

Adieu Saïgon, Au Revoir Hanoi: The 1943 Vacation Diary of Claudie Beaucarnot
English Translation

Preface

Claudie Beaucarnot (born Beaucarnot)

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Vacation, 1943, or Hanoi to Saigon by the Long Way 'Round

To be nice to a friend from the *Lycée Albert Sarraut*, who wanted to gather together documents in order to assemble an account of the everyday life of the French in Indochina up to 1945, I rummaged through my loose papers saved in a box.¹ There, I found these notes, written from day to day in three small notebooks in the car that carried us for the 1943 vacation. I had forgotten them for thirty years!

It seemed to me, after reading them again, that they give a small glimpse of the life we lived at the time.

I could not have believed that two years after this simple account of our world - of the French of Indochina - would collapse on 9 March 1945.²

¹ Madame Beaucarnot deposited a typewritten transcription of her diary with Yvonne Fontain-Biggi, a friend who wanted to collect memoirs of time spent in Indochina. In turn, Ms. Fontain-Biggi deposited these papers at the Archives Nationales, Section Outre-Mer, in Aix-en-Provence. The diary is held at code 67 APOM, d. 2. "Fonds Biggi" The Lycée Albert Sarraut, in Hanoi, was the elite high school for northern Indochina. The Lycée Chasseloup-Laubat, in Saigon, was the equivalent for southern Indochina.

² In June 1940, when France fell to the German Army, the Germans permitted the creation of residual, pro-fascist state in the southern two-fifths of France known officially as *État français* and colloquially as Vichy France because its leaders established their capital in the resort town of Vichy. The conservative, anti-Semitic war hero Marshal Philippe Pétain accepted Vichy France's leadership. Because Vichy France allied with Germany, and Germany had allied with Japan, and most of France's colonies had rallied to Vichy, Vichy France and Japan became diplomatically fraternal. This fraternity had both advantages and disadvantages for a Japan increasingly anxious to assert hegemony over Southeast Asia. On the one hand, it permitted the Japanese to insist on allowing the presence of fraternal troops on the soil of French Indochina. On the other, it meant the Japanese had to tolerate the presence of a residual French administration. So, as Mme. Beaucarnot indicates, while other Europeans faced a very

We had maintained an almost normal life during the years of the war.

The Governor-general, Admiral [Jean] Decoux, was able, thanks to some shameless accords made with the Japanese, to minimize their presence in Indochina.

The French administration was still there, as were the French troops, which enabled the planters, the industrialists, the merchants, everyone, strongly assisted by the people of Annam, intelligent and hardworking, to compete in ingenuity in order to try to make the Indochinese machine run with the available means.³

Using only the products of the country, inventing, creating, fixing. Largely employing *Système D*, which was used by both the French and the Vietnamese, we lived through this exalted time when we could count on only ourselves.⁴ We experienced the same satisfactions as Robinson Crusoe on his desert isle, when he discovered a use for the materials that he had on hand.

The children could continue to go to school, the adults continue to work, all receiving the best care from the doctors of the pharmaceutical laboratories – the

difficult situation under direct Japanese occupation after December 1941, the French remained relatively free and in peace. On 9 March 1945, the Japanese Army committed a coup against the French colonial administration. This coup arose because although the Vichy administration had crumbled in 1944, Indochina had remained allied with Vichy even though Vichy no longer existed after June 1944. Some members of the French administration had begun to show noisy sympathy to liberated France and to resisting the Japanese. In the context of a collapsing empire in Southeast Asia and the Pacific, the Japanese military commander decided to eliminate the French administration and residual military, and assert direct Japanese administration and a pro-Vietnamese independence position. The Japanese military executed nearly 6,000 French soldiers and administrators on 9-10 March; the remaining French had to go into hiding. For her part, Claudie found herself at the house of the family friends, the Balicks (Directors of the School of Art of Cochinchina). Mr. Beaucarnot arrived by train from Hanoi on the 8th, a fairly miraculous trip in itself given Allied harassment of Indochina's transportation system at this point.

³ In an effort to bring to life a policy of autarky, the French and Vietnamese did make some incredible strives in supporting an economy almost entirely cut off from any form of resupply after December 1941. One of the greatest accomplishments was the manufacture of rubber tires. The French also turned to traditional medicine in the absence of imported biomedicine.

⁴ *Système D* – D for 'débrouille', roughly "make-do" – is a classic example of French ingenuity in the face of lack or bureaucratic impediments to achieving personal or community goals.

Instituts Pasteur and Yersin – who pursued their research in the quite unpleasant climate of this country.⁵

In short, this state permitted us to spend four years during the war in acceptable conditions.⁶ This was not the case for our English neighbors from Malaya or from Burma, or the Dutch in Java, who stagnated in the Japanese prisons when they were not killed at the start of things.

So, when I think back on all that happened during our last years in French Indochina, I am deeply saddened.

What a mess provoked by the madness of men!

But this is just a part of the history of humanity. The cycles succeed and renew themselves but always turn out the same; the inherent nature of human beings provokes the taste of war and the love of freedom.

Unfortunately for us, we found ourselves at this precise moment in the history of Indochina that became our eviction from the country.

Nevertheless, this country was mine.

My father was very young when he arrived there in 1920, just after the war of 1914. As Director-General of the Tileworks of Indochina, he stayed there throughout his entire Indochinese life. Criss-crossing from North to South without pausing, he

⁵ Hanoi, Saigon, and Nha Trang had Pasteur Institutes, where basic scientific research was carried out. The Pasteur Institutes served as the major medical laboratories for Indochina, and handled vaccinations and epidemiology. The Yersin Institute focused on paristology and bacteriology.

⁶ Despite a severe interruption to the export of raw materials that formed the basis of the French economy in Indochina, substitute employment and subsidies enabled the French to maintain a fairly normal lifestyle for much of the war. The Vietnamese population, however, suffered increasingly as the Japanese increased year-by-year their demand for rice. In early 1945, these exactions provoked a horrific famine in northern Vietnam, in which up to two million Vietnamese perished. The precise chronology and causes for this famine remain murky, for a sufficient quantity of rice remained in storehouses to feed the population and not all Vietnamese in the North suffered equally.

discovered numerous mines that allowed for new manufactures for the development of this country's resources. Knowing Indochina well, he loved it and valued its people.

He took a wife, my mother, born of Breton father who came to Hanoi around 1890 as a mathematics teacher and a Vietnamese mother from a good Ha Dong family.

All of these components were thus gathered so that we would be genuine Indochinese and that we would remain all of our lives in this country that was ours.⁷

The events chased us from it. It was a total heartbreak.

There is not a single day that my mind doesn't drift back to my faraway country that I will most likely not see again.⁸

I married a doctor I knew there and he gave me four children. My husband is dead, but my children surround me with their affection and are indulgent towards their mother who beats their ears with her Indochinese memories.

Despite the time, these memories have stayed very lively, of these happy years of our childhood and of our adolescence.

I can see again our family so united, with a father who was an exceptional being and for whom I always had an unlimited admiration. He had all the qualities, including whim and humor. Intelligence, perpetually awake. Enthusiasm, always present. Without great health, he had a great physical resistance that allowed him to spend day after day in the bush when he would look for the contours of minerals. I don't know how many times I saw him get up in the night to check on the kilns at the factory when there

⁷ Claudie asserts this identity – neither French nor Vietnamese – repeatedly.

⁸ In 1997, Mrs. Beaucarnot did in fact make a quick return visit with her daughters, but did so as part of a package tour that did not allow her the time to revisit the many places in Indochina she wanted to visit.

was a delicate firing. And the trips that he took from Hanoi to Saigon every year in order to inspect the factories of Cochinchina.

His inventive spirit allowed him to create original processes, exceptional machines and even, what we call today, gadgets. To Mama's great displeasure, who saw her house turned into laboratory.

Mama was happily the moderating element. She restored a little peace and reason in this effervescent imagination.

For Papa, all that we did was good. All that we asked for was given to us. Then when we felt that this wasn't very reasonable, we turned to Mama, knowing that she would refuse for our own good.

And that's how our life passed, fairly peacefully up to March 9, 1945.

When I reread these notes from our trip, I think back to all that happened in this country, thanks to enterprising and courageous men. Of course, like in all of society, there were individuals who were more or less scrupulous. But in the end, we don't have to blush at the achievement realized in Indochina.

It is simply unfortunate that the events have thus passed.

And now, after all these years of war that took so many lives, and ruined this beautiful country, it was necessary for the government, by putting aside destructive ideology, to accept the assistance of all the good intentions offered them. It was necessary that the inhabitants, full of resources, would be able to begin work in a country finally at peace.

Monday, June 28th, 1943

Memorable date: we never stayed in Hanoi so late. Usually, from June 15, after the distribution of prizes at our dear old *Lycée Albert Sarraut*, we departed (mother and her daughters) for the freshness of Tam Dao. Tam Dao is a health retreat at 1,000 meters, where the Tonkinese go to rest during the summer.⁹ The retreat is 90 kilometers from Hanoi, but the last twenty kilometers are on the edge [of a cliff] with tight turns that leave us with unpleasant memories of nausea.

By a stroke of luck, this year, at this time, Papa had to go to Cochinchina to inspect the Long Buu Tileworks and find new soil, clay, and mines in order to make new products available.

We profited from this by leaving as a family to combine work and pleasure.

And here we are then “on the Mandarin Road” that Roland Dorgèles described with such grace.¹⁰

The clock at the train station read 3:30pm when we passed it. If all goes well, we will sleep in Vinh tonight.

We made quite an impression exiting Hanoi. I know well that since the war, the people of Hanoi have seen the most extraordinary vehicles circulating through their city.

⁹ By Tonkinese, Claudie means the French of Tonkin, one of the three administrative districts the French superimposed over Vietnam. Southern Vietnam was designated a colony in 1859 and was thus technically part of France. Annam, including the central part of Vietnam from Phan Rang to Vinh, and Tonkin, from Thanh Hoa to the Chinese border, were made protectorates in 1885. Cambodia became a protectorate in 1862, and Laos in 1897. While the French maintained indigenous administration for domestic concerns in Annam and Tonkin, French authority increasingly penetrated Vietnamese life until in fact indigenous administration meant very little. In 1911, the authority of a Governor-general united the five parts of Indochina into Federal administration. In 1917, the French ended the traditional examinations for mandarins, the officials of the old imperial Vietnamese administration.

¹⁰ See Roland Dorgelès, *Sur la route mandarine*. Paris: Albin Michel, 1925.

However, we dazzled them with our gazogène.¹¹ Imagine a black Primaquatre (our Renault) with three enormous cylinders on the roof.¹² Underneath the cylinders, of which two hold the reserves of charcoal and the last the gas filter, on which we placed two flat trunks. Everything is covered by a tarp, and because one cannot see what is underneath, this creates a worrisome bulge. On the front bumper, we secured two canisters (one containing oil and the other alcohol). We cannot forget the two spare tires that the chauffeur attached in front of the canisters.¹³ After everything was packed, the vehicle resembled the snout of a pig.

There are five of us in the car. Papa is driving, as always. Mama is sitting next to him and Nicole; my little sister is in the hole between the two. What we call “the hole” in our family is a cubby between the two front seats. This cubby exists because the vehicle was requisitioned at the start of the war and transformed into an ambulance.¹⁴ When it was returned to us, besides these changes, we inherited a stretcher.

In short, Nicole is in the hole and furious about it. All the more, she is “chubby Nicole!”

But Papa put the heavy weight in the front because the back is already quite loaded with the gas plant set in the trunk. Finally in the back are the chauffeur and I. We cannot weigh more than 90 kilograms between the two of us. The aforementioned

¹¹ A gazogène is one of the expedencies of the war years, both in France and in French Indochina. Through a boiler system usually placed in the rear of a vehicle, the *gazogène* produced alcohol that the regular engine consumed as fuel.

¹² The Renault Primaquatre.

¹³ In this sense, the nameless chauffeur is literally someone who loads fuel into the *gazogène* for the Beaucarnots. He is not a driver in the modern, American sense of chauffeur.

¹⁴ According to Mrs. Beaucarnot, the government took the car, narrowed the two front seats in order to provide a wider space over the transmission tunnel. This wider space could accommodate a stretcher.

chauffeur is well deserving of his name, because he was in charge of loading charcoal into the gazo.

We settled in as well as best we could. A small suitcase, four raincoats, and two hats separated us (I recommend wide, soft-brimmed hats for traveling). Since we left, I have been wrestling with them. I have one foot wedged between two bottles of water and the other one is rooting around trying not to crush a flask of eau de Cologne that is lodged in the basket. Because the floor of the car is carpeted with basketry. This is mother's specialty. When father asks her if she will have a lot of bags [she would reply,] "No, my love, there's nothing but a small suitcase." Actually, there was only one small suitcase, but she forgot to mention the twelve baskets! So, we scattered them throughout the car. And this way, the chauffeur inherited the basket containing the thermos, and me the basket where the flashlights were found.

The car is going quite fast now. We are fifteen kilometers from Hanoi. I am looking at the landscape to the right and to the left of the road. Moreover, God knows that it is familiar to me. Rice fields...rice fields. Here and there, a thicket of bamboo and areca (betel).¹⁵ In every thicket, a small village.

The sun is hiding behind a blanket of clouds. There is a terrible refraction and the heat stupefies the Vietnamese pedestrians. We are obliged to honk many times before they take heed, never knowing if they will go to the right or the left.¹⁶

¹⁵ Wrapped in a leaf and slaked with lime, betel is chewed and serves as a mild narcotic.

¹⁶ One of the constant tropes of transport in French Indochina is the conflict between (French) driver and (Vietnamese) pedestrian. Colonial-era literature is full of references to French drivers striking Vietnamese pedestrians, and then blaming the Vietnamese for being in the way. This attitude probably originates in a combination of a French sense of propriety about roads and rapid travel and Vietnamese inexperience with motorized transportation.

What's going on? The car is shimmying along the road. I look and see a guy zigzagging, a beam upon his shoulder.¹⁷ He must be sleepwalking. We really honked, but he heard nothing. He approaches us dangerously and then, all of a sudden, I close my eyes, a violent shock, and the sound of broken glass. The car stops. I open my eyes and I see the fellow head for the grass, rubbing his lower back. Papa gets out and looks for the guy underneath the car. He thinks he's dead! When Papa sees him unscathed, by reaction, he wants to administer a thrashing. Mother calms him and after, we being reassured that there isn't any damage (except a little bit to his cargo), we start up again.

We arrive in Phu Ly, which is a pretext for a traditional joke: "What is the river that runs through Phu Ly? The mug! Why? Because Fouly on the mouth!"¹⁸

After Phu Ly, if we turn to the right, we will be in Chi Né, around forty kilometers, the coffee plantation of Papa Leconte.¹⁹ Then at Sông Lang, his farm. It's there that there are the enormous drying rooms for, and all the correct equipment to treat, the coffee and to package it for shipment just about everywhere especially to France before the war. Sông Lang is the middle of limestone mountains, situated in the Middle Region, and is populated by the Muong people.

Mr. Leconte, with his lovely beard that has always impressed me, is the true patriarch in his family of twelve children. Papa calls him the Marquis of Carabas (who

¹⁷ This is the balance pole in-between which the Vietnamese two baskets.

¹⁸ Mrs. Beaucarnot's explanation for this is as follows: "Phu Ly is a small town 60 kilometers to the South of Hanoi. *Fouly sur la guele* is a French joke utilizing argot and a homonym at the same time. *Guele* is the French equivalent of the English slang for face, mug. Phu Ly pronounced *fuly* is a homonym for 'fous-lui' in French, which means to hit his mug."

¹⁹ Mr. Emile Leconte has a long, important, and fecund place in the history of Indochina. Arrived in Indochina in the 1880s with the *troupes coloniales*, Mr. Leconte mustered out of service there and took

never sees the sun set on his land).²⁰ In reality, his domain is more modest, but he has, all the same, 800 head of cattle and one or two dozen milk cows who produce a delicious milk with which he produces a delicious cheese (it's his niece Lucy who is predisposed to this activity).

It is a true paradise for us young people who spend all of our little vacations (Christmas, Easter, etc.) at his place with all of the children that we love as siblings.

Just before vacation, he sends to Hanoi his big truck, nicely cleaned and equipped with two banks of benches, to go around to all the boarding houses to gather up the children and their friends. Then, it heads to the farm.²¹

It reminds me of a memory of the promenades in a carriage, the boat trips in grottoes where subterranean rivers flow, bathing in the muddy arroyos from which we chase water buffaloes in order to take their place, the scaling of huge hayricks from which we fell full of scratches, the group showers in the evening before sumptuous meals. The cries, the laughs, the games, the carelessness...

Here the Cordillera annamite begins. We do not leave it for a long time. To the right, there's also Ke So. It seems that there is a very beautiful cathedral.²² Monsignor Puginier built it with the aid of his loyal followers, he who had never built anything. He drew the plan on the ground in full scale and had it built on top of the plan. It was

out a large concession about 60 kilometers south of Hanoi. He had twelve *métis* children with several Vietnamese wives.

²⁰ The Marquis of Carabas is a character in the children's story, *Puss in Boots*.

²¹ Mrs. Beaucarnot explained that for the children of administrators and colonists who left their children in boarding schools while they went to distant posts, plantations, or mines, this vacation was important for morale and health.

²² Ke So was the diocese headquarters for western Tonkin. There was a large Catholic community here, including the cathedral built by Monsignor Puginier built between 1879-1884, seminary, and press. Tonkin and Annam's population numbered perhaps 1.5 million before 1954; about 900,000 went South after the conclusion of the 1946-54 First Indochina War.

necessary to walk up three stairs to access the finished church. All of a sudden, the church sunk two meters without any stone falling out of place, without any cracks. And now, one descends three steps to enter the church!

Now we roll along on a raised road, bordered by trees. We pass through villages. Papa is obliged to give more than just a tap on the brakes to avoid the women of the villages, half-asleep, half-deaf. Yet again, braking. The Renault skitters and I feel a twist in my stomach. It's a small shepherdess who let go of the loin of her animal at the moment we were passing. "Oh la vache!" cries father. No one knows to whom that was addressed.²³

In the rice fields, naked boys slept on the backs of their water buffaloes. Farther along on a little bridge, two equally nude kids throw stones in the stream. There, we crossed a pond covered by lotus. It was height of the season and the flowers made a big red stain. A *bé-con* pinched the pistils of the lotus that contained the seeds.²⁴ These seeds have a soporific quality and delicious. Candied, as one tastes them at Têt, they recall a little bit candied chestnuts, but with a finer flavor.

Here is the Do Len ferry. It is a paddlewheeler. It is a miracle that it is still working! We get out of the car while on the ferry and use the opportunity to empty the contents of the thermos. A kid walks in the water in the middle of aquatic plants that the river carries. He eats jackfruit. It is an enormous delicious fruit but can stink. I adore eating it, a big fleshy, sweet piece.

²³ This is a common expression of frustration in French, perhaps humorous because the animal may have been a bovine.

²⁴ By *bé-con*, Claudie means a little kid.

Upon leaving the ferry, the back of the car is so low that we lost the little lamp that illuminates the registration number. It was found and reattached more or less satisfactorily.

At Ninh Binh, a stop at the place of some friends. We unloaded from the car a sack of vegetables, which was intended for them. We had some lemonade, and then kissed them goodbye.

Here is the terrestrial Halong Bay.²⁵ The calcified rocks are the same as those in Halong Bay. Only the water is missing, but it's really missing. The motor starts to heat up and we must go along for a long time before finding a little muddy water elsewhere. We profit from it [the stop] to put charcoal in the gazo. We pass by the boundary that delineates Annam from Tonkin.

We are now in Thanh Hoa province. The car really moves! It is 6 o'clock in the evening. I root out a box of biscuits from a basket. We finish it off. We stop for a drink and to put more water in the radiator. We also notice that the boy that we had jostled a few minutes ago had completely demolished the right headlight and smashed in the hood a little.

We left. Night fell and a star appeared in the sky. Mother asks if it's the Shepherd's star. We don't know. She takes the opportunity to sing: "It's the evening star, it's the love star/The lovers and the mistresses love one another night and day." Gosh! That must be quite tiring, exclaimed father. Mother becomes gay, starts to tell us her young loves. Father chuckled with joy.

²⁵ Impressive, sharp limestone peaks jutting up from rice paddies and streams surround Ninh Binh. They resemble the more impressive peaks that emerge from Ha Long Bay, to the East of the port of Haiphong.

The chauffeur snoozes. He has a considerable capacity for sleep. Even when shopping in the city he sleeps while driving.

The night becomes darker. We turned on the remaining headlight and it doesn't work properly, but only flashes. Before leaving, father took the car to the garage and said to check everything, the headlights included. They found a way to mount the headlights in reverse! We are fortunate to be abundantly provided with flashlights. Nicole illuminates father who reattaches the headlamp. And I illuminate the chauffeur who refills the gazo.

The chauffeur and I serve as a thermometer: when our backsides start to heat up, the combustion is at its end, [indicating] that there is almost no more charcoal. Then we stop. Our headlight functions well now. We are obliged to drive like this until Hué, because the S.T.A.I. (*Société des Transports et Automobiles de l'Indochine* - Society of Transport and Automobiles of Indochina) Garage was incapable of providing us with a second headlight.²⁶

The chauffeur had fastened the canister that helps take up the water badly. It makes a frightful hullabaloo behind us. It is time to arrive at the next rest stop.

It is ten o'clock in the evening. There, to the left, is the road that leads to Cua Lo beach. Before, we left behind us to our right the little village of Xa Doai, the country of oranges. They are famous despite their green skin, which makes one think that they are not ripe.

²⁶ By 1943, spare parts, especially of this sort, must have become relatively difficult to acquire.

At last, Vinh!²⁷ The first hotel where we stop is full! ²⁸ A second hesitates to receive us. After quite a long discussion, we are placed in the annex. It's clean. There is a shower that we use with delight. But it is terribly hot outside. To top off all the bad luck, the rheostats of the fans are in a little padlocked box. Hardly washed, we begin to sweat again. My prickly heat causes me terrible itching. I rub myself with eau de Cologne, which burns me even a little bit more, and then Nicole powders me with camphorated talc. I do the same for her. We perspire abundantly. I sleep on my back, so that the sheets absorb the sweat. And I pass a sleepless night, having also drunk black coffee too late.

Tuesday, June 29th.

At 7 o'clock father knocks on the door. "Are you ready? We are leaving right after breakfast." We take another shower, some more black coffee. Nicole complains, because there is no milk. While we assemble the luggage, father makes a tour of the garages to find charcoal. It cannot be found in Vinh. We go as far as Ben Thuy.²⁹ No charcoal there either. There is only a sufficient amount of fuel to reach Dong Hoi.

²⁷ Vinh is a medium size city and the capital of Nghe An province. The province had resisted the French continually since the period of occupation had begun. Most notably, revolts in 1930-31 had cost many thousands of Vietnamese lives. In 1941, the colonial government had unleashed a brutal repression of anti-colonial activities in Nghe An, resulting mostly famously with the execution of Vietnam's most famous female communist revolutionary, Nguyen Thi Minh Khai. During the American War of 1965-72, Vinh was an important starting point for the troops of North Vietnam traveling south on the Ho Chi Minh Trail.

²⁸ This would have been the Grand Hotel. The second hotel was most likely the Hotel de la Gare.

²⁹ Ben Thuy is Vinh's port and a center of industry, located at the beginning of the estuary of the Fish River that leads to the South China Sea. In 1943, Ben Thuy had an important match factory, power plant, several sawmills, and an ice plant. It never realized its full potential as a port because the opening to the sea frequently silted up, making the passage of larger ships impossible. It too was leveled completely during the American War of 1965-72.

We wait twenty minutes at the Ben Thuy ferry. It smells of dried fish. An old woman asks for money to have a new *cai ao* made.³⁰ We give her six sous. She isn't happy. It isn't enough. Too bad!

The car is not running well today. Every twenty kilometers it is necessary to add water to the radiator. It is true that the "Laos wind" (*foehn*), which is so drying, blows today.³¹ Father knows that between Vinh and Dong Hoi, it is very dry. We notice it quickly.

In places, the road is red-violet. This color is due to a violet schist.³²

It's great to travel with father! He knows so many things in so many areas. But we never talk to him about botany: for him, all flowers are begonias.

We are stopped again to take on water from a clear stream, so clear that one sees the streambed with its stones and algae, which have the exact same form as corals. One sees little fish that swim very, very quickly. Nicole throws a pebble in the water. A woman who passed along the road enters the water, pushes aside the dead leaves that float on the surface and puts water in her conical hat. She drinks, then wets her face.

The scenery changed. There are no more rice fields, but in front of us is a mountain range. On the crest of the short mountain a wall. Approximately in the middle of the range, one sees a door. This is the Gate of Annam.

Father explains. "You see, on this side of the wall, we are still in the country of Annam. On the other side is Cham country."³³

³⁰ *Cai ao* literally means a shirt, but here probably means a new set of clothes.

³¹ The hot, dry *foehn* blows in central Vietnam during the summers, often covering everything in its path with yellow dust.

The Vietnamese come from Canton, of the Chinese plains. The first Vietnamese royal dynasties had their citadels and their palaces in the region of Vinh Yen. Then they made war against the Cham. Their second capital was Thanh Hoa. They pushed back the Cham until the Annam Gate. The wall served for a long time as the limit of the Vietnamese. Then they chased the Chams, taking Hué, installing themselves there.³⁴ Finally, they invaded Cochinchina, which they disputed with the Chams and Khmers.

We attack the peak; we passed through the Gate of Annam on foot. The Mandarin Road passes below. The motor breathes heavily. Us too, because it becomes hotter and hotter and the Laos wind is quite dehydrating. We have dry throats and there is not another piece of ice in the thermos.

Yet another ferry. It's the Ferry of the Sailors. We call it so because previously the ferrymen were all dressed up as French sailors. The wind blows with unheard-of violence. It carries away father's hat, which we recover in the lagoon, completely soaked. The paddlewheeler is on the other side of the river. When we call, it comes, but we are obliged to wait for more than a quarter of an hour before the ferrymen can secure the ferry, so strong were the waves. We close the windows on the windy side, because the waves hit with such violence against the side of the ferry and send the spray into the car. It is briny water.

³² In the asphalt.

³³ Until the Vietnamese began what is known as the Nam Tien – the March South – in the early 15th [[C, the Cham peoples, an Indianized people of Malaysian origin, controlled the coasts of Vietnam from just below Vinh to just north of Saigon, where their kingdom butted up against the Kingdom of the Khmer.

³⁴ The Nguyen made Hué their capital in 1802, and spent decades building the city's Citadel and Forbidden City.

On the other riverbank, the landscape changes again. The road snakes through the middle of some filaos (the pines of the Indochinese coasts).³⁵ From time to time one sees the blue sea through the pines. We go through a village. Rice paper wrappers dry on screens, a large black pig sweeps the road with its belly and runs away grunting.³⁶

Here is the Dong Hoi aviation field. Father landed here two years ago during maneuvers.³⁷ We enter Dong Hoi by a Vietnamese gate. It is the old citadel still surrounded by a moat where greenish water stagnates. At the bungalow, each of us takes two lemonades. We feel better. We fill the thermos with beer and ice.³⁸ We buy some charcoal and take the time to change a tire that is about to burst. We are ready.

While leaving Dong Hoi, we drive along a lagoon bordered by mangroves. It smells of sea air. Another ferry. Little *bé-con* swarm around the car to sell us boxes, plates, trays, and wood smoking sets.³⁹ After getting off the ferry, Father almost left the chauffeur behind, who just had time to catch hold of the car and dive into it, crushing my wide, soft-brimmed hat in the movement. We pass by two pagodas on the side of the road. On each side of the entryway, there are bas-reliefs of a kneeling elephant. We go through a land of plenty. There are banana trees, areca trees (betel), papaya trees,

³⁵ The filaos are like shaggy pine trees.

³⁶ The Vietnamese pot-bellied pig, which is black with very short legs.

³⁷ As an air force reservist, Mr. Beaucarnot had been called up in September 1939, but released shortly thereafter during the *drôle de guerre* period of September 1939 – May 1940 (known as the *sitzkrieg* in Britain). His reserve maneuvers continued annually throughout the war.

³⁸ During the 1920s, the French had popularized beer through brands such as Bière BGI (*Brasseries et glaciers de l'Indochine*) and Bière La Rue. A few foreign brands, such as Tiger, were also available. Beer remained relatively expensive for the average Vietnamese.

³⁹ *Bé-con* translates roughly as “little children” or just “kids.” The smoking set consisted of a sort of water pipe and stand for alcohol or a long, lacquered pipe intended for opium. Street vendors in Vietnam still commonly sell such items.

sugar cane, sweet potatoes, and coconut palms. It's with difficulty if one sees huts behind this vegetation.

Under a torrid sun the *nha-qué*, protected by their conical caps, dig, irrigate, harvest, and gather.⁴⁰ Some are bent over, feet in the water, occupied by replanting rice. Others hold the shaft of the plow, pushing their buffalo in front of them. We see the horns and heads of the water buffalo sticking out of the water, the rest of their bodies disappearing in the mud. A few of them got out, waddling heavily. Some others, who had been out longer show us their crusts of dried mud, cracked in spots. We pass over a small bridge. The river is dried up. All of its bed is filled with sand. The wind has driven stripes across it and one sees traces of footprints. The sand is all white and fine like sugar. From time to time, one sees the steeple of a church emerge from the groves. They are rare in Annam.⁴¹ One especially sees evangelist temples, and pagodas. The latter abound. The richest among them have their entrance protected by a screen of masonry on which run and twist sculpted dragons and where tigers grimace, fearsome and mustachioed.

Splat! We crushed a snake that was crossing the road. Sad cows search for a shady corner. We are getting farther from the ocean. If there is a beach tonight before arriving in Hué, father promised to stop so that we could have a swim. This morning, we had the sun to our left and father had sunburned his neck. This evening, it's mother who has it. She protects herself behind a feather fan that she drags with her

⁴⁰ *Nha-que* is an expression for a peasant or bumpkin.

⁴¹ When the Popular Front government took power in France in 1936, they liberalized political control in Indochina. During this period, one American evangelical Protestant missionary organization, the Christian & Missionary Alliance of Denver, made impressive gains in converts throughout central Annam. After 1975, the communist Vietnamese officially discouraged and disestablished the Protestant religion until 1999.

everywhere. To pass the time, we nibble on everything that we can put our teeth into. The box of biscuits is rapidly disappearing. We equally devoured the crêpes and the Vietnamese sausage purchased in a small village where we stopped to procure charcoal. Fifty percent of the village was bleary-eyed. It's because they are all sensitive to conjunctivitis, and if one member of the family has it, the others do as well. They circled the car and contemplated with a curious air these *ong tây, ba tây* who eat *do an An Nam*.⁴²

We are now driving on a rounded plateau. We no longer see rice fields, but grass and thickets. I start using father's expression "le tutu sans connaissance" from the stiffness due to my twisted position as much as the heat of the gazo that started to warm my bottom.⁴³ Again, the plain with its rice paddies all dried out. This makes me think of a similar place; this morning, during a stop, we saw a poor man so thin you could see his heart beat under his skin.

Another ferry. It is the last one before Hué. What's agreeable about Annam is that the ferries are all equipped with propellers.⁴⁴ They're fast and for the most part more pleasant. This ferry we name "the ferry of the little singers" because usually, they come up on the ferry with the auto and charm us the entire crossing with "*Lai ba cho toi mot xu*" in all tones.⁴⁵ Today undoubtedly, it is too hot. Some are parked in a hut; others bang round in the water.

⁴² That is, "...these Mr. [Ong] And Mrs.[Ba] French [Tay] who eat Vietnamese food [do an]."

⁴³ "Le tutu sans connaissance" translates roughly as "the bottom without memory," meaning her rear end has gone to sleep.

⁴⁴ As opposed to Tonkin and northern Annam, which still had paddlewheelers.

⁴⁵ The 'they' here refers to beggars. The Vietnamese phrase translates as, "Lady, please give me a penny."

Here, there is a candlenut plantation.⁴⁶ These two-meter high bushes bear nuts that produce tung oil. The shadow of the car, completely twisted, runs alongside us. I turn away. The car raises a considerable amount of dust. The poor people who we pass quickly doff their large frond hats and plunge their faces into them.

In Quang Tri, there is a very picturesque Chinese tower. The clouds cover the sky. We see an enormous rainbow. We observe the setting sun amusing itself by throwing its last rays on the clouds.

A riot of colors, a kind of northern lights. All of a sudden, it's raining. Right away, we pull up the windshield.⁴⁷ Mother grabs for raincoat. I am hit with large, very hard raindrops. It smells of wet earth.

We aren't very far from Hué. The next six kilometers is like a pool table. We drive with care. A rabbit hypnotized by the headlight rests immobile in the middle of the road. Father swerved to avoid running over it. During one of our stops, Mama buys some pineapple.⁴⁸ She peels and cuts them, leaving the eyes, which we quickly scarf down. These fruits are very juicy and refresh our dry throats.

To stretch our legs a bit, we run around, Nicole and I. She pinches my sides. I chase her while screaming in order to unwind.

Five kilometers before Hué, there are huts along the road. Finally, here is the Citadel on the left. And on the right, the Perfume River. The war hasn't constrained Hué with blackouts. It has been a long time since we have seen lamps without shades. It is pleasing. We penetrate the court of the Hotel Morin at exactly nine o'clock. After a

⁴⁶ This is the *Aleurites moluccana*. Tung oil is used as a lubricant, applied, for example, to a whetstone before sharpening a knife.

⁴⁷ This Primaquatre had a fold-forward windshield.

lot of hassle, we find two rooms. After a nice shower, we go down to the restaurant. We are the last ones. There is not even enough ice. The water is warm but the meal is good. We have an excellent night despite the heat.

Wednesday, June 30th

It's mother who comes to wake us up. We look at the clock: 9:30! It's not possible! Father left much earlier to take the car to the garage. We go down to lunch after a nice shower and find father again at the garage. The headlight is already repaired. There's only the oil change left to do. But we aren't leaving until tomorrow morning. We take a quick tour of town with mother by *pousse-pousse*.⁴⁹ We visit the Khai Dinh Museum, which is found, on the interior of the Citadel. This citadel is immense.⁵⁰ The moat, which surrounds it, is filled with lotus flowers. The museum is being restored. We enter nevertheless. All the objects are scattered about in the display cases. It is hot. We also want to visit the Imperial Palace, but it requires the authorization of the Resident-superior.⁵¹ Too bad for the Palace. We searched through

⁴⁸ Vietnamese pineapples are smaller and sweeter than their American counterparts.

⁴⁹ A *pousse-pousse*, or sometimes simply *pousse*, is the Vietnamese equivalent of a rickshaw. Like a rickshaw, at this time a runner, in between two parallel rods, pulled a chair mounted above two rubber-tired wheels. Late in the colonial period, bicycle-driven *pousse* arrived in Indochina, a more expensive investment but easier on driver and passenger alike.

⁵⁰ Emperor Gia-Long (1762-1820, r. 1802-20), the first of the Nguyen Dynasty emperors, had a Citadel and Palace after 1802. Very heavily damaged during the 1968 Têt Offensive, it is now a UNESCO World Heritage site and under gradual rehabilitation.

⁵¹ The Residents-superior sat just below the pinnacle of civilian colonial power, the Governor-general. Below them were the local urban Residents in the capitals of provinces. Cochinchina differed from the other four parts of Indochina (Tonkin, Annam, Laos, and Cambodia) in that it had a Governor rather than a Resident-superior. Below all of these officials was a hierarchical civil service of about 6,000 individuals organized in many branches (Administration, Education, Public Works, etc.). All of these branches had both European and Vietnamese employees; in the racialized structure of the colonial world, no Vietnamese person, no matter what their rank, could supervise a French person, and the Vietnamese on average earned 9/13^{ths} the wages of a European. Likewise, no Vietnamese person could rise above the rank of sergeant in the colonial military.

a few boutiques in search of straw hats that a lady in Tonkin recommended to us. We find only hideous hats of woven bulrush. A tour of the market where we buy fruit paste wrapped in sesame. It's delicious. We return to the hotel to eat. This afternoon we will visit the tombs of the emperors of Vietnam. A young woman who has lived in the city for fifteen years will act as chaperone. I am the only one in the family who does not know them, not ever having had the time to visit them despite numerous trips through Hué. We drive alongside the Perfume River for a moment, and then we turn left. We are driving through the middle of pine trees. This rounded countryside is characteristic of the area around Hué. The kings really chose an ideal location in which to be buried. For my part, I would prefer live there.

We passed in front of the Esplanade of Sacrifice to the Earth and Sky. Every three years, there is a ceremony, the Nam Giao.⁵²

We are driving along for a bit before arriving at the Tomb of Tu Duc.⁵³ The Entry Gate is quite imposing. We walk along a tiled pathway. To the right, there is a pavilion that rises above the water. This is where the queen would undress, because these are the Baths of the Queens. There is an artificial island of which one sees the earthen foundation. The water is now full of lotus. We go up a set of stairs, penetrating a courtyard to the left, at the base of which is a temple. We enter. It contains objects having belonged to the king, the presents that he received from the French of the period. In the glass urns, one sees pots of flowers containing plants in gold of fruits made of precious stones. Two old women, heads shaved and charged with watch over the resting soul of His Majesty look at us with an uneasy air. We go back down the

⁵² The Nam Giao...

stairs, passing by the canal that flows to the Bath of the Queens. After having climbed a few steps, and passing through another gate, here is another courtyard. On each side, forming a hedge, there is an elephant, a horse, and four mandarins. Father thinks the elephant has a feet that is too stiff. Our guide tells us to make a wish in the ear of the elephant. It will be granted!

Higher up, on a roof, there is a large stele engraved with Chinese characters. There are verses that Tu Duc wrote himself. He was a poet in his day. On each side of the stele, there is a kind of tower. These are the brushes. The kings have the right to two brushes, the queens only one. Behind the stele and many meters above, there is a basin in the form of a mango. On the other side of the pool, we see the walls of a new, smaller enclosure, formed by the bronze forbidden door, or rather sheets of copper. There's a little hole in the door; I take a quick peek. My eager eye could see only a brick screen. The king is buried somewhere in the enclosure. No one knows exactly where, because he had those who had buried the body decapitated. The visit of the tomb is over. At the exit, a little *bé-con* came towards us carrying a little yellow and red bouquet, the colors of Annam. One would say that he should give a recitation. Mother gives him some pennies. He jumps like a kid goat.

We get back into the car, which we had locked because an entire tribe of *bé-con* had surrounded it. We continued to drive amongst the pine trees, which give off a sweet odor of resin. There are also sumptuous *flamboyants*.⁵⁴ Arriving at a small village, I see a sign: "The Minh Mang Ferry." Is it necessary to cross the river? Father,

⁵³ Emperor Tu Duc (1829-1883) reigned 1847-1883.

⁵⁴ Popular names for the Royal Poinciana (*Delonix regia* or *Poinciana regia*), a flashy tropical plant that produces enormous sprays of red and orange flowers.

who knows better, prefers to stay close to the car. We climb aboard a small sampan. I let one of my hands drag in the water: it's lukewarm. After fifteen minutes, we arrive on the other side. We walk down a path through hundred year-old trees, which form a tunnel. Through a side door, we enter into the enclosure that holds Minh Mang's tomb.⁵⁵

What characterizes Minh Mang [‘s tomb] and makes it appealing is water. Minh Mang [‘s tomb] is entirely surrounded by water. In the first courtyard, one can see the same arrangements of Mandarins as at Tu Duc [‘s tomb]. But what's shocking is that there are two gilded griffins on which the gilding has cracked as if one has placed them under a bell. These two glass monuments clash terribly. Higher up there is also a stele but it is not carved, save on one face. Finally, at the back, there is another temple where the royal spirit rests. But the door is closed. We cannot visit it. If my visit were limited to this, I would have been a little disappointed. But the charm of this temple is found behind the temple.

A small kiosk is found on each side near the water. A bridge separates them, of which the entrance and exit are decorated with a very detailed stone portico. Finally, all the way at the back, the forbidden enclosure. I leave enchanted by the site of Minh Mang.

We meet up with father in front of three filthy highlanders.⁵⁶ We were really thirsty. A shopkeeper of the area offered us some green tea. We weren't used to the taste and we grimaced, but we recognized that it's a very refreshing drink.

⁵⁵ Minh Mang (1792-1841) ruled from 1820 to his death.

⁵⁶ During the colonial period, highlanders appeared in the lowlands much more frequently than they do now. These highlanders were probably Bru, who inhabit the highlands to the West of Hué.

We still have to visit Khai Dinh [‘s tomb].⁵⁷ We pass a troop of scouts who were singing while walking.⁵⁸ They arrived at the tomb of Khai Dinh at almost the same time we did. How disappointing!

The tomb is on the side of a hill, much smaller than the preceding ones. It is entirely gray and seems sad. There are many steps, which reminds our chaperone of the St. Charles Train Station in Marseilles.⁵⁹ There are dragons on the banister. Their eyes are made from broken glass.

The guardhouse is at the first landing. On the second are found two rows of linhs and mandarins. Finally, there is the tomb. The rooms are enormous, with high ceilings. The walls are black and white. The first hall is full of glassware. On the walls, the decorations are made from pieces of bottle and of expensive blue china that was crushed in order to make Chinese characters and mosaics. Everything is mixed up and lacking charm. The guard opened the Throne Room for us. There is a stone altar on which is placed a bronzed statue of His Majesty. The coffin is found underneath the altar. He is the only king who is buried in this fashion. There is a stairway behind the statue of the king; we climb it and we arrive at the museum of the king. It contains all the ordinary objects, his turban, the costume that he wore to a ceremony in Hanoi, his courtyard outfit, his boots, his decorations, his weapons, even his perfume. He used [the brand] “what the women like.” It was heavy and humid in this room. We leave it

⁵⁷ Khai Dinh (1885-1925) ruled from 1916 to his death. He was pro-French and very eccentric.

⁵⁸ The Governor-general of Indochina during the war, Jean Decoux, promoted a whole series of reforms intended to integrate the Vietnamese into the society and administration of their own country. Most especially, he promoted sports and sporting organizations. Although they had existed in France since 1910, and in Indochina following the war, the Scouts received a big boost after 1941 under the programs of Governor-general Jean Decoux.

⁵⁹ The southern entrance of the St. Charles train station in Marseilles has a long, wide staircase flanked on either side by statues of lions and figures representing France’s (one-time) colonial possessions.

disappointed. I raise my head and see small bells on the roof. They are to chase away evil spirits when the wind blows. At the exit, the guard wants our signature in the guest book. It is an ordinary school notebook. I suggest a stinging remark; Mama was happy to write her own signature. In front, on the hill, there is a more modest tomb. It is that of Her Majesty the Queen Mother of Bao Dai.⁶⁰

We slowly return to Hué among sweet-smelling pines. In this favored location, the Benedictines intend to build a convent. To the right, the Mountain of the Seven Hairs. The mountain is covered by trees and at its summit there is a sort of clearing on which there are seven tall and sparse pines. At the back, there is the king's screen. It's a mountain in the form of a shelter in which the crest is covered by a row of pines. And each side that we see has the same form.

We return to Hué enchanted by our walk.

We dine and go bed. The Morin Cinema is two steps from our room. They are showing "The Heart in Celebration," an American film that we have already seen in Hanoi.⁶¹ With Nicole, we comment, "Wait, she (the heroine) is doing this, she is on the balcony and is singing Siboney." Then, the scene in the forest. Finally, it's Schubert's "Serenade" in a ridiculously decorated music hall. We fall asleep to the sound of the Marseillaise and the Vietnamese hymn that ends the showing.⁶²

Thursday, July 1st

⁶⁰ Bao Dai (1909-1999) reigned 1924-1953.

⁶¹ I am still working on what film this might have been. It would have had to have been received before 1942.

⁶² The Marseillaise is the French national anthem. The Vietnamese hymn is...

In the morning, we leave for Quang Ngai. The exit of Hué is green. On our left is an enormous lagoon; to the right the railroad is bordered by pines. The road is quite straight and well-kept thanks to the tests His Majesty does in his ultra-rapid cars. Here is the road that leads to Bach Ma, a hill station (1,500 meters).⁶³ From up there, one has a splendid view of the ocean. Many people from Hué have a villa there and even the Tonkinese have started to build there. As we are climbing the Phu Gia Pass, the railroad is lost in a tunnel. Descending the summit to the right is the Lang Co lagoon. It's magnificent. We call it a fjord. The mountain falls straight into the water. The mangroves wash their strange hair in the clear water. There's Lang Co and its filaos. Here's the refreshment stand where we stopped last year and ate oysters and bought dried sea horses. We are in a month without an "R" this time, and it's better to refrain from eating them. From here, we see a pass up beyond; it's the Cloud Pass. We will be there soon.

After the Lang Co Bridge is the slow climb of the pass. From the ledge with its stele of Pouyanne, we have an extraordinarily lovely view.⁶⁴ Lang Co is situated between the lagoon and the sea. There is a splendid beach. We continue to climb 'slowly but surely'.⁶⁵ We overhang the sea by more than 100 meters. The railroad is much lower than the road. The sea is clear and one can see the rocks quite clearly. At the horizon, the sun taps so strongly that the scintillation makes us squint our eyes. The motor is heating up. We look for a spring to fill up the water [in the radiator]. The road

⁶³ Founded in 1922, Bach Ma today is a National Park. The ghostly ruins of former colonial-era villas are scattered among the trees. There is a guesthouse where park visitors can stay. A few wealthy Vietnamese have begun to rebuild the villas for private use.

⁶⁴ This refers to Albert Armand Pouyanne, a long-time member of the Bureau of Public Works in Indochina.

⁶⁵ The original was in English as well.

is in better shape than it was last year. This is not surprising; here is a steamroller and some coolies who are breaking up rocks. Hold on, a spring! We stop in the shade. Nicole and I jump on the loose rocks and plunge our hands into the water. It is very cool. "Sensitives" grow near the water. I bother them, they close up. During this time, mother questions the cai of the work site: he tells her that the maintenance of Peak of the Clouds is half the responsibility of the city of Tourane, half the responsibility of the province.⁶⁶

We leave. What a view! At every turn, we see either the ocean or the forest; we find ourselves at the peak (495 meters). The clouds cover the mountain summit. They are always there. On the left, there is an ancient fort and gate. It is the descent of the pass. All of a sudden, we catch a glimpse of the enormous harbor of Tourane. It's grandiose!

Now, in front of us, a mountain entirely burned, and on each side of the road, big black rocks. At the summit of the large mountain, small houses shine in the sun. This is Ba Na, the hill station of Tourane.⁶⁷ We arrive in Nam Ô, the country of *nuôc mam*,⁶⁸ Mother wants to buy two bottles. We stop. We chitchat and we take off, weighed down by an aromatic liquid.

There is cultivation in the all-white sand and among the entirely round tombs.⁶⁹ Here and there, a marble stele. The road is covered with white sand. It looks like a

⁶⁶ Tourane, now known as Da Nang, was the major city of Quang Nam province, but Faifoo, now known as Hoi An, was its capital under the French. Tourane was the target of the fleet of...

⁶⁷ Ba Na, at 1,400 meters, hosted fewer residences than Bach Ma

⁶⁸ Nuôc mam is a brownish, fermented sauce made from compressed anchovies. It forms the basis of much of Vietnamese cooking. As Claudie indicates later on, it is highly nutritious.

⁶⁹ Traditionally, a geomancer determined the best location for a person's grave. Oftentimes this gravesite was located right in the middle of a field under active cultivation. The family of the deceased paid a small rent for the acquisition and upkeep of the site.

snowy landscape. In Tourane, we look for a garage to get some charcoal. We tour the city three times without finding the S.C.A.M.A.⁷⁰ We stop at a market where they sell cinders. They produce less energy than the charcoal specially prepared for the gazo. But this is better than nothing is. Then we go to eat lunch at the Hotel Morin again. While passing in front of the Post Office, Papa stops to send a telegram to our friends in Quang Ngai so that they will reserve two rooms for us at the bungalow.⁷¹ Right away after lunch, at one o'clock, we leave again. On the outskirts of Tourane, the Henri Parmentier Museum is found (Cham statues).⁷²

After about six kilometers, the motor made a curious noise and it wheezes. To the tune of the Internationale, I sing, "It's the fatal breakdown!"⁷³ Father and the chauffeur check the motor. It must have a valve that doesn't close. We return to Tourane. Back to the search for the impossible-to-find garage. We question a kid who points us in one direction. It isn't there. A soldier points us in the opposite direction. Finally, we arrive in an unsigned enclosure. There are several dismantled cars inside. This is it!

It is hot underneath the wavy sheet metal that covers the shed. The boss isn't there but the foreman diagnoses the problem. It will take five hours. This will be shorter than father thought. All the same, he is furious. "You see, I will never again send a telegram. I announced that we would arrive at 5:00pm. I have to telephone to warn

⁷⁰ The local garage.

⁷¹ The colonial government subsidized several bungalows for travelers in town not provided with appropriate lodging for European travelers. In the 1940s, there were bungalows in Dong Hoi, Quang Nam, and Tuy Hoa.

⁷² The *École française d'Extrême orient* (EFEO – the French School of the Far East) founded this museum in 1915. It has the finest collection of Cham sculpture in the world.

⁷³ The Internationale is the song of...

them of the delay.” He went to the post office. Nicole and I dig for a box of crackers. Mother is looking for a favorable location. We find her after a quarter of an hour seated on the steps of the owner’s house, her turban askew, tousled and fanning herself with her feather fan. We sit down next to her. Father comes to join us after a moment. We chat when the wife of the garage owner appears. She invites us in to refresh ourselves. We pass an hour at her house, then we toured the city. The sides of the sidewalk are marble. In Tourane, everything is in marble: the stairways and even the knife rests of the hotel were in pink marble.

We bought some notebooks, and then we got some cold drinks at the Hotel Morin and drank them in front of the river. There is a strong wind and it feels nice.

When we return to the garage, we find that the car is ready. We leave. The Marble Mountains.⁷⁴ Thirty-one kilometers from Tourane is Faifoo, the city of Chinese fishermen.⁷⁵ Very picturesque. We crossed a large river on a sturdy bridge. It’s the Thu Bon River. In the country, there are small norias that turn with a treadmill.⁷⁶ There are at least three people on each wheel. Once again, it’s a Canadian countryside.⁷⁷ At Tam Ky, one comes across several carts loaded with shells that are used to make lime. We arrive in Quang Ngai at 5:00pm and go straight to our friends’ house for dinner. Father, who is a bit tired, intends to spend tomorrow in Quang Ngai. At the bungalow,

⁷⁴ The Marble Mountains are a collection of marble peaks immediately to the South of Da Nang which have famous grottoes of religious significance in them.

⁷⁵ Faifoo, now known as Hoi An, has served as an international port for perhaps a thousand years.

⁷⁶ As Claudie explains later, Noria are tall waterwheels which lift water from slow-flowing rivers to the fields above them relying on the pressure of the river water or by people propelling them through foot power.

⁷⁷ Meaning, a lot of filaos.

father and mother have a room in the central building. We are in the annex, Nicole and I.

Friday, July 2nd

Father, Nicole, and I take the *pousse-pousses* to go visit the Quang Ngai norias. Nikki and I wore the sombreros purchased in Hue to great effect. The *pousse-pousses* are hard and uncomfortable. Like those in Hue, they have a bell that serves as a warning device. This tintinabulates, and one thinks it is a horse carriage. To protect their tires, the coolies had stitched old bicycle tires over them.

We cross the Quang Ngai Bridge. The river, the Tra Xuc, is practically dry. We get down from the *pousse-pousses*. Father shows me the little canal first. "You see, here is where they judge the draft of the noria. It is quite strong. Each noria is made up of about eight or nine bamboo wheels which bathe lightly in the water. The local people make dykes to create different water levels in order to produce a current. The slope is about 30 centimeters. There are bamboo blades which make the wheels turn. It is the Chinese who made this discovery: water pressing against an open surface produces much greater pressure than against a flat surface. The Vietnamese used this technique. They also employed it for the rudders of their junks. There are about ten paddles following the spokes of the wheel. The wheel has a diameter of approximately five meters. Between each paddle and situated obliquely on the horizontal are hollow bamboo. When they plunge into the water, they fill up, and when they reach the peak of their race, they release the water into the main canal. It loses about 50% of the water during the ascent because of the holes in the bamboo and in the canal in braided

bamboo. The crook of a tree on which the bamboo turns forms the axis of rotation. This sputters and purrs like a motor. Each noria develops a force of about 20 horsepower. All of this elevated water serves to irrigate the plants. The owners of the norias are given a quarter of the production by the cultivators.⁷⁸ The norias are used only three to four months each year, during the dry season. They are demolished after use.

This afternoon we bathed in the Tra Khuc River. We were thinking we were in the low waters of the Loire. The water is warm. On our return, we stopped in front of a corncob vendor. She grilled us a few, which we hungrily devoured, the bath having worn us out. Nicole and I spent the night scratching ourselves. It is from bugs and mosquitoes. It is with joy that tomorrow we are leaving the delights of Quang Ngai.

Saturday, July 3rd

At 6:30am, the gazo, vibrating with impatience, awaits us. Today's trip will be long. Quang Ngai to Nha Trang, 400 kilometers. We have to leave early. The first village we encounter is Mo Duc. The region is covered with rice fields and makes one think of Thanh Hoa. Further on, there is Duc Pho. Two years ago, several kilometers from there, my parents lost a wheel. They had to return to Quang Ngai by train. We drive along a lagoon, then we climb a ledge. Farther below are the salt pans of Sa Huynh, which belongs to the Administration.⁷⁹ Across an immense area, we see salt marshes, settling pools. It is dirty and gray. Here and there, some woven reeds protect

⁷⁸ Ethnic Chinese capitalists often built and managed the norias.

⁷⁹ One of the most important sources of taxes came from the colonial administration's monopoly on salt.

a large amount of salt. In the village of Sa Huynh, there is a vacation colony in an empty school.

Again, sand, cacti, filao. Behind, the ocean is always blue. We climb a new slope. At the summit, we see spread out at our feet a plain with coconut trees as far as the eye can see. And here the railroad passes underneath us. All of a sudden I see smoke behind my back. I cry, "There's something burning!" and I am not very reassured. We stop. It was the wooden frame of the screen that sifts the charcoal that is on fire. The chauffeur bales out some water from the rice field and wets it. He also took the opportunity to dampen the water pipe, which began to smell of burning. We are driving through the middle of millions of coconut trees. It is Tam Quan, the first village of coconut trees, then Bong Son. We buy some coconuts. There is a large bridge above a very clear river. Parallel to us, and about 200 meters away, there is a metallic railroad bridge. We drive almost 26 kilometers with hardly any breaks between the coconut trees. Then we see nothing but clusters of trees.

About a dozen kilometers from Qui Nhon we were stunned by the beautiful rooftops. They were made from very thick straw, have an elegant shape, and often the gables are decorated in wooden lath carved with art. It is in this region where one can find small, pretty Canadian canoes. Father wants to buy us one to ride the Dan Nhim [River] from Dran to Djring.⁸⁰ He recommends that we take a good look into the courtyards in front of the huts. It is where the people dry the small boats. But we have peeled our eyes and there is not anything in the yards, or on the riverbanks, or in the ponds. It is the dry season. In a village where we stop to add charcoal, Mother

questions a Tonkinese. There are not any boats at this time. They crack during the summer. The villagers rebuild them each year during the [period of] high water. No luck! Ten kilometers before Qui Nhon, on a small river, we see one of these small canoes. It is all alone. Father tries to get in and falls in the water up to mid-thigh. The boat is full of water, the attempt failed, but Father bought it anyway and we attached it to the top of the car using bailing wire. We have a biplane. Thus encumbered, we attract attention at our entrance into Qui Nhon, to the Morin Hotel, where we meet up with some Tonkinese acquaintances.

We lunch, contemplating the sea from the terrace, and at 1pm, we depart. Qui Nhon is in the form of a cul-de-sac. It is necessary for us to retrace our path for five kilometers. We find ourselves again on Colonial Route 1. Farewell to the Tower of Gold and to the Tower of Silver, two Cham towers not far from Qui Nhon.⁸¹ We have seen in the city a Cham woman with her green tunic and her fearsome air.⁸² They are almost always dressed in green or blue, with untidy hair and a savage appearance. They carry heavy loads on their heads. We see many of them near Phan Rang.

Flocks of ducks swim on partially dried up ponds. Just now, we have passed a kilometer marker. Hanoi 1041km, Saigon 640 km. We have traveled more than halfway. Now there is uneven and picturesque scenery. We are completely surrounded by mountains. We drive atop a slightly raised plateau. Here and there, a watchtower is used for hunting. Another pass to climb, it is the Cu Mong Pass. From the summit, we

⁸⁰ The Dan Nhim River originates on a mountain peak to the east of Dalat, and descends southwards until it joins the Da Dung River. The Dan Nhim has some white water and several waterfalls.

⁸¹ These are the Thap Doi towers, remarkable for their atypical pyramid-shaped roofs.

⁸² By the colonial era, the population of Chams had been greatly reduced to a mere residue of their former greatness. For the most part, the Cham had converted to Islam as a way to maintain some form of cultural distinctiveness and homogeneity.

see a small, pretty valley deep in the middle of the mountains. In the valley, there is cultivation and even a tree nursery. A veil on the rice fields. We traverse a second coconut tree country. It runs alongside the sea. Like everything else, it is gorgeous. It feels like we are on an island in the Pacific. It is 2:30pm. The chauffeur is sleeping; his head is gently resting on my cape. Before he crushes it, I gently move it. Mama put one of the cowboy hats on her head and tipped it down. Nicole is dozing. She opens her eyes for a bit when I noisily admire the scenery. Papa and I are the only conscious ones in the car. There is a lot of feldspar along the road. This is also where Father gets his bentonite, a ceramic product.⁸³ We arrive at the outskirts of Sông Cau, a small, pretty village in the middle of coconut trees, and not far from the sea. There are traces of rice fields here. The mounds of dirt glisten in the sun.

We have some friends who have lived in Sông Cầu for a few years. Here is the actual city of Sông Cầu. There is even a town square! The small white sailboats play on the sea. They make very pretty enameled pots in this region.

The Quang Ngai-Nha Trang part of the trip is really the most picturesque. Another turn. We have an aerial view of Sông Cầu, the harbor, the terraced rice fields (black plastic refractory laterite clays)

All of the mountains are cultivated. All the plots of land are compartmentalized. We call them the hedges of Vendée.⁸⁴ These are the basalt lands. And this also

⁸³ Bentonite is an absorptive and colloidal clay

⁸⁴ The Vendée is a region in Southwestern France, along the Bay of Biscay, famous for its hedges. It also is historically important for the counterrevolutionary activity of its rural, largely Catholic population during the French Revolution.

resembles Papa's Morvan (the Gioc Gang Pass).⁸⁵ I dream and think of my grandparents in France, precisely in the Morvan.

On the Gang Ho Pass, the road is on a ledge. There are still rounded graves in the sand, but gray rocks surround them. In the distance, it looks like rain. Over there on the mountains, there are fires. The mountain dwellers burn the vegetation to make clearings appropriate for cultivation.

We saw that we would meet a bus, piled high with baggage. We do not see how it can move. All kinds of members were sticking out of the openings. Here a head, there an elbow, there a hand or foot! Hat!

At each stop, a group of small kids and sometimes some adults come to admire us. At each departure, I turn to see if anything has fallen off. Behind us, the group searches feverishly for this same reason. There are more Vendean hedges. These mountains with flat summits look like truncated Mexican pyramids. Far off, on the horizon, we see a boulder on the mountain. It is the "Monk" rock. Closer it looks like a monk in a dress of bure. We walk around for over an hour. This is the start of the Varella Pass. There are numerous horse carriages crowding the road. They slowly get back in line after mature reflection.

Here is Tuy Hoa. To get into town, we must turn right. We hurry through Tuy Hoa. There is a Cham tower overlooking where the train station is found. While passing through, we see a bungalow. It is the third and last one. (There's one in Dong Hoi, one in Quang Ngai, and this one). We cross two bridges. The second one is the

⁸⁵ The Morvan is a region of France south of Dijon known for its many valleys, gorges, and thick forests.

longest one we have crossed, besides the Doumer Bridge.⁸⁶ It is at least one kilometer long. The railroad bridge, which runs parallel, is metallic and four meters from us.

The “monk” is imperceptibly drawing closer. When it floods, the road that we are on is normally submerged. On the right, there is the Tuy Hoa Sugar Refinery, otherwise quite a distance from the town.

The vast plain covered with rice fields that we cross is entirely irrigated by the Bao Dai Dam. There is rice everywhere. The air is hot. We receive gusts of it in the car. We are at the foot of the “Monk.” Here is the commemorative monument of last section of railroad of Varella. At the foot of the Monk, there are big, completely round black rocks. It is chaotic. The vegetation is luxurious. To say that the monk seemed so far away! We have already left him behind us. We stop in the same place as last year to take on water. It is a clear and active spring. We see some little fish swimming. Mother pretends that she sees one as big as her arm.

During this time, Nicole is looking for a place in which to retreat. This lasts a moment.

The slope of Varella resembles that of Tam Dao, but less long and less tedious. It is also on the ledge. It is so beautiful that I must stop writing to better savor it.

We overhang the Vung Ra Bay. There are pretty little beaches with fishing villages. And then, after a turn, we contemplate the openness and Isola Bella.⁸⁷ It is an island that father has morally appropriated. Each time that we pass this spot, we are euphoric. The island is three kilometers from the coast. On one side, it overhangs the

⁸⁶ Until the 1920s, the Doumer River over the Red River between Hanoi and Gia-Lam was the longest bridge in the world at just over 1.3 miles.

⁸⁷ Which island this is remains unknown.

sea. On the right, it slopes gently towards a small beach. How I would love to live there!

On the horizon, behind Isola Bella are the foothills of Lang Bian.⁸⁸ The railroad is well below the road. It passes through numerous tunnels to avoid the turns (Dai Linh train station). We drive alongside the Dai Lanh beach. Now there will be numerous passes to climb before arriving in Nha Trang. First, there is the Co Ma Pass that we climb cheerfully. So long, Isola Bella. We lose sight of it behind a bend. We see a house, high up, which dominates the sea. It was for sale for a long time, without finding a buyer because of [the threat of] malaria. It rains on the mountain in front of us. I recognize the countryside of the area around Ninh Hoa. We went on a hunt here with some friends. But not our father, he only hunts for stones. There is much game and even tigers. It is for this reason that we see numerous watchtowers, which emerge from the groves. It is only 6:00pm and the sun has already disappeared. The sky is cloudy, so it is nice now.

A line of stones on the right and a pile of wood on the left border the road. Large carts pulled by two oxen block our route. It is necessary to move slowly. Behind the clouds, the sun tries to throw off some rays. On the horizon, the mountains are blue.

Here is Ninh Hoa. The last time we were here, we purchased tiny flashlights in many different colors. Mother is looking all over for her chicken feather fan. We finally find it under Nicole's rear end completely crumpled and bristled. I console Mother by telling her that her *cai quat* resembles a swan.⁸⁹

⁸⁸ Lang Bian Mountain, consisting of five peaks of between 2100-2500 meters, dominates the southern highlands.

⁸⁹ *Cai quat* = a fan.

6:30pm. This is the mauve hour. The mountains are mauve, the small clouds are also mauve, even the road is mauve.

Around here, it is full of mangrove swamps. The area must be very malarial. I continually scratch my back and my stomach. It is not vermin, but the last stages of my prickly flesh. We are so tired that we have stopped talking.

Nha Trang, more than 16 kilometers away. I recognize the islets that one sees from the villa of our friends. The last pass before Nha Trang is that of Ru Ry. We make some arabesques with the car.⁹⁰ Far away, we can see the Nha Trang Seminary; on the left, it is the Gallois-Montbrun beach.

Here is Ponagar, the beautiful Cham Tower at the entrance of Nha Trang.

We cross a bridge; a turn and we are there. From the beach road, we see Crocodile Island (that is what Nikki and I have named it). It only looks like this animal near the vicinity of the Beurivage Hotel. Otherwise, on the north side, where the Post office is found, or on the south side, the Cau Da, it no longer looks like a crocodile. The weather is great. It is the only place where we do not have to turn on the fans. We are all overcome with fatigue when we arrive at our friends' house. Tomorrow we will go to mass at 6:30am (so we do not have to take the dresses out of the suitcase). It was Mama's birthday and at the same time that of one of our friends where we are staying. We swapped kisses.

Sunday, July 4th

⁹⁰ That is, some swerving motions resembling a ballet pose in which one bends at the waist over one leg.

At 6:00am, the sun still is not up: there is but a red spot on the horizon. We each climbed on a bicycle with Nikki and departed towards the church. It is very cool and I shiver under my tobralco dress.⁹¹ All of a sudden, the red disk of the sun started to rise. It immediately feels warmer.

Upon returning, we “swaddle.” That is to say, we slip on our bathing suits to plunge into the sea. It is delicious. Very clear and calm. There are not enormous waves. We do the crawl, frolic, and play with a ball. We are even trying out the boat that Father bought in Qui Nhon. It holds its own in the water despite father’s bad test. But it can hold but one person. I am afraid that the descent of the Dan Nhim (River) will not be so easy. After staying in the water for two hours, Nicole and I carry the boat on our backs. It is heavier than we thought. The sand is burning. We see a slight steam, like that which is found underneath flames, which rises from the beach.

At Noon, at the table, I am seated in front of the sea. It is very blue. I see it through the filaos of the garden and the very red bougainvillea. There is a cool wind that comes from the sea. Unfortunately, from time to time, a horse carriage full of jars of *nuôc mam* and *mam tôm* passes on the road and sends us whiffs of more or less pungent and stubborn odors.⁹² We eat like ogres.

After the siesta, more bathing. The tide has gone down. It is necessary to go quite far to have the water rise to the shoulders. The waves are stronger than this morning. We return and take showers and then we go for a bike ride.

Monday, July 5th

⁹¹ Tobralco is fine, light, cotton fabric.

We woke up at an ungodly hour this morning. The sea was exquisite. I felt stinging and I quickly got out of the water because I remembered the jelly fish stings from last year. I still have scars on my ankles. We were in town on bicycles. As much as the beaches are beautiful, the town is ugly and dirty. There is such a thick layer of dust in the road that sometimes we just miss falling after a skid. We purchased cakes that had the taste of eggshell.

We arrive in Nha Trang. The motor started to cough upon arriving in Nha Trang.

In the afternoon, Nicole swims with the little daughter of our friends. I put on my suit as well, but covered with the sombrero and my glasses, I gaze at the sea. The sun is playing on the waves and gives birth to a thousand little stars that sparkle, disappearing and reappearing.

We are about in the middle of the beach. I saw it spread out on each side, like an arc of a circle of about three kilometers.

On the right on the peninsula, one sees the buildings of the Oceanographic institute.⁹³ In the distance, on the ocean, two small islands are in the shape of tortoises. This is where the Chinese go to search for swallows' nests, from which they make delicious soups. The large Crocodile Island is there, immobile. I am waiting, as always, to see the beast move.

The site is marvelous. We do not grow tired of it. It is so nice in the warm sand; I met a friend from Hanoi. We gossiped for a minute. It seems like we are leaving

⁹² *Mam tôm* is a preserved shrimp paste.

⁹³ The Nha Trang Oceanographic Institute studied Indochina's sea life. The Vietnamese institute that has replaced it still operates in the same place.

tomorrow for Dalat. I would have liked to have stayed here longer. It is one of the corners that I prefer in Indochina.

Tuesday July 6th

In route to Arbre-Broyé. We are heading in the direction of Saigon. It is only 8:00am. The sun has not yet chased the fog, which hangs at the foot of the mountains. On each side of the road, there are green rice fields, areca, and fruit trees in the gardens. I saw, in passing, a pomegranate tree that was bending under the weight of its fruit. Bouquets of bamboo and here and there a flamboyant tree in bloom. A whiff of ilang-ilang penetrates the car.⁹⁴

Some coolies carry loads of dried, pressed tobacco leaves. Here at the plantations of Suôi Giao, which are part of the Pasteur institute of Nha Trang.⁹⁵ These are plantations of rubber trees. The first ones we have come across. Further to the south, this is all one can see.

The road is being repaired. We are obliged to drive slowly. We plow through a thick layer of dust. The steamroller itself is sunk in it.

The chauffeur did not do a good job of repacking the car. The top of a bottle is scratching my ankle. It is irritating and I cannot move it because it is jammed into a basket. We are driving through a region well stocked with game. Last year, during a night hunt with our friends, we brought back a roebuck. There are also stags, agoutis, and tigers. Father often sees them on the road during his peregrinations. Me, I open my eyes as wide as they will go, but I never see anything but the powdery road.

⁹⁴ The ilang-ilang is an Asian evergreen, with abundant and perfumed yellow and green flowers.

So, it has been over a week since we have been on the road. This is the life that pleases me a lot. Huge geckoes cross the road. Behind us, on the left, is the majestic Cam Ranh Bay. It is immense and is closed off by a very confined gully. We see the houses of Cam Ranh at the foot of a sandy mountain. Then there's Ban Goi, where we ate the famous oysters at the Amposta's house. We drive for another several kilometers. The bay is still there. On this side, one sees it quite well. There are coconut trees, which give an impression of Oceania. There is even a coconut plantation because the trees are planted regularly. Here is Hiep My and Karom. We meet some men and women highlanders, completely black and half-naked. They are working on the road here as well. It is dreadfully bad. We are jolted and the tires take a real hit. To the left, a kapok plantation.⁹⁶ Father flew over the mountains to our right in a plane. He saw a magnificent lake in the middle of the vegetation, which is not very thick. He says it is very beautiful, but unexplored. There is no habitation. The region is practically inaccessible. It is like certain corners of Varella or Lang Bian. There are but highlanders who have passed there. A military mission has just been formed to explore the Lang Bian. Because the maps do not even mention certain regions. So, no one has ever spoken about the little lake that Father saw. A few small planes would suffice to rapidly examine the terrain without fatigue.

Here we are near Phan Rang, in full Cham country. We see two Cham towers on the side of the road. On the subject of these towers, Father, who is a ceramist, says that people have theories that are all the more stupid than the ones before them.

⁹⁵ In Vietnamese, *suôi* means Spring, thus Rach Springs.

⁹⁶ Kapok in English. This is a fine fiber from the Ceiba tree used as insulation, padding, and for floatation.

Someone even pretended that the Chams constructed these towers from unfired bricks, then set them afire to make them cure! In reality, the Chams ground down each fired brick. They were stuck together without cement. Father found, at the Cham Tower, a polisher than served to polish the bricks at the construction of the tower.

Around Phan Rang, there are extensive areas covered with rice fields. They belong to holy orders. Elsewhere, we see the bell tower of their church dominating the plain. It is hot in Phan Rang. The mountains have little vegetation. At the entrance of the town is the stadium. All along the route, we saw stadiums, even the tiniest villages.⁹⁷

There are many Cham women in the town. While we are refilling the gazo, they approach the car to look at it. They each have a heavy load of wood on their heads or a large basket full of provisions. They are wearing green, yellow, blue, or black tunics. They are very dirty and they have on their heads a type of turban made of a rough rag. This turban serves as a cushion on which they place their loads (Hindu influence). Around their necks are long glass jewelry necklaces and for earrings, small pom-pons. We devour a Chinese soup in the corner of the cheap restaurant and we left. Here's Cham Tower. This is where one can take the train to Dalat. There is a very well maintained Cham tower. We recognize the Naga figure.⁹⁸ A sign indicates: Temple of Poklaun Garaî. These towers are not at all temples. These are tombs with the same name as those in Hué. It's the same for Angkor. It was necessary that before the war, in 1939, it was a knowledgeable foreigner that discovered this.

⁹⁷ Along with swimming pools, Governor-general Jean Decoux had innumerable stadiums constructed to encourage sporting activities.

⁹⁸ In the Hinduized mythology of Southeast Asia, a *naga* is a mythical creature, part man and part snake.

The road snakes under the shadows. Here on the right, is the small mill, which was used to tread the agaves. It has been abandoned for 20 years. These agaves are used to make textiles: hemp, jute, etc...A metallic bridge on a small river cut by rapids. The air is burning. It stings the eyes. I open wide my window wings to try to see the savage animals/beasts. I hear mother cry: the does, the does! Two does are flirting on the road. As our car approaches, they bound into the bushes. They had beautiful fawn coats.

Now, my biggest wish would be to see a tiger. The small shrubs that we just saw have made room for large trees. Mother told me that the ones with large leaves are teaks. A squirrel crossed the road.

Five hundred meters to our left is the Kron Pha train station. It's on the low side and this is where the cog railway begins.

We attack the Bellevue slope. We stop in a charming corner in the shadow of a banyan. Further down stream, a torrent. We get some water. Papa is amazed by the absence of votives in the trees. Because, for the Vietnamese, the banyan is a sacred tree. We always see pots of lime attached to the branches of banyan and often we find a small altar in front of it. But here we are in the highlander country: the beliefs are different. The highlanders give reverence to the divinities.

From here, we are overlooking the forest-covered plain. There are large, very straight trees and a variety of bamboo with very fine leaves. We met a highlander with his crossbow. We see the ocean off in the distance. We are at an altitude of 700 meters. We are entering the pine zone. There are funny looking wheelbarrows on the road: these are baskets on wheels.

We round a bend and see the winding road that we just climbed. And on the plain, in the middle of the forest we see a long, gray, trail. It's the road that we took. From time to time, we see the cog railway down below. Here is the kiosk of Bellevue, crushed beneath the bougainvillea. What a splendid view from here!

It is 1:00pm. We descend to the Bellevue Hotel to eat. For dessert, we're eating excellent jams made by the innkeeper, who is very nice. We tell him good-bye. We arrive in Dran, which is 4 km from Bellevue. Here's Dran. Mr. Aviat's sawmill. We stop at his place to tell him hello. He had us visit the inn that he built. Then we climbed on toward l'Arbre Broyé. Some highlanders are working on the road. To me, it's funny to see them who are so proud and independent, working for foreigners. I really like these people: they are very loyal and candid.

We see the Dran plain spread out below us. It looks like a doll village with the Dan Nhim, which snakes through the middle. Now the road is climbing and makes its way through the pines. The scenery resembles that which the Japanese paint on their fine porcelain: a mountain blurred with pines. We arrive in l'Arbre Broyé, the destination of our trip and where we will stay a few days in the chalet that we rented for our vacation. There are log cabins. It feels like we're in a Canadian forest. Our little chalet doesn't do justice with its outward appearance: it is made from wood covered with straw. But the interior is cute, clean, and charming. Everything is clear: the buildings, the window shutters, etc. Unfortunately, there is neither water nor electricity. Papa bustles about to put up the lamps, which he attaches on the car batteries. Everything is lit up. For water, this will take longer and will be harder, the spring is quite a ways away. But we can do it.

Wednesday, July 7th

At 9:00am we leave for Dalat to make some purchases because we are lacking some necessities. Around here, all the houses are wooden: boards or logs. Wood is cut in the forest. After the forest are some small, completely cultivated valleys (tea).

Here's Entre-Rays. Its small wooden church resembles, from a distance, a construction game. We are dominating the mountains covered with pines, which look like cedars. It's kind of like the Libyan countryside. There are two different kinds of pines here: the large ones, which resemble the coastal pines, are the pitch pines.⁹⁹ The others are smaller but provide more than those that one finds in Tonkin and Tam Dau.

Then it's the small Bosquet train station, in the middle of the pines with its tiny wooden houses bordering the road. We are passing through the middle of the Pasteur Institute's plantations.

Here's the Lang Bian Palace and the Parc Hotel Farm in Dalat. There are many vegetables. We are starting to see quite a few villas and we catch a glimpse of Dalat. Finally, here's Dalat.

While Mother is buying bread and Papa is looking for electrical wire, Nicole and I wait in the car. We had stopped in front of a Chinese boutique where some highlanders were providing fresh supplies. They put all their provisions into large varnished pots, which they carry on their backs with the aid of a support. There are men and women. They are all smoking pipes. When they aren't smoking, the women carry their pipes in

⁹⁹ That is, any of the three-leaved pines that produce pitch useful for producing turpentine.

their buns of hair. They have long embroidered skirts. Their tops are naked. And nevertheless it's cold out. I see an old highlander who has goose bumps. Another is wearing a vest made of coconut fibers. A third guy was continually taking his pipe out in order to spit. I watch him, fascinated, because he was flinging long jets of saliva without even parting his lips. A woman highlander is wrapped up in a blanket. They always have blankets, which they use as coats. The women have gaily-colored pearl necklaces. The men have belts made out of fabric around their backs and which goes between their legs. The belts are large in the front, leaving only a string in between the buttocks. It's their only article of clothing. They are almost all curly, but really filthy. The women have in their earlobes, circles of wood with a diameter of at least 5 centimeters. Those that have removed the pieces of wood have lobes, which dangle enormously. The men have smaller circles. Sometimes they have anklets made from circles of fabric. The women are carrying baskets. Because in these mountains everything is carried in baskets or in pots on the men's backs. They are all very tan and very muscular. What a beautiful race!

Bang, here a police officer with in a forage cap gives us a fine: it appears that we can't park here. Again, he must know! But that's how it is in Dalat. The safes of the municipality fill up quickly with games like this.

Now it's the return under the rain.

Thursday, July 8th

Housework, cooking. The servant and the cook were supposed to arrive on the train last night. They must have slept through the Arbre Broyé stop because they didn't get off and they should be in Dalat by now. We had to send the chauffeur to meet them.

Nicole and I made the beds. Mama swept the chalet, then went into the kitchen. The meal we had wasn't too bad. One of the chickens that we bought in Dalat was saved. We ran through the lemon trees, the coffee and tea plants, each one of us armed with a stick to catch it. It found refuge under the car in the garage, after making a tour of the garden. This is where the chauffeur caught it. He immediately wrung its neck. This way, he won't run and we'll eat it tomorrow. Mama wants to prepare it. We tease her, because one time in France, she made us eat a chicken that she forgot to eviscerate. We yell at the poisoner.

Nicole and I explored the Chinese of the area. There is a really small sordid boutique but we still find a nice selection of things. Papa bought a repetitive alarm clock there yesterday and we purchased some candy. This is the baker of the area. We buy bread from him and he even makes pastries, including occasionally somewhat sandy madeleines, but they're not bad! We asked him if he sells ice cream, because we are really craving a milkshake. He said no, that it wasn't worth it to turn the ice because the weather is sufficiently cold. He doesn't sell books either, which is too bad. But he wraps his merchandise in pieces of American newspapers, on which I found usually eccentric styles of dresses, but occasionally adorable. Like the other merchant in Arbre Broyé, there is a vegetable vendor. He's an old Tonkinese man who has been here for 45 years, he told us, and who has smoked opium for 30 years. His house is even dirtier than that of the Chinese, which is impossible. One can access it by three wooden

steps. The interior is small and completely black. Behind a curtain, we make out a lamp for the opium, which is on a sideboard.¹⁰⁰ It's underneath this where he spends the majority of his time. We give him our order for vegetables, and then we leave this hovel, completely happy to see the light and to breathe fresh air.

When we arrive at the chalet, Papa called me to go explore the forest. I am not very enthusiastic, but I'm wrong because we are going to see a really marvelous countryside.

We commit to the path, where little stones roll under our feet. It's weird: I feel very light/weak here, I run faster than on the plain, I walk easier and nevertheless I am breathing heavily and wheezing strongly. It appears that it takes five days to acclimatize. At the end of this lapse of time, the number of red corpuscles increases considerably and I breathe more fully. We continue to climb, me following Papa and from time to time running to catch up to him. I turn around and see down below the train station and the little huts of Arbre-Broyé. We are now walking over the pine needles. We are on a peak. It's the highest peak of the station, more than 600 meters. We walk a bit forward in the grass and now a splendid view meets our eyes: mountains everywhere, down below the Dran plain with an altitude of 1000 meters, this famous plain, which in reality is a plateau, is nothing but the Dan Nhim valley. Its length spans over 60 kilometers, to the toll bridge on the road that leads to Djring. The valley is covered with agriculture. From our viewpoint, the gardens resemble little compartments and the Dan Nhim snakes through the middle of them. On the left all at the far end and pretty far away that make one ask, how do you get there, we see the ocean? It's

¹⁰⁰ Opium paste is twirled and pressed into a small cone and inserted into the bowl of a long pipe from

grandiose and even a little overwhelming. We feel miniscule and at the same time very large.

We are entirely out of breath. We regretfully leave our post, and then it's the descent. Papa wants to pass through the brush to prospect a little and return to our chalet in a straight line. I have some white leather sandals. They are not exactly the best for this type of walk, but these are the only ones that I brought with me. The closed-toe shoes will arrive with the servant and the cook. We slide the length of the slope over some ferns, dead leaves, roots, twigs, and dry branches. These crack under our feet. My feet are completely soaked and I am afraid of getting leeches.

It's much worse right now, because to keep a straight line, we entered into an inextricable jungle of sorts. Everywhere there are very tall and straight trees linked together by creepers, which hang, become entangled, and form a network in which it makes it difficult for us to circulate. Finally, a sort of clearing. We run to it. It's a small stream. Luckily, a natural bridge passes over it. It's a tree that is completely green because it is covered in green moss. I stop and catch myself with a thorn bush. Now, it's going quite well. From this side, we are in some coffee trees, some arabica coffee trees. The terrain is terraced and on each step grows a range of coffee trees. I have a bunch of thorns on my dress. Here we are, finally back to our place. I tell Nicole about our adventures, who caught me because I didn't wait for her before departing. I'm tired but it's a healthy tired. And wham, here's a visitor. It is necessary to serve aperitifs, to pass around little cookies, to laugh while pretending to listen. It's exhausting. It's 8:00pm. We are eating and then we'll try to sleep.

which its narcotic smoke is drawn.

Friday, July 9th

We all slept better than the night before. We hope that this will get better soon. It rained all night. The rain stopped this morning, but the sky is still gray and a violent wind whistles under the pine trees, which makes a noise like waves crashing against the beach.

The chauffeur has returned from Dalat, without finding either the cook or the servant, and he took the train to Tourcham to look for them there. We are still, then, without our change of clothes, which are in the trunk, which is travelling with them. We already prepared our own meals. And this isn't too bad. What I detest the most is doing the dishes. We dirty as few as possible to reduce the amount of items to wash. This lack of water is very annoying. These are two small kids who bring it to us in canisters that are just as big as they are. They have big, round, rosy cheeks and they are very strong. Just now, we saw them climb on some stilts. They were completely content.

The weather is bizarre. Our feet are frozen and it is drizzling continuously. Oh my! Where's the sun we had in Nha Trang? It appears that tomorrow we are going to Dalat. Luckily, this will create a diversion. And in a few days, we will leave for Saigon.

Saturday, July 10th

It's still raining continuously. Nicole and I have been sneezing since this morning. It's cold, like the winters in Hanoi, and all of our wool clothing is in the trunk that has not yet arrived. We are becoming irritated. We can't even wash the linens in the river because of the rain.

I wrote to my big sister, who is in Tam Dao right now, with her two sons.¹⁰¹ The weather is beautiful there and they can amuse themselves much better than we do here; I start to miss the Tam Dao, which I detest. It must be said that since my birth, all the big vacations, with the exception of our year of leave in France and another year spent in Cochinchina, we have spent all of them in Tam Dao.¹⁰²

Tam Dao, at an altitude of 900 meters, is situated about 90 kilometers from Hanoi. It's a very agreeable hill station for the people of Hanoi in the summer, because every Saturday night, the husbands and fathers of the families of Hanoi climb to see their wives and children and spend all day Sunday with them. Every Saturday we would help with the "husband train." Seated on the long, stone bench situated in front of the Silver Cascade Hotel, all the women of Tam Dao await their spouses. Sometimes, in their impatience, they climb on the bench to look for the far away arrival on the winding road, of the car, which carries their loved ones, who were often furious because the car had a hard time climbing because of the weight of the numerous packages, which his dear wife sent along with him.

Tam Dao, to get back to it, is a really small hill station, located in a circle almost always in the fog during the vacations, because it's the rainy season in Tonkin. The weather in Tam Dao is only nice in September.

Tam Dao, whose name signifies three mountains, is quite charming and well maintained.

¹⁰¹ This is her adopted sister Juliette.

¹⁰² That is, the family's trip to France in 1934.

Green fields are everywhere. Over the waterfall are some Japanese bridges painted red. Banks of flowers on the grass, a well-equipped children's garden, and two swimming pools. Tam Dao is a children's paradise. They tolerate it very well and we see the kids: magnificent, blond or brunette, curly or straight, who had hardly just climbed from the delta, full of prickly heat and anemic, lose their rash and develop big, shiny, rosy cheeks. Tam Dao is equally the country of the women "a little (not) pregnant" who walk with a melancholic air and with slow steps.

Our villa is right in the middle of the grass. And every year Papa has Homeric discussions with the Resident-superior who, finding that it's "the wart" of Tam Dao, really wanted us to tear it down. But Papa holds on! No, but! In brief, in this precise moment, I adore Tam Dao.

Sunday, July 11th

Finally! A ray of sunlight welcomes and awakens us. We jump out of bed and say a prayer because we aren't going to mass today. There isn't a church in Arbrey-Broyé and the closest is in Entre-Rays, six kilometers on a muddy road because of the rains of these last few days. We no longer have to do the housework, since yesterday in Dalat, we found our people who were lost in the city.

Yesterday, when we finished our shopping, we ate at "Chic Shanghai," a little restaurant in the Marketplace, where we ate well. I was placed in front of the market and I saw a whole bunch of Vietnamese milling about. Highlanders and even a Cham, very pretty I think. She resembled a gypsy; she had curly, very brown hair with pretty black eyes and very red lips because she was chewing betel. All of a sudden, I see our

chauffeur whom we left next to the car, accompanied by another Vietnamese who resembles our servant. I leap into the road and join the other two. It's really him. The cook was still at the police station, where they spent the last two days. We went there to find them. They were so happy to find us, as were we. Around 4:00pm we had some tea at some friends' house before we returned to our chalet with a superb headache. After a very great night, this morning again, a beautiful sun!

At 8:00am, we performed a bit of clean up and took out the armoires, the hats, and the dresses, which had started to get moldy. Around 10:00am Nicole attempted to drag me over to the cliff to see the ocean. I served as her guide and we climbed back along the crest at 1,650 meters. We slid on some pinecones on the descent, and then we made a seesaw out of a board balanced on the trunk of a tree in the forest. We didn't head back until 11:00am, just to set the table, because we were having guests. Father found a big leech gorged with blood in the dining room. He asked who had picked it off. It could not be but Nicole or me, who returned from the wet forest. But neither of us felt anything in particular. All of a sudden, Nicole looked at her foot, which was bleeding. After having wiped up the blood, one can see the little red point that the leech made. The blood didn't want to stop flowing. We decided to descend to Dran very early in the afternoon. At 1pm, we left, singing, father, mother, Nicole, and me. Dran is nine kilometers from Arbre-Broyé by road, but a short cut exists that reduces the path to four and a half kilometers. This is considerable, and we take this route. We first follow along the ballast for about a kilometer.¹⁰³ I amuse myself by jumping from sleeper to sleeper. Nicole followed me. One sees superb things: pines that disappear

¹⁰³ Meaning, the Beaucarnot family used the rail bed of the Dalat – Phan Rang railroad.

under a mantle of creepers. The poor pines do not have such a content air anyway to have such an adornment. In any case, they have the look of a Christmas tree and are very pretty. Farther, one sees a veritable curtain of greenery held up between two trees. One would say that it was artificial, so regular was it. Everywhere, the creepers made nets in-between the trees.

We left the railroad line in order to follow the road for a minute. We encountered a highlander man and woman, breasts in the air, drinking while seated on the ground. One of the highlanders had within a basket a machete that I would like to acquire but he doesn't want to sell it. To console me, he plays us a little air of music on his khene.¹⁰⁴

We start on a little path that descends, snaking. We frisk about in the undergrowth, but all of a sudden, the path becomes a steep path, which descends practically vertically. Mother is a little bothered, because she begins to slide on the pine needles. The situation worsens even more because of the presence of the highlanders who have caught up with us and who, in single file, contemplate mother with pity, without trying to overtake her, while Nicole and me at the bottom of the slope, wait to collect mother when she slips, all the while laughing in bursts. It becomes a little too slippery. Mother asks the guide for his walking stick and refuses father's help. She is soon obliged to use it in order not to lose her prestige vis-à-vis the highlanders who continue to follow us. Moreover, the path is very picturesque, but mother doesn't seem to taste the charm. It's a little path in the undergrowth with roots half exposed from the earth that slow us and, here and there, a propitious pine slows a fall that would appear fatal. My sister and I amuse ourselves by running and throwing ourselves at full force

against the pines we encounter. Mother is up high on the ridge with the highlanders behind her. If we had a Kodak, what a beautiful photo this would be. We would entitle it, "Nini the First, Queen of the Highlanders!" She found the attractiveness adequate. She walks now like a crab. Like this, there is less risk for her to fall. Finally, the Calvary is finished for mother. We arrive on the road and here are the first houses of Dran. One can hear the train whistle. Quickly, mother and Nicole throw themselves towards the station. Father and I follow them. We stay at Dran long enough to do some shopping and then take the 6pm train to go back up to Arbre-Broyé. We buy vegetables, two vases for flowers, a basket for fruit, and then go along the edge of the Dan Nhim [River]. A friend I encountered takes us for a snack at her house. Father comes to look for me and we return to the station waiting for our train. We board the post car, just behind the locomotive. The climb begins, slowly, entirely bumpy because of the cog railway. With the railroad, the view is much less beautiful because of the route. We arrive just after nightfall at Arbre-Broyé. What a swell Sunday!

Monday, July 12th

This morning another magnificent sun. Even better, the sky is blue and cloudless. Father and I are sunbathing. Wearing sombreros, we spread out a mat on the grassy side of the hill in a sunny spot and we stretch ourselves out on it for a good while. The sun is invigorating, but one can't abuse it.

¹⁰⁴ A khene is an instrument of the Indochinese highlands that resembles a set of inverted pan pipes, through which music emerges skyward rather than towards the ground.

At noon, we eat some delicious, little fish. Papa bought them yesterday in Dran from a Vietnamese who caught them above the Dan Nhim Bridge. The skin of these fish is very fine, but they are full of bones.

Papa killed a snake, which I almost stepped on in the grass. These dirty creatures have the hard life: when we pass by the same spot twenty minutes later, the body was still convulsing while it's head was completely crushed and the ants were starting to devour it.

We found an enormous mushroom behind the house. It had to have grown during the night. The top of it was red, the underside yellow, and when pressed on the yellow part it turned blue. Papa absolutely wants to prepare an omelet for noon. He said that it was a morel. Knowing his knowledge of botany, Mama dissuaded him.

Tuesday, July 13th

This morning we descended by car into Dran. The weather is marvelous and we took our swimsuits, with the hope of taking a bath in the Dan Nhim after eating. We arrived in Dran at 10:00am. We (walked) half the way, that is to say exactly 5 kilometers and we would've continued like this to the end because the slope continues. We weren't voluntarily driving without running the motor, but the gas didn't want to work, and it wasn't until halfway that it decided to run.

We made a tour of Dran (which didn't take long) looking for a funnel and a pepper mill. We found everything in the Chinese boutiques except these two items.

Then we made a jump to the market. I'm hungry for "monkey bread." Mama bought an enormous morsel of it. She also shopped for some chickens, pineapples,

potato pancakes, and black beans, which were made into a delicious Vietnamese dish (the *chê dau den* or black bean beverage). The recipe is simple: plunge these beans into boiling water. When they are cooked, add sugar. The water changes color, it becomes “red-brown” and the grains stay on the bottom. We swallow it whole and it is very refreshing.

After a gargantuan meal at my friend’s house, who invited us over, we read the most current newspapers. Around 3:00pm, we got ready to go down near the Dan Nhim, when my friend was struck by an attack of malaria. We put her in bed: she was shivering, chattering her teeth, even though she was covered with three enormous blankets. In less than 15 minutes, these made her very warm: she was burning up and wanted to take everything off.

The bath was moreover strongly jeopardized, because the sky was darkening very rapidly. Then it started to rain. We climbed back up to our hideout under the rain. It’s still raining!

Papa asked me, as we were climbing the side, why I don’t really like this region, which he really appreciates, because this countryside reminds him of his home country. Me, I am Tonkinese: I love my delta, the beach, the countryside, and the ocean. Especially the ocean. In fact, everything that is flat.

Wednesday, July 14th

We were awoken at a decent hour by the rattling of the coffee mill, which the cook is grinding in the kitchen. We lay in bed a bit. Now it’s the servant who, in the dining room is placing the eating wood on the table. We hear cups hit the saucers. We

guess that he is adding the jar of jam, than the fruit basket. I'm not used to hearing these morning preparations in Hanoi, because my room is on the second floor. Here in this little chalet, everything is on the same level: our room is adjoining the dining room. And only the length of a small canopy separates the kitchen. All of this contributes to remind us of France: the countryside, the climate, and the discomfort!¹⁰⁵

If it weren't for the mosquito nets on the beds, one would think that we were transported to the Morvan, Papa's native land. To be more in the atmosphere, Papa had then done away with this accessory from the first night. We kept it to evade the caress of the cockroaches, the butterflies, or the caterpillars. In this type of pantry, we felt much more secure.

The shutters are still closed, but I see a small ray of sunlight peeking through the badly joined boards of the chalet. Maybe it's time to get up; all the more, a suave odor of coffee and toast starts to spill into the air.

Nicole is already up. I listen to her breathing noisily like each time that she is doing physical exercise. It's my turn!

It is necessary then to hurry and (freshen up) because we leave at 9:00am for Dalat.

The chauffeur starts up the gazo. We hurriedly swallow our coffee and we leave. About one kilometer from the beautiful ridge that we had climbed with much difficulty, Mama noticed that she had forgotten her key for the trunk. Papa grouses, but we return to the house. Mama runs in to her room, no key. Panic stricken she asks me if I put it in

¹⁰⁵ The Beaucarnot family traveled to France in 1934, Claudie's first trip. Instead of traveling the usual route, through the Suez Canal, they traveled to Japan, Hawaii, and through the United States. What she found remarkable about France was how behind-the-times and dirty it seemed. Only one bathroom per

my bag. No. She sends me to look for it. I don't find anything. I hear "Claudie" being called, I run back to the car. The key was at the bottom of Mama's bag. Papa is furious. Mama, a little irritated, is speaking quickly and is saying anything. Happily, we eat at our parents' friends' house. The man offers me a beautiful branch of mimosa from his garden. It smells good. The woman gives us some forget-me-not sticks, which we will plant at Tam Dao. We do some shopping. We have purchased a funnel, but the pepper mill cannot be found in Dalat. We will look for one in Saigon. We are heading there the day after tomorrow.

In the afternoon, we are eating at our friends' parents' house. On the way back, we stop to see some old friends, who tell us that the road is cut near Saigon. It is necessary to find out more information before leaving. Night has fallen: it's very clear. It's almost a full moon. The moon sends its rays over the leaves on the trees, which have silver reflections. What a beautiful night!

Thursday, July 15th

This morning Papa and I prospected. At 10:00am the father and his daughter, the one which was carrying the hammer to break the stones, descended the slope in front of the house, under a radiant sun. About two kilometers on the ballast [of the rail bed], we arrived at the seam that Papa had found. Papa has a terrible eye for discovering soils or minerals, whether from the car, by the train or even by plane, all while driving or piloting. Because Papa has some rheumatism, he puts me in charge of climbing the mountain with the hammer to bring him back some stones. The slope was

floor in an apartment building. Dirty streets. At this point, the mother country did not make a favorable impression.

stiff. The ground consisted of broken stones covered with dead leaves. With each step, I slipped on the leaves and the ground crumbled under my feet. I ploughed steps into the soft stone with my hammer and thanks to this improvised staircase, I was able to reach the goal, in this case, a wall that Papa had told me to scratch out. When my foot left the not so deep notch, I started to descend the slope on my stomach.

I had really hung on to the underbrush that I came across. It gave in and left me hanging by my fingers. I told myself, let's hope that it holds! I reach the wall by foot, all the same, full of grazes and thorns. My hat was caught on a branch. I was red and very upset. Without discouraging myself, I climbed back up and came back with only the stone. I am again greatly vexed because a little lower down Papa discovered the same stone. We returned, exhausted, and dead-tired, but contented with finding an interesting material.

During the siesta, we packed our suitcases for Saigon, because we are leaving at an early hour tomorrow. We will be eating in Djring.

5:00pm. We return to our exquisite walk. We left, Papa, Nicole, and I, after the siesta, to search for clay for tiles. We walked a long time on a path through coffee trees. There were beautiful yellow wildflowers, which we thought were "snapdragons." We took some dry pods, containing seeds so we can sow them in Hanoi.

After the coffee trees, we arrived at a valley full of cultivated flowers. Papa baptized it, "Happy Valley." This is what the cemetery in Hong Kong is also called. Then Papa showed us the holes that the wild boars dug in the hills to eat the roots. The animals wreak terrible havoc. The whole terrain has holes and is turned over. These boars come from the plain. There were many of them before, between Phan Rang and

Phan Thiêt. The hunters made them flee to the hills. Now, none remain on the plain. I remember that I had seen an enormous one last year, not far from Phan Thiêt. It was one of the rare remaining ones.

We found some curious fruit. They appear to be highlander tomatoes. These fruits resemble little Chinese lanterns. One punctures the skin, which is full of air and on the peduncle one sees a red fruit when it is ripe. We heard monkey cries in the big trees of the forest. Papa saw seven of them the other day, a whole family, who were squawking and jumping from tree to tree.

We returned, enchanted and bringing Mama three monstrous appetites and an enormous bouquet of wildflowers.

Friday, July 16th

I couldn't sleep, worked up, overexcited, and thrilled at the idea of going to Saigon. It's a city that I like a lot. I lived there for more than a year from about 1936-1937 and I have exquisite memories (staying with very dear friends, almost relatives, and going to the Lycée Chasseloup-Laubat with their kids). Life in Saigon is more laid back, happier, less austere than in Hanoi. At 7:00am we got up, awakened for a long time by a strong and violent wind. At the moment, it seemed as though our house of wood and of stubble was going to fly off like that of the first little pig in the song.¹⁰⁶ At 8:00am we leave, after having listened to Mama for a good moment like always. We descend towards Dran, to rejoin Fimnon by following the valley of the Dan Nhim. This valley of the Dan Nhim is very fertile. There is not even one square meter of land that

¹⁰⁶ This song remains unidentified.

wasn't given to plots. Papa shows me the two hills between which a dam was supposed to be built, to flood the Dran plain. This was to create an immense lake, of which the level rose all the way to the chimney of the Aviat sawmill. The Far East Heavy Construction Company (*Compagnie des Grands Travaux d'Extrême-Orient*) had to execute this job, of which the project, which was made many years before this war. Everything is cultivated in this valley, which stretches out over 50-some kilometers in length.

On the left, at the summit of the hills, the quinine plantations of the Pasteur Institute, spread out over many kilometers.

Stop: Papa wants to know what this mineral is that we see on the road. He takes his little hammer and goes to look at it and feel it. Everything is cultivated here; the ground is very fertile. In the fields, one sees horses with long manes and some herds. Highlanders are working on the road. Here's the airstrip on the left.

There are oak trees on the hills, all contorted/twisted and shriveled. Corn in the shallows. Right now, we are driving through the rice fields. One has an absolute inflated feeling on the delta. Papa and Mama traveled this route fifteen years ago. There are only reeds everywhere. Not one plant nor house.

A new stop. Papa calls me over to show me some very plastic clay close to a rather deep stream. Papa tells me to follow him. Now I am wearing these high-heeled clogs, of which many are fabricated in Hanoi, and which twist my ankle repeatedly. I take them off and join Papa, who is ecstatic: Look at this little, miniature "grand canyon"! We see a very interesting geological formation. We find a very beautiful and very plastic clay, but in too small of quantity to be susceptible for exploitation. During this time,

Mama is questioning the road workers who are working on the road. They tell her that the area is very unhealthy. From above the bridge, which hangs about four meters above us, she cries to us to climb back up.

We take off. We are driving quickly/rapidly. To the left is a large coffee plantation. It's that of Fimnon. To the right, here and there, some pine trees that one bleeds.

We rejoined the road to Saigon. We see the sign: Saigon 277km, Djiring 54km. We will eat in Djiring in about an hour and a half. We come across numerous tree-tapping stations. But the production of resin is weak (of which one makes turpentine, etc....).

We are approaching Lien Khang, where friends of our used to live, two years ago. The Dan Nhim starts to flow more rapidly between large rocks and weeds. It's because we are approaching the Lien Khang waterfalls, which are very beautiful. We stopped there the last time.

Some highlanders with baskets and gourds, which are fruits that are empty and dried, push pigs in front of them. Here, there's a horse farm. Further, these are the Gougah waterfalls, which are still more beautiful than those of Lien Khang are.

On each pine that borders the road and which pertains to a tree-tapping station, there are two or three cut with a bowl attached underneath, to collect resin. To the right, seven kilometers further, are the Pongour falls.

Here's the toll bridge. It functions like a lock. It was constructed by Mr. Reiche for the *Société Eiffel*, without any help from the government. The lock serves now to pay the Society.

The plateau on which we are now driving is an ancient lake bottom. Papa found kieselguhr here. This material is formed by millions of shells of little creatures, diatoms. In millions of years, human corpses will maybe form the ground. Papa told me that in prehistoric caverns there are horse bones, because this was just about all the men of the caverns ate, formed many meters deep (phosphorous). While extracting the morsels of kieselguhr, he disturbed a scorpion, some centipedes, and some termites.

There is an elegant highlander woman under a pink umbrella.

Thirteen kilometers before Djiring, these are the first coffee plantations. The terrain is very propitious for these cultures. There isn't even the need to smoke them.

They are all along the road. The pine trees are scarce. There are many trees and bushes. A herd of large cows are crossing the road.

We are one kilometer from Djiring. Beautiful trees border the road. It seems as though we are in an avenue. To the left are some windbreaks.

Here's Djiring and its hotel: the Braïan Hotel, which is an inn, made of wood. At the Braïan is the river of Djiring. We are on a hill. At the foot of Djiring, there are rice fields with highlander huts. The highlanders are not like the Vietnamese, who gather in villages. They have separate huts rather far apart. Often they sit right on the edge of the cliff and often on stilts. It's only noon. We stop at Braïan to eat. We leave Djiring after a rather brief meal. On both sides of the road, coffee trees. Some little, completely blond highlanders play in the road.¹⁰⁷ The countryside is very undulating by mountains in the background. All of this surrounds the hills, with the highlanders' huts scattered about. In the distance, rice fields. To Djiring, we were still at 1,000 meters,

we start to descend, then we climbed back up a bit. The scenery changes: the hills aren't as tall. Still coffee.

We are still descending. A minute ago the road passed through the summits of the hills, now it passes at the foot of these hills. The air is warmer. Many of the huts are on piles.

The air rushes in by the windshield, which Papa removed, but it feels heavy. The sun appears intermittently when the large clouds don't hide it. A bridge over a river, which flows with salty water. Little village of Cong Ninh, wooden church. An amusing road sign: "Hunters beware, don't shoot domestic elephants."

It's the virgin forest: arborescent ferns, large trees with long, hanging liana, undergrowth.

Clouds accumulate above our heads. Some raindrops splatter the windshield.

Before the Blao pass, we were stopped at the Control office by an Indochinese guard who asked us if we were carrying coffee. No. The first time that Papa passed by this place, he thought the guard asked him if he had had his coffee and had he taken it at the hotel, and Papa said, "Yes, yes and you too?".

Here's Blao pass. Very picturesque. There are many wild banana trees. In the air a toucan, which is going the same direction we are one moment, then veers to the right.

At the base of the Blao hill, we will be at sea level. Ten kilometers to go. The hill. There are highlander huts on the peak of the mountain. One must ask oneself how do

¹⁰⁷ The blondness has two potential sources, either malnutrition or the blond hair occasionally reported among the Hmong peoples.

they stay put. Enormous bamboo emerges in different sections of the road and sometimes it forms an archway.

Here we are at the base of the hill. It is hot. There are some rapids. A pineapple plantation. Each time that we think there's a car or a truck, there's a scent of oil or bizarre grease.

The road presently runs along a tributary, the Lagna, a fast river with crocodiles. Here's the Lagna Bridge. We stop to try to see some reptiles and to gather our thoughts.

I got my glasses out of a basket and I adjusted them on my nose, because the sun reappeared and we are roasting in the car.

The road at present borders a stream in the middle of a tropical forest, but under the shadows, it feels chilly.

We leave the Province of Upper Donnaï. A sign informs us that we are entering Cochinchina. Now there's a forest with big, straight trees, which are identical to those in the Bien Hoa forest. There are, besides large wood cuts by the B.I.F. (*Bien Hoa Industrielle et Forestière* - The Bien Hoa Wood and Industrial Company). This is the region of the wild elephants. We squish enormous amount of these animals' manure on the road, and on each side, the bamboo are trampled and uprooted.

A herd must have passed by here last night.

Here are these carts with enormous wheels, which serve to transport sections of wood. A turtledove flies just in front of the car's hood. There it is! I saw my tiger. It was enormous, majestic. He leisurely strolled across the road and disappeared in the

bushes. It's 4:00 in the afternoon and 118 kilometers to Saigon; 500 meters further there are some people. I was delighted! We stop to get charcoal.

We struggle up the small hills and descend the small slopes, like it was some Russian mountains. We drive back over the more tumultuous Lagna River.

Here are the first rubber trees of Cochinchina. The road passes between two immense plantations with well-aligned trees.

There's the Suôi Rach train station. Last station before the B.I.F. They have their own railroad. The numerous rubber tree plantations that we are coming across belong to the B.I.F. (L.C.D., *Les Caoutchouc du Donnai* - the Rubber Company of Donnai). The Michelin plantations are on the Thudaumot side.

The car stopped by itself. What's it doing? Papa looks around. He opens the gazo, waiting for an explosion to occur. It is weak. He bends down under the hole to see of much charcoal is remaining. We wait a moment and it restarted.

Here's Han Loc. It's a fork: From here, one climbs to Dalat, coming from Cochinchina. And straight ahead, one arrives in Phan Thiêt.

Here we are in the Bien Hoa forest. When I was little, Papa would always threaten that the red ants in this forest would eat me!

The crossing of the forest is long! Long!

Here's the psychiatric asylum, a few kilometers from the town. It is very pretty/charming. More rubber trees and finally Bien Hoa reaches the outskirts of Donnai.

Before arriving in the town/city, we passed in front of the Bien Hoa School of Art's ceramic ovens.¹⁰⁸ The director of the school is Mariette Balick. Her husband runs the sculpture and foundry section. They have been friends of my parents for many years. They have been a part of an extraordinary expansion of this school and produce reputable ceramics, which they ship all the way to the United States, which really appreciates them.

Since Mariette and Robert are on vacation, right now in Phuoc Haï, a little fishing village where they own a hut on stilts, we don't stop. We are heading straight to the Long Buu factory, the goal of our journey. Because Papa has to take stock of all his recent findings of soil materials and minerals, to get some new manufacturing started.

Our home base will then be Long Buu, a distance of only 30 kilometers from Saigon, where we will return every day.

Papa has in effect, a number of things to regulate there: formalities to fulfill registrations of mining perimeters to carry out, friends and clients to see.

¹⁰⁸ The Balicks and Beaucarnots were close friends, with a natural interest centering on clay. The Balicks ran the Bien Hoa School of Art (*L'École d'Art de Biên-Hoà*), Mariette Balick responsible for ceramics and administration and Paul Balick responsible for bronze. Other employees, European and Vietnamese assistants and supervisors assisted the Balicks in their teaching. The school opened initially in 1903 under the leadership of Mr. Chesne, the man responsible for modernizing Cochinchina's road system. The school received government subsidies, and students paid tuition based on level of instruction and place of origin (In 1930, students paid 4\$70 for the first four years and 30\$ for the terminal year; students from outside Cochinchina paid substantially more). In 1937, the ceramics section enrolled twenty students, and the bronze section counted thirty. At this time, most students enrolled for four years, with a fifth year as an intern or at another school (such as at the School of Art at Gia Dinh) and there were also a few students who took courses on a more casual basis. Earlier references indicate a course of seven years, with students enrolled at age 13. Through a related Association, the School exhibited and sold its wares in Indochina and abroad. See Section coloniale - Indochine française. "Les écoles d'art de l'Indochine." In *Paris*, ed. Exposition internationale des arts et techniques. Hanoi: IDEO, 1937. [ASOM] C9 N°194, *Trois écoles d'Art de l'Indochine: Hanoi, Phnom Penh, Bien Hoa*. Hanoi: IDEO, 1931. , Teston, Eugène, and Maurice Percheron. *L'Indochine moderne: encyclopédie administrative, touristique, artistique, et économique*. Paris: Librairie de France, 1931. .

The offices of the S.A.T.I.C. (*Société Anonyme des Tuileries de l'Indochine* – Tileworks Corporation of Indochina) are on Garcerie Road in Saigon, but we can't stay there.

We then settle into the factory, which contains very agreeable living conditions on a small height which overlooks the tile factory and from where one can see the Donnaï. The terrain surrounding the factory is all torn up, because they've extracted much clay there. But now they have to go find it somewhere further away, because the pockets are exhausted here. The terrain is still full of holes: all dusty during the dry season, and transformed into a mess when it rains. Now the clay is brought here by sampan, the factory being close to the river, or by carts pulled by oxen.

Papa and Mama lived in Long Buu for a year in 1936. Me, I was living with our friends, the Rouelles, in Saigon, where they own multiple "compartments": these small lodgings typical of the city are in banks of one-story houses, with a courtyard in the back.

What wonderful memories I've kept from this period, where, unfaithful to the Lycée Albert Sarraut, I took the half-fifth/half-fourth A forms at the Lycée Chasseloup-Laubat (with [Norodom] Sihanouk, the Cambodian prince, as a fellow student).¹⁰⁹

I've always had a strong attraction to Saigon. Life is very different, merrier, more nonchalant than in Hanoi. This comes, without a doubt, from the climate and the personalities of its inhabitants. They lead the good life. Besides, life is much easier for them than in Tonkin. The country is rich: rice grows in large quantities in the Mekong delta and there are numerous other interesting crops.

¹⁰⁹ The "A" forms took Greek and Latin.

While in Tonkin, the severe climate conditions commit the inhabitants to perpetual work with a poorer yield. The Red River delta is sad. All is ochre: the sky, the ground/soil, the rice fields, and even the clothing of the people are colored brown. But I love my Tonkin more than anything. That's where I was born. As good as it is to leave it from time to time, I am just as happy to return!

Hanoi is a calm, tranquil, somewhat stiff, city. Saigon is a slow, happy, cosmopolitan city. Here we are, then, as temporary Saigon residents.

Saturday, July 17th

What a great night spent in Long Buu! We are leaving for Saigon at 9:00am. Papa has a lot to do and drops us off in town. We also have what we need to do. Lunch at Mount Ventoux. The afternoon passed quickly. Tonight, dinner with the Factory Director and return to Long Buu.

Sunday, July 18th

An Italian friend invited us to lunch. At night, we dine at a friend's house, who just became a Saigonese a few years ago, but whose husband was formerly a pharmacist in Nam Dinh. The poor man left just before the war to get new medications for his pharmacies and is still stuck in France by the events. His wife, whom we really like, is then all alone in Indochina.

Monday, July 19th

Yesterday the offices were closed. But today is Monday and Papa can continue with his business. We are lunching at some other friends' house and at night, we are dining with Vana, but at the Queen Pédauque [Restaurant] this time.

Tuesday, July 20th

It's our last day in Saigon. Papa must finish all his formalities and other business, because tomorrow, we are going to check out the Baria region, where Papa owns a "mountain." We will maybe come back if Papa finds some interesting stones.

We are eating again with our Italian friends. The day is passing like a flash. This afternoon I took a dip at the Cercle Sportif in the beautiful pool located amongst huge trees.

And tonight, we will enjoy Chinese soup at the Butterfly Bar, on Catinat road. Besides its charming name, this little restaurant prepares the best Chinese specialties in Saigon. Whether it's the soups with shark fins or with swallows nests or with crabs, or if it's the shrimp beignets with sweet and sour sauce, or, or....

Before leaving, some impressions of Saigon on 1943.

We easily find, without ration coupons, things that are rare in Hanoi: oil, sugar, soap, and milk.

The *coolies-pousse* don't grouse like in Hanoi, but they are rarer.¹¹⁰ The beer, especially the brand Tiger Beer, appears more than in Hanoi. I am horrified by beer and don't talk about it except by hearsay.

¹¹⁰ *Coolies-pousse* refers to the rickshaw pullers.

At the Pagode, the most renowned tearoom/ice cream place in Saigon, we savor some delicious café liégeois. But it's still better at O'Daka in Dakao. Also in Dakao, the baker makes famous bread.

Wednesday, July 21st

We leave for Phuoc Hai, a pleasant little beach amongst the dunes. Mariette and Robert left their fishing house on stilts at my parents' disposition. From there, we can radiate because Papa has to prospect in the region. We are heading in the direction of Cape Saint-Jacques, which takes us away from Baria.

We left the Long Buu factory at 9:00 this morning after saying our good-byes to the personnel, because we aren't coming back before we leave for Dalat.

The road is horrible up until we get back to the Bien Hoa Bridge. We don't have to drive through this town because there is a new portion of road that is larger and less cluttered. We get on the road to the Cape. On the left is the way to Phan Thiêt or Dalat. Here we are amongst straight rubber tree plantations, a little behind, the factory of the B.I.F. The road is very shady and not too bad. We are driving at a good speed/pace. An armadillo with its tail covered in scales crosses the road.

With our Renault-gazo, we even pass a V8 gazo. Papa is happy like a kid. We left the Ford behind. We cannot see it at all. Papa is even more proud because our gazo is his creation.

The countryside is varying a bit: some rice fields from time to time, but overall there's rubber. Some exhalations of latex penetrate our frightened nostrils. In a plantation, a woman is going from tree to tree to empty the wood full of milk into a pail.

After two insignificant villages, Long Thanh and Phu My, we see emerging from the forest the mountain of Baria. We flew over it in 1936 in a Cauldron-Renault from the Aero-Club of Cochinchina, of which Papa was a member.¹¹¹ We are going to Phuoc Hai to do some rounds under Mariette and Robert's villa and we sent them a message filled with money because we had forgotten to provide stones. On the mountain of Baria, there are numerous pagodas and altars. All of a sudden, a nauseating odor, worse than the latex, spreads throughout the car. I look at Nicole with a suspicious eye, while pinching my nose. She swears to high heavens that she is not guilty. In effect we are travelling through a swamp, which seems empty into several of the huts.

Here are the first houses of Baria. Papa stops us in front of the market and while he goes to the tax office for some information, we do some shopping with Mama: corn shoots, cinnamon apples, bananas, tomatoes. In a pharmacy, we find some specialties that are still coming from France.¹¹² We jump on them. The vendor, very friendly, would love to sell us a glass with Betty Boop painted on it, which Nicole desires.

Not far from Baria is the village of Long Dien with its amusing little fountain, near the marketplace, the fountain that was built in the memory of Kai-Thanh-Liem, self-designated benefactor of the village.¹¹³ We stop to buy some mangosteens. These delicious fruits don't grow in Tonkin. The road is nice right now, through little clumps of trees.

¹¹¹ The Aero-Club of Saigon was founded in 1930. It offered pilot training and planes for the use of its members. In 1930, the Club had approximately 200 members.

¹¹² It is difficult to imagine any French vessel making the trip from France to Indochina after 1941. These goods may be smuggled from elsewhere.

¹¹³ Kai Thanh Liem was...

Here's Phuoc Hai. We stop in front of our friends' house.¹¹⁴ I haven't been back here in seven years and it looks to me that it's not the same place from the exterior. But yes! I remember the garden in the sand, where, dressed in a swimsuit I posed as a dancing statue, modeled by Robert. He cast it in bronze and it sits proudly on Mama's desk.¹¹⁵

The interior hasn't changed: a house of wood on pylons, a veranda which encircles it, with shades of cloth which one can pull down or pull back depending on the weather. And when the wind was blowing a bit too hard, Robert would yell out, "Let go of the ropes!" And all of us cabin boys would secure the stores as high as possible.

We quickly make ourselves at ease: barefoot and in shorts.

We then make a delicious meal: shrimp, fish, mushrooms. After the siesta, where I read *The Big Hotel*, by Vicky Baum, we take off our parasols and run all the way to the beach, which is very small and rather dirty. The waves are lousy. We throw ourselves into the sea and we are rolled, tossed and transported 60 meters further on, parallel to the beach, luckily. Then we dried off on the sand by the sun. At our return we briefly showered in the bathroom, which is found beneath the stilts. Then, well refreshed, we are sitting on the veranda, and are nibbling on some pancakes and drinking lemonade.

During the night, we sleep on little cots. There is a terrible wind in the filao trees of the garden and we hear the ocean rumbling very close. A shutter bangs. I get up on my heels and shut it. Good night!

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Thursday, July 22nd

Today we are going to prospect on Papa's mountain.

After breakfast, Nicole and I are going to say good morning to the ocean. It's choppy. On the horizon, it mixes with the sky; in the middle, it is yellow, higher up, it appears very green. Raging white waves crash on the sand of the seashore. A small, timid, sun, which resembles that of Tonkin during Tét, tries to pierce through the gray clouds. A woman is trying to sunbathe on a sheet. The village fishermen put their large boats, which have two big eyes painted on the front, into the water.¹¹⁶ I admire their dexterity. They're not afraid to be thrown on the seashore. In a few strokes of the oars, they pass the dangerous area and swim there where the waves are calmer.

We take some large breaths of fresh air and we run to the car, because we already hear the motor running.

Here's our little mountain. To go from the road to the hill on foot, we cross over a dike between two rice fields. We climb/scale the mountain, while walking in the undergrowth. I'm afraid of being poked because I have very open sandals. They are little, and red: I got them specifically for vacation, from our little cobbler in Hanoi, but they're not for prospecting. (I am always annoyed with my feet and my shoes).

We gather interesting rocks and despite some slips on dead leaves and the humid ground, we arrive at the summit. It's tidy and flat. No more trees nor underbrush but the plants, which resemble orchids, cover the ground. They have large, clear, green leaves and each plant holds only one long, pink flower.

¹¹⁵ Mrs. Beaucarnot still retains this statue.

¹¹⁶ The eyes, still quite common on fishing boats, are intended to scare away sea monsters.

Here and there a clump of very fine bamboo, which sting. I gaze at the flowers with curiosity. Papa reminds me of my task: "You came to look for stones and not flowers." Then he looks for an area where we can see the ocean and calls me. The ocean isn't very far: about eight kilometers separate us. We can see it very well behind the dunes. We can even see our friends' house. Unfortunately, there is no more sun and the ocean is a dirty gray.

Some raindrops start to fall. The wind is howling stronger in the bamboo, which creak imitating the cry of a crane.

Our bags of jute are full of rocks. It's time to go back. We slowly descend; the path is becoming more slippery with the rain, which is currently coming down hard. At the base of the hill, we take refuge in a cabin, waiting for a lull. After about a quarter of an hour we meet back at the car to go to Phuoc Hai to eat. We change so we can dry our wet clothes and after eating, we take off for Saigon. On the road, I realize that I left my shorts and my shirt on the clothesline. And it's the only pair of shorts that I brought on our trip.

Friday, July 23rd

Here we are again at Saigon, which is a synonym for shopping and purchases. In the afternoon, we are going to buy our last purchases for Arbre-Broyé. We are going to the old market, which is one of the picturesque spots in Saigon. It's the Ali Mohamed quarter.¹¹⁷ They are amusing with their shirts, which float above pieces of black and white with red eyelets, which serve them as a skirt. They all wear fezzes: there are

some pretty, all white ones, embroidered ones, and a ton of reds with a black tassel, some greens in velour.

At about 4:00pm we made the rounds and said our good-byes to our friends in Saigon, because we are leaving for Dalat tomorrow.

At 7:00pm we are tasting delicious coffee in a bistro in Dakao. We even devour a Chinese soup at 8:00pm, we change restaurants to finish our meal.

Saturday, July 24th

Take off at 8:00pm. The car sags under the weight of the packages and bags. Good-bye Saigon! We pass by Dakao again, then here's Gia Dinh. The Binh Long bridges over the Saigon River. In Binh Long, Papa has a small factory (Mininco).¹¹⁸ Coconut trees border the river. The outskirts/surroundings of Saigon, from Tu Duc to this bridge it is very green and picturesque. There are coconut trees and little streams of water everywhere.

Here's Tu Duc. This is where raw nem are made (the pork meat is put in a brine).¹¹⁹ It's delicious. A little further it's "the Cascade" an establishment of half of a tea room and half open air café where one can have some refreshments after getting out of the pool which is in the form of a stream. What great times we the pent here in 1936! At night, we could dance to the sound of pick-up to the sounds of the tango, "slow," and paso doble.

¹¹⁷ The "Ali Mohamed" are malabars or Indians who ran small dry goods store or merceries in central or southern Indochina.

¹¹⁸ The purpose of the factory is still unclear.

¹¹⁹ This is a collection of raw herbs, vegetables, pork, and sauce wrapped in a steamed and cooled rice pancake.

For the moment, there isn't a question.

Just after Bien Hoa, the rubber trees begin. I really like these plantations with their trees well planted in regular staggered rows. The rubber trees are very leafy and create a thick shadow.

Just after the Dalat-Phan Thiêt fork, a flock of parrots pass above the car. There are at least 50 and their vibrant colors glisten in the sun.

Eleven o'clock. We stop at the charcoal vendor for the gazo. To buy some. We take the opportunity to eat a bowl of rice accompanied by a delicious dish: venison in soy sauce.

We leave. Here's the place where we saw the tiger eight days ago. On the road is some elephant dung.

Papa keeps amused by crushing the snakes that traverse the road. They are big and long and there are quite a few.

All of a sudden, a light smoke lifts up behind our backs, but in the interior of the car. This burns the eyes and we start tearing. We stop. Papa opens the trunk. It's the isolating asbestos shield that has caught fire! The chauffeur throws water on it...

Blaos pass 850 meters. Highlanders on the road. We arrive in Diring in two hours and take some coffee while reading the newspapers. We wait on a friend who is supposed to arrive around 5:00. Together we have an apéritif and he leaves for Dalat while we dine and sleep in Diring.

Sunday, July 25th

We attend the mass at the little wooden church in Djring. It's very picturesque: there are highlanders draped in their coverlets, the women highlanders with their little ones on their backs, some Vietnamese, the Sisters of Leprosy in dark blue dresses and white bonnets. At the exit, we tour the market. It's again more curious: the highlander, the Vietnamese, the Chinese mixed.

On the return, we dash into the car on the road to Dalat, because Papa wants to prospect all day and we return to sleep in Djring. We stop in the shadow of pitch pines to eat. I keep myself amused after our meal by emptying the three resin woods at the foot of a pine in a single bowl. I am gummed up all over: my fingers are completely sticky. Some friends who are coming down from Dalat stop to greet us and continue on their way to Saigon. We return to Djring just to have tea and escape the rain.

Monday, July 26th

Today is the day that we are climbing up to our eagle's nest. A tour of the market and we leave. Stop to eat on the grass at noon. We meet up with some friends who are coming down from Dalat. Some others that are going. It's crazy, the traffic that is on this road. We have a five o'clock tea at Bellevue and we reach Arbre Broyé at 7:00pm.

Tuesday, July 27th

A lot of wind. The sky is gray. We spend the entire day in Arbre-Broyé. At night, it begins to rain.

Wednesday, July 28th

A woman friend came to see us yesterday and she slept at our place. It was really cold that night. ~~We had frozen feet and no way to reheat them.~~ This morning, the weather is like winter. We have thick fingers, cold noses, which run. The toilet water appears to be frozen. At 9:00, well wrapped up, we leave for Dalat where we sleep and where we'll spend the day tomorrow. Papa and Mama dine at some friends' house and Nikki and I at our friends' house. At 4:00, we go to the pastry maker in fashion at Dalat: the Pâtisserie Dauphinoise (Mr. Deneréas). He's an old assistant in a Tonkin pharmacy. He was our neighbor in Hanoi. Other peculiarities, an old tailor of Hanoi become a butcher in Dalat (Mr. Mas).

Thursday, July 29th

We eat at some relatives of Papou and Manou with a bunch of acquaintances of Tonkin. A selection of monstrous croquets. And at night we returned to our place in l'A. B. (Arbre-Broyé).

Friday, July 30th

I'm going to Djing with Papa. We climb up a mountain to prospect. Numerous slips on the pine needles. I was poked by some maringouins and I got a large blister on my right big toes.¹²⁰ Papa is satisfied: he found an interesting stone.

Eat in Djing. While Papa goes to the Public Works Office, I continue to walk. At 4:00pm, we take the path back. Stop at a man's place, who offers us some milk, some

¹²⁰ The maringouin is a kind of winged, biting insect.

good coffee and cake made completely from manioc flour. While leaving him, I take the steering wheel. It makes a strange noise. At about ten kilometers, stop to see where this noise is coming from. Papa and the chauffeur search in vain. Worrying, Papa takes the steering wheel. We finally arrive in Arbres Broyés without another problem.

Saturday, July 31st

We are supposed to go to Dalat, but Papa is tired and rests. We unpack the suitcases and arrange the clothes in the armoires. We completely electrify with the Colibri group.¹²¹ It's dazzling.

Sunday, August 1st

We spent the day at Bellevue. That is to say that at 9:00 we prospected on the road from Dran to Fimnon. Then, before going to eat with our friends from Bellevue, we passed by the post office where I had to get some stamps to put on a letter that I had written to my "sister" in Tam Dao. But, it was Sunday, so the post office was closed. We ate a delicious leg of venison, which the *hotelier* had killed the night before. It was very tender. And we drank some good coffee in Bellevue. The coffee trees grow very well in this region. The terrain, the climate, are favorable for them. The altitude is equal to between 1000 and 1800 meters. And moreover, no borers or parasites, which ravage the plantations and terrors of the Tonkinese coffee plantations.

So, with the last drop of coffee swallowed, we toured and visited the electricity plant of the *hotelier*. It serves as a waterfall. It's simple and rudimentary, but this works.

¹²¹ This must mean they connected to the local, privately-owned electrical grid.

It even makes ice cream. Before leaving Bellevue, we bought, from Mr. Berthe, strawberry, orange, and prune jams and citron. He's the best jam maker in Indochina.

At Dran, we bought some vegetables: peas, green beans, butter beans, carrots, cabbage, peppers, beans. All of these vegetables are packed in the interior courtyards of the wooden houses, which don't rent. One must know the good locations. The vegetables of Dran and of Bellevue really have a taste: they remind us of the vegetables in France. Here it's a true Cocagne country.¹²²

At 5:00, we ate at my friend's house, then before the climb back up to Arbreyé, it was necessary to arrange our purchases in the car. I myself put in one of the aluminum tubes of the roof of the Prima[quatre], the vegetables and the chickens. Our friends from Bellevue climbed back up with us and slept at the house, where we arrived at 7:30.

Monday, August 2nd

Last night our friends went on a hunt. They came back shivering after about an hour because it was raining. This morning we accompanied them to the train station, because they are going back down to Bellevue. Our friends, Papou and Manou, are arriving on this train coming from Dalat, with one of their friends. They are coming to find us so we can eat together out on the grass. We had rapidly prepared sandwiches at 11:00, all five, left singing. Mama asked Gaston, a young man of the area, to follow us with a rifle, because there are many more-or-less savage/wild animals: monkeys, wild boars, and tigers.

¹²² The Cocagne is a particularly rugged section of the Vaucluse region of southwest France.

We then went to Happy Valley, and then we followed a little stream, which took us into the underbrush. We crossed the stream on pieces of wood, more-or-less rotten and which under our weight dug into the soft dirt. On the side, which we had reached, there was a beautiful little, shady beach. We put down the sack of provisions and our raincoats and we tried to reach the clearing, which we could see behind the trees. We then entered into the tall grass amongst the thorns. There wasn't a trail so we had to retrace our steps. As it was noon, we unpacked the provisions and devoured everything! We then returned to the house to drop off our affairs and to refresh ourselves, because it was really hot. After a few moments pause, I took my friends on the cliff which overlooks Dran and where we see the ocean at about 70 kilometers, as a bird flies. It's the Cam Ranh Bay that we see. We were seated in the grass and unwound nicely. At 3:30, these young ladies took the train back to Dalat.

At night, Nicole acted as Papa's secretary, while I drew him some maps so that he can take his mining perimeters.

Tuesday, August 3rd

We are going to Dalat, where we will spend the day. When we arrived there, Papa told us that we had to sleep there. We don't even have pajamas or toothbrushes!

Wednesday, August 4th

Because we are in Dalat, we do our shopping in the market before returning to Arbre Broyé. I tried to get my pair of sandals that I ordered five months ago. They won't be ready until Saturday. At this point, patience is no longer a virtue, it's a vice.

Thursday, August 5th

The weather is beautiful/great. Nothing sensational to write about. There are a bunch of people eating.

Friday, August 6th

We all leave by car for hours, to Bellevue, where Nicole and I will spend the day with a Tonkinese friend, while Mama and Papa are taking her husband to Djing. We fish suspended just above the river on an aerial bridge, which sways in the wind. Our friend's hat flies off and lands in the water. I miss catching it because of Nicole who jumps from the bridge, which relieved of this heavy weight takes flight into the air and falls touching the water, adopting a movement from high to low of a uniform speed. I feel rather agreeable tickle in the stomach, but I also have a disturbing sensation of instability.

In short, I catch the steel cable, which holds us back in time, and just prevent us from a jump in the stream. We catch five fish! Noon. It's time to go back to eat. During the siesta, I mail my letters, then we eat some *chào gà*, very fine Vietnamese soup: it's a rice stock with pieces of shredded chicken. It's a very rustic soup that you can't find in the restaurants, but exquisite in simplicity. I adore Vietnamese cuisine. In my mind/opinion, it's the best in the world. Less greasy than Chinese cuisine. I don't dare compare it to French cuisine, because I only have tasted the dishes prepared by our Indochinese cooks who get their own art from their French women. In brief, I would be completely satisfied with Vietnamese cooking if I could, but Papa doesn't feel the same.

He has never grown used to *nuoc-mâm*, the national sauce, a fish brine of which the odor could frighten the Westerner's nostrils. But, outside the taste, this sauce, which is found in all the dishes, has many virtues, which covers the lack of nutritional deficiencies of the Tonkinese. Some doctors from there would also prescribe it to their patients.

So, after our *chào gà*, we took a long walk and we went almost to the point where we can see far off into the distance. But today it is raining in the plains. We see the Kron Pha train station at our feet, and the plain, at 700 meters below, is no more than 100 meters above sea level. We clearly distinguish the Cam Ranh Bay covered with a curtain of rain.

We return with the first raindrops and wait for our parents who don't arrive until 9:00pm to take us back.

The night is complete and the mountains are full of fire, which the highlanders have lit.¹²³ It's beautiful and this reminds me of arriving at night in Hong Kong by boat. In places, this makes a rampart of flames; in other spots, there are only red points. The spectacle is magical! It has already been three days that this has burned and it's not finished. During the day, there is steam and a thick smoke, which stings the eyes from Dran all the way to Bellevue.

We reach Arbre Broyé at ten o'clock at night.

Saturday, August 7th

¹²³ Most likely, the highland peoples are lighting fires to clear brush to prepare fields for planting.

We spent the whole day at the house. Some friends came for lunch. Around 5:00, Papa and I went on foot to our neighbors' who live one kilometer up a rocky road. I had my pretty raincoat in navy satin with white spots, but peasants' feet, because I wore Vietnamese clogs, because of the rough road. Papa had put on his shoes without socks. We were very elegant.

When we arrived at their place, I couldn't go into the house because their daughter had chicken pox and since I have never had them, the lady figured that it would be more prudent to receive me in the garden. She offered me candy and cut me an enormous bouquet of flowers for Mama. There are mauve and white lilacs, which smell very strong, Japanese mimosas with their little round, silvery leaves, and French mimosas with long, fine leaves, and then three big hydrangeas of an adorable blue.

When Papa had finished speaking with the man, we left. I almost fell several times with my clogs and I got a huge blister.

Sunday, August 8th

After breakfast, we sunbathed with Nicole. We put a sheet out on the ground behind the house, and flat on our stomachs wearing hats, we read while heating our young bones. The sun was strong, but didn't last.

At noon, we ate Vietnamese food. It was only Mama, Nicole, and I; Papa and Gaston went to do some prospecting. Around 10:00 it started to rain in torrents.

I have the feeling that rains will start now. It's time for us to go to sunnier climates.

At 4:00, the car came back. Papa and Gaston were completely soaked. The rain surprised them in the middle of the forest.

Papa was astonished at my nice appearance today. Evidently, I was lightly made-up! This is a contrast to my normal, slightly greenish shade. By coincidence, this time spent on the mountain must have treated him well, because he has some color, whereas he is usually pale in Hanoi.

We got our bags ready for Nha Trang.

Monday, August 9th

Yesterday, on my blanket, I read, with much pleasure, Francis de Croisset's book *We Took a Lovely Trip*. It's very lively and amusing, full of humor, which I love. He describes India and the British who live there, very well. When I come across books that are entertaining to read, I dream of being the Kipling of Indochina. Alas! I will never have the power. It's the one regret of my young life.

We leave for Dalat and we are returning tonight.

In Dalat, Papa takes the car to the garage to get the broken brake cable and the weak lights repaired. During this time, we do some shopping. I go to recover my sandals that are finally ready. We eat at "The Cottage," a little restaurant that faces the lake, between the Cercle Sportif and the stadium. We eat very well, there.

At 3:00, we go to see if the car is ready. It won't be ready until tomorrow. So, we will again have to sleep in Dalat. Luckily, we have many friends there to accommodate us. Suzanne, Papa Leconte's oldest daughter, lends us some nightclothes. Papa looks

hilarious in Suz (ie)'s husband's pajamas. He looked like a Chinese. We women find a shawl, a jacket, and a nightshirt for us to share.

Around 10:00 Papa goes to see the father of Papou and Manou. He is an architect and the Head of City Planning in Hanoi. He is here on vacation and is staying in one of the last houses in town, on Graffeuil Road.

We made a reservation at the Cottage for 8:00pm, because we are going to dine there.

With Suzie and her husband, we go to the Ballansard garage to get our jackets that we had left in the car. We separate: Mama and Suzanne visit a house, whereas Gastounet, Nikki, and I, we head to the garage. New separation: I leave all by myself on a bicycle and take a road with less of a climb, because of a huge blister, which makes me limp. Nicole and Gastounet take a short cut.

We had decided on a meeting place/point. I look for them. They are looking for me. After about 20 minutes, we meet up at the Market square. Gastounet takes us to the pastry shop to wait for the other women.

We nibble on cake during the half-hour.

We all leave for The Cottage on foot. When we reached the base of the Lake Bridge, we met up with Papa who was in a *pousse*. He was furious because the coolie made a scene at the Cottage, yelling that he was not being paid enough, so then Papa gave him 1.50 piastres for one hour. Then Papa told him that he would give him two piastres if he would take him to the market on one side, and back to The Cottage, on the other side. We laughed heartily. The coolie took him up the one side and right back

down to the other. He wanted to throw the coolie in the water, because of this offensive behavior!

At night, terrible indigestion!

Tuesday, August 10th

I'm waiting at Suzie's while my parents are getting the car. They return at 11:00 and we leave. We stop at the Cerutti's house for lunch. Then, Mr. Cerutti took the 1:00 train to Hanoi.

At 3:00, we leave for Arbre-Broyé, where we arrive at 4:30, at the same time as Mr. Lebourg, who was getting off the train coming from Bellevue. We make the final preparations, then good-byes to the people who lent us their chalet. Finally, dine and to bed to the road tomorrow.

Wednesday, August 11th

It's today that we are leaving Arbre-Broyé for the plain. We speeds ourselves slowly, we close the suitcases, we reopen them to throw in a forgotten object, we close them and open them again. We register one at the train station to send it quickly to Hanoi.

Finally at 11:00, we were all packed in the car and we descended the slope. Goodbye Arbre-Broyé and all its surroundings, where we spent some good times!

At Bellevue, we abandon Mr. Lebourg into his wife's arms and we leave to eat at Kiosque in Bellevue.

Then it's the real descent. We see a crossing the road.

This road is really atrocious with its tight curves, too close and too numerous.

At 3:00pm, we arrive at the Cham Tower, where there is a terrible wind and dust. This is always the case at the Cham Tower. We see irrigation canals, which were dug by the Cham people during their time of splendor. It appears as though this region used to be rich, many centuries ago. Today it's dry, very dry. We see many goats and whom are content with doing little.

We stop at the Cham Tower Bungalow to drink a bit, because the wind really dehydrated us, than we leave on the Cana. The road along the coast is very beautiful, but we have the wind in front and we advance slowly. Here is Cana, then, a bit further the "Question Point Hostel."

It's a very rustic building in the middle of a sandy "garden," where the dune plants grow. But all the same there is a certain comfort. We stop, eat, and sleep.

Thursday, August 12th

Rise at 7:00. Bathroom, then Nicole and I head to the beach while our parents go to Sông Long Sông. We find a sand snake on the sand. He has a very fine head and neck and it's tail is large. It's the same one that one can see in the Institute of Oceanography in Nha Trang. Meanwhile we bravely bury our feet in the sea, and then we look for shells in the rocks. We don't return until 11:00, the same as our parents.

Eat, rest, then on the road to Nha Trang. We arrive there at 10:30 and we go straight to our friends, the Rouelles, house. These are some old friends of my parents and their children are like our brothers. They live in Nha Trang, but the kids study in

Saigon and don't come home except for vacation. We are always welcome with open arms there and it's truly a joy to meet up with them.

Friday, August 13th

At 7:00, Danie, the youngest girl of the house, came to wake me up. I threw on my raincoat and went downstairs with her father to go rowing. We rowed until 9:00. It's because I want to train for the races on August 15! This is a really short notice, but one can always try.

After the rowing, a swim. We swim just in front of the Beurivage Hotel, where I met up with a friend from Hanoi, who is also training for the 15th! The Beurivage Hotel is the big attraction: it's here that before the war, I had the pleasure of seeing Charlie Chaplin and Paulette Godard, at the time of their world tour.¹²⁴

We return from our bath at 11:00, noses red from the sun and cooked arms. This afternoon I'm going to ask the doctor's wife if she will be my partner for the rowing competition. She really wants to, but only if she is guaranteed to win! We are training tomorrow and if it goes well, we'll sign up for the 15th.

At 6:00pm, I did a jump at tennis where I play like a fool. At night, exhausted, tired shoulders, red eyes and nose from too much sun, I go up to bed and sleep like a (rock).

¹²⁴ Charlie Chaplin made quite an impression in Vietnam, especially among the Vietnamese who came in droves to see him.

Saturday, August 14th

I get up at 6:00 so my partner isn't waiting for me. At 7:30, she's still not here. A little later, I get a message from her. She is tired and excuses herself! The race is sunk, and that's the real deal.

Sunday, August 15th

We go to mass at 6:30 at the Nha Trang church, which is found on hill and from where one receives a beautiful view of the ocean.

We arrive in time to take part in the first races at 8:00, which take place in front of the Cercle but at large.

We bathe then with Nicole before the races. The water is very crisp at this early hour and there are many little jellyfish, which luckily don't sting.

I reflect on the 15th at Tam Dao. Every year there are big sporting events, which I participate in, especially in swimming. There are also sack races, imitation competitions, and tennis tournaments. And at night fireworks and to end in a blaze of glory, a dance on the terrace of the Silver Falls Hotel. It's always very fun.

Tonight, in Nha Trang, like every night after dinner, we climb on our little hut on the terrace of the house. Mr. Rouelle built this little cagna for the kids.¹²⁵ There are beds with mosquito nets. It's Nicole and my domain for a few days.

From the terrace, we gaze out at the sea under the clear, blue night. On the horizon, we see some small, luminous points. These are the small fishermen boats. On

¹²⁵ Cagna = cai nhà, house

the moonless nights, we see them more clearly and it's like we can see lights from a faraway city/village.

Monday, August 16th

Ordinary vacation day: swim, tennis. This afternoon we push to the diving board in front of the Cercle, and do some "angel jumps" and "carp jumps." After dinner, we take a lovely walk in the moonlight on the still-lukewarm beach.

Tuesday, August 17th

With Nicole, we go all the way to the diving board of the Cercle with our boat: one after another because it is a single-seater, the other swimming behind. On the diving board, we find our group of friends. Laughing, gossiping, and diving. To come back, there are so many waves that we are obliged to push the canoe into the sea while to the end of the road, then to carry it on our backs to finish. We arrive at the house at 12:30, exhausted, and scarlet, where we are reprimanded because everyone is at the table!

This afternoon it rains. It's the first time since we've arrived in Nha Trang. So, no tennis. We play cards. They try to teach me how to play poker without much success.

We dine early because tonight we are accompanying Papa to the train station.

For him, the vacation, if we can call it that, is over. He has things to do in Hanoi and leaves us the car and the chauffeur for our return at the end of the month.

His train leaves at 9:20pm. We all accompany him on bicycles and return under the moonlight.

Wednesday, August 18th

The weather is still beautiful. So swimming and tennis.

Thursday, August 19th

After a sunny morning, a downpour comes down during the afternoon on the hut that we take cover under. It rains on the mosquito nets and in the beds. We will sleep in the house tonight.

Friday, August 20th

I start to peel seriously. The skin is all pink underneath like that of the little pigs in France (our Indochinese pigs are completely black with a stomach that sweeps the ground). It appears as though we are going on a hunt tonight. We take some bread, sausage, and tea.

After we are heartily eaten alive by the mosquitoes, we return empty-handed. The fishing boats wink on the horizon.

Saturday, August 21st

Mr. Rouelle anticipates a trip on the sea on Sunday. We must then get a small boat and we will go to Cauda for this. The water near the jetty was clear and we saw adorable blue fish, which swam amongst the corals and the little fish on the rocks. The sampaners caught us an urchin. There were beautiful boats anchored in the inlet. I have nostalgia for big trips.

Sunday, August 22nd

Get up at four in the morning. I'm sleepy. The moon sparkles and the sky is pure. Let's hope that the sea will be good. We leave in the car to go to Cauda. Here the fellow with whom we made an agreement with yesterday, tells us that we can't leave, that we have to make a reservation three days before the departure. After a lot of chitchat and a small augmentation in the price of the journey, we can go. But the evil fellow did not buy hooks so we can't fish!

Monday, August 23rd

Maine, Mr. Rouelle's oldest daughter, takes the train at 8:00, with her husband who is coming to get her. They leave for Saigon.

With this, we start to feel the end of vacation!

Tuesday, August 24th

We row for more than an hour in the morning, before our bath. But this afternoon, some new rainfall. Decidedly it's time for us to regain our Hanoi Penates.¹²⁶

Thursday, August 26th

Same program as yesterday. Bath before the morning rain. We went to the diving board. All along the beach, we could see schools of fish all ready. We could almost catch them with our bare hands!

¹²⁶ That is, Hanoi house gods.

There were large sharks. We know this by the curtain hoisted on the mast of the diving board. But we don't intend to provoke them. Certain days, certain ones of these creatures venture all the way under the jetty. And to discourage foolishness, we are frequently reminded of the story, true by the way, of two young guys who made a bet of swimming all the way to Crocodile Island. One followed the other in a boat. At halfway, one swimmer was attacked by a shark, which tore off one of his legs.

Friday, August 27th and Saturday, August 28th

We profit fully from these last days of vacation. Mama decided to leave on Sunday. We start, then, to repack the suitcases. We go for a bike ride the length of this immense beach avenue. We are going to the Institute of Oceanography on the Cauda side. Return to the city from the other side (crossing strong) little horse carts, which we call match boxes and which transport nuoc-mâm and shrimp pastries, which are very sweet smelling. We pass in front of the Yersin Institute, in front of the Beaurivage Hotel. We arrive in front of the diving board and we run into the dusty town to do some shopping.

Sunday, August 29th

It's the departure for Hanoi. We say some touching good-byes to our friends. The chauffeur had prepared the car and we have nothing left to do but to charge it. This time I'm going to sit up front by him to keep him awake in case it's needed. Mama and Nicole sit behind in the heat.

We are in an inverse sense going on our trip of two months.

But Papa isn't here, not only will we miss his charm, but again we will be hurried to return.

Good-bye Nha Trang. We again pass by the bridge, which links the small islands; we quickly pass the Cham tower of Ponagar. Our next town is Ninh Hoa, where Mr. Rouelle works at the Nieu Ba Distillery.

Then it's the [Cape] Varella from which I throw a nostalgic glance at our Isola Bella. I rapidly pass on the Tuy Hoa crossings and from its big bridge, from Sông Cau and its coconut trees, from Qui Nhon and its gold and silver Cham towers. We pass Bong Son and Tam Quan, the two villages, some coconut trees where we no longer desire to quench our thirst with coconut milk.

Here are the Sa Huynh salt pans. We aren't too far from Quang Ngai where we will sleep in the bungalow.

Monday, August 30th

We leave Quang Ngai rather early. The batteries of huge norias are still in place. Then it's Tam Ky and its lime kilns. Now it's Faifoo, the Chinese fishing village, which is very pleasant to see. Not too much trouble. At Tourane, we refresh ourselves at the Morin Hotel (as they allow us). We will take off soon. On the left is the road that goes to Ba Na, the Tourane altitude station.

Our next stop will be Hué, at more than 100 kilometers from here. It's a route full of magnificent views. Here's Nam Ô and its nuoc-mâm factories. The "Cloud Pass" that we will climb heartily. Lang Co and its lagoon. Another pass, that of Phu Gia

announces the next arrival at Hué. We are driving on an excellent section of the road. An enormous lagoon stretches out on our right. And here's Hué.

It's 5:00. Tea time. I have a friendly thought of Micheline, my best friend from high school who lives here and her father, who is the director of the private electric factory of Hué. But I won't be able to see it because we have to go sleep at Dong Hoi, where we held some rooms. So, good-bye Hué and its Perfume River, by the way not always scented.

We pass by Quang Tri, then after many ferries, we finish by arriving late at Dong Hoi and are slightly tired.

Tuesday, August 31st

After a good night spent at the bungalow, we leave fairly early because today's trip will be longer because we want to be in Hanoi tonight. We exit Dong Hoi by the ancient gate, which closes off the citadel. We drive along the sea on a ledge, bordered by sections of filao trees. After the sailor ferry, we are at Ron, a village by the sea. We then climb the Dal Hap Pass, then we descend again to drive at sea level, which we continue to follow, but not as close. There's the Vietnamese Gate up above and here's Ha Tinh that we rapidly drive through. We still see a bit of the sea.

And it's the Ben Thuy ferry that allows us to reach Vinh. The Vinh beach is Cua Lo. But one must go there especially and we don't have time to go bathe today.

All while following our road, which gets closer and then further from the sea and which I find rather monotonous, we finish by arriving at Thanh Hoa, then it's Ha Trung,

the last village of Annam [Protectorate]. We are going to enter Tonkin. The car seems to feel at home. It seems to me as though it is going/driving faster.

At Ninh Binh, stop at our friends' who offer us a refreshment. We are impatient to leave.

Now, it's the Do Len ferry. A bit further, Phu Ly. We are approaching the end.

Finally! It's Hanoi. And the car stops directly in front of 180 Grand Buddha Avenue. Here we are at our place. We're home.