

Analysis of evidence

Thousand kilometers of slopes

Indochina

Writing: 1990-1960 Pages

Odyssey experienced by Jacques Boubal and George Henry

following the Japanese coup of

March 9, 1945 in Indochina.

Afterword by Michel El baze

Cho Bo, Moc Chau, Small Conoï, Son La, Col Meo, Tuan Giao, Dien Bien Phu, Hui-Chang Houn-Tay, Muong Khoua, A Pa Chai Malitao

Names that sing, places of hard fighting evoked Boubal and Henry in their Journey to China after the Japanese coup of March 9, 1945 in Indochina.

2219 casualties including 716 French soldiers killed in combat.

Toll before reaching Sze Mao in Yunnan where gather the survivors before reaching the camp Tsao-Pa, the last step in the long march to China.

After the Japanese defeat, it was not until January 18, 1946 that General Salan gets Chang Kai Check his consent to the relief of Chinese troops from Laos by the French troops of China.

Thus began a long journey back that Boubal and Henry tell with attention to detail and precision that is the value of this testimony, important contribution to our knowledge of the work of French troops in the Far East.

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Among 2,219 victims killed 716 French soldiers Whose to the fight.

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Preface General Jean Carbonel

Until the Second World War, the military presence in northern Indochina met two requirements:

- Firstly, the maintenance of French sovereignty and the possible protection of our nationals
- Secondly, keep the country safe episodic incursions of Chinese gangs crossing the border to loot villages.

The first of these missions was ensured by the implementation of the order of units of the battalion, almost entirely European in the centers of the Delta, where they were able to respond quickly when needed.

Homeland Security was also never seriously worried. The case of Yen-Bay in 1930 was only a hand of hostile elements, thanks to the loyalty of aborted Indochinese Garrison units. There were, indeed, some ginger groups, but they were confined in the Bac Son Thanh Hoa and were also reduced and inefficient.

As for the Indochinese population, despite understandable nationalist, she remained loyal and ever, the French-Indochinese solidarity was not as great as during the Japanese Occupation from 1940 to 1945.

The second mission was entrusted to Indochinese units stationed in border areas and magnitude inversely proportional to their distance from the border. "Bells" in a section on each track leading in China, then it was more of the companies back then battalions on every major route to Hanoi.

A serious shortcoming: the total absence of inner ring to move laterally while our reserves roads converged star to Hanoi.

This device was therefore marked with the sign of the scattering, with little possibility of such combinations.

The beginning of the war in 1939, burst like a thunderclap in a quiet sky. He was known effect that Thailand and China harbored ambitions in our territories, and it was feared that these powers will benefit from the focus on Europe to manifest. Finally there was a body of Japanese engaged battle against the Chinese in the Kuang Si and at Kuang Tung, whose proximity was hardly reassuring.

Or, if our military presence was enough to almost routine peacetime, it was perfectly unsuited to the requirements of a conflict against a modern army. Our arms, very old fashioned, could not, neither number nor quality, including artillery and aviation, rival that of any opponent. Especially the latter, already assured of the power play, benefit from opportunities concentration for us unattainable.

A conflict of a certain size would therefore find ourselves in a state of dramatic inferiority, both numerically as the equipment and tactical, our crumbling and our lack of movement means - trucks and roads - not for us no overall operation. The Japanese were not mistaken, that upon entry in Indochina in 1940, clung to "tag" all of our units.

By 1939, the High Authority of Indochina took the lead, first increasing troop levels by exceptional clearance, then seeking to procure the necessary equipment.

A mission was sent to the United States. But the American administration, superbly oblivious of the treatment once the Indians in their territory was fundamentally hostile to the French presence "colonialist" in Indochina, and our request was flatly denied.

It then appeared that, at least for now, we can not count on ourselves, hoping, however, that in case of serious conflict, alloying elements would end well by coming to our aid. Hence, I think, to the High Command, the desire to be able to resist as long as possible, and hope for Allied intervention before it is too late.

Thus fortified were some places in the North-East frontier of Tonkin. But non-continuous fortifications, between which is expected no battlegroup, which, moreover, have only modest means, can not expect to last long. We times, alas, the cruel confirmation.

As for the possibility of outside help, I do not know if the High Command had received assurances, but I can say that the local Command, namely the General Alessandri, firmly believed. I give below some evidence:

- A few days after March 9, the general told me, with a grin, "I'm keeping you in reserve for Allied reinforcements will arrive in Dien Bien Phu, given your knowledge of the English language you will be my Foreign Minister (sic) "

- In mid-March, paratroopers were dropped on the PC of General His-La. One of them fell on the roof of our hut general, radiant, took him by the arm and turned to us, "Gentlemen, he says, this is the first." The enthusiasm dropped when Captain Cortadellas, who commanded the stick of 10 paratroopers, we learned that he was from India, where there were only three operational sticks of 10 men each, and 2 during training

- When, on the night of March 25 to 26, General Alessandri told me the command of s / group "C" with a value of 3 battalions, which would operate on the axis Son La, Tuan Giao, Dien -Although Phu Phong Saly, Muong Outay, his orders were very clear "Conduct a delaying action to give reinforcements time to arrive."

But hope for outside help rapidly melted, and the reality was expressed bluntly, albeit

with understanding and sympathy, one day in the second half of April when installed on a hill, we expected the Japanese attack that we knew to prepare.

Two light aircraft landed on the dry paddy separating the wood where we gathered the Japanese. Came out a senior official from Paris and a Commander from India. I then laid before our situation: lack of heavy weapons, absence of refueling, ammunition nearing completion, total lack of medicines, wounded left behind, exhausted men ...

There I was told that this was known, no aid could unfortunately be given us, and that in fact we were doomed to a "bloodbath" (sic). And as gunfire, leaving the Japanese lines, began to chatter, the planes took off quickly, ending illusions in fact, we had already lost.

In his "Memories of War", General de Gaulle gave a very accurate assessment of this dramatic period. Here are some excerpts:

It should be ensured that, from one day to the next, the Japanese would liquidate the Authority and the French force, and they would do the most sudden and brutal way ...

Knowing malice allies, especially the United States, with respect to our position in the Far East, I wanted to essentially we were there too belligerent ... Japanese aggression is not in doubt, I wanted our troops fight, despite what their situation would have despaired.

Despite continuous efforts of the French government, Washington is still opposed to transportation, to the Far East, the troops that we hold ready in Africa or Madagascar. The fighting involved in Indochina led to no change in the attitude of the United States.

The fighting took place in Indochina in the bitterest terms: surprise, isolation, lack of resources, feeling that God is too high and too far France. But the efforts and sacrifices were all the more meritorious. In the moral capital of a people, nothing is lost sentences of his soldiers. "

That last sentence can only go to the heart of the professional soldiers of my generation who, after hearing their grandfather tell their war of 1870, have lived their adolescence in the War of 1914-1918 made by their father, then experienced themselves - even if they do not participate directly - the wars in Morocco and Syria 1925-1926, 1939-1945 War, the Indochina 1945-1954 finally that of Algeria in 1954 - 1962.

But what about the boys - not professionals, they - that alone having their age at the critical moment threw in a dramatic adventure where they risked their lives? It is comforting to think that some of them do not forget, do not keep any bitterness from their ordeal and tell with verve and precision not without humor.

This is the case of Mr. Henry, who was then serving in the Geographic Service of Indochina, and Mr. Boubal which, aged 20, while serving in the military. I let them speak and express my most cordial sympathy.

Until the second world war, the military device in North Indochina replied to a double demand :

- on the one hand, to insure the maintenance of the French sovereignty and the possible protection of our nationals
- on the other hand, to hold the country under cover episodic inroads of Chinese bands crossing the frontier to loot our villages.

The first of these missions was insured by the implantation of units in the order the Battalion, almost entirely European, in Centers of the Delta, where they were in measure to intervene rapidly in case of need.

The internal security was not elsewhere ever seriously worried. The affair of Yen-Bay in 1930 was only a knock of hand of hostile elements, aborted thanks to loyalisme of indochinoises units of the garrison. It existed, it is true, some group irreducible, but they quartered in the Bac Son and the Thanh Hoa and were also reduced that ineffective.

As for the indochinoise population, despite a strong comprehensible nationalistic tendency, it would remain loyal and, never, the solidarity franco-indochinoise was also marked during the Japanese Occupation of 1940 to 1945.

The second mission was confided to indochinoises units parked in frontier territories and an importance conversely proportional to their removal of the frontier. "Bells" of a section on each tracks driving to China, one found then more in rear companies, then battalions on each great itinerary leading to Hanoi.

A serious gap : the total absence of internal bypass allowing to displace our reserves, all the road system converged in star to Hanoi.

This device was therefore marked with the sign of the scattering, without great possible roundup possibility.

The debut of the war, in 1939, burst as a knock of thunder in a tranquil sky. It was indeed notorious that Thailand and China fed ambitions on our territories, and one could fear that these powers do not profit the priority given to Europe to demonstrate. It existed finally a Japanese battle body committed against Chinese to the Kouang Si and to the Kouang Toung, whose proximity was little rassurante.

If our military device sufficed almost for the routine of the time of peace, it was perfectly maladjusted to demands of a conflict against a modern army. Our armament, very obsolete, could not, neither in number, neither in quality, notably in artillery and in aviation, to rival with a possible adversary. As much that this last, already insured the numerical superiority, would benefit from possibilities of concentration, for us impracticable.

A conflict of a certain scale would find us therefore in a dramatic inferiority state, so on the numerical plan that on tactical and material plans, our émiettement and the insufficiency of our ways of displacement - trucks and roads - allowing us no totality manoeuvre. Japanese did not deceive there, that, from their entry in Indochina in 1940, attached "to mark" all our units.

From 1939, the High Authorities of Indochina take aheads, first in increasing the effective soldiers by an exceptional raising, then in seeking to obtain the necessary equipment.

A mission was sent to U.S.. But the American Administration, superbly oblivious of the inflicted processing formerly to Indians on their territory, was fundamentally hostile to the french colonialist presence in Indochina, and our demand was categorically refused.

It seam while, whole at least in the moment, we could have count only on ourselves, in hoping however that, in case of serious conflict, elements allied would finish by coming us in assistance. From where, I think, for the High-Commandment, the concern to power resist as long as possible, and the hope of an intervention allied before it is not too late.

Thus it is that were fortified some places of the North-east frontier of the Tonkin. But non continuous fortifications, between which is anticipated no battle body, and that, moreover, have only modest ways, can not hope to hold long. We have had, hélas, the cruel confirmation.

As for the possibility of an external assistance, I ignore if the High-Commandment had received insurances, but I am able to assert that the local Commandment, in the occurrence the General Alessandri, believed it firmly. I give below some evidences :

- Some days after 9 Mars, the general declared me, with a large smile, I guard you in reserve because of reinforcements allied are going to arrive in the basin of Dien Bien Phu and, given your knowledge of the English language, you will be my Foreign Minister Businesses (sic)

- To the mi-Mars, parachutists were loosed on the P.C. of the general in Son La. One of them came across the roof of our "pailote" the general, radiant, took him by the arm and, turning to us, "Gentlemen, here is the first". The enthusiasm fell when the Captain Cortadellas, that ordered the stick of 10 parachutists, said that he came from Indias, where existed only 3 operational sticks 10 men each, and 2 under way of training.

- When, in the night of 25 to 26 Mars, the General Alessandri confided me the commandment of the s/ grouping C, a value of 3 battalions, which was going to operate on it centers Son La, Tuan Giao, Dien Bien Phu, Phong Saly, Muong Outay, his orders were very net "to Lead an action "retardatrice" to give to reinforcements the time to arrive.

But the hope of an external assistance smelted rapidly, and the reality was expressed, although with comprehension and sympathy, a day of the second fortnight of April while, installed on a hill, we waited the Japanese attack that we knew to prepare.

Two light airplanes posed on a dry "rizière" separating us from woods where Japanese gathered. In exited a

high official coming from Paris and a Commander coming from Indias. I exposed then our situation : lack of heavy arm , absence of all supply, ammunitions touching their end, total lack of medicine, hurt left on the spot, men exhausted...

It was replied me that this situation was known, that no assistance could unfortunately be brought us, and that, in fact, we were vowed to a bath of blood (sic). And as knocks of fire, leaving from Japanese lines, began to smack, had unglued them rapidly, putting an end to illusions that in fact, we had already lost.

In its Memories of war, the General of Thrashes gives a very exact appreciation of this dramatic period. In here is some extract :

One had to be insured that, a day to the other, Japanese would liquidate the Administration and the French Force, and that they would make it the most sudden manner and the most brutal.

Knowing the malevolence of allies, especially American, with regard to our position in Far East, I held essential that we were, there also, belligerents The Japanese aggression making no doubt, I wanted that our troops fight, in spite what their situation would have despaired.

Despite the unceasing steps of the French government, Washington opposed always to transportation, to the Far East, troops that we held ready in Africa or in Madagascar. Combats committed in Indochina brought no change in the attitude of U.S..

Combats in Indochina unfolded in the most bitter conditions : surprise, isolation, lack of ways, impression that God is too high and France too far. But efforts and sacrifices not in were that more meritorious. In the capital morale of a

people, nothing loses sorrows of its soldiers.

This last sentence can only go straight to the professional soldier heart of my generation who, after having heard their grandfather to tell them the war of 1870, have lived their adolescence during the war of 1914-1918 made by their father, then have known themselves - even if they have not there directly participated - wars of Morocco and Syria 1925-1926, the war of 1939-1945, this of Indochina 1945-1954, finally that of Algeria 1954-1962.

But what to think from boys - non professionals, them - which, alone, the fact to have their age to the critical moment projected in a dramatic adventure where they risked their life ? It is comforted to think that some of them do not forget, keep no bitterness their tests and tell them with an animation and a precision non deprived of humor.

It is the case of Sir Henry, that served then to the Geographical Service of Indochina, and Sir Boubal who, old of 20 years, accomplished then his military service. I leave them the word and expresses them my very cordial sympathy.

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In memory of our comrades killed in action

died of exhaustion on the slopes

disappeared in the jungle

and Survivors, unknown hero of this odyssey

prelude to a "Indochina"

which still exists at the time of writing.

memory

Memory: single transferable luggage

Jacques Attali

Location

French Indochina

In 1945 all the countries that form the Indochinese Union of French sovereignty, that is to say, Tonkin, Annam, Cochin China, Cambodia and Laos covers 740,000 km<sup>2</sup>, or 1 1/2 times the area of France

- 1700 km from Dong Dang on the Chinese border to the tip of Ca Mau, the distance between Norwich, England, in Valencia, Spain

- 200 km in its narrowest part

- 2600 km coastline
- 3200 km land border
- Two major rivers: the Mekong 4180 Kms, which originates in Tibet, flows through Yunnan, Laos (it separates Thailand), Cambodia and Cochin China and empties into the South China Sea
- The Red River (Song Lai) which flows into the Gulf of Tonkin (2000 km).

People as diverse as the country itself.

The Tonkinese no resemblance to the Annamite center or at Cochin. It has nothing to do with either the Cambodian or Laotian. Not to many ethnic groups from the Chinese migration, or Indonesian, well before Christ.

Many Chinese in the capital, they want trade.

North Tonkin: Thais, the Thos, the Muong.

South: the Rhades the highlanders. To mention only the most important.

Hanoi administrative capital.

Hue Royal Court.

Saigon: commercial capital.

Kingdom of Cambodia: Phnom Penh Capital.

Kingdom of Laos: Luang Prabang.

Approximately 40,000 French including: European 15,000 military and 4,000 employees. The rest: settlers, farmers, traders, industrialists. The French presence that began in 1624 with the arrival of Jesuit Father Alexandre de Rhodes.

The whole country is divided into provinces at the head of which there are residents, senior French officials.

A Governor General, based in Hanoi is the depositary of the powers of the Republic.

The native administration remains in place in the protectorates.

### historical Background

After being invaded Manchuria in 1931 the Japanese were fighting in China since 1937, the Chinese equipment being refueled American war mainly by Tonkin (railway Yunnan) and the Burma Road, where repeated threats Japan against France and

against England.

The Japanese take advantage of the French defeat in June 1940 to require the General Catroux Governor General of Indochina, the presence of a Commission of Japanese control.

On July 20, 1940, General Catroux is replaced by Admiral Decoux.

On 2 August 1940 the Japanese government issued an ultimatum to Vichy claiming, inter alia, the free passage of its troops on the Indo-Chinese territory.

On August 30, 1940 signed an agreement in Tokyo establishing the principle of a Japanese military presence in Tonkin. Admiral Decoux balks and dragged out negotiations for implementing the agreement.

On 5 September 1940 the Japanese army of Kwang-Si occurs at the border near Dong Dang-20km from Lang Son. Admiral Decoux having sent several battalions there, the Japanese renounce come into force.

The fight will still take place a few days later, presumably because of the impatience of the Japanese military leaders who attack Langson of 22 to 25 September 1940, however, a Japanese squadron bombed Haiphong. Bilan fights Lang Son: 150 dead, including 15 officers. Note that neither the Chinese nor the British nor the Americans have not outlined any move to defend Indochina, with the latter even refused all arms sales to the mission that General Catroux was sent to the USA in this effect.

The Japanese can therefore, at first, occupy northern Indochina, but temper this provocation by releasing 1,000 French prisoners captured in Lang Son.

Encouraged by the Japanese, Thailand attack us turn to Cambodia and Laos. Note in this conflict, the victory of the French fleet destroyed in Ko Chang in one battle most of the Thai fleet.

On January 27, 1941 Japan imposed its mediation and signed an armistice and a peace treaty, May 9, 1941, forcing Indochina to sell to Thailand several provinces of Cambodia and Laos.

On July 14, 1941, new ultimatum from Japan to Vichy.

This time the Japanese get permission parking and transit for their troops across the Indochinese territory that will serve them later base from which to attack Burma, Malaysia and Singapore in an attempt to realize their dream of "Greater East Asia".

The administration and the French army remained in place with all their prerogatives. Note that the Japanese military when the opportunity arose, stopped to greet the rising French flag on public buildings.

Pursuing their conquests, the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor December 8, 1941, and then land in Malaysia and seized Singapore.

The compromise situation that prevails in Indochina from 1942 to 1944 can be explained by the fact that Japan needs a certain order to exploit the wealth and procure the supplies needed for its war effort: rice, corn, dried fish, rubber, coal, wood, tin, tungsten, etc ...

Ironically, during this same period, an agreement for border police from 1896 still applies and allows French and Chinese officials regularly correspond and even meet to resolve border issues. Consensus waiting to be established between the French partners, Japanese and Chinese ...

The first shots of the Japanese expansion stops are marked by the lapels of his fleet in the Coral Sea in May 1942 and to the island of Midway in June 1942.

In 1943 the Japanese began to lose ground in the Solomon Islands in the Aleutians and at year end in the Gilbert Islands.

In 1944 the Japanese are losing strength in turn: the Marshall Islands in January, New Guinea in April, Saipan and Guam in July, their defeat proves the horizon of Indochina with the American landing in the Philippines in October.

Meanwhile, British troops, Indian, Chinese and American combined in 1943 to form the South Eastern Asia Command (SEAC), under the command of Lord Moubatten, pass also against the offensive.

Whereas 60,000 people, including 15 Europeans of our Armed Forces in Indochina 000 futures were likely to constitute a danger to them, Japanese troops, heavy 4 divisions attacked our garrisons by surprise on the evening of Friday, March 9, 1945.

Being in the bush George learned this event until much later.

Part 1

\*\*

1000 km of track

In our story we often use the word "track"

but that can be a trail through the jungle, along the mountainsides. Above all the time walking there replaces km

distance unit completely unknown.

On a track with a handful of men to dwell on the company.

There is no place for the war of position

and tactics of the War College lose all their rights.

That's the jungle trail.

Our arrival in Indochina

George Henry

In 1931, George Henry, then aged eleven, visit the colonial exhibition held in Paris, where it was, among other things, restored stucco famous Angkor Watt temple.

This exhibition marks the peak of the French colonial empire, is coupled with an evocative film of the distant lands where everything is still to do and discover "Africa Speaks you."

For him it was love at first sight, but it will have to wait another six years before embarking for Beirut and Damascus, where he was hired under the Colonial Artillery Regiment of the Levant.

Recalled to France as an instructor of Black Troops, sometimes just before the collapse, to attend the retreat in May and June 1940.

He embarked again to be assigned to the Artillery Regiment of Colonial Morocco in Marrakech and Casablanca where he boarded the S / S Chenonceau March 4, 1941.

This vessel converted troop ship carrying 2,000 soldiers to Indochina.

Brief one-day stop in Dakar.

Off the Cape of Good Hope we boarded by a pirate ship after a chase of several hours and a few warning shots ...

The next new arrest, this time by a submarine escorting a cargo ship. Calming after a few minutes of concern: the submarine and the ship are French, they have captured the eve of the SOS Chenonceau.

Stopover in Tamatave whose bay is infested with sharks attracted by waste from a meat factory, and Diego Suarez.

Across the Indian Ocean and boarding in the Sunda Strait by boat Dutch war: do not panic ...

China Sea and landing in Saigon May 5, 1941 (2 months of travel) ...

Assigning the 5th R.A.C. Battery coast of Cape Saint Jacques for five months.

Detached senior administrator Geographic Service Indochina as topography from the month of October 1941, he will perform a variety of missions including border demarcation of Siam in 1942.

During the Japanese coup of March 9, 1945 he participated in the survey map of Dien Bien Phu in 1/100 thousandth.

Volunteer Fighter, Cross 39/45 War, Military Medal, George Henry has compiled 3,000 km<sup>2</sup> map of Indochina.

Jacques Boubal

Jacques Boubal arrives in Indochina at the age of 2 years, in 1926, following the assignment of his father Henry Boubal, Comptroller General of the Indochinese Security.

After studying at the Lycée Albert Sarraut in Hanoi and Saigon Laubat Chasseloup High School, he enlisted in the 5th advancement Call Colonial Artillery Regiment in Saigon in July 1944.

After a short stay in the 5th R.A.C. to the barracks Martin Pallères Saigon, it is directed in September 1944 the Military Instruction Center Chapa in Tonkin.

Chapa at 1800 meters above sea level (on the slopes of Fan Si Pan, whose summit is 3150 meters) is the Tam Dao, one of the hill stations where the French civil servants or Tonkin, had take a vacation, the climate to recover his health.

We are about fifty kilometers from the town of Lao-Kay, located on the Red River on the Chinese border of Yunnan.

It was in 1886 that the naval infantry troops occupied Lao-Kay - whose strategic interest was obvious.

The "stay" at Chapa will last until early February 1945 officers and NCOs, were responsible for training course, professional soldiers, who for the most recent years of stay in Indochina.

Overall contact with management was good. It must be said that the French youth in Indochina, was generally very patriotic and athletic. And physical effort demanded by the training program was well accepted and supported.

They love this active life, made marches and combat exercises, day and night - the carabiner hand, the package on the back. They could not know that all this was to serve them in the trials that lay ahead.

Their early February 1945 internship ended, they joined Lao-Kay walk and Garrison Tong by train.

Tong

Military camp Tong, 50 km from Hanoi, was the largest concentration of troops in the French army in Indochina. All weapons were represented, including aviation.

With other comrades, Jacques Boubal is assigned to the 4th RAC, 3rd Battery, where he continued his education, but this time on the mountain guns 75mm carried by mules.

Tonkin, in February, it's cold - and he falls a light rain, very penetrating: the drizzle.

A Chapa they perceived effects of winter: they are complete the package, and that's turned into soldiers of 1914-1918: the long underwear, wool pants, putties, shoes nails, and the famous canopy on the head cap in khaki wool.

45 years later, he still keeps in his memory, a painful memory. Indeed, having found that the shoes of the French Commissariat, were not particularly flexible, following the steps, they had their feet trimmed many bulbs, it was an ordeal ...

Jacques Boubal had made friends with the cobbler regiment, with a few dollars, had to look to make its as flexible as a pair of gloves boots ... We will see what will happen afterwards.

Every day at 5 am alarm clock with regulatory bugle call: clothing, hot coffee and towards the stables to dress mules.

While there, the circus began. First, he had to make to get into the box mule or mule, which was assigned to them. The animal was waiting and maneuvering so as to jam against the side walls of the box.

It was necessary that one of them (there were two) reaches to grab his ear and twist to make him see reason.

Then came the years of dismantling and reassembling of the 75 mountain, with the list aloud the various component parts of the barrel.

Finally two, you had to load and secure the equipment on the back of the mule, which of course was impossible to prevent them from performing the maneuver perfectly.

The riding, classroom instruction, sports, shooting carabiner, furnished it their days.

After the evening meal, they are not hanging around the barracks to join! No problem with the "old" colonial military occupation, they were well aware that not much should be "annoying" young Indochina.

Late February, early March 1945, the atmosphere had suddenly tense.

There were rumors that the Japanese were preparing to attack us. I must say they were not paying much attention, their leaders did not seem to take it all seriously. Tong camp was quiet.

However, a few days before the date fatidique Jacques Boubal had received a letter from his father - stationed in Saigon - confirming what was said, and he even stated that it was for March 9 in the evening, according to information precise obtained the services of the French Safety (cf Fleutot report).

His friend Alphonse Denis - the son of the Co-Denis Brothers in Saigon - his father had received the same information, plus a ticket in the envelope 20 USD! if necessary ...

We knew that the paratroopers had been dropped in Laos in the center of the country, as well as Cambodia. There was talk of "resistance" - General Mordant is responsible for this - but it was all very vague in their minds.

For a good understanding of the rest, it seems necessary to present the strengths of the Group of Tong, before the Japanese attack, and we will for this, we refer to the work of the General Sabattier, who commanded the Division of Tonkin and who had under him the Alessandri General commanding the Western Group of the Red River. .

1) "In the South, between the Red River and the Black River (Camp Tong) the General Staff of the Group.

- Infantry 1 / 5th REI, 2 / 5th REI, 1/1 RTT, 2 / 4th RTT
- 2nd Artillery Battery 75 TT, 3 / 4th RAC 2 battery 75 including one in a section.
- Powered D.M.C. reinforced platoon of motorcycle D.M.M.
- Aviation aerial observation and one section of the detachment extended from the base of Bach Mai group.

In addition to these combat units, instructors and students in many courses and workshops running at Tong.

- Military School: one of the students had been allocated as section leaders in the units of the group, the remainder constituting a platoon mounted. "
- The C.I.R.E. (Central European Command Recruits).
- The Center for Instruction Signals.
- The C.T.A.2
- The Center for Automotive Education and repair shop.
- Services Stewardship, Artillery and Health.

2) North of Red River:

3 / 5th and S.H.R. 5th R.E.I. confined area Cotich, the 4 / 19th RIC the custodial supply bases and ammunition. A total of 6,000 fighters, including Europeans only 1 1900, these are the numbers under the direct orders of General Alessandri.

This handful of French and Indochinese, was virtually surrounded by some 10,000 Japanese, perfectly equipped garrisons Hanoi, Xuan Mai, Phu To, Vinh Yen, and those ranged along the Red River to Lao-Kay.

On the night of 8 to 9 March 1945, the main force camp Tong are in operation.

Jacques Boubal.a notes in his book: the general alarm was sounded about 23 hours. We receive orders to take our weapons and raise Indochinese sentinels - the custody of the police station of the district of 4th RAC is strengthened, and we will remove the shells for 75 mm guns, pyrotechnics. All units returned maneuvers.

March 9 in the morning, we learn that General Sabattier and his staff who had arrived in Hanoi yesterday, just left Tong, for an unknown destination.

To 16 hours, an observation reported Potez columns Japanese troops trying to camouflage themselves and converging towards the camp Tong.

We talk to movement on the Black River or the Red River. We still do not know more, and we wait.