

## CLANDESTINE MEETINGS IN HANOI: BRITISH LIAISONS WITH HO CHI MINH, AND VO NGUYEN GIAP, IN 1946

T.O. SMITH\*

---

**Abstract:** At the end of the Second World War, British Foreign Office and Secret Intelligence Service personnel were transferred to Vietnam. At the same time, Vietnam experienced a power vacuum caused by the surrender of the Japanese occupation forces, the haphazard reestablishment of French colonial rule, and the outbreak of various Vietnamese nationalist uprisings clamoring for independence. Although the French quickly regained control in the south, in the north the situation was less clear-cut. In such circumstances, British personnel in Vietnam attempted to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the real situation in the north, and by association comprehend the true political nature and intent of the nebulous Vietminh and its senior leadership. Therefore, this article examines a series of events during 1946 when British operatives in Hanoi and Saigon were able to operate behind the scenes and freely associate with Ho Chi Minh and other Vietnamese nationalist leaders. In doing so, a picture emerges of a less than clear-cut relationship between Vietnamese nationalism and communism. Hence, British local personnel in Vietnam were able to develop a more nuanced understanding of the complicated connection between indigenous nationalism and communism in Vietnam. This methodology was soon adopted by the British Government and enabled it to apply a more pragmatic approach to other Cold War ideological problems than its allies did.

**Keywords:** Ernest Bevin; Vo Nguyen Giap; E. William Meiklerid; Ho Chi Minh; Lieutenant-Colonel Arthur Trevor-Wilson; Hanoi; Saigon; Vietnam

---

---

\* Huntington University, USA. [tsmith@huntington.edu](mailto:tsmith@huntington.edu)