the United States "recognizes no right on the part of the Japanese military in French Indochina to take such action and that this Government reserves all rights in regard to property involved in which it or its nationals may have an interest. . . ." Grew was also to ask for the release of the seized cargoes.[26]

By early June, Hull's memoirs record:

> What had happened thus far was the opposite of what the President and I had hoped would happen. We had been willing to accept the Japanese proposals on May 12 as a basis for discussion knowing full well they could not be accepted as they stood, but hoping that our subsequent discussion would bring about modifications that would make them acceptable. But as soon as the Japanese Government realized we were willing to use the May 12 proposals as a basis for discussion, they began instantly to move, not in our direction with more conciliatory proposals, but in the opposite direction with changes that brought the proposals more into line with their imperialistic ambitions and their Axis alliance.[27]

On 2 July, Ambassador Leahy reported that on his own initiative, he had made clear to the French Foreign Office that if France had any thought of following Germany and Italy in recognizing the Japanese-backed Chinese regime at Nanking, it "should before doing so be well aware of the unfortunate impression such a step would cause in the United States and of its bearing on the position of French Indochina after the war...."[28]

On the same day, Japanese Foreign Minister Matsuoka sent Admiral Nomura a message, which the US Government intercepted, stating *inter alia* that "Preparations for southward advance shall be reinforced and the policy already decided upon with reference to French Indochina and Thailand shall be executed...."[29]

On 10 July, Acting Secretary Welles spoke with Lord Halifax, the British Ambassador:

> Lord Halifax then ... inquired what the Government of the United States would do in the event that Japan occupied Indochina entirely. I stated that the President has authorized me to say that ... the Government of the United States would immediately impose various embargoes, both economic and financial, which measures had been under consideration for some time past....[30]

Six days later, Grew sent a report foreshadowing the Japanese occupation of southern French Indochina:

> The following is a paraphrase of a secret telegram received today from London by my British colleague:
>
> 1. It is learnt that the Japanese Ambassador at Vichy has been instructed to present to the French Government a demand for bases in French Indochina. The demand is to be made with a time limit later identified as July 20. In case the French Government accepts the demand the Japanese occupation will be carried out peacefully and territorial integrity guarantees will be given. Materiel, goods and arms will be promised. In case of French refusal the occupation will be carried out by force and Japanese Ambassador has been directed to hint that important changes for Indochina may be involved.
> 2. The Japanese attach great importance to the United States and Great Britain having no prior information for fear complications might be created. The French Ambassador therefore is not being informed lest he inform his American and British colleagues.[31]

The same day, the State Department informed Leahy in Vichy of this development and accompanied it with the following urgent instruction:

> The President suggests that it would be desirable for you to talk with Marshal Pétain personally as soon as possible regarding this matter, expressing the hope that a decision by the French Government may be put off as long as possible. For your confidential information only, from the standpoint of this Government even should the French Government eventually have to give in (which, unfortunately, seems inevitable), all of the time gained before France gives in is advantageous to the interests of the United States. Any tactics, therefore, which Marshal Pétain's Government may be able to employ by means of dilatory negotiations to string out the discussions and to postpone the date when actual movement will be undertaken by the Japanese will be highly desirable. Please keep the Department informed by telegram of all the statements which may be made to you in this connection, requesting that your conversations be regarded as completely confidential.[32]

The following day, 17 July, Hamilton, Chief of the State Department's Division of Far Eastern Affairs, spoke by telephone to Secretary Hull, who was recuperating from an illness at White Sulphur Springs in West Virginia. This conversation and the several that followed—which probably would not have been recorded if Hull had not been ill and out of Washington—revealed Hull's strategy:

> The Secretary commented that we would wish to approach the (new) Japanese Government with a view to obtaining clarification as to its policy in such a way as not to give offense or to be irritating to the Japanese.
>
> If the information or indications which we should receive as to the new Japanese Cabinet's policies and courses should be that the Japanese Government would carry out peaceful courses and rely on peaceful methods, then of course our attitude could be shaped accordingly. If the indications should be that the sum and substance of the Japanese position is to stay hooked up with Hitler's program of conquest, such as would be indicated by Japan's acquiring by force or threats of force military and naval bases in French Indochina, then the Secretary believed that we should develop a broad program designed to deter Japan and to place obstacles in the way of Japan's program of conquest. The Secretary suggested that there might be included in such program the granting to

> China of a further substantial loan of $100,000,000 or $200,000,000. The Secretary mentioned that we might care also to consider granting a loan to France if French Indochina should decide to resist Japan's demands for acquisition of naval and military bases. As further steps in such a program, the Secretary thought that the civil agencies of the Government should work out concrete measures, the results of which would be to impose economic, financial and other restrictions upon Japan. The Secretary believed also that thought should be given to them in any such program. The Secretary expressed the view that such a program would be characterized by a general tightening up but always short of becoming involved in war with Japan. He manifested his view that the Far Eastern situation should be viewed in its relation to the world situation and to our policy of extending all possible aid to Great Britain....
>
> During our conversation, I made the comment to the Secretary that I was not certain in my own mind as to the advisability of this Government's, in the event that Japan should acquire military and naval bases in French Indochina, forthwith instituting a program of drastic economic and other restrictive measures against Japan. I said that if there was any doubt in the Japanese official mind as to whether Japan should go against Siberia or against the Dutch East Indies and Malaya, It seemed to me that it would be decidedly preferable that Japan go northward rather than southward and that it would not be to our interests to take action which might influence Japan to go southward rather than northward. The Secretary stated that he was inclined to think that Japan's main attention was centered southward and that any action Japan might take against Siberia would be only after the collapse of Soviet resistance, should that occur, when Japan would simply pick up the pieces preparatory to embarking on a southward movement.
>
> The Secretary said that these were merely his initial impressions....[33]

Hamilton had another conversation with Hull the next day, in which Hull suggested for consideration certain thoughts.

> 1. The acquirement by Japan of military and naval bases in French Indochina would constitute a menace to the Philippine Islands and to peaceful commerce with a very important section of the world, the products of which are of special importance to the United States and many other nations. Such acquirement would also constitute a step

prejudicial to the peace and stability of the whole Pacific area.

2. There is no danger to Japan from anyone and any thought on Japan's part of acquiring bases in French Indochina because of that factor would not be warranted. The British had no aggressive intention against Japan, the United States had none, the Dutch had none, the French had none, and there is certainly no reason to believe that the Soviet Union is planning aggressive action against Japan.

On this point I commented to the Secretary that while our attitude on this matter was entirely logical and justifiable from our point of view, there were many Japanese who honestly and sincerely believed that a possible combination of the United States and the Soviet Union, or a combination of Great Britain and the Soviet Union, definitely would constitute a menace to Japan. I said that many of these Japanese had very narrow concepts and ideas. I said that it would be very difficult to convince Japanese leaders that they were not in danger at this time as a result of political and military developments in the Far East which some of them viewed as steps directed toward the encirclement of Japan.

3. The Secretary suggested as a third point that Japan could get everything she wants in the way of expanded trade and prosperity for her people by going forward with a peaceful settlement with the United States. The Secretary mentioned that he had had constantly in mind, following any peaceful settlement with the United States, endeavoring to bring about similar peaceful settlements between Japan and Great Britain and Japan and the Netherlands.

The Secretary commented that the only warrant for Japan proceeding to acquire military and naval bases in French Indochina was as a preliminary to going south.

The Secretary said that he thought it was very important, in view of developments, that we had already approached the Japanese Government twice in regard to reports that the Japanese Government intended to acquire military and naval bases in French Indochina.

The Secretary indicated that he thought that we should allow the new Japanese Government to get its feet on the ground and then we should continue our effort to cause the Japanese Government to see that its own best interests did not lie in the direction of further pursuit of a policy of aggression but rather along peaceful lines.[34]

The next day, 19 July, Hornbeck, the State Department's Political Adviser, sent Acting Secretary Welles a brief memorandum summarizing a memorandum he had forwarded the day before.

> There were three parts to the program of action which I suggested in my memorandum of yesterday regarding action to be taken when Japanese action in and against Indochina becomes obvious: namely, economic pressures and, simultaneously with the application thereof, expedition of additional aid to China and new disposals of armed forces (especially planes) in the Far East (especially at Manila). I hope that none of the three will be overlooked and that all three of these measures will be taken simultaneously.[35]

Hull's memoirs record that the Japanese occupied the southern portions of French Indochina on 21 July, "and were now in possession of the whole of France's strategic province, pointing like a pudgy thumb toward the Philippines, Malaya and the Dutch East Indies."[36]

"The Pudgy Thumb" Falls and Talks Resume

Ironically, after over a century of American unconcern about Indochina—after over a century of considering Indochina an area unconnected to America's military or economic interests—it was Indochina's progressive subjugation by Japan in 1940 and 1941 that triggered a sudden turnabout in Washington's strategic assessment. Indochina was still unimportant in itself to the United States—it had few natural resources and US commercial interests were minimal. But, removed from friendly control, it offered an unfriendly power a springboard for threatening areas of real concern to the United States: China, which had been under Japanese attack for nearly a decade and which the United States was pledged to support; the commodity-rich Dutch East Indies and the Malay States; the sea lanes from the Indian Ocean to the Pacific; and the entire South Pacific area.

The United States had had little interest in, or concern about, France's moves to occupy Indochina in the nineteenth century. But in the twentieth century, with technological developments in transportation and communications, and with the expansion of America's power and interests in the Pacific area, the upset of the status quo—the loss of the European colonial empires through combined Axis onslaughts in Europe and Asia—led to a wholly different appraisal of American interests and the threats to those interests. Moreover, real American interests in China and the genuine American desire not to undermine either Chiang Kai-shek or the British and Dutch positions in Asia in the face of growing Japanese pressure narrowed Washington's choices, short of war, in seeking to resolve differences with Japan.

As American economic measures against Japan tightened, Southeast Asia's resources became more important to Japan's objectives and thus made expansion southward inevitable. Thus, American and Japanese interests in the region clashed and Indochina became a focal point for that clash.

On the day the Japanese moved against southern Indochina, Secretary Hull and Under Secretary Welles spoke by telephone. The conversation was recorded by Cecil Gray, Assistant to the Secretary.

> Secretary Hull raised for consideration Vichy's appealing to Hitler to help stop the Japanese from carrying out the much discussed move on French Indochina.

> Secretary Hull likewise suggested for consideration with the Far Eastern Division the desirability of having one more talk with Admiral Nomura. The Secretary said that we could review for the Admiral our whole policy and discussions looking toward a peaceful settlement of Pacific questions. During all this time certain elements in the Japanese Government have been moving in the opposite direction of force and conquest. We desire to see the new Government move in the direction of a peaceful settlement even though it felt that it would to do so gradually. If the Japanese Government had such intention to agree with our ideas, we could be very patient and collaborate in all practical ways. However, if the new Government is not prepared to move along the lines of a peaceful settlement, but takes action showing the world that it is following a policy of force and conquest,... then we would merely state that it knows what sort of position this decision leaves us and other peaceful nations in.[1]

Hamilton, Chief of the State Department's Far Eastern Division, spoke again with Hull that day regarding a possible further meeting with the Japanese Ambassador:

> The Secretary suggested that if the Ambassador should say that the political situation in Japan would not permit the Japanese Government to make a drastic change in its policy at this time, we could indicate a disposition to be patient while the Japanese Government developed public opinion in Japan by their own means and in such ways as the Government thought best. The only thing which would be needed at this time as a first step to indicate that the Japanese Government sincerely desired to pursue courses of peace would be for the Japanese Government to desist from any reported plans to go ahead with the acquisition of military and naval bases in French Indochina. Any such move on Japan's part would, the Secretary said, of course be regarded by the world as a step of aggression.[2]

On the same day—the day the Japanese occupied southern Indochina—Admiral Nomura informed Rear Admiral Turner, Director of the Navy Department's War Plans Division, that "within the next few days Japan expects to occupy French Indo-China." Turner's report of the conversation stated:

> How the occupation would be made he is not informed; presumably, it would be chiefly by an over-land march from Hanoi southward, but on this he is not yet informed. In any

> case, for the immediate future security of Japan, both against a possible attack from the south and for a better control over the activities of Chungking, this occupation has become essential.... The occupation of Indo-China by Japan is particularly important for the defense of the United States since it might threaten the British position in Singapore and the Dutch position in the Netherlands East Indies. Were they to pass out of their present control, a very severe blow would be struck at the integrity of the defense of the British Isles, and these Isles might well then be overcome by the Germans. It can thus be seen what a very close interest, from a military viewpoint, the United States has in sustaining the *status quo* in the southern portion of the Far East....[3]

On 23 July, Cecil Gray recorded yet another telephone conversation between Hull and Welles.

> The Secretary spoke of the latest venture of Japan toward acquiring bases in Indochina in the face of the fact that Japan was not threatened by any nation on the globe. This southward movement, he said, stemmed from a policy of force and conquest....
>
> There followed an exchange of views as to what Mr. Welles should say to the Japanese Ambassador later in the afternoon when he kept an appointment with Mr. Welles.
>
> The Secretary's general idea was that if the Japanese Ambassador attempted to explain away the Indochina move by saying that it has been brought about by peaceful means, then such "peaceful means" were completely contrary to the spirit of the discussions between the United States and Japanese Governments looking toward a friendly settlement in the Pacific. The United States Government, Mr. Hull said, could only be driven to the conclusion that our discussions for a friendly settlement had been wiped out by the Indochina development. The Secretary said that if we waited until he came home to tell Ambassador Nomura the foregoing, then it would come too late as a warning to Japan. We must let them see the seriousness of the step they have taken and let them know that such constitutes an unfriendly act because it helps Hitler to conquer Britain. The Secretary said that if we did not tell the Ambassador all this, he would not sit down with Admiral Nomura when he came back to Washington. It would be a farce to do so....
>
> Secretary Hull then ... said that Mr. Welles might begin the conversation by speaking to Admiral Nomura concerning a

> readjustment of the United States position via-à-vis Japan somewhat as follows: There is a profound belief everywhere, in view of many reports from many sources, that the Japanese movement into Indochina has two probable purposes, or at least two possibilities this Government cannot ignore: (1) if this Government is to be safe, it is bound to assume that this act constitutes definite notice of the launching of a policy of force and conquest on the part of the Japanese Government; (2) this Government, in the interest of its own safety and in the light of all Japanese utterances and acts, must assume that by its actions and preparations Japan may be taking one more vital and next to the final step in occupying all the South Sea area. Such a statement to the Ambassador would lay the basis for our own future acts and would let the Japanese understand fully our position. . . .
>
> It was agreed between the Secretary and Mr. Welles that something must be said to the press along the lines of the foregoing paragraphs. This would be for the purpose of making a record about the real significance of the Japanese movement and likewise to acquaint the public with the fact that we knew what was going on. Mr. Welles then read to the Secretary a draft of a statement prepared by the Far Eastern Division. The Secretary made specific comment as follows: make clear the fact that the occupation of Indochina by Japan possibly means one further important step to seizing control of the South Sea area, including trade routes of supreme importance to the United States controlling such products as rubber, tin and other commodities. This was of vital concern to the United States. The Secretary said that if we did not bring out this point our people will not understand the significance of this movement into Indochina. The Secretary mentioned another point to be stressed: there is no theory on which Indochina could be flooded with armed forces, aircraft, et cetera, for the defense of Japan. The only alternative is that this venture into Indochina has a close relation to the South Sea area and its value for offense against that area. The Secretary closed by suggesting that Mr. Welles make clear to Admiral Nomura that we are ready and desirous of going forward with our discussions should circumstances permit, and that if an agreement were reached between our two countries, it would safeguard Japan far more securely than taking over Indochina. . . .[4]

The next day, 24 July, the State Department issued a press release:

> By the course which it has followed and is following in regard to Indochina, the Japanese Government is giving clear indication that it is determined to pursue an objective of expansion by force or threat of force.
>
> There is not apparent to the Government of the United States any valid ground upon which the Japanese Government would be warranted in occupying Indochina or establishing bases in that area as measures of self-defense.
>
> There is not the slightest ground for belief on the part of even the most credulous that the Government of the United States, of Great Britain, or of the Netherlands have any territorial ambitions in Indochina or have been planning any moves which could have been regarded as threats to Japan.
>
> This Government can, therefore, only conclude that the action of Japan is undertaken because of the estimated value to Japan of bases in that region primarily for purposes of further and more obvious movements of conquest in adjacent areas.
>
> In the light of previous developments, steps such as are now being taken by the Government of Japan endanger the peaceful use by peaceful nations of the Pacific. They tend to jeopardize the procurement by the United States of essential materials such as tin and rubber which are necessary for the normal economy of this country and the consummation of our defense program. This purpose of tin, rubber, oil or other raw materials in the Pacific area on equal terms with other nations requiring materials has never been denied to Japan. The steps which the Japanese Government has taken also endanger the safety of other areas of the Pacific, including the Philippine Islands.
>
> The Government and people of this country fully realize that such developments bear directly upon the vital problem of our national security.[5]

While the 24 July press release indicated the Government's serious concern over Japanese expansion, it did not give the impression of the major break in Japanese-American relations that Hull had implied in his 23 July conversation with Welles. However, Hull was candid in his memoirs:

> When Welles telephoned me, I said to him that the invasion of Southern Indo-China looked like Japan's last step before jumping off for a full-scale attack in the Southwest Pacific. Since it came in the midst of the conversations we were holding with Japan, I said I could see no basis for pursuing the conversations further.

> Welles made these comments forcefully to Nomura and gave him my decision that our conversations had come to an end.[6]

Hull's memoirs continue, revealing what does not appear in the formal diplomatic records.

> On the following day the President, receiving Nomura, proposed that if the Japanese Government would withdraw its forces from French Indo-China, he would seek to obtain a solemn declaration by the United States, Britain, China, and The Netherlands to regard Indo-China as a "neutralized" country, provided Japan gave a similar commitment. Japan's explanation for occupying Indo-China having been that she wanted to defend her supplies of raw materials there, the President's proposal took the props from under this specious reasoning. A week later the President extended his proposal to include Thailand.
>
> Indicating our reaction to Japan's latest act of imperialist aggression, the President froze Japanese assets in the United States on July 26. I agreed to this step by telephone. All financial, import, and export transactions involving Japanese interests came under Government control, and thereafter trade between the United States and Japan soon dwindled to comparatively nothing.[7]

Roosevelt elaborated slightly on his proposal in a message to Harry Hopkins, who was visiting Churchill at Chequers at the time:

> Tell Former Naval Person Churchill ... in great confidence that I have suggested to Nomura that Indochina be neutralized by Britain, Dutch, Chinese, Japan and ourselves, placing Indo-China somewhat in status of Switzerland. Japan to get rice and fertilizer but all on condition that Japan withdraw armed forces from Indo-China in toto. I have had no answer yet. When it comes it will probably be unfavorable but we have at least made one more effort to avoid Japanese expansion to South Pacific.[8]

In a separate passage in his book on this period, Robert Sherwood noted that, in response to Japan's occupation of Indochina, Roosevelt placed General MacArthur and the Philippine armed forces under US Army command.[9]

On 25 July, Cecil Gray recorded another telephone conversation between the still-recuperating Hull in White Sulphur Springs and Acting Secretary Welles in Washington.

> We have had conversations for several months with the (Japanese) Ambassador and his associates covering this matter completely and we couldn't have offered more assurance to Japan for her entire satisfaction from every standpoint than we did in those discussions. I told him (the Ambassador) repeatedly that if this matter progressed I expected to get a similar agreement with the British, the Dutch, et cetera. We have followed that up as the Indochina phase developed....

After reviewing with Welles US efforts to resolve its differences with Japan, Hull continued:

> There is a strong so-called peace group in Japan back of him (the Ambassador). Naturally, it would have been utterly impractical for us to have followed a purely appeasement policy when every consideration would prevent us from putting on embargoes and penalties and retaliation during these negotiations. My judgment is that the State Department and the Government should not say too much on this Japanese question. The first thing we know we will run into a storm. It is so delicate and there are so many angles to it. I am sure Japan is going on unless something happens to stop her. This is a world movement. The Japanese are seeking to dominate militarily practically one-half the world and apply the barbarous methods that they are applying to China and that Hitler is applying to Europe, and if they have their way, they will carry out what they are saying of their right to be supreme in that half of the world, by which they mean military supremacy with methods of arbitrary, selfish domination and the Hitler method of piracy and naval control of the seas and commerce. At any rate, I just want you to keep that in mind.[10]

On 28 July, while the US authorities were waiting for a Japanese reply to the President's proposals, Hull spoke to Welles again by phone, and Gray dutifully recorded the call.

> I don't know whether I said this to the President or to you or Hamilton the other day when were were talking about what we should and could say to the Japs as a last resort. We would be willing, if they would take the right course, to utilize our navy to help the Japs, in a way satisfactory to them, to protect themselves from Indochina. And I said, as we remarked a dozen times to Nomura, we would try to get Britain and the Netherlands and other interested countries to sign an agreement similar to the one we were talking about. I

> mentioned those things and our position of cooperation. The only thing we talked about for several months has included all kinds of protection to them locally and generally as well.
>
> My view is that Nomura sent them the President's proposal and the Ministers there have held it up. I think myself that about ten days ago the military crowd got the upper hand and pushed the others into this Indochina venture, which is a movement toward conquest and force and away from the one course which we have been discussing. These other things, if true, are just by-plays on their part. Can they now seriously turn to us and talk about an agreement to help them out, as though they don't know they need no protection from Indochina. We are making a mistake if we don't look out for other developments instead of clinging too much to our discussions looking toward a settlement. The Japanese situation needs to be watched very closely. I would remind Nomura first, that the conversations we have had and the proposals that we have made have covered every imaginable kind of possibility of danger to Japan, especially from Indochina; that there were no possibilities to start with and it would be a great injustice for a Government like Japan seriously to profess that she is in danger from anyone in the Indochina area.[11]

The following day, Hull and Welles spoke yet again, with Gray recording:

> In a telephone conversation today Acting Secretary Welles acquainted Mr. Hull at White Sulphur Springs with certain information he had imparted to the Japanese Ambassador yesterday about Japanese ships. Secretary Hull [commented]:
>
> Just as we knew that the Japanese were going to send troops and everything else to Indochina, we do know from the same source of information that they are going on to the next step. If we assume, contrary to what informed outside observers and even specialists say, that they will not do that and instead either do nothing or go north, we will find ourselves surprised in all probability, I think we need to keep a stiff rein and consider making it just as stiff as possible short of actual military activity. They will settle down all over Indochina in effect and then we know they will be moving again, perhaps into Thailand. They will take us by surprise, if we are not careful.
>
> The British and the Dutch raise the question of what we should say to China in the way of further help. These should be conferred with if we say anything about further loans or further aid.

> I think we need to give all possible thought to aiding the Philippines and China with whatever we can spare—aircraft, et cetera.
>
> I don't suppose our people would think it safe to send a squadron down south in a pretty conspicuous area, would they?
>
> We must assume, in the light of the same source of information we first had about the certainty of the occupation of Indochina, that they may go further any time. They don't limit themselves with respect to time in connection with further movements. We must not be taken by surprise. So it is up to our folks to decide on a course of progress.[12]

On 29 July, Welles sent Ambassador Grew a message in Tokyo.

> The President asked me to express to you his opinion (at this stage merely for your background information) that inasmuch as time is of the essence, should the Japanese Government accept the proposal made and should they already have landed naval and military forces in Indochina, the essential thing in that event, until these forces could be totally withdrawn, would be to make sure that they did not "dig in."[13]

On 31 July, ten days after the Japanese moved to occupy southern Indochina, Acting Secretary Welles instructed Ambassador Leahy in Vichy to inform Admiral Darlan, then the French Prime Minister, of the US Government's position toward:

> the recent acquiescence by the French Government in Japanese aggression in Indochina and its bearing upon the vital problem of American security, referring to my statement of July 24.
>
> Whereas this Government recognized that the French Government may have been in no position to resist the pressure exercised upon it, it is nevertheless not clear what are the intentions of the French Government in providing in collaboration with the Japanese Government for the "common defense" of this territory.
>
> The French Government has publicly declared and has lost no opportunity to impress upon this Government its determination to resist to the utmost all encroachments upon the sovereignty of its Empire and in fact has given solemn assurances that it would not deviate from the Armistice obligations or permit the use of its territory as bases for military operations against its former ally.

> The recent agreement concluded with the Government of Japan now permits foreign forces to occupy and enter a territory which is an integral part of the French Empire, for reasons which surpass the scope of any agreement to which the French Government is known to be a party.
>
> Under the circumstances, this Government is hesitant to believe that there has been any change in the determination of the French Government to resist foreign aggression but is impelled to inquire in the interests of its own national security whether the position of the French Government has altered and whether it contemplates any further commitments which in fact would constitute agreements permitting the use of French soil for military operations against third powers....[14]

The following day, 1 August, Welles informed and instructed Grew in Tokyo:

> 1. ... I took occasion to say to the [Japanese] Ambassador that we have heard from authoritative sources that the Japanese are bringing or are about to bring pressure on the Government of Thailand similar to that which they have recently exerted against the French Government and the Indochina authorities; that we, of course, regard such reports with very serious apprehension; and that, speaking under instructions from the President, I wished to state that the proposal which the President made recently in relation to Japan's contemplated procedure in and regarding Indochina would also extend to and cover any such contemplated procedure in and regarding Thailand. I requested that the Ambassador immediately inform his Government of this. The Ambassador replied that he would do so.
> 2. The President and I desire that you at the earliest possible moment inform the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the above.[15]

On 2 August, Gray recorded another telephone conversation between Hull and Welles in which Hull made the following observations,

> I think the Japs expected us to go to almost any lengths economically when they took this big stride in Indochina. We could have gone further, in my opinion. You have to keep this in mind—that there is naturally going to continue to be an element of risk and danger in our course, if it is sufficiently firm and extensive to checkmate them. I just don't

> want us to take for granted a single word they say but appear to do so, to whatever extent it may satisfy our purpose to delay further action by them. If we can bring about a situation over there responsive to the standpoint we seek and also public opinion at home, it will be fine. Of course, I think they would have stood for cutting oil off entirely as a deserved penalty for going into Indochina. We must realize that the extreme elements that don't reason much may be poised and ready to take advantage of any attractive slogan to make a break southward.[16]

The same day, the State Department issued another press release on the situation in the name of Acting Secretary Welles.

> The French Government at Vichy has given repeated assurances to the Government of the United States that it would not cooperate with the Axis powers beyond the obligations imposed on it by the armistice, and that it would defend the territory under its control against any aggressive action on the part of third powers.
>
> This Government has now received information of the terms of the agreement between the French and Japanese Governments covering the so-called "common defense" of French Indochina. In effect, this agreement virtually turns over to Japan an important part of the French Empire.
>
> Effort has been made to justify this agreement on the ground that Japanese "assistance" is needed because of some menace to the territorial integrity of French Indochina by other powers. The Government of the United States in unable to accept this explanation. As I stated on July 24, there is no question of any threat to French Indochina, unless it lies in the expansionist aims of the Japanese Government.
>
> The turning over of bases for military operations and of territorial rights under pretext of "common defense" to a power whose territorial aspirations are apparent, here presents a situation which has a direct bearing upon the vital problem of American security. For reasons which are beyond the scope of any known agreement, France has now decided to permit foreign troops to enter an integral part of its Empire, to occupy bases therein, and to prepare operations within French territory which may be directed against other peoples friendly to the people of France....[17]

According to Hull's memoirs, Hull met with Ambassador Nomura on 6 August, two days after Hull had returned to

Washington, to receive a new set of Japanese proposals, "purportedly in answer to the President's proposals of July 24 on Indochina."[18] Hull noted that Japan proposed to withdraw her troops from Indochina only after a settlement had been reached with China, and the United States would have to recognize Japan's special position in Indochina even after the withdrawal. Moreover, Hull recorded, Japan's proposals made no mention of Roosevelt's suggestion that Indochina be neutralized. Hull concluded that Tokyo had moved further away than before from a basis for possible negotiations.[19]

At this time, Roosevelt was meeting with Churchill at the Atlantic Conference, and Sherwood's account describes the discussion of Japan's latest proposals,

> Roosevelt showed him [Churchill] copies of the statements handed to Secretary Hull by Ambassador Nomura five days previously. These presented the Japanese occupation of Indo-China as a *fait accompli* which, the Japanese said, "was of entirely peaceful character and for self defense," and offered proposals looking toward "a speedy settlement of the China Incident." There was no doubt, as Roosevelt and Churchill agreed, that the Japanese proposals could be acceptable only if the United States were prepared to sell China down the river.... The only definite promise that Roosevelt gave was that he would see the Japanese Ambassador, Nomura, on his return to Washington, and he sent a radio to Hull to arrange this meeting. Following was the conclusion and crux of the warning given to Nomura on August 17, while Churchill was still at sea on the way home:
>
> "This Government now finds it necessary to say to the Government of Japan that if the Japanese Government takes any further steps in pursuance of a policy or program of military domination by force or threat of force of neighboring countries, the Government of the Untied States will be compelled to take immediately any and all steps which it may deem necessary toward safeguarding the legitimate rights and interests of the United States and American nationals and toward ensuring the safety and security of the United States."
>
> Which meant absolutely nothing except that the United States was electing to reassert its status as a sovereign power which would look out for its own interests. Churchill undoubtedly hoped for something much stronger than that, and Sumner Welles' notes indicate that for a time Roosevelt considered taking a firmer position, but the fact remains that he quickly

> compromised on what seemed to be a safe middle course between the tough line and the soft one....[20]

Hull notes in his memoirs that Welles returned from the Atlantic Conference ahead of the President, bringing the document that had been agreed on between Churchill and Roosevelt. Hull found it "dangerously strong," and he and his Far Eastern experts redrafted its conclusion into the version quoted above. Even then, Hull notes, he felt the statement was "too provocative, unless it was balanced by a more friendly gesture." Thus, Hull and his colleagues divided the document into two statements: One would be the warning. The other, an olive branch, would inform Japan that our Government would be prepared to continue its conversations with the Japanese Government and thereby offer Japan a reasonable and just alternative to the course upon which she was launched.

Hull decided to recommend that the President hand both statements to Nomura. The President readily agreed, and he read the two statements to Nomura on 17 August.[21]

Hull's report to Grew on 18 August of the President's meeting with Nomura gives the details.

> The President [said] that if the Japanese Government takes any further steps in pursuance of a program or policy of military domination of neighboring countries by force or threat of force, this Government would be immediately compelled to take whatever steps might be necessary toward safeguarding its legitimate interests and rights and those of American nationals and toward insuring the security and safety of the United States....
>
> The Japanese Ambassador then made reference to the question which he had raised on August 8 with me in regard to the possibility of the heads of the Japanese Government and the Government of the United States meeting with a view to discussing possible means of adjusting relations between the two countries and to the desire expressed by the Japanese Ambassador to me on the previous day for a resumption of the informal conversations which had been in progress between the two Governments. The President then reminded the Ambassador of what I had said previously to the Ambassador ... and especially the fact that the Ambassador had been informed that in the opinion of this Government the measures being taken by the Japanese Government had served to remove the basis for further conversations in regard to a

> peaceful settlement in the Pacific region. The President dwelt on the fact that those informal discussions naturally envisaged the working out of a progressive program by peaceful methods and that under such program Japan would, in the opinion of this Government, attain all the objectives which Japan affirmed it was seeking with much more certainty than under any other program.
>
> The President then said that if the Japanese Government feels that Japan desired and was in position to suspend its expansionist activities and to embark upon a peaceful program along the lines of the policies to which this Government was committed, the Government of the United States would be prepared to consider resumption of the informal exploratory discussions and to endeavor to arrange a suitable time and place for an exchange of views. He suggested also that it would be helpful to both Governments before undertaking a resumption of such conversations if the Japanese Government would furnish a clearer indication than has yet been given as to its present attitude and plans, just as this Government has repeatedly outlined to the Japanese Government its attitude and plans. . . ."[22]

In his memoirs, Hull states that Nomura's suggestion for a meeting between Roosevelt and Konoye, the Japanese Prime Minister, recurred again and again in the following weeks both in Nomura's conversations with Hull and in Foreign Minister Toyoda's conversations with Grew in Tokyo. Hull records that the President agreed in principle to such a meeting, but in his conversation of 17 August, he had suggested that Japan clarify her position before America proceeded with preparations for it. According to Hull, Roosevelt had indicated that, if such a meeting were to be held, it might be arranged for about 15 October.[23]

John Toland's account adds another dimension to the story and carries it forward. Although Hull's account of his meeting with Nomura after his return to Washington makes no mention of the Japanese proposal for a summit meeting, Toland's account asserts that Hull, "mixing accusations with moral observations, contended that it was now clear that those in Japan who favored peace ' had lost control.' " When Nomura asked if this was Hull's reply to the proposed summit meeting, Hull repeated his statements, concluding that "it remained with the Japanese Government to decide whether it could find means of shaping its policies accordingly and then to endeavor to evolve some satisfactory plan." Toland continues:

> Since the Japanese military leaders felt they had bent a good deal to approve the meeting, its cool reception in Washington sharpened a growing suspicion. Did the Americans really want peace or were they playing for time? Each day twelve thousand tons of irreplaceable oil were being consumed and soon the armed forces would be as helpless as a whale thrown up on the beach.[24]

According to Toland, when Roosevelt agreed in principle to a summit meeting and suggested that, if it were to take place, it be scheduled around 15 October, Nomura cabled Tokyo: "A reply should be made before this opportunity is lost."[25] Toland's account continued:

> The following afternoon, August 18, Ambassador Grew was summoned by Foreign Minister Teijiro Toyoda. The admiral . . . said he wanted to speak frankly, as a naval officer and not as a diplomat. Japan had gone into Indochina to solve the China affair and not because of pressure from Germany. The freezing of funds which followed had left "a big black spot on the long history of peaceful relations" between Japan and America, and future historians would be unable to understand if the negotiations broke down. The solution was a meeting between the two leaders of both countries in which the problems could be settled "in a calm and friendly atmosphere on an equal basis."
>
> Grew, who had not been informed by the State Department of the proposed Konoye-Roosevelt meeting, was taken by the novel idea. Both leaders were gentlemen from distinguished families and they could reach an honorable settlement. Moreover, he would be in attendance and it could be the crowning moment of his own career. . . .
>
> The meeting lasted for an hour and a half, and as soon as Grew returned to the embassy he sent an extraordinary message to Hull:
>
> "The Ambassador [Grew] urges . . . with all the force at his command, for the sake of avoiding the obviously growing possibility of an utterly futile war between Japan and the United States, that this Japanese proposal not be turned aside without very prayerful consideration. Not only is the proposal unprecedented in Japanese history, but it is an indication that Japanese intransigence is not crystallized completely owing to the fact that the proposal has the approval of the emperor and the highest authorities in the land. The good which may flow

> from a meeting between Prince Konoye and President Roosevelt is incalculable. The opportunity is here presented, the Ambassador ventures to believe, for an act of the highest statesmanship, such as the recent meeting of President Roosevelt with Prime Minister Churchill at sea, with the possible overcoming thereby of apparently insurmountable obstacles to peace hereafter in the Pacific."[26]

Hull recounts that Nomura came to see him five days later, on 23 August, to say that his Government wished to hold the summit meeting before 15 October. Again Hull gave him no reply. Four days later, on 27 August, Nomura handed Hull his Government's replies to the notes handed to him by Roosevelt ten days earlier, and Hull arranged a meeting with the President the next day.[27] In the first note, Japanese Prime Minister Konoye proposed a summit meeting as soon as possible, with negotiations following rather than preceding the summit. Konoye's note said "the present situation was developing swiftly and might produce unforeseen contingencies." The second note assured the United States of Japan's peaceful intentions, of its search for a settlement in the Pacific consistent with American principles, and indicated, among other things, that Japan would withdraw its troops from Indochina "as soon as the China Incident is settled or a just peace is established in East Asia."[28]

There ensued a series of discussions between Nomura and Hull over the Japanese replies to Roosevelt. Nomura emphasized the need for a summit meeting as quickly as possible to reduce the potential impact of German efforts to disturb United States-Japanese relations and of Japanese elements stirring up an anti-American sentiment in Japan. Hull, on the other hand, stressed the need for agreement in principle before the summit meeting to avoid the serious consequences of a failure. There were deep suspicions on both sides. In his memoirs, Hull stresses the suspicions of Japanese motives: their desire for secrecy regarding the summit meeting masked the Japanese Government's weakness vis-à-vis pro-war elements; and Konoye's own record did not inspire confidence that he would carry out any agreement reached. Moreover, Hull and Roosevelt were seriously concerned at the impact a cosmetic but insubstantial agreement at the summit would have on China. Hull claimed that Konoye's postwar memoirs confirmed US suspicions of Japanese motives and the wisdom of insisting on agreement before holding the summit meeting. According to Hull, to get Army agreement to the summit, Konoye had to agree to walk out of the meeting with the President

if the latter refused to agree to Japan's special position in East Asia.[29]

Roosevelt met again with Hull and Nomura on 3 September to give Nomura the US replies to the Japanese notes of 28 August. The President's replies called once again for "preliminary discussion of the fundamental and essential questions on which we seek agreement," and asked Japan to clarify its attitude regarding the "fundamental questions still outstanding between us."[30] Toland's account picks up the Tokyo threads again. Before Roosevelt's replies were received, Japanese authorities held a conference on 3 September. Some of those present questioned whether Japan had made a mistake being so conciliatory and whether the Americans were playing for time. In this atmosphere of "the psychology of desperation," after seven hours of discussion, the conferees agreed that war preparations would be completed, with a deadline of 10 October to achieve diplomatic objectives. According to Toland:

> The slim hope that this hastily conceived deadline would be reconsidered by the Cabinet before presentation to the Throne disappeared with the arrival, a few hours later, of a reply from Roosevelt to Japan's conciliatory proposal. It was in two parts: one was a polite refusal of Konoye's reiterated invitation to meet until they first came to agreement on the "fundamental and essential questions"; the other, an Oral Statement, was as vague and more disappointing. It was the kind of clever riposte so many diplomats seemed to delight in: it politely avoided promising anything of import while side-stepping the main issues. It noted "with satisfaction" Japan's willingness to abide by Hull's four principles but seemed to ask the question, "Do you really mean it?" and never mentioned Japan's offer to withdraw all troops from Indochina.
>
> Since it seemed to be a deliberate rebuff (which it was not), as well as a belittling of concessions made by the Army at agonizing cost (which it was), the Cabinet approved the deadline policy without argument. . .[31]

Toland argues that the Emperor uncharacteristically questioned the Cabinet's decision when it was presented to him on 6 September and that, although in the end he acquiesced, his emphasis on continued negotiation with Washington and his concern at the outcome if Japan entered a war with the United States gave Konoye added impetus to keep trying for a summit meeting with Roosevelt. According to

Toland, several hours after the imperial conference on the 6th, Konoye sought a very private meeting with Grew, who had Embassy Counselor Eugene H. Dooman with him as interpreter.

> Konoye argued that "He and Roosevelt, face to face, could surely come to an agreement, but only such a meeting in the near future could accomplish this. Negotiations using the ordinary diplomatic channels would take a year. Konoye couldn't reveal, of course, that he had less than five weeks before the October 10 deadline. "A year from now," he said, "I'm not sure that anything can be done to solve our differences. But I can do it now. I promise that some agreement can be reached if I can only see him [Roosevelt]. I'll offer him a proposal which he can't afford to reject." After this cryptic remark he turned to Dooman, who was born in Osaka of missionary parents and who had already spent almost twenty-three years in Japan: "You know the conditions in this country. I want to tell you something you must not repeat to Mr. Grew. You should know so that you can impress him with your belief in my sincerity. You realize that we cannot involve the Emperor in this controversy, but as soon as I have reached a settlement with the President I will communicate with His Majesty, who will immediately order the Army to cease hostile operations."
>
> This was a bold plan, something never before attempted in Japan's history. Although impelled to tell Grew, Dooman promised to keep it a secret.

Grew went back to the embassy and sent "the most important cable" of his career.[32]

Hull records that the United States received Japan's replies from Grew on 5 September (Washington time) and that Nomura handed him copies a day later. Hull notes:

> They were much narrower than we had reason to expect from the comparatively generous assurances communicated to the President on August 28. They thereby followed the pattern of the earlier conversations in that, as soon as Japan saw we were interested in a set of proposals sufficiently to want to discuss them, she began to back-pedal and to narrow and limit them.[33]

Hull's observations continued:

> Japan promised not to make any military advance from French Indo-China against any adjoining area and not to

> resort to military action against any regions south of Japan without justifiable reason. We took particular note of this qualifying phrase, also of the fact that Japan still evaded the President's suggestion that she withdraw her troops from Indo-China in exchange for neutralization of that colony....
>
> On the day Nomura handed me these new proposals, Premier Konoye, in a conversation with Grew in Tokyo, said that the Japanese Government fully subscribed to the four principles I had set forth in my memorandum to the Japanese on April 16—respect for the territorial integrity and sovereignty of all nations, noninterference in the internal affairs of other countries, the principles of equality, including equality of commercial opportunity, and nondisturbance of the status quo in the Pacific except as it might be altered by peaceful means.
>
> Konoye's affirmation of complete adherence to these principles looked to us like an attempt to make his other proposals more palatable. In any event, Foreign Minister Toyoda stated one month later that Konoye had accepted these four points only "in principle," and that in applying them to actual conditions certain "adjustments" would be necessary. That meant, of course, that the Japanese Government might accept these principles, but the Japanese Army would apply them in its own way....
>
> To me it seemed there was still only one chance in fifty of reaching a real agreement with Japan. My major hope was to hold off Japan's next advance, which would probably bring war in the Pacific, as long as possible.[34]

Once again, the Japanese were putting all their hopes on a summit meeting with Roosevelt and became suspicious that the Americans were playing for time; the Americans focused on the need to get clear agreement with the Japanese in advance to avoid the risk of a summit failure, and they became suspicious of Japanese motives in avoiding agreement before a summit meeting. Discussions continued in Washington between Hull and Nomura and in Tokyo between Toyoda and Grew.

They stayed essentially on the same treadmill until the Japanese struck at Pearl Harbor.

While these discussions touched on central questions affecting peace and war in the entire Pacific area, of which the Japanese occupation of Indochina was only a part, Hull records his concern that Japan was strengthening its position in Indochina:

> In the background of all these difficulties in our discussions lay a series of menacing Japanese developments. Japan increased the number of troops in Indo-China, began to prepare new airports there, and entered actively into the administration of the colony. . . .[35]

Hull had a conversation with the French Ambassador on 16 September, at the latter's request, specifically to discuss Indochina.

> The French Ambassador ... indicated that his Government desired this Government in any conversations or negotiations with Japan to keep in mind the interests of Indochina, and especially her desire to be completely independent of Japan when a settlement is reached in the Pacific. I here interrupted him and said that, with no purpose whatsoever to argue the matter, but merely to point out certain phases of it, regardless of where the truth lies, there is a real belief that during August 1940, Japan had requested Hitler to ask the Vichy Government not to be too demonstrative in its opposition to Japanese occupation of Indochina and Indochinese waters by means of its Army and Navy. There exists likewise the belief that the Vichy Government, notwithstanding the fact that such action went beyond the terms of the Armistice, complied with this request in an effort to placate Hitler. I added that this Government was opposed alike to Japanese conquest and to German conquest; that we are opposing both in different ways and that we profoundly believe that the Hitler invasion, as illustrated by the occupation of France, will mean utter ruin to France and to Europe, and finally to America unless Hitler is stopped by force; and that we shall continue our opposition in various ways until he is stopped. I said the general attitude in America toward the occupation of Indochina by the Japanese manifested itself in various ways, since the occupation evidently was next to the final step in a possible military invasion of the South Sea area. In addition, I said that we were fundamentally opposed to the invasion of small or helpless countries by a powerful country like Japan; and that we had emphatically made this known to Japan in more ways than one, in fact, some of the ways we had registered our opposition had not been made known.
>
> I said that his Government was urging us to keep in mind the freedom, welfare and autonomy of Indochina in connection with any conversations or negotiations that may take place between Japan and this country; that our attitude in this matter thus far has been made known, as I had outlined it to

> the Ambassador. I said further that this country wants nothing from Europe or Asia except peace and order under law and justice and fair dealing, et cetera, et cetera, and hence our interest in and opposition to Japanese encroachments on Indochina....
>
> I said finally that we have had no negotiations with the Japanese and may have none; that thus far only the most casual and exploratory conversations have taken place, and that, if perchance a stage of negotiations should be reached, I would then hear the representations of the French Government with respect to Indochina and offer appropriate comment to his Government in regard thereto.[36]

On 23 September, Under Secretary Welles recorded another conversation with the French Ambassador.

> The Ambassador referred again to the hope of his Government that in any conversations which were in progress between Japan and the United States the occupation by Japan of Indochina should not be regarded by the United States as a *fait accompli*. He urged that the United States should insist on American participation in trade with Indochina and particularly on the right of the United States to continue exporting rubber from Indochina. He likewise urged that United States observers, in whatever category might be deemed most appropriate, be sent to Indochina.
>
> I said that consideration would be given to the specific suggestions that the Ambassador had made but that with regard to the larger issues brought up by the Ambassador, I felt sure that these matters had already been fully covered by the Secretary of State in his conversations with the Ambassador. I stated that I was at a loss to understand the suspicions of the French Government in this regard inasmuch as the President had informed Marshal Pétain that it was the desire of the United States that the integrity and independence of France and the French colonies be maintained. I further reminded the Ambassador that one of the cardinal principles of the foreign policy of this Government was the right of all nations to trade on a basis of equal opportunity and under equality of conditions and that the United States necessarily, therefore, maintained this principle with relation to the Pacific, as well as with regard to all regions of the world....[37]

By early October, the tightening Japanese grip on Indochina was beginning in earnest to interfere with American commercial interests

there. On 2 October, the State Department instructed Grew as follows:

> The Department suggests that, in your discretion, you convey to the Foreign Minister on an opportune occasion a statement along lines as follows:
>
> The attitude of the American Government toward Japanese activities in French Indochina is well known (as set forth *inter alia* in the Acting Secretary's statement to the press of July 23). That attitude remains unchanged. This Government has noted recent acts of the Japanese military in Indochina, which seem to constitute additional indication of an intention on the part of the Japanese military to infringe upon and disregard French sovereignty in that area. This Government finds it especially difficult at this time to reconcile the reported Japanese actions in Indochina with recent declarations of high Japanese officials that Japan's fundamental policy is based upon the maintenance of peace and pursuit of courses of peace.[38]

The Department instructed Grew again on 4 October:

> The New York office of the Standard-Vacuum Oil Company in reporting to the Department the situation outlined in Saigon's telegram under reference states that to accede to the requests would in effect mean turning over to the Japanese the entire installation facilities of the Standard, Texas and Shell companies at Saigon; that the requests are tantamount to a demand that the companies cease functioning; and that the Standard and Texas companies and presumably the Shell Company do not desire to lease their properties. The Department, in reply, informed the Standard-Vaccuum Oil Company that it saw no reasons of policy why the oil companies should not adhere to their decision that they were unwilling to agree to the Japanese request.
>
> In the event that the Japanese military authorities should endeavor to force the issue by the use of pressure methods, the Department desires that you seek an early opportunity to inform the Japanese Foreign Office of the situation under reference and of the fact that any attempt on the part of the Japanese military authorities to coerce or to force under conditions of duress the American oil companies against their will to lease their properties at Saigon would be viewed by the American Government as a wholly unwarranted interference with American rights and interests; that the American

> Government is confident that the Japanese Government, being apprised of the situation, will wish to issue to the Japanese General Staff in Indochina appropriate instructions.
>
> You may at the same time, in your discretion and if the situation should so warrant, also inform the Foreign Office to the effect that the attitude of the American Government with regard to this matter would in no way be modified if the Japanese military authorities at Saigon, foregoing direct methods, should seek to gain their ends by indirect means such as forcing the French authorities of Indochina to seize the properties in question and thereafter to permit Japanese utilization thereof.[39]

The same day, the Department instructed Ambassador Leahy at Vichy:

> The French and Indochinese authorities are thoroughly cognizant of this Government's desire and earnest efforts to obtain rubber in the face of various difficult conditions imposed. There is, however, no disposition under present circumstances to meet any new conditions of any nature whatsoever in order to obtain the relatively small quantity of Indochinese rubber now presumed to be available for sale to the United States. As to the Japanese demands on Vichy with respect to rubber, the Department is not impressed with the vigor of French resistance either now or in the past.[40]

Four days later, the Department instructed Ambassador Leahy at Vichy once again, and this time added instructions to Consul Browne in Saigon.

> Please approach the appropriate French authorities as soon as practicable and, after referring to the situation under discussion and the views of the American Government in regard thereto ... state that the American Government is confident that the French Government will wish to issue to the Indochinese Government without delay such instructions as will prevent the requisitioning, for the purposes indicated, of the properties of the American oil companies at Saigon. You may add that the American Government views as a matter of importance the development under reference and that it is loath to believe that the French Government would consider even momentarily the requisitioning in Indochina of American properties in order that such properties may be placed at the disposal of any third country.

> Department desires that you make known without delay to the appropriate Indochinese authorities the views of the American Government. . . .[41]

More than a month later, on 15 November, while discussions affecting peace and war continued in Washington and Tokyo, the Department instructed Ambassador Leahy at Vichy:

> With reference to the provisions of our Trade Agreement with France applicable to Indochina, you should address a note of protest to the appropriate French authorities in regard to the preferential treatment accorded to Japanese products enumerated in list A, annexed to the Indochinese-Japanese customs agreement of May 6, and make formal reservation of American rights. . . .[42]

On 20 November—Thanksgiving Day—Japan's envoys called on Hull to offer their "final proposition," a modus vivendi or temporary agreement. Hull's memoirs called it an ultimatum. Among its six points, Japan offered to withdraw its troops from Indochina when peace was restored between Japan and China; meanwhile, Japan would remove its troops from southern to northern Indochina upon conclusion of the present agreement. However, Hull considered Japan's other conditions so onerous that they, in Hull's words, "would have assured Japan's domination of the Pacific, placing us in serious danger for decades to come."[43] On 21 November, the US Consuls in Saigon and Hanoi reported extensive new landings of Japanese troops and equipment in Indochina—"the zero hour was approaching."[44]

On 22 November the Department repeated its warning to Americans to leave the area, emphasizing that shipping was difficult and likely to get worse.[45] On the same day, Hull discussed the State Department's proposed "counter"modus vivendi which provided *inter alia* that Japan would withdraw its forces from southern Indochina, and would reduce the total of its forces in northern Indochina to 25,000, the number there on 26 July 1941 with the British, Chinese, Dutch, and Australian envoys. The Chinese Ambassador pressed to have the 25,000 figure reduced to 5,000. Only the Netherlands Minister was ready to approve the American proposal. Meanwhile, American officials knew from intercepted Japanese messages that Japan was willing to wait until 29 November for an agreement—"after that things are automatically going to happen."[46]

On 24 November President Roosevelt cabled "Former Naval Person" Winston Churchill.

On November 20 the Japanese Ambassador communicated to us proposals for a *modus vivendi.* He has represented that the conclusion of such a *modus vivendi* might give the Japanese Government opportunity to develop public sentiment in Japan in support of a liberal and comprehensive program of peace covering the Pacific area and that the domestic political situation in Japan was so acute as to render urgent some relief such as was envisaged in the proposal. The proposal calls for a commitment on the part of Japan to transfer to northern Indochina all the Japanese forces now stationed in southern Indochina pending the restoration of peace between Japan and China or the establishment of general peace in the Pacific area when Japan would withdraw all its troops from Indochina, commitments on the part of the United States to supply Japan a required quantity of petroleum products and to refrain from measures prejudicial to Japan's efforts to restore peace with China and mutual commitments to make no armed advancement in the southeastern Asiatic and southern Pacific areas (the formula offered would apparently not exclude advancement into China from Indochina), to cooperate toward obtaining goods required by either in the Netherlands East Indies and to restore commercial relations to those prevailing prior to the adoption of freezing measures.

This Government proposes to inform the Japanese Government that in the opinion of this Government the Japanese proposals contain features not in harmony with the fundamental principles which underlie the proposed general settlement and to which each Government has declared that it is committed. It is also proposed to offer the Japanese Government an alternative proposal for a *modus vivendi* which will contain mutual pledges of peaceful intent, a reciprocal undertaking not to make armed advancement into areas which would include northeastern Asia and the northern Pacific area, southeast Asia and the southern Pacific area, an undertaking by Japan to withdraw its forces from southern French Indochina, not to replace those forces, to limit those in northern Indochina to the number there on July 26, 1941, which number shall not be subject to replacement and shall not in any case exceed 25,000 and not to send additional forces to Indochina. This Government would undertake to modify its freezing orders to the extent to permit exports from the United States to Japan of bunkers and ship supplies, food products and pharmaceuticals with certain qualifications, raw cotton up to $600.000 monthly, petroleum on a monthly basis for

> civilian needs, the proportionate amount to be exported from this country to be determined after consultation with the British and Dutch Governments. The United States would permit imports in general provided that raw silk constitute at least two thirds in value of such imports. The proceeds of such imports would be available for the purchase of the designated exports from the United States and for the payment of interest and principal of Japanese obligations within the United States. This Government would undertake to approach the British, Dutch and Australian Governments on the question of their taking similar economic measures. Provision is made that the *modus vivendi* shall remain in force for three months with the understanding that at the instance of either party the two parties shall confer to determine whether the prospects of reaching a peaceful settlement concerning the entire Pacific area warrant extension of the *modus vivendi*....
>
> This seems to me a fair proposition for the Japanese but its acceptance or rejection is really a matter of internal Japanese politics. I am not very hopeful and we must all be prepared for real trouble, possibly soon.[47]

On 26 November, Ambassador Winant transmitted "Former Naval Person's" reply:

> Your message about Japan received tonight. Also full accounts from Lord Halifax of discussions and your counter project to Japan on which Foreign Secretary has sent some comments. Of course, it is for you to handle this business and we certainly do not want an additional war. There is only one point that disquiets us. What about Chiang Kai Shek? Is he not having a very thin diet? Our anxiety is about China. If they collapse, our joint dangers would enormously increase. We are sure that the regard of the United States for the Chinese cause will govern your action. We feel that the Japanese are most unsure of themselves.[48]

The same day, Hull forwarded his views to the President:

> With reference to our two proposals prepared for submission to the Japanese Government, namely:
>
> (1) A proposal in the way of a draft agreement for a broad basic peaceful settlement for the Pacific area, which is henceforth to be made a part of the general conversations now going on and to be carried on, if agreeable to both Governments, with a view to a general agreement on this subject.

> (2) The second proposal is really closely connected with the conversations looking toward a general agreement, which is in the nature of a *modus vivendi* intended to make more feasible the continuance of the conversations.
>
> In view of the opposition of the Chinese Government and either the half-hearted support or the actual opposition of the British, the Netherlands and the Australian Governments, and in view of the wide publicity of the opposition and of the additional opposition that will naturally follow through utter lack of an understanding of the vast importance and value otherwise of the *modus vivendi,* without in any way departing from my views about the wisdom and the benefit of this step to all of the countries opposed to the aggressor nations who are interested in the Pacific area, I desire very earnestly to recommend that at this time I call in the Japanese Ambassadors and hand to them a copy of the comprehensive basic proposal for a general peaceful settlement, and at the same time withhold the *modus vivendi* proposal.[49]

Roosevelt agreed to Hull's recommendation and later in the day the US counterproposal was handed to the Japanese negotiators. As Hull notes in his memoirs, the United States learned later that Japan had by this time already put her naval forces in motion for the attack on Pearl Harbor.[50]

On 27 November, Under Secretary Welles told the British Ambassador, Lord Halifax:

> information received this morning tended to show that Japanese troop movements in southern Indochina were already very active and that Japanese forces there were being quickly increased in number. I said these reports likewise indicated that the threat against Thailand was imminent. I said, in conclusion, that it was evident from the information received here that the Japanese were preparing to move immediately on a very large scale. The gravity of the situation, I thought, could not be exaggerated.[51]

About the same time, Secretary of War Stimson sent to Roosevelt a suggested statement for inclusion in a message to Congress about the state of United States-Japanese relations. This statement made little mention of Indochina, but stressed the threat to the Philippines and the Straits of Singapore "through which gateway runs the commerce of the world, including our own, between the Pacific and the Indian Ocean." In listing the dangers to vital US interests if

negotiations with Japan broke down, Stimson mentioned China, the Philippines, and "our commerce with the Netherlands East Indies and the Malayan Settlements." If the Japanese were permitted to carry out their threat to attack and conquer these friendly countries, Stimson said, US imports from these countries would be interrupted and destroyed. "These imports, principally rubber, are vital to our welfare both in time of peace and war ... such an interruption of our trade with the Netherlands East Indies and the Malayan States would be catastrophic."[52] Secretary of the Navy Knox submitted a similar proposed statement to the President.[53]

On 29 November, Hull submitted to the President a draft message to the Congress "to which draft the Secretary of the Navy and the Secretary of War made material contributions," in which US relations with Asia were traced since the turn of the nineteenth century:

> By these steps Japan has enveloped with threatening forces the western, northern and eastern approaches to the Philippines. Should this process go further, it will completely encircle and dangerously menace vital interests of the United States.[54]

Hull had also sent the President at the same time a proposed message to Emperor Hirohito. Hull records in his memoirs that he was not in favor of a message to the Japanese Emperor except as a last resort, and that if the President decided to send the message, the message to the Congress should be held off to await the Emperor's reaction.[55]

Hull continued to see the Japanese envoys, but he made no headway with them. In a conversation on 1 December, Hull emphasized that the United States could not overlook Japan's digging herself into Indochina, the effect of which was to create an increasing menace to us and our friends, that we could not continue to take chances on the situation, and that we would not allow ourselves to be kicked out of the Pacific.[56] On the same day, the President, through the Department of State, gave Nomura and Kurusu a memorandum asking their Government for an explanation of the continued Japanese troop movements into Indochina.[57]

On 5 December, Nomura and Kurusu gave the State Department the Japanese Government's reply to the President's inquiry. Hull states:

> This was a specious statement, unworthy of a child's intelligence, that Japanese reenforcements had been sent to Indo-

> China as a precaution against Chinese troops in neighboring China. "It seems," the reply stated, "that an exaggerated report has been made of these movements."[58]

Hull remarked to the Ambassadors,

> I had understood that Japan had been putting forces into northern Indo-China for the purpose of attacking China from there. "I have never heard before," I added, "that Japan's troop movements into northern Indo-China were for defense against Chinese attack. This is the first time I've known that Japan is on the defensive in Indo-China."
>
> Nomura commented that the United States Government blamed Japan for her move into Indo-China, but that if Indo-China were controlled by other powers it would be a menace to Japan.[59]

On 6 December, the President decided to send his message to the Emperor. He forwarded it to Hull with the note: "Dear Cordell: Shoot this to Grew—I think it can go in gray code our least secret code—saves time—I don't mind if it gets picked up."[60]

The President's message began by referring to a message sent "almost a century ago" by the President of the United States to the Emperor of Japan:

> extending an offer of friendship of the people of the United States to the people of Japan. That offer was accepted, and in the long period of unbroken peace and friendship which has followed, our respective nations, through the virtues of their peoples and the wisdom of their rulers have prospered and have substantially helped humanity.
>
> Only in situations of extraordinary importance to our two countries need I address to Your Majesty messages on matters of state. I feel I should now so address you because of the deep and far-reaching emergency which appears to be in formation.

After professing the desire of the United States for peace, the President got to the heart of the matter. He reviewed the history of Japanese military pressure against Indochina, stating that in recent weeks

> it has become clear to the world that Japanese military, naval and air forces have been sent to Southern Indo-China in such large numbers as to create a reasonable doubt on the part of other nations that this continuing concentration in Indo-China is not defensive in its character.

Roosevelt went on to say that Japanese troop concentrations in Indochina were now so large as to raise legitimate questions in the minds of the people of the region regarding Japanese intentions to attack "in one or two directions." Roosevelt assured the Emperor that the United States had no intention of attacking Indochina and that he was certain he could obtain greater assurances from the other governments in the region. Accordingly, he called on the Japanese Government to withdraw its forces from Indochina "in the assurance of peace throughout the whole of the South Pacific area."[61]

As Hull noted in his memoirs, "This message did not get to Ambassador Grew, or to the Emperor, before the Japanese struck at Pearl Harbor."[62] And America's focus of attention on Vietnam was assured.

NOTES

Preface

1. *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1958, vol. 11, p. 645. Cochin China was the name of the area that today roughly constitutes the southern third of Vietnam. M. Poivre was Pierre Poivre, who wrote *Voyages d'un philosophe, ou Observations sur les Moeurs et les Arts des Peuples de l'Afrique, de l'Asie, et de l'Amérique*. Yverdon: 1768. 2. Ibid., p. 646.

3. Ibid., vol. 12, p. 508. The "young prince" Jefferson referred to was the son of Nguyen Anh, who later became Emperor Gia Long. The young man had been brought to Paris by a French missionary, Pigneau de Behaine, Bishop of Adran, who wanted to garner support for the boy's future against the maneuvers of the Tay Son brothers in their rebellion against the throne. Jefferson's meeting with the young Cochinchinese prince may have been the first contact between Americans and Vietnamese.

4. Ibid., vol. 14, pp. 636-637. 5. Ibid., p. 641. 6. Ibid., p. 647.

I MERCHANT SHIPS AND THEIR CAPTAINS

The **Fame** *and Captain Jeremiah Briggs*

1. This chapter is based largely on original source materials in the Peabody Museum, Salem, Massachusetts—Crowninshield family correspondence, and Captain Jeremiah Briggs' log of the *Fame*'s voyage. See p. 5 for excerpt from Briggs' log.

2. Samuel Eliot Morison, *The Maritime History of Massachusetts, 1783-1860*, Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1921, p. 100.

The Brig **Franklin** *and Captain John White*

1. P. Midan, "Les Européens Qui Ont Vu Le Vieux Hué: John White," *Bulletin des Amis du Vieux Hué*, 24th year, no. 23, April-September 1937, pp. 93-96.

2. For references to the *Aurora* and her master, Robert Gould, see Henry Wyckoff Belknap, "The Wheatlands of Salem and Their Vessels," undated, Essex Institute, Salem, Mass.

3. White's account referred to a Dr. Morrison's "View of China"; to "Dr. Leyden's Treatise on the Language and Literature of the Indo-Chinese Nations" in *Asiatic Researches*, a British journal of the day; to *The Indo-Chinese Gleaner;* to Sir John Barrow's *Voyage to Cochin-China (1792-3);* to Abbé Rochon's *Voyages and Discoveries*, 1699; to Major Michael Symes' *Embassy to Ava*, 1795; and to Poivre.

4. John White, *A Voyage to Cochin China*, Oxford in Asia *Historical Reprints, Oxford University Press*, Kuala Lumpur and Singapore, 1972, p. 251.

5. Ibid., pp. 246-247. 6. Ibid., pp. 264-266.

7. Midan, "Les Européens."

II DIPLOMATS AND NAVAL VESSELS

John Shillaber, US Consul in Batavia

1. Department of State Archives, Microfilm Reading Room, National Archives, Washington, DC, Batavia Consular Letters, vol. i, 1826:

a. 27 February 1826:

I should feel highly honoured & gratified if the Govt of U. States would authorize me to make commercial arrangements with some of the Native independent sovereigns, of these eastern regions, for American trade. The appearance of one of our national ships in this part of the globe would have a good effect & the voyage probably prove of utility to young officers.

b. 14 March 1827:

Under date of 27 Feb. 1826, I intimated the probable utility of having one or more Am. national vessels appear in these seas, and I am strengthened in the opinion, by the great increase of Pirates, and the jealousy between the Sovereign of Siam & the English ...

c. 21 October 1829:

[I]t would be of essential service to our commerce in the east, if one of our national ships be made to appear in the several ports, more especially those under native govts. as Siam, Cochin-China, etc. it is my opinion a commercial treaty may be made with the Sovereigns of those countries mentioned that would place our trade upon a more favorable footing.

d. 10 December 1830:

[I]mportant advantages would accrue to the commerce of the U. States with Siam & Cochin China if Commercial Treaties, based upon mutual interests, were made with the *independent* Sovereigns of those countries.... At present the port charges & other exactions laid upon American vessels in these ports are not fixed, but assessing them is left to the will of an officer, who not unfrequently lays them very disproportionately upon different vessels, and as the amount is always very considerable (some thousands of dollars) men sending vessels there are always in doubt what amount will be exacted until their return home.

There are no regulations for trade, and the formalities and manner to carry it on is left to be fixed by the same officer who assesses the ports duties, etc., & that not untill the vessel is in the harbour thus producing vexatious and unnecessary delays & heavy charges.

I am confident that most of these difficulties & probably all of them, if the Government of the U. States will send a person to negotiate, may be done away, and many advantages secured our trade that it does not now enjoy [for] its intercourse with these countries whose commerce is a valuable branch of our E. India [sic.]. During my long residence in the E. Indies I have acquired some knowledge of the languages, manners, peculiarities & commerce of these people and it would be gratifying to my feelings to be appointed to negotiate the proposed treaties. I beg leave further to suggest that it would be of essential service to our commerce in those India Seas if one of our frigates or sloops of war should be kept cruising there, where piracies are frequent.

There is no part of the world where a ships company may enjoy better health, adopting the precaution of laying but a few successive days in any one harbour, than, the mild climate, clear skies, and numerous Islands, shoals, etc. would afford facilities to our officers to acquire knowledge & experience peculiar to their profession, equal if not superior to any other part of the Globe. The Congress frigate was the last American ship of war in those seas, since when ten years have elapsed, during which time the English & Dutch have always had several national vessels, & the French from time to time. The Congress I believe visited only Manilla and Canton.

e. 17 December 1830:

I had the honor to address you a letter under date of the 10th in which I expressed a desire that the present administration would renew my commission as Consul for the Netherlands East Indies and gave my views of the advantages one of our national vessels cruising in the China seas etc. would be to the American Trade there, and that a treaty with the Sovereigns of Siam & Cochin China would also benefit trade, proferring my services to accomplish this object.

2. Ibid., *Consular Instructions*, pp. 267-268, 13 December 1830 (first page and date missing, but Shillaber's letter of 10 December 1830 [see note no. 1d above] bears notation "13 Dec. answered." Shillaber's 30 May 1831 letter [see note 3a below] also refers to Brent's letter of 13 December 1830.).

3. Ibid., *Batavia Consular Letters:*

a. 30 May 1831 (concerns principally Siam):

Should the President of the U. States, ... determine to send a Mission to the Courts of Siam, Cochin China and Japan, or either of them, to attempt to place the American trade with the two first-mentioned countries upon a more favorable footing than it is present and open a trade with Japan, and do me the honor to appoint me the Agent for the purposes named, which honor and [word illegible] I earnestly desire may be bestowed upon me [words illegible] declare that my best [word illegible] and exertions shall be devoted to accomplish the objects envisaged to the satisfaction and honor of Government and country and benefit of American commerce.

b. 1 July 1831 (concerns principally Japan).

c. 3 July 1831. As far as I am aware, this letter is the first official US Government report on Cochin China. For pertinent extract see Appendix A.

d. 12 August 1831:

On my passage from Europe I made up statements with regard to Siam, Cochin China & Japan at some considerable length and I hope after perusal the President may see fit to send a Mission to one or all those places. Should this take place, I beg leave to suggest that there be no expression in the Letters to the Sovereigns, or credentials of the Mission, that may lead those people to think the US a Republic. Those despots would affect to become alarmed at an intercourse with the U. States, free as it is, if they come at the knowledge of its peculiar Govt. through its own official [word missing] ...

e. 29 January 1832:

I have the honor to forward herewith copies of my communications upon Siam, Cochin China & Japan, and would remark that since writing the originals, I have decided to remain in this country until 1834, being one year longer than I formerly intended to...

f. 25 April 1832:

I beg leave to hand you herewith a copy of my communications upon Siam, Cochin China and Japan, & express a hope that Govt. will send a Mission, as is therein proposed. I am confident the result would be advantageous to our trade, & as the National revenue now so far exceeds the expenditures, I presume the expense, will not be an objection. In event of the President honoring me with the appointment of commissioner, my best powers and exertions shall be given to the object in view.

4. *American State Papers:* Documents of the Congress of the United States, 2nd Session, 19th to 21st Congress, January 1827-March 1837, Washington, DC: Gales & Seaton, 1860, *Naval Affairs*, vol. iv, p. 6.

5. Ibid., p. 158.

***Edmund Roberts, Special Agent, and the Sloop-of-War* Peacock**

1. James D. Richardson, *A Compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Presidents, 1789-1897,* Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1896, vol. iii, p. 53.

2. Edmund Roberts, *Embassy to the Eastern Courts of Cochin China, Siam and Muscat, in the U.S. Sloop-of-War Peacock, David Geisinger, Commander, During the Years 1832-3-4,* New York: Harper & Brothers, 1837, pp. 5-6.

3. For other accounts of Shillaber's efforts—and disappointments—and Roberts' appointment, see "Edward Livingston, Secretary of State," *The American Secretaries of State and Their Diplomacy,* Samuel Flagg Bemis, ed. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1928, vol. iv, See also Tyler Dennett,

Americans in Eastern Asia., New York: Barnes & Noble, Inc., 1941, chap. vii.

4. Edmund Roberts, *Embassy*, p. 6.

5. Nguyen The Anh, *Bibliographie Critique sur les relations entre le Viet-Nam et l'Occident*, Paris: G-P Maisonneuve et Larose, 1967, p. 156, note #611.

6. Department of State Archives, National Archives, Washington, DC, *Special Missions*, vol. i (1832), Letter to Levi Woodbury, Secretary of the Navy, from Edward Livingston, Secretary of State, 5 January 1832.

7. Ibid. Full text at Appendix B and draft treaty with Cochinchina at pp. 18-19. These are the first official US instructions regarding Cochinchina.

8. Ibid. Letters to Roberts from Livingston, 14 February 1832 and 23 July 1832.

9. Roberts, p. 13. Except where otherwise indicated, this account of Edmund Roberts' first mission to Cochin China is drawn heavily from Roberts' own account. However, see also Bemis, Dennett, Hunter Miller, *Treaties and Other International Acts of the United States of America*, Government Printing Office, 1931; vol. 3; and Charles Oscar Paullin, *Early Voyages of American Naval Vessels to the Orient, reprinted from US Naval Institute Proceedings*, Copyright 1910, pp. 716-724. Roberts' own official reports on his mission are found in the State Department Archives, *Special Agents*, vol. 10. The full text of his first summary report is at Appendix C. It should also be noted that Dennett cites, as sources for the Roberts mission, the Roberts papers in the Department of State and in the Library of Congress, Manuscript Division.

10. Text of President's letter is at pp. 26-27.

11. Roberts, *Embassy*, pp. 171-188.

12. This is an expression used by inferior officers, in corresponding with superiors, when referring to themselves.

13. Roberts, *Embassy*, pp. 182-184. 14. Ibid., pp. 189-190.

15. Ibid., p. 201. 16. Ibid., p. 214. 17. Ibid., p. 215.

18. Ibid., pp. 219-220. 19. Ibid., p. 225.

20. Mr. Edmund Roberts.

21. *Bulletin des Amis du Vieux Hué*, 24th year, no. 1, January-March 1937. "Notelettes," par L. Sogny, II, "An American Mission in Annam under Minh-Mang," pp. 63-64. See also W. Everett Scotten, "Sire, Their Nation is Very Cunning. . .," *The American Foreign Service Journal*, vol. xii, January 1935, p. 15.

22. Department of State Archives, *Singapore Consular Letters*.

23. See Roberts' report at Appendix C.

Edmund Roberts: Second Mission

1. Department of State Archives, Microfilm Reading Room, National Archives, Washington, DC, *Singapore Consular Letters.*

2. Ibid., letter dated 30 March 1835.

3. Ibid., *Special Missions*, I, letter to Edmund Roberts from Secretary of State Forsyth, 20 March 1835. 4. Ibid.

5. Charles Oscar Paullin, *Early Voyages* ..., p. 721.

6. W.S.W. Ruschenberger, *A Voyage Round the World; Including An Embassy to Muscat and Siam, in 1835, 1836, and 1837*, Philadelphia: Carey, Lea, & Blanchard, 1838, p. 347. This account of Roberts' second mission to Cochin China draws heavily on Ruschenberger's work.

7. Ibid., p. 357. 8. Ibid. 9. Ibid., p. 364.

10. Hunter Miller, vol. 3, pp. 780-786.

11. *Bulletin des Amis du Vieux Hué*, "An American Mission." Slightly different translations of these imperial records are contained in "Les premières relations entre le Viet-Nam et les Etats Unis d'Amérique," by Thai van Kiem, *Bulletin de la Société des Etudes Indochinoises*, Saigon, vol. 37, no. 3, 1962, p. 285. The two translations, however, differ in no material way.

***Joseph Balestier, US Consul, and Captain John Percival of the* USS Constitution**

1. Department of State Archives, Microfilm Reading Room, National Archives, Washington, DC, Letter from Joseph Balestier to Secretary of State Forsyth, 3 August 1837.

2. Ibid., *Singapore Consular Letters*, I. 3. Ibid.

4. Jean Chesneaux, *Contribution à l'Histoire de la Nation Vietnamienne*, Paris: Editions Sociales, 64 Bd. Auguste-Blanqui, 1955, p. 95.

5. D.G.E. Hall, *A History of Southeast Asia*, 3d ed., New York: St. Martin's Press, 1968, pp. 644-646. Hall's account suggests that the American show of force put Emperor Thieu Tri in an awkward domestic political predicament to which he had to react. "Governor Butterworth, in a letter of 13 March 1847, reported to the British Government of India that trading vessels coming from Cochin China had brought notice of new stringent regulations against foreigners there, and that he had told the mandarin in charge of them that 'the English sovereign would be displeased,' if they were put in force against British subjects. 'The mandarin,' he continued, 'at once gave me to understand that the regulations originated in the visit to Turon Bay of the American ship *Constitution*, when that vessel fired upon the town and destroyed several of the inhabitants, because the demand of her commander to have a French missionary bishop, then in prison, given up to him, was not complied with. And that the restrictions in question must be viewed as a

bit of policy on the part of the king, who was anxious to show his subjects that the insult offered to him had not been passed over with impunity. . . .' "

6. Joseph Buttinger, *The Smaller Dragon: A Political History of Vietnam*, New York: Praeger, 1958, p. 391, Note 17.

7. August Haussman, *Voyage en Chine, Cochinchine, Inde, et Malaisie*, 1848, t. ii, pp. 376-377, as excerpted in Georges Taboulet, *La Geste Française en Indochine*, Paris: Maisonneuve, vol. i, p. 365.

8. See Appendix D for the text of Percival's letter of 21 June 1845 to the Secretary of the Navy. Taken with its attachments, from the Naval Archives, *Letters to the Secretary of the Navy from Captains*, National Archives, Microfilm Division. 9. Ibid.

10. Ibid., Percival's letter to the Secretary of the Navy, 26 July 1845, with enclosures.

11. Whatever the facts regarding Percival's actions in DaNang Bay, there seems no doubt that two years later, in 1847, a French naval force attacked and destroyed five Cochinchinese sloops of war in the same bay, ostensibly for the purpose also of forcing the release of French priests imprisoned by the king. An account of this action is contained in Dispatch no. 80, 1 May 1847, from US Minister to China A.H. Everett to Secretary of State James Buchanan, State Department Archives.

12. Balestier had continued his effort to persuade Washington to give him such an assignment. For example, he addressed a letter to Secretary of State James Buchanan on 15 October 1848, while he was in Washington, pressing his case.

13. Department of State Archives, *Special Missions I*, pp. 292-296. The instruction provides an excellent view of overall American policy toward Southeast Asia in mid-19th century. It also contains the first mention of the objective of establishing a US consular presence in Vietnam.

14. *Senate Documents* 618 (29-38), 32nd Congress, 1st Session, 1851-2, vol. 7 of 16 vols. Doc. 38, "Report of Joseph Balestier to Secretary of State," 25 November 1851, pp. 3-5.

15. This account is based on Balestier's reports to Secretary of State Daniel Webster, *Senate Documents*, Ibid., pp. 3-8.

16. For Balestier's detailed reports of his Cochinchina mission, see *Senate Documents*, Ibid., pp. 37-46.

17. Ibid., Balestier's letter to the Secretary of State, 19 March 1850.

18. Department of State Archives, *Singapore Consular Letters*.

III COMMERCE, STRATEGIC THINKING AND COLONIAL EXPANSION

Daniel Webster and Commodore Perry

1. Henry Merritt Wriston, *Executive Agents in American Foreign Relations*, Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press 1929, p. 337.

2. Joseph Buttinger, pp. 275-276. 3. Ibid., p. 275.

4. Ibid., p. 388, note 7.

5. Hunter Miller, vol. vi, Document 164—Japan: 31 March 1854, pp. 515-516.

6. *Foreign Relations of the United States,* vol. 41, 33rd Congress, 2d Session, 1854-55; Senate Ex. Doc. no. 34, "Correspondence Relative to the Naval Expedition to Japan," p. 81.

7. *Perry's Expedition to the China Seas and Japan,* House Doc. No. 97, vol. 2, 33rd Congress, 2d Session, pp. 173-174. See also Tyler Dennett.

8. Wriston, pp. 360-361.

9. Perry either ignored or was unaware of Percival's unfortunate hostile action at DaNang Bay two years before the French incident.

10. *Perry's Expedition,* pp. 174-175. 11. Ibid., p. 180.

12. *Foreign Relations,* vol. 41, p. 182.

13. Ibid., vol. 54, 36th Congress, 1st Session, 1860; Senate Ex. Doc. no. 39, p. 2.

14. Ibid., vol. 51; Senate Ex. Doc. no. 22, "Correspondence of the Late Ministers of China," pp. 272-273, p. 446.

15. Ibid., p. 290. Letter dated 19 November 1854.

16. Ibid., p. 633. Letter dated 12 February 1856.

17. See *The Complete Journal of Townsend Harris,* Introduction and Notes by Mario Emilio Cosenza, and Department of State Archives, Microfilm Reading Room, National Archives, Washington, DC, III *Special Missions Instructions,* pp. 83-85.

18. See *Foreign Relations,* vol. 50, 35th Congress, 1858; Senate Ex. Doc. no. 47.

Colonies and Consulates

All notes except where otherwise indicated, refer to material to be found in the Department of State Archives, Microfilm Reading Room, National Archives, Washington, DC.

1. John F. Cady, *The Roots of French Imperialism in Eastern Asia,* Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1954, p. 17. 2. Ibid., p. 136.

3. *Foreign Relations of the United States,* vol. 54, 36th Congress, 1st Session, 1860; Senate Ex. Doc. no. 30, p. 489.

4. Ibid., p. 529; *Legation Despatch* no. 38, 12 November 1858.

5. *Peking Legation Despatch* no. 4, 25 February 1859.

6. *Singapore Consular Letter* no. 15, 22 March 1859. 7. Ibid.

8. *Singapore Consular Letter* no. 18, 7 April 1859.

9. *Peking Legation Despatch* no. 6, 12 April 1859.

10. *Hongkong Consular Letter* no. 11, 8 August 1859.

11. *Singapore Consular Letter* no. 6, 6 March 1861.

12. *Singapore Consular Letter* no. 10, 7 April 1861.

13. *Singapore Consular Letters*, 20 October 1861. This is the first available official record of an American ship calling at Saigon since the *Franklin* in 1820.

14. *Singapore Consular Letter* no. 27, 19 November 1861. 15. Ibid.

16. *Bangkok Consular Letter*, 26 February 1862.

17. *Hongkong Consular Letter* no. 30, 26 December 1863.

18. *The Diplomatic Correspondence of the United States of America*, 1866, Part I, pp. 473-4.

19. This text is filed with *Singapore Consular Letters*. For the full report of 14 July 1868 from Consul Allen in Hong Kong, see *Hongkong Consular Letters*.

20. *Singapore Consular Letter* no. 48, 16 June 1870. In the Paris Legation despatch file is a copy of a record also by Jasper Smith, dated 4 October 1870, stating that on 10 September, the Department conveyed its negative decision to Sewell. This record bears the marginal notation, "Write Mr. Washburn that it is not deemed expedient to appoint an agent under the Consul at Singapore. It may be thought best to establish a consulate or commercial agency there." This particular record may have been stimulated by Minister Washburn's dispatch no. 290, from Paris, received in the Department on 3 October 1870 (sent 14 September), which reported that the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs understood that Sewell had appointed a consular agent in Saigon and the Ministry awaited confirmation from Washington before issuing an exequatur (a written recognition of a consul by the government of the state in which he is stationed, authorizing him to exercise his powers).

21. *Singapore Consular Letter* no. 119, 30 November 1870. This letter refers to State Department dispatch no. 35, 10 September 1870, which presumably conveyed the Department's negative decision. (See also note 20.)

22. *Singapore Consular Letter* no. 155, 9 March 1871. In Paris Legation dispatch no. 498, 7 August 1871, US Minister Wickham Hoffman forwarded to the Department the French Government's bill for the repairs to the *Palas*.

23. *Foreign Relations*, vol. 78, 42d Congress, 1871; House Ex. Doc. no. 220, 2d Session, p. 673.

24. *Singapore Consular Letter* no. 4, 18 October 1871.

25. *Singapore Consular Letter* no. 5, 31 October 1871.

26. *Singapore Consular Letter* no. 29, 23 April 1872.

27. This report, dated 13 June 1872, is filed among the *Singapore Consular Letters*. 28. Ibid. 29. Ibid.

30. *Bangkok Consular Letter* no. 68, 20 June 1872.

31. *Peking Legation Despatch* no. 41, 16 June 1869, Enclosure B.

32. *Peking Legation Despatch* no. 170, 6 July 1872, Enclosure.

33. *Hongkong Consular Despatches*, no. 472, 7 May 1878; no. 480, 2 July 1878; no. 482, 6 July 1878; no. 490, September 1878; no. 495, 10 October 1878; and no. 500, 15 November 1878.

34. *Singapore Consular Despatch no.* 324, 28 July 1880; *Singapore Consular Despatch* no. 331, 25 August 1880—*Hongkong Consular Despatch* no. 99, 8 September 1880; *Singapore Consular Despatch* no. 369, 5 February 1881. The first case involved a stowaway, one Daniel Hyde, aboard a French ship out of Hong Kong for Saigon. The second concerned the shipwreck of the American barque *Rainbow* near the mouth of the "Cambodia river," and the third involved a mutiny aboard the ship *Colorado* at Saigon.

35. *Singapore Consular Despatch* no. 371, 19 February 1881.

France and China: A Growing Confrontation

1. One Vietnamese source claims that France's renewed effort in Tonkin in the early 1870s led to a remarkable, if brief and unsuccessful, first Vietnamese diplomatic effort with the United States. I have been unable to document it from American official or scholarly sources. The following is translated from the sole source available, Thai van Kiem, op. cit., Nouvelle série-tome xxxvii, Année 1962, numero 3-3e trimestre 1962:

> In 1873, Viet-Nam was in difficulty with France, which wished to extend its domination, beyond the present Cochinchina to the whole of the Vietnamese territory. The Court in disarray, decided to send Bui-Vien abroad, with the mission of entering into contact with a foreign power, non-colonialist, capable of bringing aid and assistance to Viet-Nam, in its hours of distress. . . .
>
> He sought by every means to enter into relations with the Chinese notables of the island [Hong Kong], when he made the unexpected acquaintance of the American consul in Hong Kong. . . .
>
> Already at that time, Bui-Vien thought that aside from the European countries, it would be of interest to establish relations with the United States of America.
>
> He thus confided in the American consul, informing him of the situation in his country and of the object of his voyage.
>
> The American consul interested himself in the project of the Vietnamese patriot, and informed him about American history, the courageous struggle undertaken by the Americans to gain their

independence. He also believed in the moral solidarity of the two countries, one of which had suffered from what the other still was suffering.

Enthused by the personality of the President of the United States of America, Simpson Grant, promoter of a vast program of modernization, Bui-Vien expressed the desire to go to America, since after all, the aid that he sought could not come from an exhausted China whose Foreign Minister himself, LyHong-Chuong, thought that his country had already enough internal difficulties without being able to interest itself still in another country's destiny.

The winter of the same year, he sailed for Japan. After having arrived quite rapidly at Yokohama, where he stayed with the American consul, on the introduction of his colleague in Hong-Kong, he left for San Francisco. Disembarked at San Francisco, Bui-Vien remained there for several days to make visits recommended by his American friend, then continued on his way to Washington, D.C. . . .

After laborious démarches carried out with great tact, he finally saw the big day so sought after when he was received solemnly by President Simpson Grant.

It seems that he obtained from the President of the United States a promise of aid and of alliance, subordinated nevertheless to the presentation of credentials which alone would permit President Grant to justify his intervention to the Congress.

Bui-Vien thus resolved to return to Viet-Nam to request Emperor Tu-Duc to provide him with the necessary diplomatic instruments. But, afterward, he learned on his way back that new political events would not permit the United States of America to keep its promise, and Bui-Vien, heart-broken, saw his dream disappear on his return journey.

2. Joseph Buttinger, p. 411, notes 80 and 81.

3. *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1875, vol. i, *Peking Legation Despatch* no. 52, 12 May 1875, pp. 319-320. 4. Ibid., p. 328.

5. Department of State Archives, National Archives, Washington, DC, *Bangkok Consular Despatches*, no. 9, 10 September 1880.

6. Ibid., reprinted from the *Pall Mall Gazette*, 26 August 1880.

7. Ibid., *Peking Legation Despatch* no. 101, 9 May 1882. These comments were evidently considered too sensitive to be published in the regular Foreign Relations volumes as they appear only in the Archives copies with brackets drawn around them and with the marginal notation "omit to end."

8. Ibid., *Bangkok Consular Letter*, no. 27, 15 March 1883.

9. Ibid., *Peking Legation Despatch* no. 159, 20 March 1883.

10. Ibid., *Bangkok Consular Despatch* no. 39, 8 June 1883.

11. Ibid., *Peking Legation Despatch* no. 214, 13 June 1883.

12. Ibid., *Bangkok Consular Despatch* no. 42, 16 June 1883.

13. Ibid., *Paris Legation Despatch* no. 359, 22 June 1883. The telegrams themselves were dated 12 June 1883.

IV THE UNITED STATES' GOOD OFFICES

The First Attempt: July-August 1883

All notes refer to material found in the Department of State Archives, Microfilm Reading Room, National Archives, Washington, DC.

1. *Paris Legation Despatch* no. 359, 22 June 1883.

2. *Peking Legation Despatches,* Telegram, 5 July 1883.

3. *Department Instructions, France,* p. 587, Cipher Telegram, 11 July 1883; China, p. 456, Cipher Telegram, 12 July 1883.

4. *Paris Legation Despatches,* Telegram, 16 July 1883.

5. Ibid., Telegram, 17 July 1883. For more details, see *Paris Legation Despatch* no. 372, 18 July 1883.

6. *Paris Legation Despatch* no. 374, 26 July 1883.

7. *Department Instructions,* p. 482, Instruction no. 155.

8. *Paris Legation Despatch* no. 374. For Morton's detailed report on this exchange, see *Paris Legation Separate Despatch,* 24 July 1883.

9. *Bangkok Legation Despatch* no. 49, 23 July 1883.

10. *Paris Legation Despatch* no. 391, 9 August 1883. Copy of telegram, dated 7 August 1883.

11. *Paris Legation Despatch* no. 397, 22 August 1883. Copy of telegram, dated 11 August 1883.

12. Copy of telegram, dated 13 August 1883.

13. *Paris Despatch* no. 397.

14. *Peking Despatch* no. 259, 28 September 1883.

15. *Peking Despatch* no. 230 (Confidential), 8 August 1883.

16. *Peking Despatch* no. 232, 16 August 1883.

The Second and Third Attempts: July-August 1884

All notes except where otherwise indicated, refer to material to be found in the Department of State Archives, Microfilm Reading Room, National Archives, Washington, DC.

1. *Bangkok Legation Despatch* no. 55, 30 August 1883.

2. *Peking Legation Telegram,* 13 September 1883.

3. *Bangkok Legation Despatch* no. 63, 8 October 1883.

4. *Peking Legation Despatch* no. 268, 8 October 1883.

5. Ibid., Enclosure 1. 6. Ibid., Enclosure 3. 7. Ibid., Enclosure 4.

8. *Paris Legation Despatch* no. 433, 24 October 1883.

9. *Paris Legation Despatch* no. 437, 2 November 1883.

10. Ibid. 11. Ibid

12. *Peking Legation Telegram*, 9 November 1883.

13. *Paris Legation Despatch* no. 443, 14 November 1883.

14. *Peking Legation Despatch* no. 308, 24 December 1883. 15. Ibid.

16. *Peking Legation Despatch* no. 315, 31 December 1883.

17. *Peking Legation Despatch* no. 385, 18 March 1884.

18. *Foreign Relations, 1884*, enclosure to *Peking Legation Despatch* no. 427, 16 April 1884, pp. 94-95. Seymour's dispatch was dated 22 March 1884.

19. *Department of State Instructions*, China, Instruction no. 239 to John Russell Young, 21 March 1884. The instruction answered Young's dispatch no. 308, 24 December 1883. For additional background on the treaty port issue, see also *Peking Legation Despatch* no. 350, 11 February 1884, *Foreign Relations, 1884*, pp. 67-68, and Department of State Telegram of Instruction, 22 January 1884, *Foreign Relations, 1884*, p. 64.

20. *Foreign Relations, 1884*, Instruction no. 267 to Young, 18 April 1884, p. 96.

21. *Paris Legation Despatch* no. 557, 13 May 1884.

22. *Peking Legation Despatch* no. 442, 2 June 1884.

23. *Peking Legation Telegram*, 20 July 1884.

24. *Paris Legation Despatch* no. 592, 24 July 1884; and copy of a telegram from Frelinghuysen to Morton.

25. *Paris Legation Despatch* no. 592. 26. Ibid.

27. *Paris Legation Telegram*, 25 July 1884.

28. *Peking Legation Despatch* no. 496, 21 August 1884, Enclosure 2.

29. *Peking Legation Despatches*, Cipher Telegram, 30 July 1884.

30. *Paris Legation Despatch* no. 601, 6 August 1884. 31. Ibid.

32. *Peking Despatch* no. 496, Enclosure 5. 33. Ibid., Enclosure 7.

34. *Peking Legation Despatches*, Cipher Telegram, 13 August 1884.

35. *Paris Legation Telegram*, 14 August 1884.

36. *Department Instruction*, China, no. 324, 16 August 1884.

37. *Peking Legation Despatches*, Cipher Telegram, 20 August 1884.

The Fourth Attempt: September-November 1884

All notes, except where otherwise indicated, refer to material to be found in the Department of State Archives, Microfilm Reading Room, National Archives, Washington, DC.

1. *Peking Despatch* no. 496, 21 August 1884.

2. Young telegram to Secretary of State, 22 August 1884.

3. *Peking Despatch* no. 496, Enclosure 31.

4. Young telegram to Secretary of State, 26 August, 1884.

5. *Peking Despatch* no. 505, 7 September 1884.

6. *Paris Legation Telegram*, 3 September 1884.

7. *Peking Despatch* no. 569, 9 December 1884, Enclosure 1.

8. Ibid., Enclosure 10. 9. Ibid., Enclosure 6. 10. Ibid.

11. Ibid., Enclosure 15. 12. Ibid., Enclosure 16.

13. Ibid., Enclosure 18.

14. Ibid., Enclosure 20. Stahel sent Young a parallel confidential telegram the same day hinting at possible duplicitous dealings on the part of the French or the Chinese. He asked to see Young, who invited him to Tientsin (see Enclosures 17 and 19). There is no evidence this meeting ever took place.

15. Ibid., Enclsoure 21. 16. Ibid., Enclosure 3.

17. Ibid., Enclosure 4. 18. Ibid., Enclosure 5.

19. *Peking Despatch* no. 569.

20. *Peking Despatch* no. 582, 22 December 1884.

21. *Peking Despatch* no. 583, 22 December 1884.

22. Sidney A. Staunton, "The War in Tong-King. Why the French are in Tong-King and What They are Doing There," Boston: Cupples, Upham & Co., 1885. 23. Ibid., p. 45.

24. *Peking Despatch* no. 612, 7 January 1885.

25. *Peking Despatch* no. 628, 16 January 1885, p. 231.

26. *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1885*, *Peking Despatch* no. 650, 14 February 1885, p. 156.

27. Ibid., *Department Instruction* no. 407, 11 March 1885, p. 160.

28. *Peking Despatch* no. 688, 26 March 1885.

29. *Foreign Relations*, *Peking Despatch* no. 696, 30 March 1885, pp. 168-169.

30. *Peking Despatch* no. 4, 16 April 1885.

31. *Peking Despatch* no. 28, 20 June 1885.

32. *Foreign Relation*, *Paris Despatch* no. 29, 24 June 1885, p. 371.

Breathing Space: Trade and Consuls

All notes, except where otherwise indicated, refer to material to be found in the Department of State Archives, Microfilm Reading Room, National Archives, Washington, DC.

1. *Peking Despatch* no. 48, 2 December 1885. The microfilm copy of this report bears a stamp of the 3d Assistant Secretary of State, dated 2 February 1886, with the handwritten notation, "Ack. as an interesting review of the situation."

2. *Peking Despatch* no. 92, 17 February 1886.

3. *Peking Despatch* no. 133, 14 May 1886.

4. *Peking Despatch* no. 137, 24 May 1886.

5. *Peking Despatch* no. 143, 2 June 1886.

6. *Peking Despatch* no. 308, 17 February 1887. On the microfilm copy of this dispatch, brackets are drawn around the words "a colony creditable to the French ambition for colonization or" in the last sentence, and the word "omit" is written in the margin opposite. Presumably this phrase was to be omitted from the published version of the dispatch.

7. *Peking Despatch* no. 391, 21 June 1887.

8. *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1887, Peking Despatch* no. 412, 22 July 1887, pp. 232-234.

9. *Peking Despatch* no. 512, 15 November 1887.

10. *Hong Kong Despatch* no. 331, 4 August 1884. 11. Ibid.

12. *Singapore Despatch* no. 742, 7 November 1888.

13. Ibid. 14. Ibid.

15. *Bangkok Despatch no.* 74, 19 December 1888.

16. *Singapore Despatch* no. 757, 25 February 1889.

17. *Saigon Consular Letters,* Diplomatic Section, National Archives.

18. *Foreign Relations, 1889. Peking Despatch* no. 831, 28 February 1889, p. 99.

19. *Peking Despatch* no. 950, 23 August 1889.

20. *Canton Despatch* no. 192, 26 March 1890.

21. *Saigon Consular Letter.*

22. Ibid., 10 February 1894. 23. Ibid., 5 May 1894.

24. Ibid., 1905-1906.

25. *Singapore Despatch* no. 283, 30 September 1898.

26. *Singapore Despatch* no. 284, 1 October 1898.

27. *Bangkok Despatch* no. 88, 22 July 1901.

V THE UNITED STATES AND JAPAN

Prelude to Confrontation: American Beginnings in Indochina

All notes, except where otherwise indicated, refer to material to be found in the Department of State Archives, Microfilm Reading Room, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

1. *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1907, Part II, p. 754.

2. Ibid., p. 755. 3. Ibid. 4. Ibid., p. 757.

5. Ibid., p. 758.

6. *Saigon Despatch* no. 18, 18 February 1908. 7. Ibid.

8. Ibid., no. 48, 11 May 1908. 9. Ibid. 10. Ibid.

11. Ibid., no. 85, 7 October 1908.

12. *Department Instruction* no. 45 to Saigon, 10 September 1909.

13. *Saigon Despatch* no. 186, 30 December 1909.

14. See for example:

a. *Saigon Despatch* no. 148, 12 January 1916. Consul Lawrence P. Briggs reported a "confidential proposal by a local French banker and journalist suggesting openings for American capital;

b. A report in August 1924 from Consul Leland L. Smith describing the growing importance of American trade in Indochina and suggesting that this trade was greatly handicapped by a lack of credit facilities and information;

c. A letter from Consul Harris N. Cookingham to US Consul General Robert Skinner in Paris, 18 January 1926, which suggested local French rubber interests would welcome American investment in rubber cultivation in Indochina;

d. *Paris Consulate General's Despatch* no. 1047, 23 February 1926, reported a speech highly critical of American disinterest in investing in rubber plantations in Indochina.

Coming Confrontation

1. Buckley, *The United States and the Washington Conference, 1921-1922*, p. 90.

2. Ibid., pp. 127-128 and chap. ix, "The Four-Power Treaty." According to Buckley, the Washington Conference's Four-Power Treaty was a compromise between the British desire to keep open the possibility of a defensive alliance with the Japanese and the American desire to avoid Britain and Japan "ganging-up" on the United States. Thus, the Americans insisted on including France as the fourth power.

In essence, the Four-Power Treaty aimed at maintaining the territorial status quo in the Pacific region. The status quo applied to French territories in the Pacific and Far East, as did America's commitment to support their integrity. The senate, by a narrow margin of 4 votes, ratified the Four-Power Treaty with the explicit reservation that "there is no commitment to armed force, no alliance, no obligation to join in any defense." (Morris, ed., *Encyclopedia of American History*, p. 379).

Despite this clear disclaimer by the Senate, France later tried to use the vehicle of the Brussels conference—called in 1938 to review the results of the Washington conference—to engage the 9 powers, especially the United States, in a common commitment to continue to defend Indochina if Japan retaliated against it for arms transshipments via Hanoi and Haiphong. (See the following Chapter.)

3. *Papers Relating to Pacific and Far Eastern Affairs Prepared for the Use of the American Delegation to the Conference on the Limitation of Armaments, Washington, 1921-22;* Confidential Information Series D, no. 79, General, no. 1, Dept. of State.

4. Ibid., p. 13. 5. Ibid., p. 987. 6. Ibid. 7. Ibid.

8. Ibid. 9. Ibid. 10. Ibid. 11. Ibid., p. 1011.

12. Ibid., p. 1018. 13. Ibid. 14. Ibid.

15. Ibid., pp. 1021-1044. 16. Ibid., p. 1134.

17. *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1932, vol. iv, *The Far East*, p. 580.

18. Ibid., pp. 582-583. 19. Ibid., pp. 583-584.

20. Ibid., 1933, vol. iii, *The Far East*, p. 241. 21. Ibid., p. 361-362.

22. Ibid., 1934, vol. iii, *The Far East*, pp. 2, 27.

23. Ibid., 1935, vol. iii, *The Far East*, p. 822.

24. Ibid., p. 824. 25. Ibid., p. 849.

Arms Shipments, High Diplomacy and Commercial Considerations

1. *Foreign Relations*, 1937, vol. iii, p. 442.

2. Ibid., p. 468 3. Ibid., pp. 476-477.

4. Ibid., p. 485. 5. Ibid., p. 523.

6. The statements of 16 July and 23 August called for abstinence from the use of force in pursuit of policy and from interfering in the internal affairs of others. They advocated adherence to international agreements, etc. The statement of 16 July addressed "disturbed situations in various parts of the world." The statement of 23 August addressed the Sino-Japanese situation directly and reaffirmed the general principles set forth in the 16 July statement. It also made reference to the Washington Conference treaties and the Kellogg-Briand Pact of 1928.

7. *Foreign Relations*, 1937, vol. iii, p. 524.

8. Ibid., p. 525. 9. Ibid., p. 629. 10. Ibid.

11. Ibid., p. 632. 12. Ibid. 13. Ibid., pp. 634-635.

14. Ibid., pp. 635-637. 15. Ibid., pp. 637-638. 16. Ibid., p. 641.

17. Ibid., p. 672.

18. *The Memoirs of Cordell Hull,* New York: The MacMillan Company, 1948, vol. i, p. 552.

19. *Foreign Relations,* 1938, vol. iii, *The Far East,* pp. 213-214, p. 592.

20. Ibid., pp. 62-63, 65. 21. Ibid., p. 116. 22. Ibid., pp. 594-595.

23. Ibid., p. 136. 24. Ibid., pp. 596-597. 25. Ibid., p. 164.

26. Ibid., pp. 600-601. 27. Ibid., p. 209. 28. Ibid., p. 534.

29. Ibid., pp. 218-219. 30. Ibid., p. 237.

31. Ibid., pp. 319-320. 32. Ibid., pp. 351-352, 607.

33. Ibid., p. 375. 34. Ibid., p. 609. 35. Ibid., pp. 609-610.

36. Ibid., p. 401. 37. Ibid., p. 610. 38. Ibid., p. 612.

VI JAPAN'S SOUTHWARD ADVANCE

Japan's Southward Advance Accelerates

1. *Foreign Relations,* 1939, vol. iii, *The Far East,* pp. 103-104.

2. Ibid., pp. 104-105. 3. Ibid., pp. 105-108. 4. Ibid., p. 108.

5. Ibid., p. 109. 6. Ibid., p. 110. 7. Ibid., pp. 110-111.

8. Hull, *Memoirs,* vol. i, p. 628.

9. *Foreign Relations,* vol. iii, pp. 740-741.

10. Ibid., p. 741. 11. Ibid., p. 145. 12. Ibid., pp. 111-112.

13. Ibid., p. 114. 14. Ibid., p. 115. 15. Ibid., p. 116.

16. Ibid., pp. 528-529. 17. Ibid., p. 530. 18. Ibid., p. 535.

19. Ibid. 20. Ibid., *Japan, 1931-1941,* vol. ii, pp. 280-281.

21. Hull, p. 638.

22. *Foreign Relations., Japan,* pp. 4-5.

23. Ibid. vol. iii, *The Far East,* pp. 39-40. 24. Ibid., p. 539.

25. Ibid., p. 119. 26. Ibid. 27. Ibid., p. 121.

28. Ibid., pp. 193-194. 29. Ibid., pp. 541-543. 30. Ibid., p. 698.

31. Churchill, *The Gathering Storm,* pp. 416-417.

32. *Foreign Relations.,* pp. 233-234.

33. Ibid., p. 235. 34. Ibid., pp. 757-758. 35. Ibid., p. 758.

36. Ibid. 37. Ibid., p. 759. 38. Ibid. 39. Ibid., p. 272.

40. Ibid., pp. 273-275. 41. Ibid., p. 764. 42. Ibid., pp. 296-297.

43. Ibid., p. 765. 44. Ibid., pp. 321-322. 45. Ibid., p. 766.

46. Ibid., pp. 121-123. 47. Ibid., p. 716. 48. Ibid., p. 766.

49. Ibid., p. 91. 50. Ibid., p. 717.

Japanese Forces Occupy Tonkin

1. *Foreign Relations, Japan, 1931-1941,* vol. i, pp. 674, 678.

2. Hull, *Memoirs,* vol. i, p. 888.

3. Ibid., p. 889.

4. *Foreign Relations, Japan, 1931-1941,* vol. ii, p. 282. For the American note, of 4 February 1922, see telegram number 3, 2/3/22, to the Minister in the Netherlands, in *Foreign Relations,* 1922, vol. i, p. 45.

5. *Foreign Relations,* 1940, vol, iv, p. 10.

6. Ibid., p. 12. 7. Ibid., p. 13. 8. Ibid., p. 20.

9. Ibid., *Japan,* vol. ii, pp. 69-70.

10. Ibid., 1940, vol. iv, *The Far East,* p. 25.

11. Hull, vol. i, p. 896.

12. *Foreign Relations,* 1940, vol. iv., p. 29.

13. Hull, vol. i, p. 893. 14. Ibid., p. 895.

15. *Foreign Relations, Japan, 1931-1941,* vol. ii, pp. 86-87.

16. Ibid., p. 88. 17. Ibid., p. 90. 18. Hull, vol. i, p. 895.

19. *Foreign Relations,* 1940, vol. iv, pp. 38-39. 20. Ibid., p. 40.

21. Ibid., *Japan, 1931-1941,* vol. ii, p. 100.

22. Ibid, 1940, vol. iv, pp. 64-65.

23. Ibid., *Japan, 1931-1941,* vol. ii, pp. 289-290.

24. Ibid., 1940, vol. iv, pp. 68-69. 25. Ibid., p. 79.

26. Ibid., pp. 83-84. 27. Ibid., p. 84. 28. Ibid., p. 86.

29. Matthews, in his privately circulated memoirs, states that Baudoin, the Foreign Minister, was pro-German and Pétain was anxious to avoid a break in relations with the United States. Robert Murphy, the career diplomat whom Matthews succeeded as Chargé in Vichy after Murphy was recalled and sent to Africa, has one brief paragraph regarding Indochina in his memoirs, *Diplomat Among Warriors:* "I was instructed to make one 'representation' after another to the French Government in Vichy about Japanese demands. The foreign minister, Paul Baudoin, had been general manager of the Bank of Indochina, and was married to an Indochinese lady. He understood fully the significance of events there, but he also understood that his government was in a position to do little if anything to check the Japanese. He referred me to the Premier, and I went to see Laval, who was not an Asian specialist but who was equally noncommittal about Indochina. Laval even suggested, with a sly smile, that the Japanese had not menaced Indochina until the British fleet had put the French fleet temporarily out of commission." Robert Murphy, *Diplomat Among Warriors,* New York: Doubleday and Company, 1964, p. 60.

30. Hull, vol. i, p. 903.

31. *Foreign Relations, Japan, 1931-1941*, vol. ii, pp. 291-292.

32. Hull, vol. i, pp. 903-904.

33. *Foreign Relations*, 1940, vol. iv, p. 98.

34. Ibid., p. 102. 35. Ibid., pp. 107-108.

36. Ibid., pp. 104-105. 37. Ibid., pp. 106-107.

38. Ibid., pp. 109-110. In his memoirs Hull's account of this exchange with the French Government refers only to the points Matthews was instructed to make and makes no mention of the French reply (Hull, vol. i, p. 904).

39. *Foreign Relations*, 1940, vol. iv, p. 121. 40. Ibid., pp. 124-125.

41. Ibid., 1940, vol. ii, p. 521. During the initial call of the new Vichy Ambassador, Gaston Henry-Haye, on Secretary of State Cordell Hull, Hull raised the matter of 90 aircraft out in the weather in Martinique purchased by the previous French Government from US manufacturers. Hull urged that these aircraft be returned to the United States and that the Vichy Government use the "$40 or $50 million" credit from their return for needed foodstuff and supplies. Henry-Haye agreed to take this matter up with Vichy, but expressed the view that the terms of the armistice with Germany might prevent their return. *Foreign Relations*, ibid., p. 517.

42. Ibid., vol. iv, p. 125. 43. Ibid., pp. 129-130.

44. Ibid., *Japan.*, vol. ii, p. 294. 45. Ibid., 1940, vol. iv, p. 133.

46. Ibid., p. 137. 47. Ibid., 1940, vol. ii, p. 522.

48. Ibid., *Japan, 1931-1941*, vol. ii, p. 295.

49. Ibid., *Japan, 1931-1941*, vol. i, pp. 878-881.

50. Ibid., vol. ii, p. 294. 51. Ibid, 1940, vol. iv, pp. 146-147.

52. Ibid., vol. ii, pp. 386-390. 53. Ibid., vol. iv, pp. 172-173.

54. Ibid., p. 191. 55. Ibid., vol. ii, pp. 414-416.

56. Ibid., p. 532. 57. Ibid., p. 533. 58. Ibid., p. 536.

Exploratory US-Japanese Conversations Begin

1. *Foreign Relations*, 1941, vol. v, *The Far East*, p.6.

2. Ibid., p. 4. 3. Ibid., pp. 10-11. 4. Ibid., pp. 11-12.

5. Ibid., pp. 16-17. 6. Ibid., p. 20. 7. Ibid, p. 27.

8. Ibid., p. 28.

9. Sherwood, *Roosevelt and Hopkins, An Intimate History*, New York: Harper & Brothers, 1948, p. 259. 10. Ibid.

11. Hull, *Memoirs*, vol. i, p. 916. 12. Ibid., vol. ii, p. 984.

13. *Foreign Relations*, 1941, ibid., pp. 48-49. 14. Ibid., pp. 55-56.

15. Ibid., p. 66. 16. Ibid., pp. 67-68.

17. Ibid., pp. 400-01. 18. Hull, ibid, pp. 985-986.

19. Ibid., p. 989. 20. Ibid., p. 991. 21. Ibid.

22. Ibid., pp. 991-996. 23. Ibid., p. 999. 24. Ibid., p. 1001.

25. *For. Rels.*, ibid, pp. 162-163. 26. Ibid., p. 162.

27. Hull, ibid., pp. 1009-1010.

28. *Foreign Relations*, ibid., p. 521.

29. Hull, ibid., p. 1013. The United States was by then intercepting Japanese messages and breaking their codes.

30. *Foreign Relations*, ibid., vol. iv, p. 301.

31. Ibid., vol. v, p. 210. 32. Ibid., p. 212.

33. Ibid., vol. iv, pp. 325-326. According to John Toland's *The Rising Sun*, there indeed was a rousing debate in Japanese official circles whether to strike north against Siberia or South against Indochina, Malaya, and the Dutch East Indies. The decision was to go south, and it was approved in the presence of the Emperor on 2 July (p. 94). Winston Churchill, in volume iii of his history of the Second World War, *The Grand Alliance*, observes portentously: "Thus we see as this world drama marches on how all these three coldly calculated empires made at this moment mistakes disastrous alike to their ambitions and their safety. Hitler was resolved on the war with Russia, which played a decisive part in his ruin. Stalin remained, to Russia's bitter cost, in ignorance or underestimation of the blow about to fall on him. Japan certainly missed the best chance—for what it was ever worth—of realising her dreams." (p. 195).

34. Ibid., pp. 329-330. 35. Ibid., p. 832. 36. Hull, ibid., p. 1013.

"The Pudgy Thumb" Falls and Talks Resume

1. *Foreign Relations, 1941*, vol. iv, *The Far East*, p. 333.

2. Ibid., pp. 334-335.

3. Ibid., *Japan, 1931-41*, vol ii, pp. 518-519.

4. Ibid., 1941, *The Far East*, vol. iv., pp. 339-341.

5. Ibid., *Japan*, vol. ii, pp. 315-317.

6. Hull, vol. ii, pp. 1013-1014. 7. Ibid., p. 1014.

8. *Roosevelt and Hopkins*, pp. 318-319.

9. Ibid., p. 404. William Manchester, in his biography of General Douglas MacArthur, *American Ceasar*, adds color regarding Japan's military moves against Indochina: "On July 23 they [the Japanese] persuaded the feeble Vichy regime to give them bases in southern Indochina. The next day elements of their fleet steamed into Vietnam's Cam Ranh Bay, the best natural harbor in the Orient, and the day after that, thirty thousand Japanese troops landed at Saigon. . . ." p. 210.

10. *Foreign Relations,* 1941, vol. iv, pp. 341-342.

11. Ibid., p. 348. 12. Ibid., p. 349. 13. Ibid., p. 352.

14. Ibid., vol. v, pp. 243-244. 15. Ibid., p. 245.

16. Ibid., vol. iv, p. 359.

17. Ibid., *Japan,* 1931-41, vol. ii, p. 321.

18. Hull, p. 1016. 19. Ibid.

20. Sherwood, pp. 356-357.

21. Hull, pp. 1017-1019.

22. *Foreign Relations,* ibid., vol. iv, pp. 378-379.

23. Hull, p. 1020.

24. John Toland, *The Rising Sun,* New York: Bantam Books, 4th Printing, 1971, p. 103.

25. Ibid., p. 105. 26. Ibid., pp. 105-106.

27. Hull, pp. 1020-1021. 28. Ibid., p. 1021.

29. Ibid., pp. 1021-1026. 30. Ibid., p. 1026.

31. Toland, pp. 108-110. 32. Ibid., pp. 113-116.

33. Hull, p. 1028. 34. Ibid., pp. 1028-1030. 35. Ibid., p. 1031.

36. *Foreign Relations,* vol. iv, ibid., pp. 452-454.

37. Ibid., vol. v, pp. 291-292. 38. Ibid., pp. 304-305.

39. Ibid., p. 310. 40. Ibid., p. 311. 41. Ibid., pp. 315-316.

42. Ibid., p. 341. 43. Hull, p. 1069. 44. Ibid., p. 1071.

45. *Foreign Relations,* ibid., p. 443.

46. Hull, pp. 1072-1076.

47. *Foreign Relations,* vol iv, ibid., pp. 648-649. 48. Ibid., p. 665.

49. Ibid., pp. 665-666.

50. Hull, p. 1082.

51. *Foreign Relations,* vol. iv, ibid., p. 667. 52. Ibid., pp. 676-678.

53. Ibid., pp. 678-80. 54. Ibid., p. 693.

55. Hull, pp. 1091-1092. 56. Ibid., p. 1090. 57. Ibid., p. 1092.

58. Ibid., p. 1093. 59. Ibid. 60. Ibid., pp. 1093-1094.

61. *Foreign Relations,* vol. iv, pp. 723-725.

62. Hull, p. 1094.

CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS

1787-1789 Thomas Jefferson seeks samples of Cochinchinese rice to plant in the Carolinas.

1803

21 May Captain Jeremiah Briggs, in search of a cargo of rice or sugar, anchors his ship, the *Fame, in* "Turon" Bay (present-day Danang).

1819

7 June John White, Lieutenant, USN, anchors the brig *Franklin* off Vung-tau.

7 October The *Franklin* and the *Marmion* anchor in the Saigon River opposite Saigon. White begins lengthy and unsuccessful negotiations for a cargo of rice or sugar.

1831

3 July John Shillaber, US Consul in Batavia, in response to the State Department's request, submits the first official report on Cochinchina and potential American trading interest there.

1832

27 January Secretary of State Edward Livingston addresses instructions to Special Envoy Edmund Roberts to negotiate a commercial treaty with Cochinchina, enclosing a letter from President Andrew Jackson to the Emperor of Vietnam—the first letter between chiefs of state of the two countries.

1833

1 January Special Envoy Edmund Roberts arrives off the Bay of Danang on his first unsuccessful mission to negotiate a commercial treaty with Cochinchina.

1836

14 May Edmund Roberts arrives off the Bay of Danang on his second unsuccessful mission to Cochinchina.

1845

14 May Captain John Percival, commander of the frigate USS *Constitution,* anchors in the Bay of Danang for reprovisioning. Conducts a show of force against local authorities in an effort to secure the release of a French priest.

1850	
25 February	Joseph Balestier, US Consul in Singapore and Special Agent to Cochinchina, arrives in the Bay of Danang to disavow Captain Percival's action; to negotiate a Treaty of Friendship and Commerce with Cochinchina; and to propose that a US consul or commercial agent be located at one or more of their principal ports.
1870	
6 September	In response to Congressional interest, and after study, the State Department decides against establishing a consular agency in Saigon.
1872	
18 June	In response to Acting Secretary of State Hale, the US Consul in Singapore, A. G. Studer, reluctantly reviews the question of establishing a consular agency in Saigon.
1873	One Bui Vien, reportedly sent by the Court in Vietnam to seek aid from foreign powers against the French, reaches the United States and is supposed to have had an interview with President Ulysses S. Grant. Grant is reportedly sympathetic, but unwilling to give aid in view of Bui Vien's lack of credentials.
1874	France signs a Treaty with Annam, establishing a protectorate over that country. France later contends that it had notified the treaty to the Chinese, who did not protest; China later claims that it did protest.
1875	France blockades Annamese ports to prevent Chinese arms and supplies from getting through. Chinese remonstrate with French.
1883	
5 July	Following breakoff of French-Chinese negotiations, John Russell Young, US Minister to China, cables to State Department China's first request for good offices with French. The latter turn the resulting US offer aside.
1883	
25 August	French and Annamese sign a treaty at Hué, establishing a French protectorate over Annam and Tonkin. Chinese vow to resist.
1884	
20 July	Young cables Washington China's second request for US good offices with the French. Again France declines, charging Chinese with a treaty violation and claiming the right to an indemnity.

30 July Young cables Washington China's third request for US good offices with the French. France declines a third time.

13 September On the basis of indirect feelers from French officials, Secretary of State Frelinghuysen cables Young to explore again Chinese willingness to compromise with France through US good offices.

27 September Denying it had violated any treaty obligations to France, and refusing to pay any indemnity to France, China expresses willingness to accept US mediation, "should France propose it."

10 November Secretary of State Frelinghuysen cables Young with "personal" points for settlement with France. Chinese are willing to accept only two of four points.

1885
9 June France and China sign Tientsin Treaty.

1888
September State Department agrees in principle to open a Saigon commercial agency. Names Mr. Aimée Fonsales as Commercial Agent if he would accept.

1889
10 March Mr. Aimée Fonsales accepts the appointment as Commercial Agent in Saigon.

1898 Admiral Dewey defeats the Spanish naval forces in Manila Bay. United States takes possession of the Philippines.

1908
30 November The United States and Japan exchange notes declaring that each government supports the maintenance of the status quo in the Pacific region.

1921
13 December The United States, Britain, France, and Japan sign a Treaty at the Washington Conference on the Limitation of Armaments aimed at maintaining the status quo in the Pacific. The US Senate later consents to ratification of the Four-Power Treaty by four votes with the reservation that "there is no commitment to armed force, no alliance, no obligation to join in any defense."

1922
4 February The Four Parties send notes to the Netherlands, a non-signatory, assuring it that they would respect its rights regarding its insular possessions in the Pacific region.

1931-32	Japan annexes southern Manchuria.
1932	
January	United States sends identical notes to China and Japan saying it would not recognize any situation brought about by means contrary to the terms of the Kellogg-Briand Pact of 1928.
	Local French authorities in Tonkin attempt to block transshipment of 6 US trainer aircraft ordered by Chinese authorities in Yunnan.
27 February	French authorize transshipment of the 6 aircraft, after verifying their commercial character.
1933	France claims sovereignty over certain islands in the South China sea.
1937	
16 July	United States issues a statement, referring to "disturbed situations in various parts of the world." Opposes the use of force to achieve policy aims and interference in internal affairs of others.
18 August	United States informs France that hostilities in China between Japanese and Chinese forces do not appear clearly to constitute war between two nations; thus, the embargo provisions of the Neutrality Act are not triggered.
23 August	United States issues another statement, referring to the Sino-Japanese situation directly and reaffirming its statements of 16 July.
August	United States informs France it does not intend to initiate a concerted effort against Japan, that it prefers approaching the problem through "independent but parallel lines."
Fall	Japan occupies Pratas Reef, southeast of Hong Kong.
Mid-September	Washington instructs Ambassador Grew in Tokyo, after conferring with his British and French colleagues, to approach Japan over its seizure of the Pratas Reef.
Mid-October	Roosevelt communicates directly with French Prime Minister Chautemps over France's renewed refusal to allow Indochina to be used as an arms transit route to China. Chautemps tells US Ambassador Bullitt that France's decision was subject to review if the forthcoming Nine-Power Conference in Brussels (called in an effort to end the conflict in China) should decide on joint action that could make France's position in Indochina safe.

21 October	Acting Secretary of State Welles, "by direction of the President," informs the French Chargé that France's position could prejudice the outcome of the Brussels Conference.
22 October	French Deputy Prime Minister Léon Blum privately informs Bullitt that arms shipments through Indochina will continue at least until the Brussels Conference.
25 October	Secretary of State Hull informs Bullitt that instructions to the US representative to the Brussels Conference do not advocate any concrete course of action.
1938	
9 May	French Prime Minister Edouard Daladier informs Bullitt that all arms shipments through Indochina are going though.
1938 **7 July**	French Foreign Minister informs Bullitt that the landing of French troops in the Paracel Islands and restriction of Japanese imports into France are not related and do not mean any policy change toward Japan.
13 October	Japan lands troops on the South China coast.
1939	
Early February	Japan occupies Hainan Island in the Tonkin Gulf.
15 February	United States instructs Grew to ask the Japanese regarding their intentions in Hainan, noting the substantial American interests on the island.
27 February	France informs the United States it has suggested to Japan their differences over sovereignty of certain islands be submitted to the Permanent Court of Arbitration at The Hague.
31 March	Japan announces that the Spratly Islands have been placed under the jurisdiction of the Governor General of Formosa.
1939	
17 May	United States rejects an earlier Japanese note claiming sovereignty over all islands and reefs.
1 September	Germany invades Poland, and Britain and France declare war on Germany.
Mid-September	US Consul Reed arrives in Hanoi to monitor arms transshipments to China.

1 December	Japan protests to France regarding continuing munitions shipments to Chiang Kai-shek through Indochina.
1940	
15 April	Japan issues statement declaring it was bound economically to the South Seas regions, especially the Netherlands East Indies.
17 April	With Roosevelt's agreement, Secretary of State Hull issues a statement declaring that "intervention in the domestic affairs of the Netherlands Indies or any alteration of their status quo by other than peaceful processes would be prejudicial to the cause of stability, peace, and security not only in the region of the Netherlands East Indies but in the entire Pacific area." Hull's declaration cites an exchange of notes with Japan in 1908 embodying these principles, as well as notes from the Four-Power Treaty parties to the Netherlands in 1922.
5 June	Germany invades France.
10 June	Japan complains to Grew about the US fleet's continued stay in Hawaiian waters.
20 June	France informs the United States that the Governor General of Indochina has acceded to Japan's request that the Sino-Indochinese border be closed.
22 June	Secretary of State Hull instructs Grew to explore with the Japanese Foreign Minister the possibility of an exchange of notes guaranteeing the status quo of the Pacific Ocean possessions of the European belligerents.
28 June	Japan rejects Hull's proposal.
10 July	France collapses and is occupied by Germany. Vichy Government established.
6 August	Vichy France informs the State Department of Japan's demands for authorization to send troops across Indochina, to use airfields in Indochina, to station troops at those airfields to ensure their security, and to send military equipment and munitions through Indochina to Japanese forces elsewhere. The French Ambassador fears France would have to accede to Japan's demands in view of US unwillingness to take stronger action vis-à-vis Japan.
	Acting Secretary of State Welles instructs Grew to convey to Japan US concerns at these demands. Grew is told France had already accepted the Japanese demands.

17 August Thailand informs the United States that, while accepting the status quo in Indochina, if a third party (i.e., Japan) were to upset that status quo, Thailand would seek return of those Indochinese provinces which had been ceded to France.

21 August Welles instructs US Minister Grant to urge the Thai to adhere to the principle of peaceful negotiation and settlement of differences.

26 August The United States tells Vichy France an agreement to the concessions demanded by Japan would not be understood in the United States. France replies there is no agreement with Japan, Japan had not demanded the use of bases but only the passage of troops through Indochina.

30 August Vichy France and Japan sign an agreement which gives Japan the right of passage through Indochina, use of bases there, and recognition that Japan has the predominant interest in the Far East.

5 September Vichy France informs the United States of the 30 August agreement with Japan.

11 September Secretary of State Hull strongly criticizes Vichy France's "easy acquiesence" in Japan's demands without any notice to the United States, despite vigorous US efforts to deny Japan's rights to dominate the Pacific region. In Vichy, French deny having a choice once bereft of US help.

18 September The State Department instructs Grew to point out to the Japanese the inconsistency in Japan's professions of support for the status quo and its actions in Indochina.

The State Department informs Consul Reed in Hanoi that it is discussing with an Indochina purchasing mission possible ways of assisting Indochina. The Department asks Reed to expand his reporting, especially regarding the relationship between Vichy France and the Government General in Indochina.

19 September The Department instructs the US Chargé in Vichy to learn what he can about the Franco-Japanese agreement of 30 August, including the possibility and nature of any future commitments by Vichy.

	The Department informs Grew of report that the Japanese Commanding General has demanded that the Governor General of Indochina permit the occupation of Hanoi, Haiphong, and 5 airfields by Japanese forces. If these demands are not met, Japan threatens invasion of Indochina on 22 September at 10:00 PM. United States instructs Grew to seek assurances that these reports are not correct and that they represent neither the intentions of the Japanese Government nor of the Japanese forces in Indochina.
20 September	Grew confirms Japan has presented the Governor General of Indochina with an ultimatum.
	France informs the United States that it can agree neither to return French aircraft in Martinique to the US manufacturer nor to ship them for use in Indochina.
	Welles tells the Japanese Ambassador he understand the Governor General of Indochina has refused Japan's demands. He assumes that Japan is about to commit aggression against Indochina as it has been doing for 9 years against China. Welles states further that Japan will have no grounds for complaint should the United States render assistance to Indochina under attack.
24 September	Vichy France informs Welles that Japanese forces have invaded Indochina near Lang Son and that Indochinese authorities are determined to resist to the last man.
7 October	Vichy France informs Welles that the German Government authorizes the French Government to purchase munitions in the United States for use in Indochina and that it is now ready to negotiate for such purchases. Welles notes that Japanese forces have occupied many points in Indochina, and that the United States will require assurances that any equipment, including the planes now in Martinique, will not fall into Japanese hands.
11 December	Welles tells the Vichy French Ambassador that the United States cannot agree to export munitions to Indochina.
1941	
13 January	The State Department instructs the US Ambassador in Vichy to express concern about reports of fighting on the Indochina-Thai border.
21 January	The State Department asks Grew to express US displeasure at Japanese harassment of US businessmen in Indochina.

27 January	Grew reports that his Peruvian colleague has told him he has heard from several sources (including a Japanese source) that the Japanese military are planning a surprise mass attack on Pearl Harbor in case of trouble between Japan and the United States.
28 January	The State Department passes this information on to the War and Navy Departments, according to Hull's memoirs.
30 January	The State Department informs Vichy France it is prepared to continue its policy of considering purchase offers of commodities from Indochina.
8 February	The State Department instructs Grew to protest Japanese interference with shipments of American-owned merchandise in Indochina.
14 February	Roosevelt receives new Japanese Ambassador Nomura, accompanied by Secretary Hull. Roosevelt suggests Hull and Nomura review together all aspects of US-Japanese relations to see if they could be improved.
14 March	Hull and Nomura meet again with the President. Hull reiterates that it is up to Japan to make suggestions as to how relations might be improved.
March	Japan mediates the Franco-Thai border dispute and awards a liberal slice of Indochinese territory to Thailand.
9 April	Hull receives some proposals for improving US-Japanese relations. Hull hands Nomura a set of principles which, Hull says, could form the basis for starting conversations.
12 May	Nomura hands Hull Japan's official proposals, thereby laying the basis for bilateral discussions.
28 May	The United States protests to Vichy and Japan. French Indochinese authorities, under Japanese pressure, had ordered the seizure of American property.
2 July	The United States intercepts a message from the Japanese Foreign Minister to Nomura saying that preparations for the southward advance will be reinforced and that the policy regarding Indochina and Thailand will be executed.
16 July	Grew reports information that Japan will present Vichy France with a demand for bases in Indochina, with a deadline of 20 July to comply.
	The United States urges the French to adopt dilatory tactics.

21 July	Japan occupies the southern portions of Indochina.
24 July	The State Department issues a press release deploring this development.
	Roosevelt proposes to Nomura a Japanese withdrawal from Indochina and the declaration of a neutral Indochina.
26 July	Roosevelt freezes Japanese assets.
31 July	Roosevelt extends his Indochina neutralization proposal to include Thailand.
6 August	Nomura hands Hull a new set of proposals.
8 August	Nomura raises with Hull the possibility of a meeting between Roosevelt and Japanese Prime Minister Konoye.
17 August	Roosevelt reads Nomura 2 statements. Nomura raises suggestion of a "summit meeting." Roosevelt suggests that Japan clarify its position before preparations for such a meeting, perhaps on 15 October, are made.
23 August	Nomura tells Hull Japan wishes to hold the summit meeting before 15 October.
28 August	Nomura hands Roosevelt 2 notes, from Konoye—a proposal for a summit meeting as soon as possible and an offer to withdraw Japanese troops from Indochina as soon as the China problem is settled.
3 September	Roosevelt replies to Nomura, asking for clarification of Japanese intentions.
5 September	Nomura hands Hull the Japanese replies, accepting Hull's 4 principles but only promising not to engage in any military action from Indochina "without justifiable reason."
20 November	Japan's envoys offer Hull their "final proposition," characterized by Hull as an ultimatum.
26 November	The United States counter-proposal is handed to Nomura.
29 November	Hull proposes to Roosevelt a draft message to the Congress, tracing the course of US-Japan relations, as well as a draft Presidential message to Emperor Hirohito.
1 December	Roosevelt asks Nomura for an explanation of continued Japanese troop movements in Indochina.
5 December	Japan replies that the troop movements were to guard against a Chinese attack.
6 December	Roosevelt instructs Hull to send the message to Hirohito.
7 December	Japanese forces massively attack US military installations at Pearl Harbor, the Philippines, and elsewhere in the Pacific.

APPENDIXES A TO G
HISTORICAL DOCUMENTS

Appendix A

U.S. Consul John Shillaber's Report
to the Secretary of State on Cochin China

At Sea 3rd July 1831
Ship Caroline Augusta

To the Honorable
The Secretary of State
of the U. States
Washington

Sir,

Begging reference to my communications upon [Siam?] and Japan, Which I transmit herewith I [have?] the honor to lay before you all the information [I am possessed?] of in addition thereto regarding Cochin China and [its?] tributary provinces, being part of Kamboja and Lao, that I think may prove useful to Government in deciding whether or not to send a Mission to the Sovereign of that Country for the purpose of attempting by negociation to have the American trade with it put upon a fair footing and [under?] regulations that shall be permanent, at least for a fixed period of time.

As I have remarked in the paper above alluded to, much of what they contain is equally applicable to Cochin China, and the Mission on arrival will readily perceive such parts as are so. I shall forbear repetition, and only remark that with regard to pompous useless and sometimes ridiculous ceremonies, and high value put upon the [?] the Asiatic courts & nations greatly resemble each other [as ?] they do in [?] cunning and holding time of but little value. Cochin China is annex'd *Tonquin* together forming [an] *Empire* termed *An-Nam*, which does not produce [?] an amount of articles for exportation peculiarly [? rice?] trade as does Siam, evidently owing to the [?] less industrious, and the less encouraging system of [?] [The?] soil and climate are at least equally congenial [? as those?] of Siam to the growth of those articles and the [population?] far exceeds in numbers and proportion that of [Siam?]

An-Nam covers an Area of about one hundred [thousand?] Square Miles and has a population of about ten to [? millions?] of Souls including the tributary provinces in [Kamboja?] & Lao. Some french residents in the Country during [?] thirty five years, & have become Mandarins of high [rank?] have estimated the population at not less than fifteen Millions, and one has gone to the incredible number of twenty two Millions—but using other data which appears [?] more probable I have come to the conclusion that eleven Millions is near the truth, which is very great in proportion to the geographical extent of the Country.

The coasting trade of An-Nam gives employment to about Seventy five thousand tons, and foreign trade to about twenty four thousand tons of

Native Shipping, besides which the Chinese employ about *fifty* thousand tons of their own shipping in their trade with An-Nam.

The European and American trade with An-Nam is triffling at present, but within the last past twenty [or?] thirty years it was far more considerable. When I [attribute?] the decline of these branches of trade in a great degree, altogether, to the fears & jealousy the Government of An-Nam have heretofore entertained, and *now* do entertain [towards? Europeans?] particularly the English & less so the French, [I am?] supported by the history of this Country—and I [am confident?] in asserting that both England and France [have?] strong desires to possess this Empire so [valuable in?] soil, productions, population, salubrious climate [and?] above all for it further & great capabilities, extensive sea coast, numerous bays & finest harbours in India, into many of which empty rivers that take their rise beyond the boundaries of the Empire and are navigable nearly on the whole extent of it.

The exports are similar to those of Siam, [Sugar?] Pepper, Ivory, Stic-Lac, Cardamums, etc. etc.

I regret that there exists no data sufficiently correct [on?] which to found a Statement of the [quantities?] of the Several Articles above named—this deficit of records may be attributed to the frequent changes made in the duties, sometime exempting one article & taxing another, and vice-versa, while some for a very long period of time have not been subject to any impost, and no account is kept in the Custom House departments of those exports paying no duty. Combining all the information I have been able to collect upon this subject, I believe the Exports of An-nam suitable for the American trade now amount, cost value per Ann, to Nine or Eleven hundred thousand Spanish Dollars and if the trade is put on a fair footing, would at once employ Six or either hundred thousand dollars of American Capital & four thousand tons of shipping profitably, and so great are the capabilities of this country, the value of this trade would rapidly increase when it is, as it may be, I mean the Govt of An-nam, convinced that America has no interest in common with [those nations?] of Europe that have made conquest of as large a part of Asia & the eastern world as they had the power to accomplish and retain, & will extend their Eastern Empire when able & it may seem politic—yes, when we do, & it may now be done, convince this Govt of An-nam, and other Governments of countries in the east that have maintained their independence, the the U. States their freedom, looks with regret upon the [?] subversion of Govts around them, and has no [?] & never will have of having foreign possessions, then [will?] these Govts & their people, and those who may [?] restore to their thrones, native Princes receive the [?] and friendly flag of the U. States into their ports and [?] their countries with confidence friendship, [giving?] benefits without fears or suspicions. The time [when?] this good work may be begun under [favorable?] auspices & with almost a certainty of fore-[ordained?] success.

Those populous rich & many of them [?] nations, [?] enchained by European powers will [?] their fetters and restore their native Governments—the [?] moving silently among these oppressed people, [?] make this my Prophecy [?] my feeling [upon?] this subject, & have led me astray. I will [?] after remarking that the Asiatics [generally?] [have?] an idea that the Americans, Government & citizens [have at?] least an equal desire for foreign conquest with [England?] or any other European nation with regard [?] which produces their fears jealousies, cautious inter-[?] they deem all as one people. As sure as truth is powerful [and will prevail?]they may be undeceived and led to know [?] Except what is obtained from China the Cochin Chinese require but few foreign articles—Say Arms Opium, Glass & Iron ware, Woolens, and these in small quantities.

The regulations for trade, imposts etc. in An-nam are not so properly defined or promulgated as to prevent [?] & most vexatious impositions upon Strangers visiting that country for commercial purposes, practised by Governors of Districts & sea port towns through the Agency of custom House & other Subordinate Officers. I believe these abuses are practised without the Knowledge of the Emperor, and that if represented to him by an accreditted Agent of the U.States, would at once be done away. The principal charge foreign vessels are liable to, is the measurement Duty which differs in amount at the different ports from [20?] to 40 p. cent and ranges from about Six & half to five & four [Spanish?] Dollars per ton upon vessels of the usual proportion. other exactions, presents & demands, most of which or all are probably illegal Amount to from 1½$ to three, and in some instances four dollars per ton—the amount probably depends upon the cupidity of the Custom House Officers, or [rather those?] of higher grade behind the Scenes.

[The?] vexatious practices & delays attending these squeezes, are [?] more felt & complained of than the amount of money ex-[pended?]. After paying the above-mentioned Charges, the vessels, [with the Cargo?] she brings, is not liable to any further duty or *impost*. The *export duty* on Sugar Pepper Cardamums, Cinnamon, Ivory, Annis Seed, [? excellent] swallows' nests, Japan wood, in fact all articles wanted by American is *Five* per cent.

Although the Emperor does not generally monopolize any of the above-mentioned Articles, yet it has been done, but not frequently, or for a long time. trade, therefore, generally is upon a far better footing than [?] Siam. The *Charges* in the ports of An-nam on foreign trade are reasonable in amount, provided a vessel carries there a cargo or but part of a cargo and takes away another in return, but they fall heavy upon a vessel that carries there little or no cargo, and from the expected rise in the prices of export for other causes, after a small part of Cargo is loaded, cannot go on and compleat an entire lading—for in this case no part of the duty paid will be returned. Vessels may enter the ports for refreshment, or to get Knowledge of the state of Markets *without* being subject to duties.

It is desirable to have the *goods* imported & exported taxed in proportion to their value, and *the duty* upon *vessels* much reduced.

An-nam is an independent sovereignty, and upon terms of amity with the nations around her, particularly China & Siam.

The Government revenue is probably much larger than that of Siam, but I have not been able to obtain satisfactory statements upon this point—it is however, certain the Emperor's treasury is well supplied with money [?] having Seven to ten million of Sp. dollars [gold?] & Silver within it.

[Their?] military force is considerable. the peace establish-[ment?] consisting of about thirty thousand Imperial [guards?] generally [near] the Emperors persons, and [fifty thousand] soldiers distributed throughout the Empire. [?] are well officered, disciplined, paid & cloathed beside [?] male subject is liable to serve in the Army should the [?] require it.

[?] is the capital city—and it is entirely walled around. [?] ditch of One hundred feet width, fortified [?] according to the most approved European plan. The works are of solid masonry and have, in and upon them, about eight hundred pieces of ordinance, many of the largest are brass, from eighteen to Sixty four pounders, most of them manufactured in the country, & equal in every respect to any in Europe.

The Arsenal is extensive, and adequate to supplying the wants of the Empire, in almost every military article, equal to European.

For the useful arts, these people are in advance, with very few exceptions, of all other Asiatic nations.

With regard to the ceremonial of the Letter to the Emperor what I have written in my notes on Siam will serve for An-nam—superscribing it to His Imperial Majesty the Emperor of An-nam etc. etc. etc. The Mission should be provided with two fac similie copies of the Letter in the original language with the U. States seal affixed and three translations in the French [?] Portuguese languages also seal affixed—three translations [in?] the Chinese will also be required, but the latter may [be?] done in Batavia. The same number of copies & translations, as above, of the Missions credentials will be necessary.

These numerous copies are required for the Emperor and vice Roi of Saigon.

I add a list of Presents for the Emperor, and repeat that of those named in list second, for Siam there will be sufficient for An-nam and Japan.

I remain, Sir,
your most obt.
& Respectful Serv.

John Shillaber

Appendix B

Secretary of State Livingston's Instructions
to Special Agent Edmund Roberts

Mr. Edmund Roberts

Department of State
Washington, 27 Jan. 1832

Sir:—The President having named you his agent for the purpose of examining, in the Indian Ocean, the means of extending the commerce of the United States by commercial arrangement with the powers whose dominions border on those seas, you will embark on board of the United States Sloop of war, the Peacock, in which vessel for the purpose of concealing your mission from powers whose interest it might be to thwart the objects the President has in view, you will be rated as Captain's Clerk. Your real character is known to Captain Geisinger, and need not be to any other person on board unless you find it necessary, for the purpose of your mission, to communicate it to others.

As you will enter the Indian Ocean from the eastward, the first place at which your duties will begin will be Cochin China. Here you will proceed to the capital of the country *Hué*, sometimes called *Huéfoo*, or such other of the Royal cities as the King may reside at. You will in your passage to this place, inform yourself minutely of the trade carried on between this Kingdom and other countries—the nature of the products of the country, whether natural, agricultural, or manufactured—its maritime and military strength—and of the articles of merchandise of general consumption, or demanded for their own commerce with other nations—of the favors granted to, or exactions made upon, the commerce of the various nations who trade with them.

On your arrival you will present yourself to the King with your power and the letter addressed to him. You will state that the President having heard of his fame for justice, and desire to improve the advantages of commerce for the good of his people, has sent you to inquire whether he is willing to admit our ships into his harbors with such articles of merchandise as will be useful to him and his people, and to receive, in return, the products of their industry or of their soil. That we manufacture, and can bring, arms, ammunition, cloths of cotton and wool, glass, etc. (enumerating all the articles that you find they usually import)—that we can furnish them cheaper than any other nation, because it is against the principles of our nation to build forts, or make expensive establishments in foreign countries—that we never make conquests, or ask any nations to let us establish ourselves in their country as the English, the French, and the Dutch have done in the East Indies. All we ask is free liberty to come and go for the purpose of buying and selling, paying obedience to the laws of the country while we are there. But that while we ask no exclusive favor, we will not carry our commerce where we are treated in any degree worse than other nations. We will pay all the duties that are required by the King's authority, but we will not

submit to pay more than any other nation does, nor will we bear the exactions of any of his subordinate Officers—that the President is very powerful, has many ships of war at his command but that they are only used to protect our commerce against imposition—that if the King wishes to secure the advantages of our trade he must enter into a treaty by which the above stipulations must be secured to our merchants—that as soon as this is known our ships will resort to his ports, enriching him by the duties that he will receive, and his subjects by their commerce.

An important point is, to obtain an explicit permission to trade, generally, with the inhabitants, for it is understood that at most, or all of the ports, the Mandarins, or other officers, now monopolize the commerce, permitting none of the inhabitants to trade with foreigners.

You will be furnished with a power to conclude a treaty—if one can be obtained on the terms above specified, and such others as shall hereafter be mentioned—and to promise, which you may do verbally or in writing, that the usual presents shall be made on the exchange of the ratification—of which you may settle a list of such things as may be most agreeable, not exceeding ten thousand dollars in value for each Power.

Your compensation will be six dollars per diem, and all necessary personal expenses—which last can only be in unforeseen cases, as your subsistence on board the ship is provided for. An advance will be made to you of one thousand dollars on account of your pay, and five hundred dollars for such presents as may be necessary to gain an audience.

The above instructions will govern you in your missions to Siam, and the powers of Arabia on the Red Sea, where you will also be conveyed.

You are authorized to draw on the Department for the amount of your allowance, as it becomes due, after deducting the advance now made to you, and for your necessary expenses, to be certified by the commander of the vessel in which you sail.

I am, Sir, very respectfully,
Your obedient servant,
Edw. Livingston

P.S.—Your compensation will commence on the 9th January, 1832, the day of your leaving your residence to proceed on your mission.

Appendix C

Special Agent Edmund Roberts' Report on his First Mission

Batavia
June 22 1833

Sirs

I have the honour to inform you that we sailed from Lin-tin on the 26th Dec last for Turon Bay on the northern coast of Cochin China, having waited for the arrival of the U.S.S. Boxer until all hope of her appearance had vanished. On the first day of Jan we arrived off the Bay in very stormy weather, & so it continued for some days, accompanied with a heavy sea, & the wind blowing from an unexpected quarter (the N.W.) instead of N.E. having at the same time a strong current setting to the S. East. We continued to struggle against these accumulated difficulties 'till the 5th, and then finding we had drifted down to Pulo Canton, & losing ground on every tack, we finally bore away for the nearest port, being the Bay of Phuyen, & dropt anchor the next day in the harbours of Vunglam. Immediately on our arrival, a letter in English was, with a Chinese translation forwarded to the Capital at Hué by the Mandarin of Vunglam, directed to His Majesty Ming-Mang King of An-Nam, informing him of our arrival and setting forth the object of the Mission. On the 17th a deputation consisting of three Mandarins arrived, one being a Judge of the Province of Phuyen, accompanied by a long train of followers mounted on Elephants or horses or travelling in Palanquins, bringing back with them the letter directed to the King. They stated that they had been sent by the "Minister of Strangers" to inform me verbally that he had returned the letter unopened, in consequence of its being directed to the *King* of Annam. The present sovereign of Cochin China who apes as far as possible his Lord and Master the Emperor of China, has taken upon himself lately the title of the *Emperor* of Wiet Nam (pronounced Yünam) instead of his former title of King of An-Nam. The Minister therefore requested that another letter might be sent, setting forth the object of the Mission, and directed to him he being the proper organ of communication with the Emperor. A letter was accordingly written, which contained the desired information, and adding furthermore that I was charged with a letter of introduction from the President of the United States to the Emperor which it was necessary I should deliver in person. On the 26th two Mandarins of a higher rank arrived & said they were sent by the Minister to obtain the President's letter, or a copy of it which at first I refused to grant, as they brought no answer to my letter, nor had they any written authority from the Minister to make such a demand. I alleged furthermore in justification of my refusal, that in a similar case W Crawford received a *reprimand* from the present Sovereign through the same Minister for permitting the Governor of Lower Saigon to read the Governor Genl of India's letter to the Emperor. However, finding that nothing would be done without it, I at length yielded,

& gave him a copy of it in the English & Chinese languages, *open*, as they refused to receive any *sealed* papers, saying that they had received peremptory instructions from the Minister, to inspect every document which came from me, & they were not to forward any one unless it was couched in *humble & decorous* language, & such as was conformable to court etiquette—and here commenced various difficulties which finally ended in a total failure of the object of the Mission. I will omit the minor objections made to the wording of the President's letter, & proceed to the *principal obstacles* which were these—In the Chinese copy of the letter they pointed out how much the words *Emperor, & Cochin China*, should, as indication of respect, be *elevated* above the *head margin* of the page,—in fact *one character above* the words *United States & President*, which would indicate that the latter & the U.S. were considered inferior to the former & C. C.—finally they decided that it would be very improper for the President to address his letter simply *to the* Emperor—it must they said, be transmitted with "silent awe" (suh-te) or "with uplifted hands" (Yung or te shang) terms in frequent use among the Chinese & their humble imitators the C. Chinese in addresses from *subjects* to their *sovereign*. This was instantly rejected & they were admonished not to repeat so insulting a demand for that the President of the United States stands on a footing of perfect equality with the highest Emperor & therefore no terms can be used which may make him appear in the light of an inferior to the Emperor of C. China. The Deputies were informed, that the same term would used to the Er as is used in the letter of the Envoy to the Minister, which implies *equality* without any disrespectful arrogation of it. They disclaimed all intention of insulating the President & said it was customary for the Envoys of Burmah & Siam to use these expressions when they addressed their Emperor. Having waited eight days after this conversation, & hearing nothing further from Hué, we sailed on the 8th Feb, for the Gulf of Siam. If we had been so fortunate, as to arrive at Turon or off the Bar of Hué early in the S.W. monsoon, I believe the result would have been very different. We were too far removed from the Capital, & matters were consequently trusted too much to inferior agents. I have thus far given you only a succinct account of difficulties in C. China which occupy a considerable portion of fifty pages in my "Official Journal."

In the course of the negociation, they attempted to gain every petty advantage as well as those of a more important character, & had they succeeded, it would have been magnified into a triumph over the Government of my country.

If I could have so far debased myself as to forget what was due to my country & her chief Magistrate as to submit to their proposals, it would not have ended here. I should have been told on my arrival at Hué that if I wished to be presented to the Emperor, it would be necessary that I should comply with the ceremonies of the court & submit to perform the Ko-tow or

"knock head ceremony", and this would have been followed up by other humiliating conditions, for it is in the nature of the ultra Gangetic nations to rise in their demands as they can enforce or in any way procure submission to their will, for they are unusually more influenced by firmness, boldness, & decision than by the most sound & conclusive argument, the most mild, ineffective & conciliating conduct. The history of past negociations is sufficient to prove that neither privileges, nor immunities, nor advantages of any kind are to be gained by submission, by condescension, or even by flattery—They despise the former as a proof of weakness, the latter as arguing a mean spirit. A dignified yet unassuming conduct, jealous of its own honour, open & disinterested, seeking its own advantage, but willing to promote that of others, will doubtless effect much with nations of this stamp of character, & must in the end be able to accomplish the object desired. That a great nation, such as that of my country, should incur the possibility of having her national honour tarnished by any nation under the sun, far less by some barbarous people, experience has rendered less a matter of surprise than regret. It cannot be altogether a matter of indifference what opinion shall be entertained of her by so large a portion of the human race, as that occupying the countries between the Red Sea & Japan.

If we have failed in this attempt at negociation our honour yet remains unstained, & the resistance made to their insulting proposals to degrade the high standing of a President of the United States, will teach them I trust in any future negociation with our government, that national honour is not a mere sound, or but an empty name, for in this sound rests the strength of Kingdoms, the safety of nations—it is this that nerves the soldier's arm, it is this motive which more than any other converts the man into the *Hero.*

I have the honour to remain with
the highest considerations of
esteem and respect

Your very obedient

(signed) Edmund Roberts

P.S.

I must not omit to mention that Presents are indispensable in these countries, & are considered as a mark of *respect,* they render the donor of more or less consequence according to their *magnitude.* Both in C. China & Siam, among the first questions asked was, "*What* presents have you for the King?" considering it a matter of course that you have not come empty handed.

E R

Appendix D

Letter to the Secretary of the Navy from Captain John Percival

U.S.S. Frigate Constitution
Off Whampoa Island (China)
June 21st, 1845

Sir,

In my communication to the Department dated the 10th inst. I respectfully observed that I should make, by the first proper opportunity, a special report of an occurrence which took place at Touron Bay, Cochin China. It is as follows.

On the 14th of May, four days after my arrival at that port, a salute of six guns having been exchanged, I received a visit from the authorities of the city of Touron. They displayed some little pomp as is affected by these people on such occasions, were received with courtesy and treated with kindness and attention. After remaining some time by the Cabin they expressed a desire to examine the arrangements etc. of the Ship, and an officer was directed to attend them.

A few minutes having elapsed, one of them returned, and with much anxiety handed me an *open* letter, making signs that if discovered he would lose his head. After the party had left the ship, the letter was translated (it being in French) and was found to be directed to the French Admiral. (See copy attached marked D)

I was convinced that if aught could be done to prevent the catastrophe awaiting the Bishop, it should be done promptly. Great excitement prevailed throughout the Ship, created by the postscript of the letter, which was the only part upon which I acted. What caused me the greatest anxiety was to decide how far I might proceed, and not over step the limits of obligation in the cause of suffering humanity towards a subject of a Nation united to us by the bonds of treaty stipulations and bygone though not forgotten acts of kindness in the days of our national infancy. This was a case to which I knew no parallel, but believing that a generous sympathy was a prominent characteristic of our Government, and that exerting its influence through its agents in the cause of humanity was typographical of its moral energies and usages since the adoption of the Federal Constitution. I proceeded to use my endeavours to effect the release of Bishop Dominique Lefevre, a distinguished subject of France.

My impression is that every nation has the right to regulate its own intercourse with others, not denying to each just and proper privileges, in such a manner as would be most conducive to its own interest and prosperity. In respect however to foreigners, particularly those who have been invited to reside within its domains, and instruct its people in the arts, sciences and religion, every Nation it seems to me is under a moral

obligation to treat them with respect, kindness and humanity during their sojourn: any interference with the ordinary pursuits of the persons thus invited, on the part of a Nation, appears to me a harsh exercise of power, and to condemn them to death unheard and undefended, by an arbitrary tribunal, is inconsistent with the moral law by which every nation should be governed.

If a nation invites and allows foreigners to enter into its territories, it is bound to respect the rights of such, so long as they conduct peaceably; if in breach of good faith it proceeds to punish them vindictively when no offence has been committed, such nation is justly responsible for its conduct, more particularly if it is one semi-barbarous and that refuses to have treaties or social intercourse with the other nations of the world.

No doubt could have arisen in my mind how far to have proceeded, had the Reverend Bishop been an American citizen, for the cry of an American held in bondage, groaning under the oppression of his chains, points to but one course (in my mind) for an American officer to pursue, and that is to free him at all hazards. I looked to my instructions to bear me out: how far the Department may coincide in the view I have taken of the extract below, is a matter of much anxiety.

"Every encouragement and assistance in your power will be afforded to American Commerce and American citizens and to those of friendly nations you may meet during your cruises."

The motives which influenced me were humane, exerted in the cause of suffering humanity, to aid a subject of a Nation long in amity with the United States. If I have erred, it is an error of the head and not the heart, which at all times is devoted with its best blood to my country's honor and prosperity.

I most respectfully draw the attention of the Department to the enclosed documents, directed to the French Admiral, which contain a true statement of the occurrences as they took place, as well as information of the situation of his countryman. I understand that he has since proceeded to Touron Bay to effect the release of Bishop Lefevre.

I most respectfully submit my conduct and the motives which induced me to the course I pursued, to the Justice of the Department.

I have the honor to be
With the highest respect, Sir
Your obd't Servant

PERCIVAL
Captain
Comdr U.S. Frigate Constitution

To the
Hon' Secretary of the Navy
Washington, D.C.

Appendix E

Mr. Balestier to the Secretary of State.

United States Ship Plymouth,
March 19, 1850

Sir: I have the honor to enclose a memorandum of a conference held on the 13th March with his Excellency the governor of Kwang-nam province, at Turong. You will observe, on perusal of that document, that the pretext used for not receiving the President's letter to the King of Cochin China is based on the assumption, that as no persons were killed by the people of the United States ship Constitution, as therein stated, the letter is incorrect, and cannot be presented or read by his Majesty, nevertheless what it may besides contain. But this alleged error was a convenient pretext, which would not have been laid hold of had anything else been tangible, such as the form, or style, or address, in the Chinese translation which had been so well prepared by Doctor Parker, according to the etiquette of the court of Pekin, that it could not be cavilled at.

As to the pretext insisted on by order from Hué, as I was previously informed, it is perfectly false, according to admission from the native interpreter and the inferior officers about Turong, who more than once said what the President's letter stated was all correct, but that the orders from Hué were to deny the fact and reject the letter altogether.

My firm belief is, that by objecting to receive the President's disavowal of the outrage, they consider they will now be at liberty to wreak their vengeance on such of our citizens as may fall into their power, being unpledged to us to a friendly course. I was made to feel, as I more than once had the honor to observe to you in conversation, how hopeless it is to attempt serious negotiation with so impracticable a people, without a controlling force at hand. Had I been in a squadron of three ships instead of being in a single ship, and had gone to the entrance of the river, only a few miles from the capital, after my endeavors had failed at negotiation at Turong, little doubt rests on my mind as to the manner I would have been received, and the respect shown to the letter of the President.

Permit me, sir, to observe that the Cochin Chinese are like all other isolated and uniformed people, full of vain personal pretensions and childish conceit—abject slaves themselves, and subservient to their sovereign and superiors, they have a total disregard to the rights and feeling of others, and, in their unbounded notion of their own greatness, they are pleased to consider as a homage due to them every attempt to enter into friendly relations with them on the part of Europeans.

I would respectfully bring to your notice, sir, the extensive line of coast in the China sea under the rule of this people, which our shipping, in common with that of other nations, are compelled to approach on the passage up and down the China sea, in any part of which the lives of our

citizens are exposed and liable to be sacrificed, or their persons detained in captivity; and, to protect such practices, it becomes absolutely necessary to obtain the security of a direct expression of friendly treatment on their part. To obtain this desirable security, in my opinion it is necessary to make a formal demand of Hué, with an armed force able to enforce it. But, it is likewise my opinion that no hostile act would be needed on our part, believing that the appearance of three ships-of-war in those waters would be sufficient to obtain everything that could be reasonably asked of them.

I have the honor to be, sir, respectfully, your obedient servant,
J. Balestier

The Hon. J. M. Clayton
Secretary of State.

Memorandum of a conference between their Excellencies the Envoy and Minister of the United States to Southeastern Asia, and the governor of Kwang-nam, at the town of Turong, on the 13th of March, 1850.

At an early hour this morning the local officers of Turong came off to the United State ship Plymouth, Captain T. R. Gedney, to inform the envoy of the arrival in the town of the governor of the province of Kwang-nam, and that he was desirous to see him on shore.

The envoy stated, in reply, that the first visit was due to him, as he had come from very far to bring a letter from the President of the United States to his Majesty the King of Annam; and, moreover, it was an act of politeness due to a stranger, and which had been complied with towards diplomatic agents on former occasions at this place.

The Cochin Chinese officers said it was very true that such had been the usage in former times, but that for the last three years new orders had been given, forbidding superior officers of the government to visit foreign ships.

After a long discussion on this point, apprehending that nothing favorable would be obtained from persons who had no will of their own, nor discretionary power left with them, the envoy, in order to prevent any further loss of time, having been here already sixteen days, concluded to comply with their request, and, accompanied by Commodore Voorhees, who being invited to be present at the interview, he proceeded to the town hall, the usual place of audience.

Appendix F

No. 45/1884
The Foreign Office to Mr. Young
Peking, July 19th, 1884

Y. E.:

The first article of the Treaty made between China and the United States in 1858, declares:

"And if any other nation should act unjustly or oppressively, the United States will exert their good offices, on being informed of the case, to bring about an amicable arrangement of the question, thus showing, their friendly feelings."

And further since your arrival in China Y.E. has conducted all Business with sincere and earnest regard to the maintenance of cordial friendship.

At present France, because of the affair at Liang Shan in Annam has formulated a demand for indemnity and intimates that her vessels of war will take possession of and hold the necessary guarantees for payment. We have sent copies of the present treaty and despatches in this business to Y.E. and the other Representatives for your consideration.

In addition thereto it becomes our duty to address Y.E. and inquire in what way Your Government may be able to carry out the treaty provision quoted above and exert its good offices in effecting an arrangement in obedience to its friendly feeling.

We beg that you will take this matter into consideration and favour us with a response.

H. E. John Russell Young

July, 19th, 1884.

Appendix G

Telegram
Mr. Frelinghuysen to
Mr. Young

On receipt of your telegram the President tendered the good offices of the United States to effect if possible a peaceful settlement of the difficulties between China and France. France gracefully declines, says she has been forbearing to China as is proved by her agreeing to waive indemnity where other nations would not. She now insists upon the principle that when a treaty consented to is violated indemnity is due. That principle being recognized, is willing to leave the amount of the indemnity to subsequent discussion. France suggests that the United States advise China that treaties formally consented to must be respected. Your despatch by mail not having yet arrived, the President does not know enough of the facts of the violation of the treaty to give advice. The general principle however is incontestible. You are conversant with the situation and may convey this telegram to the Minister of Foreign Affairs. May add such suggestions on your personal responsibility as you deem wise. If any inquiry (?) arises from shortness of time telegraph me without informing Chinese.

Frelinghuysen

Received July 26th, 1884.

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