



On the policy of "yellowing" the strength of the French Far East Expeditionary Force 1/2

to the creation of the Vietnamese National Army during the Indochina War - BRENNUS 4.0

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Histoire & stratégie

The French Expeditionary Force Extreme-Orient (CEFEO), established in 1943 and originally intended to liberate Indo china of the japanese occupation troops suffer from the very beginning of a childhood illness. The lack of sufficient medical staff. and in particular of the managers and specialists in the tropics. lists. This shortage is fully apparent at the end of the year 1945 and during the year 1946 when the first major operations against a new adversary, Vietnam. -Minh whose war aims are reunification... of the three territories (Cochinchine, Annam, Tonkin) constituting Vietnam, the accession to independence and the establishment of the of a communist regime.

With the triggerlie"official"of hostilities on December 19... 1946, the threefold problem of maintenance, the relief and reinforcements from the CEFEO takes, at times, the appearance of a real "workforce crisis», especially in 1948-1949. To compensate for this proln the fall of 1945, a call was made fortherecruitment of soldiers or Aboriginallabour to help the expeditionary force carry out its missions. Such a policy wasnot new to the French army, which had already resorted to it in the19th century in its various colonial ventures, whetherinNorth Africa or Indochina, and it was adopted by theFrench army in the19th century. It isin line with theWestern logic of all countries thathave set out to conquer vast territories with smallexpeditionary forces . Inthis respect, the dismantling of the Aztec Empire by Cortesin the sixteenth century is one ofthe most telling examples, the conquest of theAztec Empirein thesixteenth century, the conquest of theAztec Empirein theseventeenth centuryand the conquest of theAztec Empirein theeighteenth century. TheSpanish conquest and its few hundred soldiers would probably not have come to an end had it not been for thehelp of tens of thousands of natives .

In the particular context of the Indochina where political issues determine the the conduct of operations, the policy of «yellowing"of OEFC staff - to use the expression coined at the time - nevertheless reaches its limits .The French authorities, both civilian and military ,realised very early on that any action against Viet Minh and its armed wing, theVietnamese People's Army (VPA), would not be able to be successful.be effective only in the case oftheconstruction of a Vietnamese state with a national army operating alongside theFrench expeditionary force.

The development of this army, subject to the vicissitudes of the establishment of the State of Vietnam led by Emperor Bao Dai, will be long and will ultimately yield mixed results. While France bears its share of responsibility for the mediocrity of many units of the Vietnamese National Army (NVA), in particular by not detaining it. While France bears its share of responsibility for the mediocrity of many units of the Vietnamese National Army (NVA), in particular by developing it only too late, that of the Vietnamese government and its lack of involvement in the process seem to be at the root of the lack of "mystique" and the weak commitment of its cadres and troops.

The "yellowing" of the expeditionary force

As early as 1943, and despite the lack of means, a decision was taken by General de Gaulle to set up an expeditionary force for Asian theatre as part of the fight against the Japan. « The blood spilled on the soil of Indochina [...] would be a title imposing »[1] to legitimize France's return to Indo-China, later wrote the head of the Provisional Government of China. the French Republic (GPRF). General Blaizot, a colonial, is responsible for the constitution of this force[2] but you have to wait until July 1945 for the French to benefit from the event - finally - the American endorsement allowing them to participate in the operations against Japan[3]. The end of hostilities in Europe and the death of President Roosevelt, who was deeply opposed to the reform of the United States. the French tour in Indochina, now make it possible for the French to possibly sending forces to the Extreme-Orient. In August 1945, the National Defence Committee sets the strength at 55,000 men of the CEFEQ[4]. The latter must be organized around two divisions American-style infantry, the 1re and 2e divisions divisionnelles d'Extrême-Orient (1re and 2e DICEO). However, because of the shortages of executives and troopers prevailing in the French army of the Liberation, the 1re DICEO is finally replaced by the 3e colonial infantry division (3e DIC), then says that the 2e DICEO never sees the light of day[5]. It's the 9e division colonial infantry (9e DIC), division of the 1re French army in the countryside since the landing in Provence, which is in a designated fact for Indochina. A marching group, in with a staff of about 2200 combatants, formed from detachments detachments of the 2e armoured division (GM/2e DB), as well as other body units, existing for some of them, are also available since 1943, such as the Light Intervention Corps (CLI) or the the Madagascar Brigade (future Extreme Brigade)-Orient, BEO), complement the device supported by different elements organic corps elements (EOCA).[6].

Thanks to the call for volunteers in the units of the 1re army army (the automatic designations for Indochina only begin in the beginning of 1946) and to the use of the French army (the ex officio to the Foreign Legion, which constitutes a "massive breeding ground" particularly in the post-war Europe. In the summer of 1945, the theoretical strength of the expeditionary force reached 50,000 men - who had to be sent quickly to Indochina. In reality they reached approximately 30,000 men in Cochinchina (the southern part of present-day Vietnam) in December 1945. However, this figure proved insufficient to carry out the many missions the CEFEQ had to face: fighting the Viet Minh insurrection and rebuilding military and civilian installations in southern Vietnam. In November 1945, the staff of the expeditionary force began a vast policy of recruiting native soldiers, which appeared to be the only way to allow a rapid increase in the number of soldiers in the units and to give them sufficient numbers to carry out their missions. Thenatives, mostly Vietnamese, were therefore recruited by the thousands under different statuses: regulars of the expeditionary force who come to "inflate" the strength of its battalions to replace losses due to operations or illness, or as replacements in companies that may accompany the troops in operations. They may be simple partisans, equipped with obsolete weapons and assigned to static guard missions (such as that of the tri-calibre kilometre towers) along communication routes, or even use coolies as day labourers[7]. This policy was partly successful and, combined with the gradual arrival of the other elements of the expeditionary force, enabled it to reach 62,000 men in

March 1946 .

The outbreak of the Indochina War, in the aftermath of the attack on the French garrisons in Tonkin by the militia...Vietnamese-Minh, lead the French command to accelerate this policy of recruitment of local origin, in particular in support and service units. The desired effect is duplicate while allowing an increase in the number of men in these training courses, this measure should facilitate the recovery of as many Frenchmen and legionnaires as possible, non-specialist units, in order to transfer them to the com-where they are sorely lacking. In practice, the recruitment of Aborigines is carried out with a view to of the number of personnel to be filled in the battalions and also of the training to be set up according to the organization plan annual review of Extreme Land Forces.-Orient (FTEO).

With the approval of the Commander-in-Chief, the 1er office - « organization and staffing " - authorizes the directions of each weapon and service to carry out the engagements. In a general way. Aboriginal people are generally recruited by corps unit. after going before a commission that eliminates the least robust. Several notes set out the conditions of engagement of Aboriginal staff. The first, dated November 9 1946, stipulates that recruitment shall be exclusively for and sets the duration of the contracts at one year. In fact, in order to broaden opportunities, this measure is relaxed and the married men are gradually being allowed to take out an commitment, hence the presence within or near the posts of the "bride and groom's camp", still famous in the memory of Indochina veterans. In addition, during the years 1947 and 1948, other notes specify the conditions of pay and allowances, the introduction of the clothing or the composition of each soldier's package. Recruitment is primarily local, which gives the units " a regionalist character ». The results have as a consequence the results have the effect of doubling, in some training courses, the unit strengths. For example, as of 15 June 1947, on the 61ste Engineer Battalion (61e BG) totals 565 men, off and in the weeks following a communication, and receives in the following weeks a of 450 natives. The average proportion of 50 per cent of Vietnamese in a number of training courses, however, deserves to be clarified, the distribution of Europeans and autochthons within the battalions not being uniform. Indeed, the percentage of French or legionnaires is greater in command functions or administrative employment-tratifs. As a result, the share of Aboriginal people in the combat fighting geniuses is more important.

[1] Charles de Gaulle, War Memories Paris, Plon, 1989, p. 760.

[2] General Blaizot was later appointed commander in chief in Indochina from May 1948 to September 1949.

[3] Jacques Dalloz, The Indochina War. 1945-1954 Paris, Points Histoire, Éditions du Seuil, 1987, p. 78.

[4] Hugues Tertrais, The Piaster and the rifle, op.cit., p. 32.

[5] The personnel who should have been integrated into the units of the 2e DICEO are distributed in the different training courses of the CEFEQ. On the question of the size of the Expeditionary Force Extreme French-Orient, see Michel Bodin, France and its soldiers, Indochina, 1945-1954 Paris, l'Harmattan, 1996.

[6] Furthermore, to the forces that are gathering in the metropolis and in the rest of the Empire, it is worth adding the few thousands of soldiers still present in the Extreme-Orient, reli-four of the former colonial army that had escaped from the army or interned by the Japanese army. Thus, in Cochinchina, on the 11th colonial infantry regiment (11e RIC) whose soldiers are taken prisoner in Saigon after the 9 March coup de force 1945 still represents, in September 1945, a contingent of about a thousand men. Finally, in northern Viet Nam...nam, General Salan, when he took command of the troops stationed in Tonkin and China, evaluates, early November 1945, at almost 5000 men (including 4500 for the the Hanoi garrison alone) the number of French personnel he can tell.s-pose. The forces that have taken refuge and are immobilized in China represent-The same force is required.

[7] In April 1946, a coolie is paid between 5, 80 and 6.50... piasters a day, compared to 7 piasters for the "specialized" coolie... and 4 piasters for the female coolie because of her supposed... lower physical strength.

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