

Lest We Forget

A History of How the U.S. Got Involved in Vietnam



By Jeff Drake

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Preface

How and why did the US get involved in Vietnam? Though these questions are old, they should still hold some interest. For the facts behind US involvement in Vietnam paint a very different history than the popular one taught in our schools or the history of the war which is currently being rewritten to match the public's highly emotional memories of the Kennedy "Camelot" years.

You may debate whether someone's intention was one thing or another, but the historical record speaks for itself. The information contained in this paper did not come from unreliable sources. Much of it is contained within our government's own prehistory of the war which it fought so hard to keep from the American public - the documents which later became known as the *Pentagon Papers*.

When one delves into the *Pentagon Papers* it becomes immediately clear why the government wanted them kept secret, for they expose the many lies that our government generated in order to get the American people strongly behind the war effort. Yet, the importance of these documents goes beyond their intrinsic historical value since they establish a precedence of governmental deceit that would be practiced again and again.

The media, however, continues to ignore the contents of these documents when discussing Vietnam either in print or on air. And herein lies the danger - for history that is hidden, unreported, or ignored because it is unpopular - *is destined to be repeated*. Just ask the people of Grenada, Nicaragua, Panama, Iraq and Somalia.

The Vietnam War, like any other war, was extremely ugly. But unlike other wars, there were many soldiers involved in the fighting who seriously opposed it. There was also a tremendous cross-section of the American public that came to oppose it - not on the grounds that we were going to lose - but on the grounds that it was *immoral* and just plain wrong.

This gathering of public opposition to immoral governmental policy from all walks of life and economic backgrounds was, whether you agreed with it or not, a fantastic exercise of real democracy and may well have been the most blatant exercise of democracy to occur in this century.

Later, this type of democratic activity would be referred to by the Trilateral Commission as a "crisis of democracy." Presidents Reagan and Bush would call it the "Vietnam syndrome" - as if public opposition to war and corrupt foreign policy was somehow sick or deranged behavior, to be avoided or somehow "cured".

As a soldier who initially supported the war effort full-heartedly and later came to oppose it, I, like many others, couldn't make sense of the military policy I was being ordered to carry out. Many of the troops rebelled against being treated as cannon fodder; others rebelled against the wanton destruction and murder that we were asked to carry out. None of us soldiers in the field had a real understanding of why we were in Vietnam. We were told that we were there to stop the communist menace. We were also told that we were there because the South Vietnamese asked us to save them from this same communist menace. But what we experienced didn't add up to what we were being told.

For twenty years I held the South Vietnamese soldier (ARVN) in contempt because I couldn't understand why so many of the ARVN's I saw obviously had no interest in fighting "their" war - the one they "asked us" to participate in. What I have learned through my research prior to writing this article has completely altered my perception of the Vietnam War and hence my understanding of this particular issue.

Part of my overall perception was indeed correct. That is, many ARVNs did not want to have anything to do with fighting the Vietcong. What was incorrect, however, was my belief that the South Vietnamese people had "asked" us to help them win the war. This request had not come from the South Vietnamese *people*; it had come from a

South Vietnamese *government*, whose existence was due solely to American support and interests. The ARVNs, many under the age of 17, had no choice in fighting and were often sympathetic to the cause of the Vietcong. Understanding this, I now feel little resentment towards the ARVNs I saw who were unwilling to fight, only sympathy. American soldiers and ARVNs alike were all unwitting cogs in the same terrible war machine.

Back home our government was busy proving that "disinformation" works. Although spreading "disinformation" is technically illegal when used against the American public by our own intelligence agencies, it was done continually through most of the Vietnam War to keep Congress towing the party line and the American public at bay. The disinformation campaigns and associated covert activities that were perpetrated over and over again to prevent a peaceful resolution to the Vietnam conflict are well documented, but like the Pentagon Papers, ignored in media discussions and most documentaries about the Vietnam War. In-depth media analysis on the subject of how the US got involved initially in Vietnam is almost nonexistent.

This paper is not an effort to paint the North Vietnamese as heroes and the US as villains or vice versa. In the jungle, it was hunt or be hunted. Reduced to animal behavior, soldiers on both sides reacted accordingly. Nor is this about guilt or accusations. I know that the blood I have on my hands will never wash clean. This is an effort to set the record straight, to enlighten, to do what I can to make a difference.

There is more to the US involvement in Vietnam than we have ever been allowed to think or know. The war has continuously been presented to the American public as "insane" and "crazy," (due in part to veterans like myself, who had no other words to describe our experiences). So labeled, people are simply discouraged from seeking the truth about the war. It is also easy to put aside a critical analysis when faced with the images of Marlon Brando in *Apocalypse Now*, or Oliver Stone's movie,

Platoon. But to do so is wrong. We owe it to the future generations of young men and women who will be called on to fight and die in foreign lands, to not give up on the truth so easily.

Be warned that the history disclosed in this document may not be the history you want to hear.

The chances are high that you may not feel that it is in your interest to read my ramblings about how the US got involved in Vietnam, but here I would beg to differ. Already, the same type of arrogant mistakes the US made in Vietnam have been made again, costing the lives of thousands more innocent victims. I believe that it is imperative that more people understand how the US got involved in Vietnam so that we do not continue to repeat it.

There is right now as I write this, a movement underway to bury and/or rewrite the past with regard to US intervention in Vietnam (and the rest of the 60's as far as that goes). It has been going on for some time, with a recent resurgence connected to the myth-building activities surrounding President John Kennedy. We would be remiss not to realize that there are people in positions of power in this country who would like the American public to forget the past, people who would like to take advantage of our forgetfulness. We owe it to the veterans of Vietnam, both Vietnamese and American, to make sure Vietnam doesn't happen again.

Remember that our government has a vested interest in not publicizing the truth about Vietnam, for the lies and misunderstandings about Vietnam have provided our government with the support it has needed to continue waging a 20+ year economic war against Vietnam, a war it has since won.

Author's Note



This paper was not written for publication. I wrote it for myself to document my findings, and for those of my friends who might have an intellectual interest in understanding the events that led to US involvement in Vietnam's civil war.

Due to this, I took the liberty of borrowing heavily from and paraphrasing certain written material (for brevity's sake) concerning Vietnam's history and have included many additional footnotes for the reader's benefit, should someone wish to delve deeper into the subject. I also quote extensively and cite sources as much as possible.

With the exception of the photo above (of me), all of the pictures in this paper are scanned from books I have on Vietnam. I spent a great deal of time cross-referencing material whenever I could to ensure its accuracy, and even went so far as to meet with Ralph McGehee, author of "Deadly Deceits: My 25 Years With the CIA."

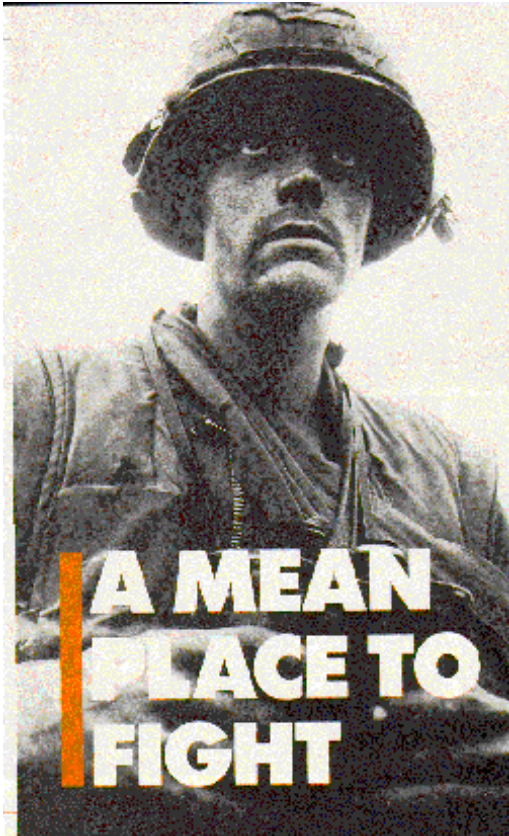
Ralph was a CIA case officer in Vietnam responsible for creating the methodology that was used for several years in determining communist strength in the villages of Vietnam. The results of his intelligence efforts strongly demonstrated that (contrary to American propaganda efforts of the time) South Vietnam was mostly communist. His findings were ignored by CIA management. Only information that supported the official foreign policy goals towards Vietnam at the time was permitted

to be passed on to the Administration (a practice still common with regard to other countries today). Ralph was punished for his unwillingness to let the issue rest and later his own studies would make him a staunch advocate of non-intervention policy and a severe critic of the Central Intelligence Agency. He has been interviewed for various television specials including Bill Moyer's "The Secret Government." Ralph provided me with additional insight into the Agency's involvement in the Vietnam War.

We cannot wait for the truth about Vietnam to be handed to us on a silver platter. We need to seek out the facts, and when we find them - understand them, expose them, spread them around.

And it is the facts that I would like to share with you...

Jeff Drake



Introduction

Surprisingly, the story behind this paper doesn't begin in Vietnam. It began in the spring of 1993 in Washington, DC.

It was an absolutely beautiful day to be visiting the nations' capital. Warm sunshine washing over the huge white buildings; people bustling about with their necks craned and stretched upwards to see the decorative architecture; blankets spread on the grass with kids begging for more pop, while their mom's and dad's tried to rest their aching feet.

My wife and I were resting our feet also. We had just run the gauntlet of names at the Vietnam Memorial. Tired from a day of touring, we parked our butts on the topmost step of the Lincoln Memorial. Staring out across the grounds, the Washington Monument stood at attention, gleaming in its sun-bleached uniform. Struck dumb by my experience at the Memorial and my inability

to remember the names of my dead friends, I just stared at the corner of the Vietnam Memorial that was visible from where I sat. Over and over I kept thinking, "How could we let this happen? There are 50,000 names on that wall. How could this happen? What did they die for?" Between my questions, I flashed back twenty-some years as the sound of a nearby White House helicopter dragged me into the past...

We're screaming down Vietnam's Highway One in a convoy. Draped over the side of the Deuce-and-a-half truck, I watch in fascination as the picture-postcard scenery zips past. Rice patties and farm land as far as you can see. Periodically, the picturesque view is accented with a Water Buffalo pulling ancient farm equipment, while behind it a small figure in black pajamas struggles knee-deep in the mud and water to keep up.

The villages we drive past are typical, and usually of little interest - except for today. As we push down the highway we notice thick black smoke coming up on our left, closer and closer.

This village doesn't look any different than any other, except for the fires and smoke, and the fact that overhead circle several Army gunships. The alleyways between the huts are littered with bodies, some still burning. The machine-gun fire comes in intense bursts and everywhere there are men, women and children running, trying to escape. They fall to the ground in apparent slow motion. None of them are armed. As we pass the scene, I imagine that I can hear their screams. I am imagining it, aren't I? The soldiers I am with cheer and wave from the back of our truck...

My reverie is broken by the sound of a jet overhead, its plume providing a patriotic backdrop to the Washington Monument. Haunted by the fresh memory, I fight back the tears. Again, I wonder about the 50,000 American dead, and for the very first time I allow myself to think about the 2,000,000+ Vietnamese war dead. How did it all begin? I promise myself then and there that I am going to seek a full understanding of the war

and how it all got started. This paper is the result of a 12-month effort to fulfill my promise.

For twenty years I have treated the exploration of my Vietnam experience like a bad love affair, one that is on again, off again. Sometimes embracing it with a fierce passion, other times attempting to distance myself from it, but failing miserably. Often seeking to understand it, but soon finding myself too close, too involved to see clearly - and then returning to it once again, hat in hand, to start over.

In hope of reconciliation, I have taken the time to do quite a lot of research on the subject of Vietnam, with a specific interest in answering the following questions:

- **Why did the US get involved in Vietnam?** Vietnam is thousands of miles away from the US. It was a backward little country, almost primitive in comparison. What possible interest did the US have in such a place? The public was told from the very beginning that we had to stop the communist menace in Vietnam or other countries would soon follow suit; that we had to defend the democratic South Vietnamese government against the gathering Red hordes. Was that really true? Did our leaders really believe that?
- **Who were the Vietcong?** I went through 19 months in Vietnam thinking that the Vietcong constituted an uprising against a "democratically elected" government; that the Vietcong were nothing more than a group of "upstarts" and troublemakers, indoctrinated and solicited by the North to cause trouble in the South. Everyone I knew believed the same thing. Were we right?

Repeatedly, US soldiers (myself included) complained about our inability to determine friend from foe – farmer or cab driver by day, guerrilla by night. We soldiers knew that the towns and hamlets were literally crawling with what we called, "Vietcong sympathizers," but that just seemed to be

one more "crazy" thing about Vietnam. We were too busy with the day-to-day affairs of the war to worry about inconsistencies between what we were told and what we knew to be true. Besides, we weren't supposed to think about what we were doing. But who were the Vietcong? Why were there so many of them? And why did they fight so hard for what appeared to us to be so little?

- **Why were we lied to?** With the release of the *Pentagon Papers*, which the government had fought so hard against, the truth about Vietnam could begin to be known. In the *Pentagon Papers*, all the details about the planning of the war - the scheming, the misguided reasoning - are laid bare. Memos and meeting notes that show the thought processes behind many of our critical military and political decisions regarding the war are compiled in book form, for our perusal. A solid foundation for understanding our involvement in Vietnam can be found in those pages. Did our government lie to us about Vietnam? Most certainly. It's an undisputed fact. Why?

Many believe that Russia was behind the North Vietnamese "invasion." But did you know that in the beginning of our involvement in the war there was virtually no hard evidence connecting Russia with North Vietnamese military actions in the South? And as for the so-called North Vietnamese "invasion," there were never any confirmed sightings of North Vietnamese regular forces in South Vietnam until 1965, a full eleven years after the start of our involvement in the Vietnam War! So who were we fighting all this time? Who was our government supporting and why? Exactly from whom were we saving Vietnam?



Indochina

Vietnam, as most everyone knows, is a country that has been no stranger to war. Many in fact, chalk up our own involvement in Vietnam as just another war in a long progression of warfare that has been Vietnam's history, as if the wars that have occurred there are somehow due to the "nature" of the Vietnamese, or just part of the existence of Southeast Asia. To be sure, warfare has been a mainstay of the Vietnamese for many years. But to assume that warfare is just a natural part of existence for the Vietnamese like the monsoon season, (and therefore look no further for the causes of these wars) does the Vietnamese a great injustice - borders on racism - and in fact, denies history itself. To put US involvement in Vietnam in a proper context, you need to go back into Vietnam's past - way, way back...

On Vietnam's northern border lies China. The Vietnam peninsula extends southward from China in the form of an "S" shape. Cambodia, Laos and Thailand make up the

western border of Vietnam (*I could see Cambodia from the top of our mountain site*). Both the north and the south of Vietnam have rich delta areas. As a result, these areas have been described as two rice baskets suspended on the ends of a peasant's carrying pole, for these two areas produce almost all of Vietnam's rice. Although these two regions only make up a quarter of Vietnam's total area, up to the early 1960's they supported almost the entire five-sixths of the ethnic Vietnamese population.

Vietnam is your traditional "melting-pot." In the northern delta area (a hilly and mountainous region) are several groups of Thai who speak languages closer to Thai and Laotian than to Vietnamese. And the hill and plateau areas of Central Vietnam have other, distinctly non-Vietnamese groups. These people were originally displaced centuries ago from the more fertile coastal regions by the Vietnamese as they pushed south from their original home in the northern Red River delta. These hill people, together with some Thai tribes in the North, and some smaller non-Vietnamese groups scattered throughout the interior, constitute what the French termed the Montagnards - mountain people living almost exclusively in the mountains and plateau areas that make up three-quarters of the country. (*The Montagnards are a people I knew and had tremendous respect for during my two tours in Vietnam.*)

In the southern part of the peninsula, south of the Mekong delta, reside around 700,000 Cambodians, in a district that used to belong to the Kingdom of Cambodia. In addition, during the early 1960's, there were over a million Chinese in Vietnam, living mostly in the South, especially around Saigon (now called Ho Chi Minh City) and Cholon.

Vietnam's near proximity to China naturally led to very close political and cultural ties between the two countries. Even as early as 221 B.C., the Chinese sent garrisons to the northern Red River delta area of Vietnam. In fact, a combined Sino-Vietnamese kingdom existed there from 207 B.C. until 111 B.C.

Naturally, the Vietnamese were influenced considerably by the Chinese, absorbing Confucian social and political values in addition to a hierarchical system of Mandarin bureaucracy which included a civil service examination system and the study of Chinese classics. Like the experience in China, the Mandarin-style of administration adopted by the Vietnamese was ill suited to cope with rapid change and eventually led to problems.

Although the Vietnamese obviously admired many facets of Chinese society, enough of their own culture remained active to build up resentment to Chinese rule and eventually mounted a revolt. In 939 A.D. the Vietnamese won their freedom from the Chinese.¹ Later in the 13th century they would again fight off the invasion of Kublai Khan, and would continually repel subsequent efforts of the Chinese to regain control of their country up through the 15th century.² For hundreds of years, the Vietnamese effort to win and stay free from the Chinese would form the basis of their own brand of nationalism.

Interestingly, the ethnic Vietnamese originally lived only in the northern part of the country. Their early efforts to move south were continually barred by an Indonesian kingdom called Champa that occupied the south. The Vietnamese finally defeated this kingdom in 1471, but it would be the 17th century before the Vietnamese would push as far south as the Mekong River delta. (The Vietnamese occupation of the southern part of the country was actually still underway in the 18th and 19th century, when the French first arrived.)

In the 17th and 18th centuries, all of Vietnam was ruled from the northern cities of Hanoi and Hue. As you might imagine, it was difficult for the government located all the way up in northern Hue to govern the southern part of the country, but they finally managed it by the first half of the 19th century. Unfortunately for the Vietnamese, the French brought this brief period of north-south unification to an end.

Enter: The French

No strangers to world-affairs, the Vietnamese rulers watched warily as the French and the British defeated China. In an effort to avoid a similar fate, Vietnamese governors attempted to keep out Western influence and commerce by repressing the French missionaries already firmly entrenched in Vietnam. Unfortunately, this act was all the pretext the French (ever eager to expand their colonies) needed to justify launching an attack against Vietnam.

In 1857, the French attacked the Vietnamese city of Tourane (now called Da Nang), and soon followed this up with the capture of Saigon in 1859. By 1867, the French had completely conquered the southernmost part of Vietnam (then called Cochin China) and made it a French colony.

In 1883, the French moved against the remainder of the Vietnamese state and subsequently took over what was left of the south (then called Annam) and the north (then called Tonkin). The Vietnamese continually struggled to regain their freedom and fought the French with armed resistance until 1917.

The French were very authoritarian and concentrated their control in the cities (the Montagnards located in the hills were left relatively undisturbed by the French). By 1930 there were as many French civil servants in Vietnam as British civil servants in India where the population was 12 times as large.

The French left the Vietnamese economy much as it was - predominantly agrarian, with the peasantry constituting 80 percent of the population. The southernmost part of the country, Cochin China, was by far the most profitable of the three districts of the country (North, Central and South Vietnam) and therefore the place where the French put all of their money.

The reason the south was so profitable was that most of the usable land was in this part of the country and owned by either the French or the Vietnamese aristocracy. The majority of the Vietnamese population

worked either as laborers or tenant farmers, but all were heavily taxed. However, even with the heavy taxes, Vietnam was a financial disaster for the French government, as most of the profits of their plunder went into the pockets of French investors with good connections to the French Parliament.

Although a few things such as communications, public health, and flood control improved under the French occupation, there was one thing the French were definitely not going to improve for the Vietnamese - their educational system. Granted, there were a few schools that some lucky Vietnamese could attend, but these educated Vietnamese were then discriminated against by the French and were refused jobs in the civil service or with French businesses. This blatant racism outraged the Vietnamese and created an atmosphere of resentment that contributed to the development of a Vietnamese-nationalist movement.³

This political movement would get unsolicited assistance from an unlikely source - the First World War. A little known fact is that over 1,000,000 Vietnamese fought for the French during this war!

Exposed to the world, observing new political ideals, and returning to a colonial occupation of their own country (by a ruler that many of them had fought and died for), resulted in some rightfully sour attitudes. As a result, many of these returning troops sought out and joined the Vietnamese nationalist movement focused on overthrowing the French.

The Vietnamese continued some sincere efforts at changing the colonial government through the political process, but all ended in frustration. Indeed, nationalists who attempted to change things through legal political activity soon found themselves in jail or worse. And as more and more Vietnamese turned to the nationalist movement, the French repression became more and more severe. Eventually, the only effective alternative left to the nationalists was to go "underground." And so, in the 1920's the first underground nationalist party was formed. Called the Vietnamese Nationalist Party, it was patterned after the

Chinese Nationalist Party (known as the Kuomintang). It had one major political objective: *overthrowing the French*.

Needless to say, the French weren't too keen on this idea and as soon as they found out about it they stomped this organization out of existence. Its leaders fled to nearby China. Afterwards, the underground struggle for sovereignty and against colonialism was taken up by different clandestine communist organizations. (In 1930, three such groups would shed their disagreements and form a union called the Indochinese Communist Party, under a man named... *Ho Chi Minh* - then referred by his followers as (Nguyen the Patriot⁴)

Ho Chi Minh

To get a good understanding of Vietnam's political climate prior to US-involvement cannot be accomplished without some knowledge of Ho Chi Minh. As the war ensued, the US media demonized Ho Chi Minh, but in reality no one personified the Vietnamese nationalist movement more than Ho.

Ho was born in 1892 in the northern part of Vietnam. His father, a Mandarin official, had his life shortened by the French who shot him for his anti-French activities. In 1911 at the age of 19, Ho left Vietnam on a French merchant ship.⁵ He lived in London for a while, working as an assistant chef at the Carleton Hotel.⁶ According to one of Ho's closest associates, Ho lived in the United States, in Harlem, for a short period of time. (Later, while living in Moscow, Ho wrote a pamphlet called "The Black Race," which was highly critical of American and European racial practices⁷).

Ho returned to France in 1917 (or 1918) and worked as a photographer's assistant. Like his father before him, he soon became involved in the political activity of the Vietnamese community (in France). Eventually he got some political articles published and joined the French Socialist Party. (The majority of this party, including Ho, would later break off and form the French Communist Party in 1920.⁸) Ho

became the Party's specialist on colonial affairs and was sent as a delegate to Moscow for the Peasant's International meeting, representing the French colonial territories. Ho was well received and got promoted to the Soviet Comintern. He then became involved with Russian assistance to the Chinese Kuomintang. (This was a particularly interesting period in world history, when Russian communists and non-communists alike, all worked together for common causes.) In 1925, while in Canton China, Ho Chi Minh shaped the Vietnamese refugees living there into what became known as the Vietnamese Revolutionary Youth, the precursor to the Vietnamese Communist Party.

When the Chinese Kuomintang party fell into disarray and split into the communists and Chiang Kai-shek's followers, Ho was forced to leave Canton and went to Moscow, where he stayed until 1928⁹. Ho then traveled to Siam (Thailand) and arrived in Hong Kong in 1930, where he reconciled the differences of the three competing communist groups and formed the Vietnamese Communist Party (later renamed the Indochinese Communist Party). Party headquarters was set up in Haiphong, a northern part of Vietnam. In 1931, Ho was arrested by the British in Hong Kong and spent the next eighteen months in jail. After his release, Ho went to Shanghai, China, and then again returned to Russia.¹⁰

While Ho was busy in Hong Kong from May 1930 to September 1931, the Vietnamese farmers were also busy and participated in several revolts against the French, especially in Ho's native province. Members of Ho's recently established Vietnamese Communist Party lent their assistance to the farmer revolutionaries by offering leadership, and became quite successful. Several of the peasant rebels would later rise to prominence as Ho's lieutenants - Pham Vong Dong, Vo Nguyen Giap, and Truong Chinh. These three ended up getting arrested along with a number of other communists and non-communist revolutionaries as the French brutally put down the resistance. During the 1930s, several thousand political prisoners were held in Vietnamese jails and penal settlements.

By the time World War II began, despite intense pressure from the French, the communists still controlled the best-organized and strongest anti-French underground groups. Being an effective nationalist organization, they naturally attracted a large number of people who were not communist, but shared the desire to rid their country of the French. This was the beginning of a fusion of communism and nationalism that would later develop much further during both the Japanese occupation of Vietnam and the nine-year effort by the French to destroy the Vietnamese independence forces.

The Japanese Occupation

As World War II warmed up and the Japanese moved into Vietnam, Ho Chi Minh (living in China) moved to China's southern border, just north of the Vietnamese city of Tonkin.¹¹ The Japanese occupation of Vietnam meant that Chiang Kai-shek and his generals had an important objective in common with Ho Chi Minh and his communist organization -- the undermining of the newly established Japanese power on China's southern flank.

Following the Nazi invasion of France in 1940, the Japanese served a number of nasty ultimatums to the French in Indochina. The French made numerous appeals for assistance to the Allies, but were unsuccessful and eventually the French gave in to the Japanese. In their settlement, the Japanese recognized French authority in Indochina and left the French in charge of local administration and security functions. In return, the French gave the Japanese the right of passage through Indochina, as well as control over local military facilities and the country's economic resources. Not a bad deal... *for the Japanese*.

Unlike other Japanese occupations, where the Japanese often offered the promise of independence in return for local cooperation, the Japanese depended on the French administrative structure already in place. This meant that Vietnamese nationalists were not offered what they wanted - independence, and were still relegated to

seeking out underground organizations for support. The communists, with the most developed underground organization, fit the bill. And since Ho and his followers were strongly emphasizing nationalism over communism, they attracted a large number of non-communists. (This is an important point - *nationalism* would always be more important to the movement than communism).

In fact, had Ho been too closely associated with Chinese communism, the Vietnamese' justifiable fear of a possible reassertion of Chinese domination could have worked against him and weakened his chances of attracting non-communists to his group. However, since his communist development had happened in Russia, Ho was regarded as more pro-Russian than pro-Chinese. In addition, he had successfully established himself as a Vietnamese leader well before the rise to power of Mao Tse Tung. For Ho, Vietnam - his country - came before any ideology.¹² All these factors worked to his favor.

What was left of the Indochinese Communist Party met with Ho in May of 1941 in South China, near the border of Tonkin. Here they established the Vietnam Doc Lap Dong Minh Hoi (Vietnamese Independence League), otherwise known as the Vietminh. (The Vietminh was a strongly nationalist party, led primarily by the Indochinese Communist party, but attempted to attract Vietnamese patriots of all political hues in a common struggle against the French. The Vietminh would become the principal vehicle of Vietnamese nationalism in the thirteen-year struggle that eventually ended in France's defeat and the Geneva conference of 1954.)

By the end of 1943, small groups of Vietminh commandos were penetrating into Tonkin, led by Vo Nguyen Giap,¹³ the future strategist of Dienbienphu and eventual Commander in Chief of the armies of North Vietnam. By 1945, the Vietminh controlled wide regions of the northernmost provinces and had engaged the full attention of most of the Japanese 21st Division.¹⁴

Being the only recognized force of some strength opposing the Japanese, the Vietminh received support from the

American OSS (Office of Strategic Services). In return, the Vietminh helped rescue downed pilots and provided important intelligence information to OSS agents. A number of OSS officers voiced their admiration for the Vietminh and helped convince OSS leaders to back the Vietminh's struggle for independence.¹⁵

The Vietnamese were in fact, banking on receiving American support for their independence movement due to Roosevelt's Atlantic Charter, which emphasized self-determination for all peoples -- not merely Europeans. In addition, the Vietnamese listened carefully to broadcasts from the US Office of War Information, which often cited US support for colonial peoples struggling for their freedom, and they believed what they heard.

In 1945, with an Allied victory imminent, the Japanese incarcerated the French troops and civil servants and assumed the positions of authority they had previously left to the French. In desperation, they also made some feeble attempts to establish a Vietnamese nationalist government, including offering a nominal grant of independence in order to secure some Vietnamese support. The Japanese appointed a man named Bao Dai to head this "independent" state. (Bao Dai had previously been employed as the French-controlled emperor (i.e. puppet) of the southern part of Vietnam.) The Japanese didn't have much time or inclination to build much support for Bao Dai, which meant he was incredibly weak.

With the French officials and troops locked up, the Japanese were unable to control the countryside and the Vietminh soon moved closer to Hanoi. Ho Chi Minh, apparently anticipating the fall of the Japanese, was prepared to strike when it occurred. Two days after the surrender of the Japanese to the Allies, pro-Vietminh elements in Hanoi staged an uprising. The very next day the Vietminh forces entered Hanoi and seized the city without resistance. A few days later Bao Dai abdicated, turning over the Great Seal to the Vietminh and unabashedly offering to serve in Ho's government (this guy was an incredible opportunist).

On August 29, the Vietminh formed the "Provisional Government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam" with its capital in Hanoi. On September 2, 1945, Ho Chi Minh formally proclaimed Vietnam's independence.¹⁶

Meanwhile, Vietminh forces in the south moved to consolidate control over the area that was known as Cochin China. The forces involved in this effort sometimes used clumsy methods and sometimes were brutal. As a result, the Vietminh alienated several key groups they needed for support. A prewar opponent, the Trotskyite communists resisted and were repressed by the Vietminh. Religious sects such as the Cao Dai and the Hoa Hoa blamed the Vietminh for the deaths of several of their leaders and became antagonized towards the Vietminh. These were important losses for the Vietminh because of these groups' well organized and clearly defined territorial bases, and the fact that they had been trained and given arms by the Japanese. The French would later take advantage of this hostility by paying subsidies to the leaders of these sects to withhold support for the Vietminh.

Ho's other lieutenants showed better judgment and had a great deal of success with the population. Remember, Ho's primary interest was in gaining nationalist support for his organization. In fact, his nationalist desire was bigger than his desire to court communist support and in November 1943, Ho disbanded the Indochinese Communist Party. Both communists and pro-communists retained key positions in the government, but many non-communists were also given sufficient responsibilities to ensure their continued support. Soon, Ho Chi Minh gained the support and admiration of both communists and non-communists alike as their outstanding leader in Vietnam's struggle against the French, and as a symbol of the new Vietnamese nationalism.

France and the Vietminh

As Japan faced defeat at the hands of the Allies, the Vietminh looked forward to Allied

support in any future struggle against French colonialism. After all, the Vietminh had given valuable war support to the Allies, and in return Ho expected support and recognition for his newly established government, the Democratic Republic of Vietnam. A statement to this effect was even included in his government's Declaration of Independence, established on September 2, 1945, which stated: "We are convinced that the allied nations... will not refuse to acknowledge the independence of Viet Nam."

Note that it is no accident that Ho would mention his expectation of US support in their Declaration of Independence. After all, Ho was a big fan of the United States. He reportedly displayed a picture of George Washington on his wall and kept a copy of the American Declaration of Independence on his desk. Indeed, the actual Vietnamese Declaration of Independence begins: "All men are created equal. They are endowed by their creator with certain inalienable rights, among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness."¹⁷ The Vietnamese admired Americans quite a lot, at the time.

But France had other ideas. The French postwar government immediately undertook steps to regain control over Vietnam. The United States and Russia were apparently too interested in maintaining good relations with France (and dividing up the world) than supporting self-determination in Vietnam.

Allied plans for postwar Vietnam became clear with the Potsdam Agreement in July 1945. This Agreement stipulated that British forces were to occupy the southern half of Vietnam, up to the 16th parallel. Chiang Kai-shek's Chinese forces were to take the country north of the 16th parallel. Under Potsdam, these forces were restricted to "the round-up and disarming of the Japanese, and the "Recovery of Allied Prisoners of War and Internees."

However, the actual behavior of the Allied occupation went way beyond this limited assignment. The Commander of the British occupation forces, Major-General Douglas Gracey, exceeded both the limits of the Potsdam Agreement and his superior, Admiral Mountbatten, who had specifically

told him to confine his troops (British and Indian) to the "tasks which had been set."

Gracey, with few troops of his own, relied upon the Japanese forces he was supposed to be disarming to control Saigon and the surrounding areas and keep the Vietminh forces at bay. Gracey also rearmed the 5,000 newly released French troops and permitted them to launch a coup d'etat on September 23, by which the French (once again) seized control of the Saigon government from the Vietminh.

Combined British-Indian and Japanese forces joined in battle against the Vietminh until the French could take over. By this time, Gracey had enabled the French to take over several other districts and eliminate the new Vietminh administration. By December 1945, French forces in the British occupation zone of the South had reached approximately 50,000, and General Gracey prepared to withdraw, having fulfilled what he regarded as his mission¹⁸ (and having satisfied his own imperialistic tendencies).

The Chinese Kuomintang army occupying the North also deviated from the Potsdam Agreement, but in a different way. Their forces of over 180,000 (far more than was required) showed more interest in looting the countryside than rounding up the Japanese. Still, the Chinese recognized Ho's regime in Hanoi as the de facto government and allowed it to function with considerable freedom, although they had replaced some Vietminh administrators with their own in Northern Tonkin.

But the weight of the Chinese occupation (both politically and economically) was enough to force the Vietminh into accepting some of France's demands in order to secure the evacuation of Chiang Kai-shek's forces from the northern part of the country. On February 28th, 1946, Chiang Kai-shek agreed to withdraw his forces within three months.

With both the British and the Chinese finally gone, the Vietminh came under direct pressure from the French. By this time it was obvious that Ho Chi Minh would be receiving no aid from either the US or Russia. Indeed, from Ho's perspective he had been

abandoned by the entire international community and left alone to deal with France. Economic disaster spurred by the Chinese occupational forces and starvation due to Allied bombing of some key Northern dams strengthened France's position. On March 6th, 1946, Ho Chi Minh felt compelled to reach a compromise with the French.

Essentially, Ho was forced to make the maximum concessions possible short of forfeiting his dominant position within the Vietnamese nationalist movement. It took everything Ho could do to quell the dissatisfaction of other various nationalist groups with this agreement.

Another little known fact - during 1945 to 1946, Ho Chi Minh had written at least eight letters to Truman and the State Department, asking for America's help in winning Vietnam's independence from the French. Ho wrote that world peace was being endangered by French efforts to reconquer Indochina and he requested that the four powers (US, USSR, China and Great Britain) intervene in order to mediate a fair settlement and bring the Indochinese issue before the United Nations. This was a remarkable repeat of history, for in 1919 following the First World War, Ho Chi Minh had appealed to US Secretary of State Robert Lansing to gain America's help in achieving basic civil liberties and an improvement in the living condition for the colonial subjects of French Indochina. This plea was also ignored and no admission was even made at the time that the US had even received the letters.¹⁹

Under the 1946 agreement, France could reintroduce 15,000 troops into the northern part of the country in order to relieve the few remaining Chinese occupation forces. The understanding was that every year, 3000 French troops would then withdraw, until by 1951 none would remain. In return for this concession, France recognized Ho's Democratic Republic of Vietnam as a "free state, having its own government, parliament, army and treasury, forming part of the Indochinese Federation and the French Union." The French also agreed to stand by the results of a referendum in Cochin China (South Vietnam) which would decide whether Cochin China would reunite

with the central and northern regions of the country.

Although this agreement resulted in an uneasy truce, it was soon made obvious that France had no intention of allowing Cochin China to unite with the rest of Vietnam. (Remember that Cochin China is where France had made all of its investments and was making all of its profits). Thumbing their noses at the Vietminh, on June 1, 1946, the French set up a separate government in Cochin China and recognized it as a "free Republic." This move, together with France's recognition of North Vietnam only as a free republic within a French Union, clearly indicated that France intended to regain control of all of Vietnam. Ho had unfortunately entered into an armistice with France on the basis of promises that the French never intended to be fulfilled.

During the summer of 1946, further negotiations between the French and the Vietnamese broke down and relations between them worsened rapidly, aggravated by small incidents. This tension peaked on November 23, when the French bombed Haiphong and killed at least 6,000 Vietnamese.²⁰ The outraged Vietminh retaliated with coordinated attacks against the French in Hanoi, which touched off major hostilities. These events marked the beginning of a war that would soon spread throughout Vietnam.

The War with the French

For the next eight years the French fought the Vietminh. The French, due to their superior fire power continued to control the cities, but the Vietminh controlled the countryside (and more and more of it as time went by).

One is tempted to ask the following question: *Why did the French, who were losing money on Vietnam, continue to pour more money, time, and effort, into keeping it?* After all, as early as 1950, the French military expenditure in Vietnam surpassed the total of all French investments in Vietnam, and although a few investors made enormous profits, they were not influential

enough to determine French foreign policy. So why throw more good money down a hole?

The answer is that the official attitude in Paris toward Indochina had more to do with the psychological and political factors of the French imperialist ideology than economic reasons.

Consider: France had already experienced a major defeat in World War II. Most Frenchmen would consider having one of their colonies throw them out on their ear as a further loss of national dignity. They also feared that if the Vietnamese won independence from them, restless nationalists in their other colonies such as Algeria, Morocco, and Tunisia would be inspired to follow their example.

By the end of 1947, the increased popularity of Ho Chi Minh throughout all of Vietnam and the Vietminh's control of the countryside convinced the French that they would not defeat the Vietminh by pure military means. The French therefore attempted to establish an indigenous Vietnamese regime to compete politically with the Vietminh.

Although France would pull the strings, they wanted this group to have enough of an appearance of independence to attract substantial nationalist support away from the Vietminh. So, the French chose (oh surprise!) Bao Dai, the former emperor of Annam (and Japanese favorite son). After much bargaining, Bao Dai agreed to serve on the condition that all of Vietnam would be "independent... within the French Union." Additional negotiations concluded with the Elysee Agreements of March 1949, although the French didn't get around to ratifying these agreements until January 29, 1950.

Under the Elysee Agreements, no real independence would be granted the Vietnamese, only a limited autonomy. France would retain actual control of Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos. These countries could all have their own armies, but in time of war France was given the right to take control and could use its army as it wished. In fact, so many controls were given to the French under this agreement that the new State of Vietnam was completely under

French control. The result was that Bao Dai's government didn't have enough of an air of independence to attract many nationalists.

The Vietnamese being no dummies, knew that Bao Dai was under France's orders and therefore his rule meant French rule. This left the Vietnamese with a narrow band of choices: either the French or the Vietminh. This soon grew even narrower as the French, in a bungled effort to damage the Vietminh, started labeling everyone who opposed Bao Dai as "communist." For more and more of the people, the name "communist" soon came to mean something good, something patriotic, representing nationalism and opposition to the French. (One can't help but wonder if the French weren't hoping to attract American attention by appealing to our (then and still current) communist-threat paranoia).

Meanwhile, the French military was failing miserably even though they had, by the end of 1949, poured \$1.5 billion into the war effort. The Vietminh clearly had the initiative and were destined to win even though they had inferior arms. This was due to their vast support and popularity, something the French could never muster (and the US military could never recognize or admit publicly during our own war).

It wasn't until 1949 that the US showed any real interest in Indochina. Up to this time, Washington was more interested in maintaining France's cooperation with the European defense alliances. Major US support for the French did not come until mid-1949, when the Communists took over China. Later, when Chinese troops entered Korea, the US disposition to aid the French grew even more and Washington became adamantly opposed to any French-negotiated end to the war that would leave the Vietminh in power and the Chinese free to concentrate on their Korean border. A policy to contain the Chinese occupied the Truman administration and Paris endeavored with some success to convince Washington that the French campaign in Vietnam helped sustain that policy.²¹

In 1952, the US exerted strong pressure on France to reject peace "feelers" extended by

the Vietminh and as a result a French delegation scheduled to meet with the Vietminh in Burma was hastily recalled. (Bernard Fall, a renowned French scholar on Indochina, believed that the canceled negotiations "could perhaps have brought about a cease-fire on a far more acceptable basis" for the French "than the one obtained two years later in the shadow of a crushing military defeat."²²

To strengthen its policy (and perhaps provide some substance to its paranoia), Washington assigned its intelligence services the task of demonstrating that Ho Chi Minh was a puppet of Moscow or Peking (either would do). However, despite diligent efforts, Vietnam was the only country they couldn't find evidence of "Kremlin-directed conspiracy," which made it kind of an anomaly. Nor could any links with China be detected. So the intelligence services therefore concluded that Moscow considered the Vietminh to be so "sufficiently loyal" as "to be trusted to determine their day-to-day policy without supervision." Thus, in a twisted-logic sort of way, it was the Vietminh's lack of contact with US enemies that somehow proved the vast designs of the "Evil Empire."²³

Truman linked his decision to send troops to Korea with increased arms shipments to the French in Indochina and assistance to Nationalist China in Formosa. In addition, to bolster public support, France's position in Vietnam was now being described to the American public in terms of the Free World stance against communist expansionism, and Washington quickly ceased to perceive the war in Vietnam as strictly a colonial conflict. Now linked to the Cold War, Vietnam was regarded as an area of strategic importance to the US.

The communist victory in China led Washington to exhibit less circumspection in assessing the nature of the political struggle in Vietnam. Anti-communist fever preempted everything else. Although Washington had never considered Bao Dai capable of delivering national support for his movement, by mid-1949 the Truman Administration began to depict him as a staunch patriot, capable of standing up to Ho Chi Minh and worthy of American

respect and aid. Seven months before the Elysee Agreements had been ratified, the US indicated its support of the Bao Dai regime. On February 7, 1950, a week after the ratification, the US extended diplomatic recognition to Bao Dai's puppet government.

Military support also began building. American bombers, military advisors and technicians by the hundreds were to follow. From 1950 to 1954, authorized US aid had reached \$1.4 billion and constituted 78 percent of the French budget for the war.²⁴ In other words, the US was paying for the French war. The extensive written history of the American role in Indochina produced by the Defense Department, which later became known as the Pentagon Papers, concluded that the decision to provide aid to France "directly involved" the US in Vietnam and "set the course" for future American policy.²⁵

Only after it became clear that the agreements were going to be ratified and that the international community was going to rally behind Bao Dai, did Ho request diplomatic recognition from Peking and Moscow. They responded promptly. The Cold War had now officially entered the Vietminh-French dispute. Understandably, the significant aid that followed as a show of support for Bao Dai helped make the Vietnamese somewhat cynical about US protestations of its commitment to national self-determination and political freedom.

The French insisted that all aid money flow to Bao Dai through France. Still representing Bao Dai to the American public as a popular figure with a sizable following, Washington continued to spin the French-Vietnamese war in a positive light, basing their information on unreliable French communiqués almost up to the very eve of Dienbienphu and publicly stating that the Vietminh's defeat was imminent. Due to Ho's being a communist, Congress and the American public were more susceptible to believing the myth about Bao Dai and less inclined to question the huge US aid commitment to France's war effort.

What must be remembered here is that for anyone to claim that Ho Chi Minh's primary and sole interest was the promotion and

spread of communism is to ignore his entire life's work. It's just not true. Everything that is known about Ho points to the fact that he was primarily interested in winning independence and unity for his country. And the people at the topmost echelon of our government who were publicly claiming that the "communist hordes" in Vietnam only wanted to spread communism were wrong, and many of them knew it.

Despite France's own imminent defeat, the US kept up the pressure to make sure that France would not negotiate a settlement. The US used the threat of ending the tremendous US aid to encourage French compliance. (This prompted a French newspaper at the time to comment that "the Indochina War has become France's number one dollar-earning export.")²⁶

By mid-1953, France had lost her authority over all but a small portion of the country to the Vietminh. In September, France, with strong US encouragement, tried one last military effort to achieve a position of strength for their negotiations with the Vietminh. This offensive soon evolved into a series of French military reverses and the loss of more territory to the Vietminh.

The CIA-owned airline, CAT (Civil Air Transport), helped the French airlift 16,000 men into a fortified base the French had established in the north, called Dienbienphu. When the garrison was later surrounded and cut off by the Vietminh, CAT pilots, flying US Air Force C-119's, often through heavy anti-aircraft fire, delivered supplies to the French forces.

In April 1954, when the French military defeat was obvious and negotiations were being scheduled at Geneva, the National Security Council urged President Eisenhower to "inform Paris that French acquiescence in a Communist takeover of Indochina would bear on its status as one of the Big Three" and that "US aid to France would automatically cease."²⁷ A Council paper recommended that "It be US policy to accept nothing short of a military victory in Indo-China" and that the US "actively oppose any negotiated settlements in Indo-China at Geneva." The Council stated further that, if necessary, the US should

consider continuing the war without French participation.²⁸

The Eisenhower Administration had of course, been considering the use of American combat troops in Vietnam for some time. Apparently this move was not made only because of uncertainty about Congressional approval and the fact that every other country had refused to send even a token force to the area, as they had done in Korea, thus removing the appearance of a purely American operation.²⁹ "We are confronted by an unfortunate fact," lamented Secretary of State John Foster Dulles at a 1954 cabinet meeting. "Most of the countries of the world do not share our view that Communist control of any government anywhere is in itself a danger and a threat."³⁰ The Eisenhower Administration realized that "This need was particularly acute because there was no incontrovertible evidence of overt Red Chinese participation in the Indochinese conflict." Thwarted, Eisenhower refused to send the troops.

Dienbienphu turned out to be the biggest battle of the war and ended in the French garrison being overrun. The whole world now realized that France's military power in Vietnam had suffered a significant defeat.

Back home, Washington was buzzing with the fallout from the news. In May, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Admiral Radford, sent a memorandum to Defense Secretary Charles Wilson that stated that "The employment of atomic weapons is contemplated in the event that such course appears militarily advantageous."³¹

General Charles Willoughby, MacArthur's director of intelligence, put it more poetically when he advocated the use of atomic bombs in Vietnam to create "a belt of scorched earth across the avenues of communism to block the Asiatic hordes."³²

By this time, two American aircraft carriers equipped with atomic weapons had been ordered into the Gulf of Tonkin in the north of Vietnam, and Dulles is said to have offered his French counterpart, Georges

Bidault, atomic bombs to save Dienbienphu. Bidault was obliged to point out to Dulles that the use of atomic weapons in such close conflict would destroy the French troops as well as the Vietminh.³³

The Geneva Conference

As the time for the Geneva conference approached, a CIA propaganda team located in Singapore began to disseminate fabricated news items to advance the idea that "the Chinese were giving full-armed support to the Vietminh" and to "identify" the Vietminh "with the world Communist movement." The CIA believed that such stories would strengthen the non-Communist side at the Geneva talks.³⁴

The Geneva Conference was held from April 26 to July 21, 1954 and officially registered France's defeat by the Vietminh. It was meant as a face-saving method for France to disengage from Vietnam. The conference agreements were designed to open the way for internationally supported accords by which outstanding problems between the contending parties could be peacefully resolved. By now, France was under considerable political pressure back home to get the hell out of Vietnam.

The US was not happy with the whole idea of the Geneva conference since it precluded any further military effort to defeat the Vietminh. In fact, while the conference was still in session in June, the US began assembling a paramilitary team inside Vietnam. By August, just days after the close of the conference, the team was in place. This, of course, was strictly contrary to the spirit of the Geneva Conference and the agreements that were made. This team, under the guidance of Colonel Edward Lansdale (whose activities were later enshrined in two semi-fictional works, *The Ugly American* and *The Quite American*), carried out a campaign of military and psychological warfare against the Vietminh.³⁵

Washington was walking a political fence with regard to the Geneva conference. Congressional elections were coming up

and everyone knew that Eisenhower had won his election as a "peacemaker" in Korea. No one would relish another war so soon after Korea. On the other hand, Washington was determined not to allow Vietnam to go communist. Politically, this would have exposed the Republicans to the same charges they leveled against the Democrats in 1952, when the "loss of China to communism" charge was prominent. Other countries in the region could get ideas. So they decided to have it both ways and implement a covert foreign policy-- i.e. appear to go along with the agreements while simultaneously working to undermine them. The US refused to give its full approval to the Geneva agreements, but did issue a "unilateral declaration" in which it agreed to "refrain from the threat or the use of force to disturb" the accords -- a bold-faced lie.

Washington had additional concerns about a negotiated settlement...

As early as 1948, top policy makers were afraid that Vietnamese independence might fan "anti-Western Pan-Asiatic tendencies in the region," (doubletalk for "others may catch the independence fever") undermining the "close association between newly-autonomous peoples and powers which have been long responsible [for] their welfare." (This is doubletalk for "relationship of an imperial power and its former colony").

In Indochina, the responsible authority was France, whose "tender care" had left the area devastated and starving. Washington also wanted to keep China from exerting any influence "so that the peoples of Indochina will not be hampered in their natural developments by the pressure of an alien people and alien interests," unlike the US and France interests, of course. The hypocrisy expressed here is quite incredible.³⁶

That the US somehow had the right to restore the "close association" noted above is taken for granted. It follows then that any problems in the area will arise from the nationalistic aspirations of the Vietnamese and not from our own imperialistic tendencies. Thus, again in 1948 the CIA warned Washington that "The gravest

danger to the US is that friction engendered by [anti-colonialism and economic nationalism] may drive the so-called colonial bloc into alignment with the USSR." In other words, we must make sure that the traditional "colonial economic interests" of the industrial countries must prevail in the event that local "friction" interferes with US global plans. The intent then is that Indochina would have to remain under "its traditional subordination," as Melvyn Lefler observed, after reviewing a broad scholarly consensus.³⁷

Another Washington concern at the time was Japan, sometimes referred to as the "superdomino" (John Dower). As numerous now de-classified postwar documents show, after World War II the push was on to restore the old economic order, and Japan had to be protected from what the State Department called the "concealed aggression" of the Russians, referring to internal Russian political developments (easily construed as possible threats to business rule). Japan therefore had to be deterred from forming independent foreign and economic policies, and from "the suicide of neutralism" (General Omar Bradley) and of course, any accommodation to China. The only hope, according to George Kennan (US Global Planner and referred to as "the father of the Cold War"), lay in restoring for Japan "some sort of Empire toward the South." In effect, the US had to provide Japan with a post-wartime "co-prosperity sphere," situated safely within the US-dominated world system, with no fear that US business interests would be denied their proper place.³⁸

On April 7, 1954, President Eisenhower warned in a news conference that Japan would have to turn "toward the Communist areas in order to live" if communist success in Indochina "takes away, in its economic aspects, that region that Japan must have as a trading area." The consequences would be "just incalculable to the free world."

Walter LeFeber observed in 1968 that "This thesis became a controlling assumption: the loss of Vietnam would mean the economic undermining and probable loss of Japan to Communist markets and ultimately to Communist influence if not control."

Eisenhower's public statements expressed the conclusion of NSC (National Security Council) memo 5405 (January 16) that "the loss of Southeast Asia, especially of Malaya and Indonesia, could result in such economic and political pressures in Japan as to make it extremely difficult to prevent Japan's eventual accommodation to communism." Thus, communist domination of Southeast Asia "by whatever means" would "critically endanger" US "security interests" (understood in the usual "economic" sense). The "loss of Vietnam" would therefore be of great significance. That it is somehow ours to lose is again taken for granted.³⁹

Given such doctrines, it is obvious why a diplomatic settlement at the 1954 Geneva conference was regarded as a disaster. Washington reacted vigorously.

For six months, starting with the Geneva conference in 1954, Colonel Lansdale's paramilitary team carried out the following operations, all while the United States publicly was pretending to promise not to interfere with the conference agreements:

- Encouraged the migration of Vietnamese from the North to the South through "an extremely intensive, well-coordinated, and, in terms of its objective, very successful... psychological warfare operation. Propaganda slogans and leaflets appealed to devout Catholics with such themes as "Christ has gone to the South" and "Virgin Mary has departed from the North"⁴⁰
- Distributed other bogus leaflets, supposedly put out by the Vietminh, to instill fear in the minds of the people in the north about how difficult life would be under Communist rule. The following day, refugee registration to move south tripled. This exodus of people moving to the south after the Geneva Accords was often cited by American officials in the 1960's, as well as earlier, as proof that the people did not want to live under communism. They claimed that "they voted with their feet." Other "Vietminh" leaflets were aimed at discouraging people in the south from returning north.

- Infiltrated paramilitary forces into the north under the guise of individuals choosing to live there.
- Contaminated the oil supply of the bus company in Hanoi so as to lead to a gradual wreckage of their bus engines.
- Took "the first actions for delayed sabotage of the railroad (which required teamwork with a CIA special technical team in Japan who performed their part brilliantly)..."
- Instigated a rumor campaign to stir up hatred of the Chinese, with the usual stories of rapes.
- Created and distributed an almanac of astrological predictions carefully designed to play on Vietnamese fears and superstitions and undermine life in the north while making the future of the south appear more attractive.
- Published and circulated anti-communist articles and "news" reports in the newspapers and leaflets.
- Attempted unsuccessfully to destroy the largest printing establishment in the north because it intended to remain in Hanoi and do business with the Vietminh.
- Laid a partial foundation for the future American war in Vietnam by sending selected Vietnamese to US Pacific bases for guerrilla training; training the armed forces of the south who had fought with the French; creating various military support facilities in the Philippines; smuggling large quantities of arms and military equipment into Vietnam (to be stored in hidden locations); developing plans for the "pacification of the Viet Minh and dissident areas."⁴¹

At the same time, the US began an economic boycott against the North Vietnamese and threatened to blacklist French firms which were doing business with them.

While the US was trying to appear aloof to the Geneva conference (while taking steps to undermine them), the Russians and the Chinese were pushing the Vietminh to come to a peaceful settlement. Both of these powers applied pressure to the Vietminh in order to get them to reduce their demands on the French. This restraint probably was induced by a then recently adopted stance of "peaceful coexistence," which aimed at reducing international tension. Plus, they were both concerned that US support of the French might extend beyond Indochina. No doubt they realized that overly severe demands on the French would play into the hands of those US politicians who had advocated using the "bomb" at Dien Bien Phu.

Germany was also on Russia's mind. The Soviet Union reportedly hoped that by moderating the Vietminh's demands on the French and upholding some of France's proposals, France might be induced to stay out of the projected US-sponsored European Defense Community.

As for China, her economic programs and newly-embarked upon moderation in foreign policy demanded that she oppose any spread of the fighting in Indochina. Besides, after Korea, China didn't want to give the US any excuse for putting troops on her southern border. Thus, the Chinese joined the Russians in advising the Vietminh to settle for an incomplete victory over the French.

The Vietminh also had their own reasons for negotiating a settlement with the French. The effort it would have taken to finish the French off completely would have been extremely costly, especially if the US were to enter the conflict. Vietminh political leaders were not willing to assume the responsibility (and the political consequences) for failing to come to a settlement. Also, the Vietnamese people were war-weary and the Vietminh depended on their support for any continued conflict, so it was wise to end the fighting as soon as possible and if the Geneva agreements were fully implemented, they would have met these objectives.

Under the Geneva Agreement, the Vietminh could (and did) expect to win politically the

struggle it was already winning militarily. It could (and did) expect to regain control over the South. The firm pledge of nation-wide elections was of key importance in the Vietminh's agreement to the temporary surrender of the 17th parallel. Without this promise of elections, the Vietminh would never have agreed to withdraw their forces into less than half the country's territory. (See below.)

By the time the Geneva conference opened, the Vietminh already dominated three-quarters of the country and was poised to take more. At Geneva, the Vietminh agreed to evacuate the rich rice-growing Mekong delta and the vast stretch of land between the 13th and 17th parallels that had constituted one of its major political bastions. Had the Vietminh any indication that this evacuation was going to be permanent, they would never have agreed to such a major concession. Note that in withdrawing to the North, the Vietminh were not being asked to give up their struggle for all of Vietnam, but only to transfer their struggle from the military plane to the political plane. Either way, the Vietminh fully expected victory. This was an expectation also shared by most of the Western participants of the conference.

The Geneva conference produced two important agreements: the bilateral armistice agreement between France and the Vietminh and the later and more publicized multilateral Final Declaration.⁴²

The "Agreement on the Cessation of Hostilities in Viet Nam" was signed on July 20, 1954, by Brigadier Henri Delteil, acting for the "Commander in Chief of the French Union forces in Indo-China" and by Ta Quang Buu, Vice-Minister of National Defense of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, on behalf of the "Commander in Chief of the People's Army of Vietnam." It incorporated the following features: First, there was to be established a "provisional military demarcation line" (fixed at the 17th parallel) "on either side of which the forces of the two parties of the People's Army of Viet Nam [Vietminh] to the north of the line and the forces of the French Union to the south" (Article 1). The maximum period of this regrouping was not to exceed 300 days

from the date the armistice entered into force (Article 2). Civil administration of the north was to be in the hands of the Vietminh, and the area south of the parallel was to be in the hands of the French (Article 8).

Article 14 detailed provisions for political and administrative control of the two regrouping zones pending general elections. Paragraph (a) states in full: "Pending the general elections which will bring about the unification of Viet Nam, the conduct of civil administration in each regrouping zone shall be in the hands of the party whose forces are to be regrouped there in virtue of the present Agreement." Paragraphs (c) and (d) of Article 14 provided that during the 300-day period allotted for regroupment of troops, civilians residing north and south of the parallel were to be "permitted and helped" to cross the parallel if they so desired. Both parties to the agreements promised "to refrain from any reprisals or discrimination against persons or organization on account of their activities during the hostilities and to guarantee their democratic liberties."

Article 16 banned the introduction into any part of Vietnam, north or south, of "any troop reinforcements and additional military personnel" from the outside world. Article 17 banned "the introduction into Viet Nam of any reinforcements in the form of all types of arms, munitions and other war materiel, such as combat aircraft, naval craft, pieces of ordnance, jet engines and jet weapons, and armoured vehicles." Article 18 forbade the establishment of "new military bases." The purpose of Article 19 was the neutralization of all of Vietnam. It stated: "[N]o military base under the control of a foreign State may be established in the regrouping zone of either party; the two parties shall ensure that the zone assigned to them do not adhere to any military alliance and are not used for the resumption of military hostilities or to further an aggressive policy."

Article 29 and many others provided for the establishment of an International Commission (consisting of Canada, India and Poland) to oversee the implementation of the agreements and make sure that both sides were complying. (Its authority was undermined however, by the fact that a

unanimous vote was required to get anything done.)

The day after signing of the above armistice agreement the Final Declaration was brought before the delegates. This agreement endorsed the preceding armistice agreement for Vietnam, together with those for Laos and Cambodia. Two particular paragraphs are important enough to be quoted in full.

Paragraph 6 reads: "The Conference recognizes that the essential purpose of the agreement relating to Viet Nam is to settle military questions with a view to ending hostilities and that the military demarcation line is provisional and should not in any way be interpreted as constituting a political or territorial boundary. The Conference expresses its conviction that the execution of the provisions set out in the present declaration and in the agreement on the cessation of hostilities creates the necessary basis for the achievement in the near future of a political settlement in Viet Nam."

Yes, that's right. The division of Vietnam into a North and South Vietnam, was originally intended as a *temporary* demarcation, to be dissolved after elections.

Paragraph 7 focused on the election and reunification: "The Conference declares that, so far as Viet Nam is concerned, the settlement of political problems, effected on the basis of respect for the principles of independence, unity and territorial integrity, shall permit the Vietnamese people to enjoy the fundamental freedoms, guaranteed by democratic institutions established as a result of free general elections by secret ballot. In order to ensure that sufficient progress in the restoration of peace has been made, and that all the necessary conditions obtain for free expression of the national will, general elections shall be held in July 1956, under the supervision of an international commission composed of representatives of the Member States of the International Supervisory Commission, referred to in the agreement on the cessation of hostilities. Consultations will be held on this subject between the competent representative authorities of the two zones from July 20, 1955, onwards."

This last paragraph is often misrepresented. Please note that in no way did it render the internationally supervised elections to be dependent on establishing "fundamental freedoms and democratic institutions" in either of the regrouping areas before elections. Rather, consistent with Article 14a of the armistice, it stated that these freedoms and institutions were the anticipated benefits of a unified Vietnamese nation to be established as a result of the nation-wide elections.

The Vietminh justifiably expected that the French would back the International Commission by arranging for the required pre-election consultations and in supervising the actual balloting in mid-1956. The Vietminh had the further assurance that any administration succeeding the French prior to the 1956 elections would legally assume France's obligations and "be responsible for ensuring the observance and enforcement of the terms and provisions" of the agreements entered into between the Vietminh and France.⁴³

The declaration was endorsed by the recorded oral assent of the representatives of the United Kingdom, the People's Republic of China, the USSR, Cambodia, and Laos, as well as by France and the Vietminh. The delegates had to change to an oral declaration rather than a written one at the last minute, due to the refusal of US Secretary of State Dulles to affix an American name to the settlement. The US and Bao Dai's State of Vietnam refused to register even an oral assent.

The fact that the USSR, China and Great Britain all endorsed the basic provisions of the armistice no doubt further strengthened the Vietminh's belief that a feature as central as the promised elections would certainly be honored. And even though the US refused to endorse the agreements, the US did make a unilateral declaration with regard to the elections. Under-Secretary of State Walter Bedell Smith stated: "In connection with the statement in the Declaration concerning free elections in Viet Nam, my government wishes to make clear its position which it has expressed in a Declaration made in Washington on June 29, 1954, as follows: 'In the case of nations

now divided against their will, we shall continue to seek to achieve unity through free elections, supervised by the United Nations to ensure that they are conducted fairly."

With no indication whatsoever that the US would oppose the elections, the Vietminh felt confident that they would be held. The US also declared that it would "refrain from the threat or the use of force to disturb them" [the agreements] and "would view any renewal of the aggression in violation of the aforesaid agreements with grave concern and as seriously threatening international peace and security." (Knowing what we know now, it's obvious that the US was only referring to Vietnamese aggression and not our own.)

It is important to note that the US declaration made no reference at all to a "South" or "North" Vietnam. In fact, every reference in the US declaration referred to a single Vietnam. Many people still believe today that the Geneva Conference split Vietnam into two separate pieces or states. It did not! What it did do is split the country into two contesting parties within a single national state. Both the Vietminh (the Democratic Republic of Vietnam) and the French-supported Bao Dai (the State of Vietnam) continued after the Geneva accords to lay claim to the entire country. The difference after the conference was that the argument between the two contending parties would now, by agreement, be carried out politically rather than militarily.

However, there was one important disparity in the positions of these two contestants: The Geneva Agreements authorized the Vietminh to administer the North while preparing for elections in both; on the other hand, the responsibility for administration of the South lay not with the Vietnamese party headed by Bao Dai, which was to compete in the elections, but with the French instead.

Believe it or not, this was actually an advantage for the Vietminh, for while they would be administering their regroupment zone and preparing for elections in both zones, Bao Dai in the south would be partnered with the French, thus disadvantaged by his popular image as a

semi-colonial subordinate of the French administration.

The division of Vietnam was a military, not physical dismemberment of the country. There was nothing in the agreements preventing the peaceful political activity of either contestant in the zone of the other. In fact, the very scheduling of the elections demonstrated that political campaigning was to be expected. Had this not been the case, the Vietminh certainly would not have agreed to the concessions.

France signed the armistice in Geneva on behalf of all Vietnamese in the areas it still controlled including the 369,000 members of the Vietnamese National Army that constituted part of the French Union. Bao Dai couldn't sign because the military he had command of only consisted of a personal bodyguard. Although nothing prevented the French from transferring political power to Bao Dai, remember that the Geneva Agreement specified that any successor to the French would have to comply with the agreements. Knowing this, later popular arguments that Bao Dai's refusal to assent to the Final Declaration therefore provided him with the right to reject selected aspects of the agreements don't hold up.

In fact, the political "State of Vietnam" remained an artificial construction of France, quite devoid of any popular following. France, halfway through the Geneva Conference, did issue a statement promising more independence, but this was not to happen until well after the conference ended. Indeed, it was not until January 1, 1955 that Bao Dai's Prime Minister Ngo Dinh Diem could proclaim real independence from France, and it was another two months before the French handed control over the French Union forces to the Saigon government.

Given the fact that Bao Dai's representatives at the Geneva Conference couldn't really play a role and lacked any genuine authority among the Vietnamese, it is understandable that they would oppose an agreement that had elections as its political keystone. They could easily foresee that an election would expose the meagerness of their following

and demonstrate all the more clearly that the State of Vietnam owed its existence solely to French military power rather than the will of the Vietnamese people. Vietnamese politicians who owed their position to France would be facing men in the election who were regarded by all their countrymen as the victorious leaders of Vietnam's independence struggle. But, by now France wanted out of Vietnam so bad that she was willing to pay the political price.

Of course, Washington was extremely upset about the prospect of elections in Vietnam, for Washington knew who would win. A high-ranking State Department official said: "it would be an understatement to say that we do not like the terms of the cease-fire agreement just concluded."⁴⁴ In 1961, a State Department "White Paper" declared: "It was the Communist's calculation that nationwide elections scheduled in the Accords for 1956 would turn all of Viet-Nam over to them. With total control over the more populous North in their hands, the Communists assumed they would be able to promote enough support in the South for their cause to win in any balloting. The primary focus of the Communists' activity during the post-Geneva period was on political action -- promoting discontent with the Government in Saigon and seeking to win supporters for Hanoi. The authorities in South Viet-Nam refused to fall into this well-laid trap."⁴⁵

Trap? What trap? In fact, this "trap" constituted an essential provision of the Geneva Agreements and was the major reason the Vietminh had accepted the armistice.

More than willing to undermine the Geneva Agreements covertly, but unwilling to give the outward appearance of contradicting the agreements, Washington went about circumventing them by forming a defense treaty for the other Asian countries (that might fall like "dominoes" after a successful Communist victory in Vietnam). The Southeast Asia Collective Defense Treaty and Protocol (signed at Manila, September 8, 1954) which became known as SEATO (Southeast Asia Treaty Organization) was supposed to serve as a barrier against the further spread of communist political power.

It was meant to provide a cloak of protection for Cambodia and Laos against aggression from communist power and inhibit the Vietminh from establishing control over the rest of Vietnam.

However, SEATO was never embraced by the major neutralist states of Burma, India and Indonesia. As a result it ended up as an arrangement dominated by the United States and its Western allies. The only Asian members it attracted were Thailand, the Philippines and Pakistan (who saw the pact as a means of strengthening itself against India rather than support of American purposes in Southeast Asia). The other signatories to SEATO were the US, the United Kingdom, France, Australia and New Zealand.

On the day the treaty was signed, the same parties unanimously designated the states of Cambodia and Laos as "the free territory under the jurisdiction of the State of Vietnam" (Article IV of the treaty) (State of Vietnam refers to Bao Dai's southern regrouping). Although this fell short of a commitment by the US to aid any government or state of South Vietnam, which would have been a direct violation of the Geneva Agreements (because there was no such politically recognized entity), it definitely still violated the spirit of the agreements, implying that the 17th parallel had a "political" character and went against the neutral status of the southernmost regroupment zone.

This treaty was an early signal of the American intention to underwrite a separate state in southern Vietnam if, despite the inadmissibility of this under the Geneva Agreements, one could be established. Paragraph 3 of Article IV stipulated that should the states of Cambodia and Laos or "the free territory under the jurisdiction of the States of Vietnam" so request, they could be recipients of the same protection by SEATO as was accorded to the non-Indochina areas covered in the body of the agreement.

Thus, Washington utilized SEATO negotiations to offset the results of the Geneva accords. Through SEATO, the US helped provide statehood for a territory that was in fact nothing more than one of two

temporary zones, thereby ignoring the stipulation that the country was to be unified in two years time. By providing protection in advance to the southern regrouping area from an attack by indigenous forces based in the other half of the same country, SEATO encouraged those Vietnamese with a vested interest in this artificial division to actively maintain it and transform the 17th parallel into a more permanent political boundary.

But SEATO was only one half of a two-pronged US effort to scuttle the Geneva accords. The other prong was the US effort to inject sufficient power into the regime headed by Bao Dai and Ngo Dinh Diem in order to render it politically viable and allow it to stand as a separate state.

Two Vietnams

During the two year break in military action secured by the Geneva Agreements, a separate state was created out of the temporary regroupment zone in the southern half of Vietnam. This transformed the 17th parallel into the political, territorial boundary explicitly forbidden under the terms of the agreements. And as the French withdrew from the South, American attempts to build up an anti-communist state were no longer impeded by a colonial intermediary. By early 1955, the US could deal directly with the new Prime Minister, Ngo Dinh Diem, rather than with the French.⁴⁶

In the struggle for power that began almost immediately in Saigon after the French departure, the US backed Ngo Dinh Diem -- at first cautiously, but increasingly without limit or qualification. When Diem returned (from a stay in the United States) to be Prime Minister, he was greeted at the airport by non other than... Colonel Edward Lansdale, the CIA's man in South Vietnam who was at the time, head of the Agency's Saigon Military Mission (SMM). Diem was an unpopular leader unloved and opposed by almost everyone - Bao Dai's followers, the pro-French religious groups, the Buddhists, the remnant nationalist organizations, and of course, the followers of Ho Chi Minh.⁴⁷

To help create Diem's government, Lansdale's men offered the Vietnamese peasants in the north, (now thoroughly frightened from all the anti-communist propaganda Lansdale and his group had been disseminating) free transportation to the South in Civil Air Transport (CAT) aircraft (owned by the CIA) and on ships of the US Navy. Nearly a million Vietnamese had been frightened into fleeing to the south.⁴⁸ (This is an example of a major disinformation campaign that worked.)

Lieutenant Tom Dooley, who operated with the US Navy out of Haiphong, also helped stimulate the flow of refugees to the south. As a medical doctor, Dooley was a fantastic propagandist whose primary audience seemed to be the US public. He himself wrote three books and numerous articles were also written about him. He concocted tales of the Vietminh disemboweling 1,000 pregnant women, beating a naked priest on the testicles with a bamboo club, and jamming chopsticks into the ears of children to keep them from hearing the word of God (*a story repeated by visiting missionaries in Duluth, Minnesota during an effort to get donations and create anti-communist fervor at the church I attended as a child*).

The purpose of these lies was to get the American public angered and moved to action.⁴⁹ Dr. Dooley's reputation remained spotless for years until later in 1979, when his close ties to the CIA were uncovered during a Roman Catholic sainthood investigation.⁵⁰

Dooley's and Lansdale's efforts worked. They convinced thousands of North Vietnamese Catholics to flee to the South, thereby providing Diem with a source of reliable political and military cadres, and in the process they also duped the American public into believing that this flight of refugees was a massive condemnation of the Vietminh by a majority of Vietnamese.

While all of this was happening, the Vietminh were withdrawing to the North according to the Geneva Agreements and Diem went about establishing his control over the areas evacuated by the Vietminh. By spring 1955, the Vietminh had removed all of its army from the South (approximately

100,000 men) and regrouped them to the north of the 17th parallel. The areas abandoned were turned over to the French Union which then passed them off to Diem. Diem encountered little resistance in extending his administration to these areas since the only Vietminh who remained in the south were conducting themselves peacefully while preparing for the elections.

Diem had a harder time in the larger southern regions where he came up against the Cao Dai and the Hoa Hoa religious sects. He responded with brutality and crushed those he couldn't bribe out of existence. It was said that "The total amount of American dollars spent on bribes during March and April 1955, by Diem may well have gone beyond \$12 million."⁵¹ Diem went on to abolish all other opposition and quickly earned a (well deserved) reputation as a very brutal ruler.

Around this time a number of related covert activities were getting underway back home. For example, from 1955 to 1959, Michigan State University (MSU), under a US Government contract, conducted a covert police training program for the South Vietnamese. With full knowledge of MSU officials, five CIA operatives were concealed in the staff of the program and carried on the university's payroll as its employees. By the terms of a 1957 law drawn up by the MSU group, every Vietnamese 15 years and older was required to register with the government and carry ID cards. Anyone caught without the proper ID was considered a National Liberation Front (Vietcong) suspect and subject to imprisonment or worse. At the time of registration a full set of fingerprints was taken and information about the person's political beliefs was recorded.⁵²

Note that during the US war in Vietnam, Operation Phoenix was carried out. This was a CIA-sponsored assassination engine that tortured and killed any Vietnamese not carrying "papers" (and therefore deemed "communist"). According to William Colby, testifying before a Congressional committee investigating CIA activities, Operation Phoenix resulted in killing over 20,000 Vietnamese civilians.

The US Army began training Diem's army while the CIA concentrated on building his government and training his police. The CIA also fed American newspapers stories about Diem, his miraculous victory over the Hoa Hoa and Cao Dai sects, and even wrote a Special National Intelligence Estimate that explained how Diem's "success [was] achieved largely on his own initiative and with his own resources," which was a complete fabrication and simply more disinformation.⁵³

Even with all the American aid, after Diem's first year running the Saigon government he still could not risk internationally supervised elections due to his lack of popular support. In mid-1955, when Ho Chi Minh's government sought to begin the pre-election "consultations" called for in the Geneva Agreements, Diem refused. On July 16, 1955, Diem declared: "We have not signed the Geneva Agreements. We are not bound in any way by these agreements, signed against the will of the Vietnamese people."⁵⁴

In 1956, Diem's interest in "free" elections was shown by a referendum he held in order to vest his regime with some semblance of public support. He received 98.2 percent of the bogus vote. Life Magazine later reported that Diem's American advisors had told him that a 60 percent margin would be sufficient and would look better, "but Diem insisted on 98 %."⁵⁵

The US clearly supported Diem in this stand, although they would have preferred Diem to at least pay some lip-service to the Geneva Accords by going "through the motions of trying to organize free elections in cooperation with the Communist North."⁵⁶ This refusal to participate was a clear reflection of Diem's own estimate of his political strength. On September 21, Diem declared that "... there can be no question of a conference, even less of negotiations" with the Hanoi Government.⁵⁷

Meanwhile, the Hanoi government continued preparing for elections. After receiving Diem's refusal to meet for consultations, Hanoi sought international support for the elections and appealed to the Co-Chairmen of the Geneva Conference for help and

reminded France of its obligations. The French, embarrassed, replied by stating: "We are not entirely masters of our own situation. The Geneva Accords on the one hand and the pressure of the allies on the other creates a very complex juridical situation... France is the guarantor of the Geneva Accords... But we do not have the means alone of making them respected."⁵⁸

On May 8, 1956, the Co-Chairmen of the Geneva Accords invited both South and North Vietnam to transmit their views about the time required for opening consultations about nation-wide elections. Hanoi responded by sending Diem a letter requesting that consultations begin immediately. On June 4, Hanoi sent the Co-Chairmen a letter saying that their request had gone unanswered and if the South continued to reject living up to the Geneva Agreements, Hanoi would request a new Geneva Conference. In August, 1956, Hanoi again repeated its request for a new Geneva Conference.

Knowing this, a statement 10 years later by the Assistant Secretary of State can best be understood as an obvious attempt to rewrite the history of this period, when he stated to the American public that "...when the issue arose concretely in 1956, the regime in Hanoi... made no effort to respond to the call of the Soviet Union and Great Britain."

Hanoi continued pursuing the issue through all the accepted channels, but got nowhere. Hanoi wrote letters requesting a conference on the elections with Diem in June 1957, July 1957, March and December 1958, July 1959 and July 1960. Diem refused repeatedly and Moscow and Peking both confined their support for Hanoi to moral platitudes.

Complicating things was the fact that the North was trying to renew its trading relations with the South while all of this election pleading and rejection was going on. In the past, the highly populated North was heavily dependent on the South's surplus rice. Hanoi offered to help "the population in the two zones in all economic, cultural, and social exchange advantageous for the restoration of the normal life of the

people."⁵⁹ But, as with the elections, Saigon refused to even discuss the matter.

Rebuffed by Saigon and unable to secure any trade relief from the US and its allies, the North then had no choice but to look elsewhere for trade partners as it struggled to rebuild. The Soviet Union and China responded. Devastated economically by the war, Hanoi began to concentrate more on agrarian reform and the elections took a back seat to this overwhelming need. Foreign aid however, declined from 65.3 percent in 1955 to 21 percent by 1960. Historian Bernard Fall observed that Hanoi's "desire to avoid a new colonialism" was behind Hanoi's independent stance. Although receiving aid from both Moscow and Peking, Hanoi carefully played the middle of the road and never made any irrevocable commitments to either country.

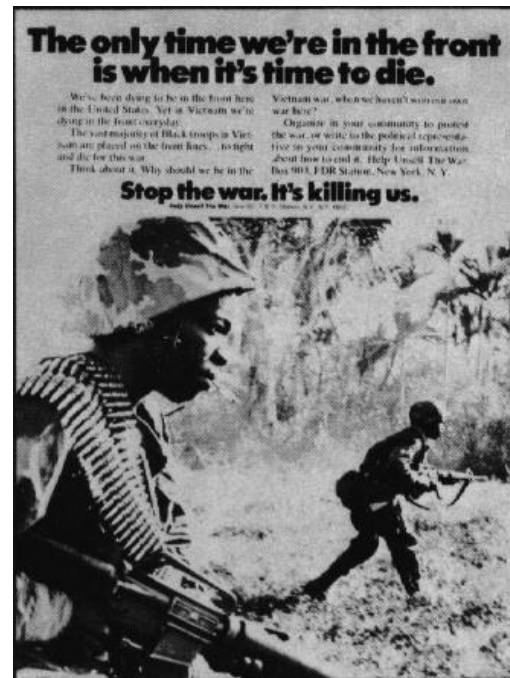
Note that although the artificial geographical partition had left the North weaker economically than the South, by 1960 the Northern government had become far less dependent upon outside economic aid than had Saigon. Removal of American aid would have collapsed the Saigon government. Removal of Chinese and Russian aid to the North would have crippled the country's industrialization program, but the North Vietnamese state would have remained standing.

The Civil War Begins

While the North was busy preparing for the hoped-for elections, Diem and his followers were busy repressing the Vietminh in the South. Vietminh members were rounded up, jailed, executed, or sent to "re-education" camps. Estimates vary, but all state that by 1956 there were around 50,000 Vietminh in jail. In 1956, the conservative publication Foreign Affairs concluded: "South Vietnam is today a quasi-police state characterized by arbitrary arrests and imprisonment, strict censorship of the press and the absence of an effective political opposition... All the techniques of political and psychological warfare, as well as pacification campaigns involving extensive military operations have

been brought to bear against the underground."⁶⁰

Diem also instigated a land reform plan that alienated much of the peasantry. Unlike the North, who had tried (and failed) to implement a Chinese-based agrarian reform, but then successfully modified the program to better fit the people's needs, Diem forced his new agrarian reform down the throats of the peasants with predictable results. Additionally, in one fell swoop, Diem eliminated the autonomy of South Vietnam's 2,560 villages and put in place a centralized administration, out of touch with the problems of the villagers.

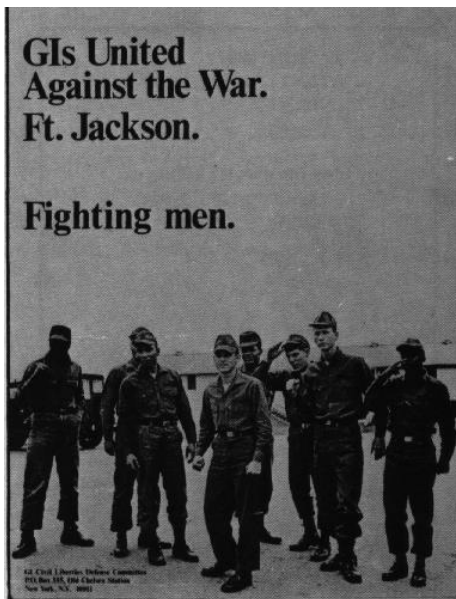


To assist Diem, the United States sent 350 additional military men to Saigon in May 1956, an "example of the US ignoring" the Geneva Accords, as stated in the *Pentagon Papers*. Shortly afterwards, John Foster Dulles confided to a colleague: "We have a clean base there now, without a taint of colonialism. Dienbienphu was a blessing in disguise."⁶¹

There was little chance of Diem winning the hearts and minds of the South Vietnamese, for that would have required a social change of the kind Diem was unwilling to accept. If either Diem or the US had been willing to

accept social change there would have been no need to cancel the 1956 election, but... canceled they were. Thus, there was no way the US could justifiably avoid being seen by the Vietnamese people as just the latest arrival of imperialist occupiers, following in the footsteps of the Chinese, then the French, then the Japanese, then the French again.

Further antagonism was generated by Diem's treatment of the Montagnard people of the Central Highlands. Whereas the French had left the Montagnards to themselves more or less, in March 1955 the Montagnards lost their autonomy and Diem attempted to force the Vietnamese culture on them. This is in direct contrast to the North, who recognized the value of the Montagnards and other non-Vietnamese cultures. The North set up autonomous zones for the Montagnards to live in and helped standardize their written languages and created secondary schools in Hanoi with courses in their native languages.



Beginning in 1957, approximately 210,000 ethnic Vietnamese from the coast were regrouped in fortified villages that the Montagnards had always regarded as their own and necessary to their support. Two years later the Montagnards themselves were regrouped and consolidated. These issues would later become major complaints

by the Montagnards against the Saigon government (*20 years later, I myself would hear the lament of the Montagnards about the loss of their land while drinking rice wine with them during my two tours in the Central Highlands*).

In 1957, a political group formed itself in opposition to Diem, comprised of anti-communist Vietnamese leaders in France. It was called the National Salvation Movement. They were strongly anti-communist and even more adamantly against Diem. They established a clandestine radio station and urged armed rebellion against Diem.

Later in 1958, yet another clandestine radio station went on the air. This radio station identified itself as the Voice of the South Vietnam Liberation Front. They used this name two years before Hanoi ever accorded official recognition to such an organization. (Yale anthropologist, Gerald Hickey, wrote that by 1958 a village he studied in South Vietnam had experienced a new political movement called the Mat Tran Dan Toc Gai Phong Mien Nam Viet Nam (National Front for the Liberation of Vietnam). The government of South Vietnam referred to this group as "the Viet Cong, or Vietnamese Communists... and invariably called the Viet Minh by the villagers. In the vicinity of Kanh Hau the initial efforts of the Viet Cong were largely confined to anti-government propaganda.")⁶²

This radio station also urged armed struggle against Diem. Hanoi launched a verbal offensive against them, claiming that they were distorting Marxist-Leninist theories. Hanoi apparently felt that this group was offering a serious challenge to their policies in the South. The National Front for the Liberation of Vietnam used the radio station to tell the southern peasantry that the North wanted to eliminate classes (the bourgeois and the petty bourgeois classes). Hanoi denounced these claims as the "vilest slander and distortion of the truth." Hanoi also denounced the Front's insistence on a strong radical, communist-oriented program, especially the Front's desire to implement a program to strive concurrently for socialism in the South together with national unification. It is quite possible that the North

believed that such a program would frighten the urban middle class in the South into opposing reunification with the North.

News of Diem's repression was beginning to spread. David Hotham, the Vietnam correspondent for the London Times and the Economist, wrote in 1959 that the Diem regime imposed by the United States "has crushed all opposition of every kind, however anti-Communist it might be. He has been able to do this, simply and solely because of the massive dollar aid he has had from across the Pacific, which kept in power a man who, by all the laws of human and political affairs, would long ago have fallen. Diem's main supporters are to be found in North America, not in Free Vietnam..."⁶³

Adding fuel to the fire, the Vietminh (veterans of the war with the French) who were living in the South, were becoming quite agitated with both Diem and Hanoi's efforts to keep them in check by discouraging their armed participation in efforts to overthrow Diem. This agitation culminated in the "Declaration of the Resistance of Veterans," in March 1960.

This declaration (ignored by most American accounts of the period) clearly presented the Southerner's frustrations with Hanoi's insistence on keeping their struggle on the political plane. In it, they justified their move from a purely political struggle to one of armed resistance as an inevitable result of Diem's oppression. They stated that Diem's actions had "forced the people into legitimate self-defense," for "if the people take up arms to struggle against terror or to punish blood-thirsty traitors, notorious criminals, faithful valets of the American-Diemists, it is only to defend themselves."⁶⁴

These veterans, after six years of incredible patience, called upon "all classes, all social strata, all milieu to struggle" against South Vietnamese repression. They appealed to the "Former Resistance Fighters and all of the people of South Vietnam" to overthrow the Diem regime and replace it with a coalition government and liberate South Vietnam "from submission to America, eliminate all US bases in South Vietnam, expel the American military advisers and not

accept any form of American interference in South Vietnam."

Hanoi's representatives sent to a meeting of these veterans in the South, reported back to Ho Chi Minh that they were an organization that would sooner or later implement an armed struggle against the South. These emissaries were called cowards by the veteran group and told that "If you don't do anything, you Communists, we will rise up against you too."⁶⁵ Even with this threat, it was another six months before Hanoi officially recognized their stance.

It was within the Third Congress of the Vietnamese Lao Dong Party held in Hanoi from September 5-10, 1960, that the Northern leadership made it clear that it supported a United Front and approved the violent overthrow of the Diem government. Even so, the Congress resolved that the first of two strategic tasks was "to carry out the socialist revolution in the North," while the second task was "to liberate the South from the rule of the American imperialists and their henchmen [and] achieve national reunification and complete independence and freedom throughout the country." In other words, they considered the socialist development of the North as being the most decisive task for the development of national reunification.

This is further evidenced by this Congress' introduction of a five-year plan for economic development of the North and their announcement of a major cutback in the defense budget to pay for it. Still, this Congress provided the South with the encouragement they wanted to take direct and militant action against Diem and the Americans.

With all of this going on, it is amazing that there wasn't a Vietminh insurrection in the South earlier. There were essentially two reasons for the delay. First, Diem's repression of the Vietminh (with the help of the CIA) was very widespread. Southern Vietminh leaders were jailed or killed. It would take considerable time before new leaders could be capable of handling the smoldering rural discontent. Secondly, Hanoi continued in its unwillingness to

encourage armed resistance to Diem's regime in the South.

Diem's repression led to a predictable uprising and renewed military confrontations in the South. Contrary to US policy assumptions, all available evidence shows that the revival of Vietnam's civil war in the South in 1958 was undertaken by southerners at their own -- not Hanoi's -- initiative.

On April 26, 1960, a group of eighteen Vietnamese notables - ten of them former ministers - issued a public manifesto to Diem. Their statements referred to "anti-democratic elections" and to "continuous arrests that filled the jails and prisons to the rafters." All who signed the manifesto were subsequently arrested. On November 11, paratroop units of the army encircled Diem's palace and called on him to rid himself of his family advisors and follow a political course closer to the country's needs. After stalling, Diem had his loyalists overpower the paratroopers. This caused a number of political and military leaders to go underground. Opposition to Diem obviously penetrated even Saigon itself.

In December 1960 (or somewhere in this timeframe), a group of Southern dissidents held a meeting at which the National Liberation Front (NLF) of South Vietnam was established. They put forward a ten-point program which called for the overthrow of the Saigon government and its replacement by a "broad national democratic coalition administration." They also called for the election of "a new National Assembly through universal suffrage," and the granting of "general amnesty to all political detainees," including a wide range of social and economic reforms (land reform and autonomy for minorities) and of course, the ousting of all US military advisors. This group called for a gradual reunification effort with the North by "peaceful means" and through "negotiations and discussions." They also called for a South Vietnamese foreign policy wherein they would "refrain from joining any bloc or military alliance... with any country," and "establish diplomatic relations with all countries irrespective of political regime."

It should be clear by now, that this "insurrection" (and the subsequent birth of the Vietcong) had its roots in the South, not the North.



It came from a *Southern initiative* in response to *Southern demands*. The NLF, or Vietcong as they were called, provided political articulation and leadership to Southerners who were tired of the harshness of the Diem government. Their cause was strengthened by the Vietnam veterans who felt betrayed by the Geneva Conference and abandoned by Hanoi. These veterans, after the North's withdrawal of forces, were left without any capability of enforcing the political terms of the armistice - the elections - and without any protection from Southern reprisals. Denied the promised elections and persecuted by the South, it is no surprise that they finally took matters in their own hands. Hanoi had to sanction their actions or risk losing all chance of influencing the flow of events in South Vietnam. There is no evidence to support the claim of the US "White Paper" of 1965 which asserted that "the Liberation Front of South Vietnam... was formed at Hanoi's order."

By postulating that the land to the north of the 17th parallel was really a separate state, it became easy for American leaders to view

any Northern support of the insurgency in the South as "external aggression," an opinion endorsed by those who considered the conflict as an example of communist expansion. Secretary Dean Rusk, choosing to ignore the highly complex causes and history of the civil war in Vietnam, further developed the theme of "aggression from the North," which was to become a prominent theme as American-supported efforts of the Saigon regime proved ineffective against the rebellion.

According to the authors of "The United States in Vietnam," many French specialists on Vietnam were quite knowledgeable about the convenient assumptions of the American government concerning Vietnam. They state that "...one does not have to rely on their [the specialists] writings to reach the inescapable conclusion that the Liberation Front is not 'Hanoi's creation'; it has manifested independence and it is Southern." They conclude that "Insurrectionary activity against the Saigon government began in the South under Southern leadership not as a consequence of any dictate from Hanoi, but contrary to Hanoi's injunctions. Abundant data have been available to Washington to invalidate any argument that revival of the war in the South was precipitated by 'aggression from the North.' The Administration's admission of this would, however, undercut the very cornerstone of its justification of American military involvement in the South and escalation of the war against the North."

In 1961, Washington embarked upon several "fact-finding" missions. Vice-President Johnson returned from his trip praising Diem and concluding that South Vietnam could be saved from communism by prompt American action. He called for an increase in the size of the Vietnamese army, coupled with political and economic reform programs. Professor Eugene Staley returned from his fact-finding mission and advocated the establishment of "strategic hamlets" as part of a general strategy emphasizing local militia defense. This became known as the "Staley plan." General Maxwell Taylor and White House aide Walt Rostow led a delegation that "expressed a conscious decision by the Secretary of State to turn the Vietnam problem over to the

Secretary of Defense."⁶⁶ The major theme of the Taylor-Rostow report was that the Vietnam problem was mainly a military one, which could be solved by a larger commitment of American power including, if necessary, American fighting men. Together, these two plans would guide US policy over the next two years.

Despite the mounting threat to his regime, Diem refused to see the extent to which the insurgency was a direct response to his own brutal rule. He kept insisting that more brutal measures would fix the problem, and became increasingly agitated by American and Western representations of the conflict as a "civil war." To Diem's twisted logic, the uprising was due to communist subversion. In February 1962, Diem's government called upon foreign correspondents to stop referring to the southern Vietminh as "rebels" and "insurgents" and instead "use the following terms: Viet Cong, Communists, Hanoi's agents and aggressors from the North."⁶⁷ This attitude went hand-in-hand with the idea that social and political reforms would have to await the prior establishment of full security. Diem, like Washington, did not perceive that the war was first of all a political problem and could only be solved through political means.

During 1962, the United States undertook a major buildup in Vietnam in accordance with the Taylor-Rostow recommendations. The emphasis here was heavily on the military side of the program due to the unwillingness of the Saigon government to implement economic reforms. Beginning in January, large amounts of material began arriving in Vietnam along with larger numbers of American military advisors and helicopter pilots. The helicopters provided a great tactical mobility to the South Vietnamese and by mid-October 1962 the crews had begun to take the initiative in firing at the insurgents. Less than year later, armed helicopters were often assigned to fly strafing missions.⁶⁸

Diem's repression finally reached the point where news of the many revolts reached the American public and Diem's true character was revealed. In May 1963, a Buddhist uprising raised the veil of myth surrounding Diem. He ordered his troops to fire into a

crowd of Buddhists protesting Saigon's order against displaying the Buddhist flag. The protests spread to Saigon where younger and more militant Buddhists assumed leadership of the movement. On June 11, a Buddhist monk set himself on fire to dramatize their cause. A picture of this made the evening news. Diem reacted by having his Special Forces attack Buddhist pagodas in Saigon, Hue and other cities. Diem closed the universities and arrested over 4,000 students. Since many of these students were children of military and civil service people, Diem helped contribute to his own demise by further eroding his already-slender power base. Diem's brother, Ngo Dinh Nhu also irritated military leaders by making it appear that it was the army that had desecrated the pagodas.



The Diem Coup

When popular resistance to Diem finally reached the level where he was more of a liability than an asset (an incredible three years later), he was sacrificed. On November 1, 1963, some of Diem's generals overthrew him and then murdered both him and his brother after they had surrendered. The coup, wrote Time magazine "was planned with the knowledge of Dean Rusk and Averill Harriman at the State Department, Robert S. McNamara and Roswell Gilpatrick at the Defense Department and the late Edward R. Murrow at the US Information Agency."⁶⁹

Diem's death potentially opened up the chances for peace in Vietnam. General Duong Van Minh stepped in to fill Diem's shoes even though considerably less than half of South Vietnam was under Saigon's control. The National Liberation Front (NLF) had virtually established a de facto

alternative government in rural Vietnam. In most of the areas that the Saigon government considered its own, their authority was restricted to the daylight hours, with the nights being owned and controlled by the NLF. (This was a situation that would not change for the duration of the war.)

Shortly after assuming power, General Minh received a manifesto from the NLF requesting that all parties concerned with South Vietnam sit down and negotiate with each other in order to achieve a cease fire and create a climate in which free elections could take place. The manifesto further advocated a policy of neutrality and friendly relations with all countries and suggested that the reunification of Vietnam be "realized step by step on a voluntary basis."

Diem's death also encouraged talk of possible peace on the international front. The New York Times editorialized on November 10, 1963, that "a negotiated settlement and 'neutralization' of Vietnam are not to be ruled out," and that the time had come to restore the Geneva settlement by negotiations. UN Secretary General U Thant recommended that the US promote a coalition government in Saigon that would include noncommunist refugees living in France.

After Kennedy's death, U Thant met with President Johnson and reportedly conveyed a message from Ho Chi Minh proposing talks on a settlement. By December, further pressure for neutralization of South Vietnam came from Cambodia's Prince Norodom Sihanouk, who (again) invited South Vietnam to join his country in a neutral confederation.

However, the US quickly made it clear that it was against any kind of neutralist solution. By mid-December, Secretary of Defense McNamara told Saigon's leaders that Washington did not see neutralism in Vietnam's future and that President Kennedy's plans for withdrawing from Vietnam had been revised.⁷⁰

Any doubts regarding the US rejection of any kind of compromise and its intent on prosecuting the war were removed with

Johnson's New Year message to General Duong Minh which stated:

*Neutralization of South Vietnam would only be another name for a Communist takeover...The US will continue to furnish you and your people with the fullest measure of support in this bitter fight...We shall maintain in Vietnam American personnel and material as needed to assist you in achieving victory.*⁷¹

Even though General Minh took stern measures against neutralism by suppressing several pro-neutralist newspapers and organizing anti-French, anti-neutralism demonstrations, he soon came under criticism from the United States and from his own generals for failing to stop the neutralist sentiment growing in Vietnam. On January 30, 1964, General Nguyen Khanh overthrew General Minh's junta in a coup. He justified this as a necessary step to halt the neutralist movement that had grown under General Minh.

A week after Khanh's accession to power, the NLF again called for negotiations to end the war, but by then Saigon's course toward continuing the conflict had become more decided. The Khanh junta rejected both neutralism and negotiations and squarely aligned itself with the United States. The US, in turn, expressed its willingness to work with the new regime.

However, during the first six months of Khanh's rule, previous ground lost to the Vietcong was not regained and the areas the Vietcong controlled even expanded. This led to increased frustration for American officials. The rise in military and economic aid and the modest influx of American forces was proving rather ineffective.

Meanwhile, Barry Goldwater (on the stump for the Presidential election) was advocating more force by taking the fight into North Vietnam itself. This reinforced an argument the Pentagon had been making along the same lines for years. It also reinforced Khanh's position since he was also advocating an extension of the war into the North and delivered a major address called bac tien ("to the North").

Two days after this address, Nguyen Cao Ky, the commander of the Vietnamese Air Force, announced that the air force was prepared to bomb North Vietnam at any time and that they could destroy Hanoi. General Maxwell Taylor, the new US Ambassador, reportedly reprimanded Ky for making such a provocative statement (and Khanh for permitting it). Khanh responded by saying that as far as he understood the situation, there were no basic policy differences expressed, only differences about timing and about what to announce publicly.⁷²

Concerned about an escalation of the war, Secretary General U Thant again suggested a peaceful settlement. The first steps toward this, he said, could be taken at a reconvened Geneva Conference. France backed this recommendation. French President de Gaulle warned against the "tremendous risk" of a generalized conflict. He said that the impossibility of achieving a military decision meant "returning to what was agreed upon ten years ago and, this time, complying with it."⁷³

Moscow and Hanoi (as well as Paris) sent communications to the fourteen nations that had participated in the 1961-62 Geneva Conference on Laos, urging that it be reconvened in order to deal with the renewal of fighting there.⁷⁴ China, the NLF and Cambodia indicated their support quickly. Considering the mounting intensity of the Sino-Soviet dispute at the time, China's endorsement of the Soviet proposal was unusually prompt and positive. Peking appealed for a reconvening of the conference to "stop the US imperialist aggression and intervention in the Indochinese states, safeguard the Geneva agreements, and defend the peace of Indochina."⁷⁵

Neither the Secretary General of the UN, the French President, nor the Soviet government received any encouragement from the US. The Johnson administration quickly rejected the idea. (Indeed, there was no interest expressed at exploring any of the opportunities for peace which seemed to be opening up.) President Johnson stated that "We do not believe in conferences called to ratify terror,"⁷⁶ The next day the US

announced that it would increase its military mission in South Vietnam 30 percent (from 16,000 to 21,000).⁷⁷ Johnson was no doubt eager to forestall any possibility of a Republican attack on him during the upcoming 1964 election. Being accused of being "soft on communism" wouldn't wash well with the public.

In Vietnam, the war was entering a new phase. Air Vice-Marshal Ky stated publicly in a news conference on July 23 that South Vietnamese commando teams had been engaged in sabotage missions inside North Vietnam "by air, sea and land."⁷⁸ Two days later Hanoi Radio charged that the Americans and their "lackeys" had fired on North Vietnamese fishing craft, and the Hanoi government lodged a formal protest with the International Control Commission. On July 30 Hanoi accused the South Vietnamese naval vessels of again raiding its fishing boats in Tonkin Gulf under the protective cover of an American destroyer, and additionally bombarding two North Vietnamese islands. This elicited another North Vietnamese protest on July 31.



On August 2, according to the official US version of events, North Vietnamese torpedo

boats launched an unprovoked attack upon the US destroyer Maddox while it was engaged in a "routine patrol." Hanoi admitted to the attack, but said it was in reprisal for the bombardment of nearby North Vietnamese islands. (Senator Richard B. Russel suggested that the North Vietnamese might have been "confused" because there had been some South Vietnamese naval "activity" in the Gulf of Tonkin, but State Department officials rejected the explanation.) Hanoi and Washington thus both agreed that North Vietnamese PT boats had deliberately engaged the Maddox on August 2, but differed as to where the engagement took place, the reason for the attack, and its outcome.

According to the US, on August 4, North Vietnamese torpedo boats launched a second attack, this time against the Maddox and another destroyer, the Turner Joy, at a time when they were 65 miles from shore. Neither destroyer suffered any damage or casualties and were reported to have destroyed the attacking boats. Hanoi insisted that this second attack never, in fact, occurred. As Senator Fulbright later observed:

But this Gulf of Tonkin incident, if I may say so, was a very vague one. We were briefed on it, but have no way of knowing, even to this day, what actually happened. I don't know whether we provoked that attack in connection with supervising or helping a raid by South Vietnamese or not. Our evidence was sketchy as to whether those PT boats, or some kind of boats, that were approaching were coming to investigate or whether they actually attacked. I have been told there was no physical damage. They weren't hit by anything. I heard one man say there was one bullet hole in one of those ships. One bullet hole!⁷⁹

This "Tonkin Gulf Incident" was indeed fabricated by the US, as was discovered in the early 1970's when the Maddox and Turner Joy logs and transmissions were revealed. There had been no attack by North Vietnamese patrol boats.

In most media coverage, even today, about the Vietnam war, this is always referred to as the "Tonkin Gulf Incident" and rarely is it mentioned that it was a complete fabrication.

The American response, putting damage and doubt aside, was prompt. President Johnson went on television at 11:30 p.m. on the evening of August 4, thirteen hours after the "attack." He informed the American public that retaliatory action was already underway. "Air action is now in execution against gunboats and certain supporting facilities in North Vietnam which have been used in these hostile operations."

Prior to issuing this statement, he had met with the leaders of both parties in the Congress and informed them that "I shall immediately request the Congress to pass a resolution making it clear that our Government is united in its determination to make all necessary measures in support of freedom and in defense of peace in Southeast Asia." They had, he said, given him "encouraging assurance" that "such a resolution will be promptly introduced, freely and expeditiously debated, and passed with overwhelming support."⁸⁰

The next day President Johnson asked Congress to "join in affirming the national determination that all such attacks will be met," and to approve "all necessary action to protect our Armed Forces and to assist nations covered by the SEATO treaty." The resolution passed 466-0 in the House, 88-2 in the Senate (with only Senator Gruening and Morse opposing). It authorized the President to "take all necessary measures to repel any armed attack against the forces of the United States and to prevent further aggression." The measure further stated that the United States was prepared "as the



President determines to take all necessary steps, including the use of armed force, to assist any member or protocol state of the Southeast Asia Collective Defense Treaty requesting assistance in defense of its freedom."

The die was cast. The so-called Tonkin Gulf Incident was just one of many fabrications made by our government to further the cause for war. Another such ridiculous fabrication was a 1966 US Army training film called, "County Fair," in which the sinister Vietcong were shown in a jungle clearing heating gasoline and soap bars thus creating a vicious "communist invention" called... napalm.⁸¹

Arthur Sylvester, Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs, was the man most responsible for "giving, controlling and managing the war news from Vietnam." One day in July 1965, Sylvester told American journalists that they had a patriotic duty to disseminate only information that made the United States look good. When one of the newsmen exclaimed: "Surely, Arthur, you don't expect the

American press to be the handmaidens of government," Sylvester replied, "That's exactly what I expect," adding: "Look, if you think any American official is going to tell you the truth, then you're stupid. Did you hear that? --- stupid." (An incredible admission, but not one that we should take lightly even, or perhaps especially, today.) And when a correspondent for a New York paper began a question, he was interrupted by Sylvester who said: "Aw, come on. What does someone in New York care about the war in Vietnam?"⁸²

In order to support State Department claims about the nature of the war and the reasons for American military actions in Vietnam, further fabricated information had to be

generated. A former CIA officer, Philip Liechty, stated in 1982 that in the early 1960's he had seen written plans to take large amounts of Communist-bloc weapons, load them into a Vietnamese boat, fake a battle in which the boat would be sunk in shallow water, then call in Western reporters to see the captured weapons as proof of outside aid to the Vietcong. In 1965, this is precisely what occurred. The State Department "White Paper," titled "Aggression From the North," which came out in February 1965 relates that a "suspicious vessel" was "sunk in shallow water" off the coast of Vietnam on 16 February 1965, after an attack by South Vietnamese forces. The boat was reported to contain at least 100 tons of military supplies "almost all of communist origin, largely from Communist China and Czechoslovakia as well as North Vietnam." The white paper noted that "Representatives of the free press visited the sunken North Vietnamese ship and viewed its cargo."

Liechty said also that he had seen documents involving an elaborate operation to print large numbers of postage stamps showing a Vietnamese shooting down a US Army helicopter. Liechty stated that the professional way the stamps were produced was meant to indicate that the North Vietnamese produced them because the Vietcong would not have had the capabilities. Liechty claimed that letters, written in Vietnamese, were then mailed all over the world with the stamp on them "and the CIA made sure journalists would get hold of them." Life Magazine, in its issue of February 26 1965, did in fact feature a full color blow-up of the stamp on its cover, referring to it as a "North Vietnamese stamp." This was just two days before the State Department's white paper appeared.

In reporting Liechty's statements, the Washington Post noted: "Publication of the white paper turned out to be a key event in documenting the support of North Vietnam and other communist countries in the fighting in the South and in preparing American public opinion for what was going to follow very soon: the large-scale commitment of the US forces to the fighting."⁸³

Part of the "large-scale commitment" to the war effort involved more operations conducted by the CIA on behalf of Washington. In 1965, William Colby oversaw the founding of the agency's Counter Terror (CT) program. In 1966, due to agency sensitivity to the word "terror," the name of the CT teams (there were multiple teams) was changed to Provincial Reconnaissance Units (PRUs). Wayne Cooper, a former Foreign Service officer who spent almost eighteen months as an advisor to South Vietnamese internal-security programs, described the operation: "It was a unilateral American program, never recognized by the South Vietnamese government. CIA representatives recruited, organized, supplied, and directly paid CT teams..."⁸⁴ The function of these teams was to use terror - assassination, abuses, kidnappings and intimidation - against the Vietcong leadership. Colby also supervised the establishment of a network of Provincial Interrogation Centers. One center was built (with agency funds) in each of South Vietnam's forty-four provinces. An agency operator or contract employee directed the activities of each center's operation, which consisted of torture tactics against suspected Vietcong. Usually Vietnamese nationals carried out such torture.

In 1967, Colby's office devised another program that would later be called *Phoenix*, to coordinate an attack against the Vietcong infrastructure. Again, CIA money was the catalyst. According to Colby's own testimony in 1971 before a congressional committee, 20,587 suspected Vietcong were killed under Phoenix in its first two and a half years.⁸⁵ Figures provided by the South Vietnamese government credit Phoenix with 40,994 VC kills. Colby admitted to this same committee that there was no proven method for knowing whether their victims were Vietcong or not.

The war years between 1967 and 1973 are documented quite clearly and so I will not reiterate them here. I am currently writing a paper describing my personal experiences in Vietnam. Accompanying this paper is an article entitled, "Claymore Alley," in which I describe my first combat experience.

The End of the War

On January 27, 1973, the US signed the "Agreement on Ending the War and Restoring Peace in Vietnam" in Paris. Among the principles to which the US agreed was the one stated in Article 21 of the Agreement:

In pursuance of its traditional policy, the United States will contribute to healing the wounds of war and to postwar reconstruction of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (North Vietnam) and throughout Indochina.

Five days later, on February 1, 1973 President Richard Nixon sent a message to the prime Minister of North Vietnam reiterating and expanding upon this pledge. The first two principles put forth in the President's message were:

- 1) The Government of the United States of America will contribute to postwar reconstruction in North Vietnam without any political conditions.
- 2) Preliminary United States studies indicate that the appropriate programs for the United States contribution to postwar reconstruction will fall in the range of \$3.25 billion of grant aid over 5 years. Other forms of aid will be agreed upon between the two parties. This estimate is subject to revision and to detailed discussion between the Government of the United States and the Government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam.

Since that time, the ONLY aid given to any Vietnamese people by the United States has been to those who have left Vietnam or those who have been infiltrated back to stir up trouble. People who have formed groups to provide aid to Vietnam have been targeted for harassment by the Federal government.

Over 2,000,000+ Vietnamese dead (4,000,000 if you include those that later died of associated illnesses and injuries). But are the real victims of the Vietnam War

yet to be born? The United States dropped tens of millions of pounds of herbicide on Vietnam. Included in this were large quantities of dioxin, which has been called the most toxic man-made substance known. Three ounces of dioxin placed in the New York water supply, it is claimed, could wipe out the entire populace. Studies done since the end of the war indicate abnormally high rates of cancers, particularly of the liver, chromosomal damage, birth defects, long-lasting neurological disorders, etc., in the heavily sprayed areas. The evidence is not yet conclusive, but further studies have been difficult to perform due to the long-standing US-sponsored isolation of Vietnam. Thousands of American veterans of Vietnam have been fighting for disability compensation due to their own exposure to the toxins. After years of citing "lack of evidence," several herbicide manufacturers finally agreed to a settlement in 1984. It is extremely unfortunate that the "evidence" we veterans needed was available and waiting to be collected in Vietnam. Every year that passes pushes the possibility of collecting it farther and farther away.

During the Vietnam War, many young Americans refused military duty on the grounds that the United States was committing war crimes in Vietnam, and that they too, if they took part in the war, would be guilty under the principles laid down at Nuremberg.

These principles were generated after the Second World War, when the International Military Tribunal convened at Nuremberg, Germany. Created by the Allies, the Tribunal sentenced to prison or execution numerous Nazis who pleaded that they had been "only following orders." In an opinion handed down by the Tribunal, it declared that "the very essence of the [Tribunal's] Charter is that individuals have international duties which transcend the national obligations of obedience imposed by the individual state."

In 1971, Telford Taylor, the chief United States prosecutor at Nuremberg, suggested rather strongly that General William Westmoreland and high officials of the Johnson administration such as Robert McNamara and Dean Rusk could be found guilty of war crimes under criteria

established at Nuremberg.⁸⁶ Yet, every court and judge when confronted by the Nuremberg defense had dismissed it without according it any serious consideration whatsoever.

"The West has never been allowed to forget the Nazi holocaust. For 40 years there has been a continuous outpouring of histories, memoirs, novels, feature films, documentaries, television series... played and replayed, in every Western language; museums, memorials, remembrances, ceremonies...Never Again! But who hears the voice of the Vietnamese peasant? Who can read the language of the Vietnamese intellectual? What was the fate of the Vietnamese Anne Frank? Where, asks the young American, is Vietnam?"⁸⁷

Epilogue

I cannot guess what effect, if any, the information contained in this paper will have on you, the reader. I know that for myself, learning about the...

- internal political situation in Vietnam
- pervasive Vietnamese support for the communists
- continued avoidance by the US government of every possible chance for peace
- lies, propaganda and disinformation campaigns perpetrated not only against the Vietnamese, but against the American public by our own government
- incredible dishonesty of our own elected officials - saying one thing, doing another, agreeing to promises and commitments, but never intending to keep them

...has forever changed my fundamental understanding of the Vietnam War.

Why did the US get involved in Vietnam?

The facts, unfortunately, point to an age-old imperialistic desire for US-domination of countries smaller than ourselves, plus an incredible intolerance of any independent foreign government that comes into power and which is out of the US sphere of

influence. If this sounds harsh, just take a look at the historical record. Time and time again, the US has undermined and/or overthrown numerous democratically elected (or popular revolutionary) governments if they were deemed "independent" of US power and influence e.g., Guatemala, Cuba, Chile, Nicaragua to name just a few. Add to these factors a combination of blatant racism against people of color (the "Yellow hordes" as the Vietnamese were often referred to) and anti-communist hysteria and I think you're close to finding an answer.

How did the US get involved in Vietnam?

Through a carefully contrived plan of deceit and covert foreign policy: Through the Kennedy, Johnson and Nixon administrations the public was continually lied to whenever it concerned our involvement in Vietnam. Every possible peaceful overture was denied or undermined. Only a military solution, a solution whereby the US could dominate Vietnam, could be accepted by our government. The Central Intelligence Agency played its part, supporting the covert foreign policy with propaganda and disinformation campaigns carried out both at home and overseas, and later by ignoring the very intelligence which showed dramatically that there was no way in hell the US was ever going to win a war with Vietnam.

Who were the Vietcong?

Contrary to popular belief, it is clear that the Vietcong originated in the South despite North Vietnamese efforts to curtail their uprising. The Vietnam War was a civil war exacerbated through US support of Vietnamese despots like Diem, Ky and Thieu. The 19 months I spent in Vietnam were not spent fighting the North Vietnamese. I, and my fellow soldiers, were actually involved in a huge military attack - *on the people of South Vietnam*. When one of our commanders would preach to us before a mission to "Bring me back some ears!" he was not asking for North Vietnamese blood. The Vietcong were for the most part, South Vietnamese who wanted independence more than anything in the world. It was their love of country and

their desire to win it back that eventually defeated the US military machine.

Why were we lied to?

For the same reasons our government lies to us today: An incredible arrogance that powerful people all over the world seem to share - that the public is not capable of making important decisions - together with the unspoken belief (and fear) - that most common, ordinary citizens would recognize immoral acts for what they are and strongly oppose them if they knew. This situation is made all the more sad by the number of Americans who have accepted the (state-sponsored) belief that they are incapable of deciding their own welfare and must hand the responsibility over to people who must then keep their "more enlightened" policy decisions secret and hidden from public view.

It is one thing to say, "Oh sure, everyone knows the Vietnam War was wrong." But, it's another thing to actually dig into the available information and find out just how wrong it was. The US attack on Vietnam (and can it seriously be called anything else?) didn't have to happen. It was avoidable. 58,000 Americans didn't have to die, nor did 2,000,000 Vietnamese. The anger directed towards the Vietnamese by American families who lost loved ones, is misdirected. The US government and its attitude of intolerance towards other countries seeking independent (and therefore uncontrolled) rule, is responsible for their deaths, and the anger of the American public should be directed at it and the people who orchestrated the war. The commanding officers and government officials who directed the war are indeed guilty of many war crimes. But they will go unpunished.

The facts about the Vietnam War are available, but are rarely discussed honestly by our media. As I said before, if the truth does not come out, we are doomed to repeat the same mistakes.

And we already have.

It appears as if the only people to have learned something from all the deception surrounding Vietnam, is the US government.

Our elected officials have reinforced their belief that knowledge is power, and knowledge hidden and kept from the American public gives it the power to do what it wants, without oversight and second-guessing. Ask Nixon about Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos and Watergate; Carter about El Salvador, Chile and the Middle East; Reagan about Iran, Africa, Nicaragua, Libya and Grenada; Bush about Africa, Iraq, Panama, and Somalia; Clinton about... only time will tell.

Control information and you control the way people think. Thus, you can convince the American public that tiny, backward countries like Grenada and Nicaragua pose a serious military threat to the United States; that the US does not carry out wars against a country's innocent population, but against satanic individuals instead, like Gaddafi, Noriega, Hussein, and Aidid.

The total number of people our military kills is now kept from us (another valuable lesson learned by our government from the Vietnam War), so the American public will not get weak of heart when their children are ordered to go and fight. That international law is meant to be broken and ignored by the US whenever it suits our needs is a given, as in Panama (an illegal attack condemned by the World Court). The murder of several thousand fleeing Iraqis (their flight out of Kuwait) is a direct violation of the Geneva Convention, but so what? It was, in the words of a jet pilot involved in the mass murder, "A real turkey shoot!"⁸⁸ Thousands more dead and forgotten by the public. If the issue is never discussed by our mass media, it never reaches the status of being an issue.

Do not translate my criticism of American foreign policy into some kind of hatred for my country. It is specifically because of the love I have for my country that I get so angered by policies which, when implemented, kill and injure thousands of innocent people and denigrate our country's good name. At one time most of the world (even Vietnam!) looked up to and respected the United States. The long litany of countries wherein US covert foreign policies have been implemented has drastically altered the world's perception of our

government and us, the American public. Americans are now becoming targets for terror as we begin to reap the seeds (of terror) our military and political interventions have sown.

My purpose in relating this all too brief history to you is merely to inform. My own ignorance of the facts led me willingly to the battlefields of Vietnam. When the next war or military intervention comes - *and it will*, I hope you will question everything the government tells you.

We owe it to the young men and women who will be fighting and dying in the next war to hold our government and military officials responsible for their decisions. But more than this, we owe it to ourselves to seek out the history of our previous military interventions, learn the facts, teach our young, *lest we forget*.

Excerpt: The Vietnamese Declaration of Independence

All men are created equal. They are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights, among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.

This immortal statement was made in the Declaration of Independence of the United States of America in 1776. In a broader sense, this means: All the peoples on the earth are equal from birth, all the peoples have a right to live, to be happy and free.

The Declaration of the French Revolution made in 1791 on the Rights of Man and the Citizen also states: "All men are born free and with equal rights, and must always remain free and have equal rights."

Those are undeniable truths.

Nevertheless, for more than eighty years the French imperialists, abusing the standard of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity, have violated our Fatherland and oppressed our fellow-citizens. They have acted contrary to the ideals of humanity and justice.

They have enforced laws; they have set up three distinct political regimes in the North, the Centre and the South of Viet Nam in order to wreck our national unity and prevent our people from being united.

They have built more prisons than schools. They have mercilessly slain our patriots; they have drowned our uprisings in rivers of blood.

They have fettered public opinion; they have practised obscurantism against our people.

To weaken our race they have forced us to use opium and alcohol.

In the field of economics, they have fleeced us to the backbone, impoverished our people and devastated our land.

They have robbed us of our ricefields, our mines, our forests and our raw materials. They have monopolized the issuing of banknotes and the export trade.

They have invented numerous unjustifiable taxes and reduced our people, especially our peasantry, to a state of extreme poverty.

They have hampered the prospering of our national bourgeoisie; they have mercilessly exploited our workers...

The truth is that we have wrested our independence from the Japanese and not from the French.

The French have fled, the Japanese have capitulated, Emperor Bao Dai has abdicated. Our people have broken the chains which for nearly a century have fettered them and have won independence for the Fatherland. Our people at the same time have overthrown the monarchic regime that has reigned supreme for dozens of centuries. In its place has been established the present Democratic Republic.

For these reasons, we, members of the provisional Government, representing the whole Vietnamese people, declare that from now on we break off all relations of a colonial character with France; we repeal all the international obligation[s] that France has so far subscribed to on behalf of Viet

Nam and we abolish all the special rights the French have unlawfully acquired in our Fatherland.

The whole Vietnamese people, animated by a common purpose, are determined to fight to the bitter end against any attempt by the French colonialists to reconquer their country.

We are convinced that the Allied nations which at Teheran and San Francisco have acknowledged the principles of self-determination and equality of nations, will not refuse to acknowledge the independence of Viet Nam.

A people who have courageously opposed French domination for more than eighty years, a people who have fought side by side with the Allies against the fascists during these last years, such a people must be free and independent.

For these reasons, we, members of the Provisional Government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, solemnly declare to the world that Viet Nam has the right to be a free and independent country - and in fact it is so already. The entire Vietnamese people are determined to mobilize all their physical and mental strength, to sacrifice their lives and property in order to safeguard their independence and liberty.

¹Cited in *The United States In Vietnam* by George McTurnan Kahin and John Lewis (Delta, 1967): This was after the collapse of the Tang Dynasty, and it was from Nan Han, a small successor kingdom confined to South China, that the Vietnamese won their independence.

²*Ibid.*: For fuller accounts of this early period, see D. G. E. Hall; *A History of Southeast Asia*, 2nd ed. (London: Macmillan 1963); John F. Cady, *Southeast Asia: Its Historical Development* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964); Joseph Buttinger, *The Smaller Dragon* (New York: Praeger, 1958)

³*Ibid.*

⁴*Ibid.* The most comprehensive biography of Ho Chi Minh available in English is to be found in Bernard B. Fall, *The Two Vietnams* (New York: Praeger, 1964), especially pp. 81-103. All subsequent citations from Fall's work refer to this book. Another substantial account is to be found in Jean Lacouture, *Cinque hommes et la France* (Paris: Editions du Deuil, 1961), pp. 11-108. A large part of Ho Chi Minh's writings for

the period May 25, 1922 through September 10, 1960 are available in a four volume edition (*Ho Chi Minh, Selected Works* [Hanoi: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1960-62.

⁵*Ibid.* Philippe Devillers, *Histoire du Vietnam* (Paris: Editions du Deuil, 1952), p. 57; Fall, *op. cit.*, pp. 83-84.

⁶*Ibid.* Fall, *op. cit.* p. 87; Donald Lancaster, *The Emancipation of French Indochina* (London: Oxford University Press, 1961), p. 79.

⁷*Ibid.* Fall, *op. cit.* pp. 87-88. This pamphlet is not included in Ho's Selected Works. For his ideas on race relations in the United States, see in Volume I of this series, "Lynching, a Little Known Aspect of American Civilization," pp. 99-105, and "The Ku-Klux-Klan," pp. 127-132.

⁸*Ibid.* Lancaster, *op. cit.*, p. 80; Fall, *op. cit.* p. 90.

⁹*Ibid.* Lacouture, *op. cit.*, p. 31; Devillers, *op. cit.*, p. 59.

¹⁰*Ibid.* Fall, *op. cit.* p. 97. There is considerable agreement that Ho spent this period in Moscow.

¹¹*Ibid.* Lacouture, *op. cit.*, p. 36; Fall, *op. cit.*, p. 97-98.

¹²*Ibid.* According to a statement by Diem to Southeast Asia Seminar, Cornell University, February 20, 1953, it was Ho's leadership as a nationalist that enabled him to rally such wide Vietnamese support.

¹³*Ibid.* Ellen J. Hammer, *The Struggle for Indochina* (Stanford, Cal.: Stanford University Press, 1954), pp. 112-113.

¹⁴*Ibid.* Harold Isaacs, *No Peace for Asia* (New York: Macmillan, 1947), pp. 148-149.

¹⁵*Ibid.* Devillers, *op. cit.*, p. 152; Fall, *op. cit.*, pp. 100-101; Lancaster, *op. cit.*, p. 143; Hammer, *op. cit.*, pp. 130-151; Isaacs, *op. cit.*, pp. 148, 164.

¹⁶See excerpt of the *Declaration of Independence of the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam* cited at the end of this article.

¹⁷Cited in *The CIA, A Forgotten History* by William Blum; Ho Chi Minh and Vietminh working with the OSS, admirers of the US; Chester Cooper, *The Lost Crusade: The Full Story of US Involvement in Vietnam from Roosevelt to Nixon* (Great Britain, 1971) pp. 22, 25-7, 40. Cooper was a veteran American diplomat in the Far East who served as the Assistant for Asian Affairs in the Johnson White House. He was also a CIA officer, covertly, for all or part of his career; French collaboration with the Japanese: Fall, *op. cit.* pp. 42-9; *Ho Chi Minh's desk: Blanche W. Cook, The Declassified Eisenhower* (New York, 1981), p. 184.

¹⁸Cited in *The United States In Vietnam* by George McTurnan Kahin and John Lewis (Delta, 1967): According to Harold Isaacs, General Gracey stated to him: "We have discharged our obligation to them. Now it is up to them to carry on." Isaacs, *op. cit.*, p. 162.

¹⁹Cited in *The CIA, A Forgotten History* by William Blum; Washington Post, 14 September 1969, p. A25. Lansing was the uncle of John Foster and Allen Dulles. He appointed them both to the American delegation at the Versailles peace Conference in 1918-19, where it was that Ho Chi Minh presented his appeal.

- ²⁰Cited in *The United States In Vietnam* by George McTurnan Kahin and John Lewis (Delta, 1967): Estimate of the French naval officer who assumed command in the area in December 1946. Devillers, *op. cit.*, p. 337.
- ²¹Cited in *The United States In Vietnam* by George McTurnan Kahin and John Lewis (Delta, 1967): The Vietminh had gained the military initiative well before the communists came into power in China. Their military strength against the French was already clearly established before they were able to secure even modest military assistance from Communist China, although during the final phases of the war, material supplied by the Chinese was to help considerably in major battles. The French did not allege a military-assistance agreement between the Vietminh and the Chinese communists until April 1950. See *Ambassade de France, Service de Presse et d'Information*, Document No. 26 (New York, November 10, 1950).
- ²²"The Two Vietnams," by Bernard Fall (New York, 1967), pp. 122, 124.
- ²³"Year 501, The Conquest Continues," by Noam Chomsky, South End Press, 1993
- ²⁴Cited in *The CIA, A Forgotten History; US Global Interventions Since World War II* by William Blum: Zed Books, Ltd. 1986
- ²⁵Cited in *The United States In Vietnam* by George McTurnan Kahin and John Lewis (Delta, 1967): "The Pentagon Papers" (NYT edition), 1971; p. XI.
- ²⁶*Ibid.*, Fall, pp. 43.
- ²⁷*Ibid.*, *The Pentagon Papers*, p. 11.
- ²⁸*Ibid.*, *The Pentagon Papers*, p. 36.
- ²⁹*Ibid.*, *The Pentagon Papers*, pp. 5,11; *D. Eisenhower, The White House Years*, 1953-56 (NY, 1963) pp. 340-41; S. Adams, *Firsthand Report* (NY, 1960) pp. 121-2.
- ³⁰*Ibid.*, Adams, p. 24.
- ³¹*Ibid.*, *The Pentagon Papers*, p. 46.
- ³²*Ibid.*, *The Times* (London) 2 June 1954, quoting from an article by Willoughby.
- ³³*Ibid.*, Bernard Fall, *Hell in a Very Small Place: The Siege of Dien Bien Phu* (Great Britain, 1967) p. 307; *Parade Magazine* (*Washington Post*) 24 April 1966; Roscoe Drummond and Gaston Coblentz, *Duel at the Brink* (New York, 1960) pp. 121-2.
- ³⁴Cited in *The CIA, A Forgotten History; US Global Interventions Since World War II* by William Blum; Joseph Burkholder Smith: *Portrait of a Cold Warrior* (New York, 1976) pp. 172-4.
- ³⁵*Ibid.*
- ³⁶Cited in *Rethinking Camelot* by Noam Chomsky: Melvyn Leffler, *Preponderance*, 166, 258; *FRS*, 32-3. See *Year 501* by Chomsky, ch. 2.1-2
- ³⁷*Ibid.*
- ³⁸Cited in *The United States In Vietnam* by George McTurnan Kahin and John Lewis (Delta, 1967): *The Pentagon Papers*, I 597, 434f. *AWWA* 33f.
- ³⁹*Ibid.*
- ⁴⁰*Ibid.*, Fall, (*Two Vietnams*), pp. 153-4
- ⁴¹Cited in *The CIA: A Forgotten History*; All other actions: *The Pentagon Papers*, Document No. 15:
- 'Lansdale Team's Report on Covert Saigon Mission in '54 and '55,' pp. 53-66.
- ⁴²Cited in *The United States in Vietnam* by George Kahin and John Lewis: See Anthony Eden, *Full Circle* (London: Cassell, 1960), p. 142.
- ⁴³Cited in *The United States in Vietnam* by George Kahin and John Lewis: Article 27 of the Franco-Vietnamese Armistice Agreement. See also the treaty of June 4, 1954, between France and Bao Dai's State of Vietnam, which made clear that the latter's independence was to entail assumption of all obligations "resulting from international treaties or conventions contracted by France in the name of the State of Vietnam, and all other treaties and conventions concluded by France in the name of French Indochina insofar as these affect Vietnam." Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Vietnam, Bureau of Archives, Treaties on Vietnamese Independence and Franco-Vietnamese Association, cited in Ngo Ton Dat, "The Geneva Partition of Vietnam and the Question of Reunification during the First Two years (August University, 1963), pp. 452-453. The writer of this dissertation served at the Geneva Conference as aide to prince Buu Loc, who was Bao Dai's Prime Minister prior to Ngo Dinh Diem.
- ⁴⁴*Ibid.*, Statement by Assist. Secretary Walter S. Robertson, Dept. of State Bulletin (Washington: Department of State, December 1961)
- ⁴⁵*Ibid.*, A Threat to the peace (Washington: Department of State, December 1961), p. 3
- ⁴⁶Cited in *The United States in Vietnam* by George Kahin and John Lewis: Diem was from a Roman Catholic mandarin family that had served the vestigial and effectively French-controlled imperial Annamese court at Hue. After working in the imperial administration for four years, Diem resigned in 1933 because of a dispute with Emperor Bao Dai. In 1946, following a long period of political retirement and study, Diem was offered the premiership by Ho Chi Minh. He turned it down in part because he held the Vietminh responsible for the murder of his brother. After an unsuccessful attempt to develop a rival political force, he left Vietnam in August 1950. He spent the next four years abroad, mostly in the United States, where he lobbied for support among religious, political, and academic leaders. The influence of Cardinal Spellman and the American Friends of Vietnam, a group that has often been referred to as the "Vietnam lobby," is difficult to gauge, but it was probably significant in gaining support for Diem in the United States.
- ⁴⁷Cited in *Deadly Deceits, My 25 Years in the CIA* by Ralph McGehee: p. 131
- ⁴⁸*Ibid.*
- ⁴⁹*Ibid.*, Dr. Tom Dooley, *Three Great Books* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Cudahy, Inc., 1960), pp. 48, 98, 100.
- ⁵⁰*Ibid.*, Jim Winters, "Tom Dooley the Forgotten Hero," *Notre Dame Magazine*, May 1979, pp. 10-17
- ⁵¹*Ibid.*, Bernard B. Fall, *The Two Vietnams* (New York: Praeger, 1964), p. 246; Osborne, "The Tough Miracle man of Vietnam," *Life*, may 13, 1957; *New York Herald Tribune*, April 1, 1955.

- ⁵²*Ibid.*, Michael Klare, *War Without End* (New York, 1972) pp. 261-3; David Wise and Thomas B. Ross, *The Espionage Establishment* (New York, 1967) p. 152.
- ⁵³Cited in *Deadly Deceits, My 25 Years in the CIA* by Ralph McGehee: Department of Defense, *United States Vietnam Relations 1945-1967* (Washington, DC: United States Government Printing Office, 1971) (Hereafter referred to as the Department of Defense *Pentagon Papers*), Vol. 10, p. 958
- ⁵⁴Cited in *The United States in Vietnam: Documents Relating to British Involvement in the Indochina Conflicts 1945-1965, Command 2834*, (London: Her Majesty's Stationary Office, 1965), p. 107
- ⁵⁵Cited in *The CIA, A Forgotten History* by William Blum: *Life Magazine*, 13 May 1957.
- ⁵⁶Cited in *The United States in Vietnam: New York Times*, August 9, 1955.
- ⁵⁷*Ibid.*, *The Times* (London), September 22, 1955.
- ⁵⁸*Ibid.*, *Le Monde*, February 25, 1956; *Journal Officiel de la Republique Francaise, Debats Parlementaires, Conseil de la Republique*, February 24, 1956.
- ⁵⁹*Ibid.*, *Vietnam News Agency*, February 7, 1955.
- ⁶⁰*Ibid.*, William Henderson, "South Viet Nam Finds Itself," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 35, No. 2, January 1957, pp. 285, 288.
- ⁶¹Cited in *The CIA, A Forgotten History* by William Blum: Emmet John Hughes, *The Ordeal of Power* (London, 1963) p. 208; Hughes was a speech writer for President Eisenhower.
- ⁶²Cited in *The United States in Vietnam*, by George McTurnin Kahn and John W. Lewis, p. 110-111.
- ⁶³Cited in *Manufacturing Consent* by Noam Chomsky: In R. Lindholm, ed. *Vietnam: The First Five Years* (Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1959), p. 346.
- ⁶⁴Cited in *The United States in Vietnam*, by George McTurnin Kahn and John W. Lewis, p. 114
- ⁶⁵*Le Monde*, April 15, 1965 cited in *The United States in Vietnam*, by George McTurnin Kahn and John W. Lewis, p. 114
- ⁶⁶*Ibid.*
- ⁶⁷*Ibid.*, *New York Times*, February 15, 1962.
- ⁶⁸*Ibid.*
- ⁶⁹Cited in *The CIA, A Forgotten History* by William Blum: *Time*, 30 June 1975, p. 32 of European edition.
- ⁷⁰Contrary to the myths surrounding Kennedy and the Vietnam war, carefully following Kennedy's speeches, notes and reported conversations demonstrates that Kennedy only intended on withdrawing US troops "after" a clear defeat of the NLF and not before. When it became obvious that the war was going to last longer than first predicted, war plans had to change.
- ⁷¹Cited in *The United States In Vietnam* by George McTurnan Kahin and John Lewis (Delta, 1967): *New York Times*, January 1 and 2, 1964
- ⁷²*Ibid.*, Peter Grose in the *New York Times*, July 24, 1964. See *New York Times* also: July 26, 1964.
- ⁷³*Ibid.*, "President de Gaulle Holds Tenth Press conference," Ambassade de France, *Service de Presse et d'Information*, New York, No. 208, July 23, 1964, p. 11.
- ⁷⁴*Ibid.*, Hanoi Radio, July 24, 28, and 29, 1964; Moscow Radio, July 26, 1964, as quoted in Documents Relating to British Involvement in the Indo-china Conflict, 1945-1965, *Command Paper 2834* (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1965), p. 239.
- ⁷⁵*Ibid.*, Peking Radio, August 2, 1964. See *Peking Review*, Vol. VII, No. 32, August 7, 1964, p. 22.
- ⁷⁶*Ibid.*, *The New York Times*, July 25, 1964.
- ⁷⁷*Ibid.*, *NYT*, July 28, 1964.
- ⁷⁸*Ibid.*, See *NYT*, July 23, 1964. South Vietnamese commandos had been conducting such operations against the North Vietnamese since 1957 and particularly since 1961. See *NYT*, January 1, 1962 and July 26, 1964; and *le Monde*, August 7, 1964.
- ⁷⁹*Ibid.*, "Why Our Foreign Policy Is Failing," an interview with Senator Fulbright by Eric Sevareid, in *Look*, May 3, 1966, pp. 25-26.
- ⁸⁰*Ibid.*, *NYT*, August 5, 1964.
- ⁸¹Cited in *The CIA, A Forgotten History* by William Blum: *Covert Action Information Bulletin* (Washington) No. 10, August - September, 1980, p. 43.
- ⁸²Cited in *The CIA, A Forgotten History* by William Blum: Congressional Record, House, 12 May 1966, pp. 9977-78, reprint of article by Morley Safer of CBS News.
- ⁸³*Ibid.*, Washington Post article reprinted in *San Francisco Chronicle*, 20 March 1982, p. 9.
- ⁸⁴Cited in *The CIA and the Cult of Intelligence* by Victor Marchetti and John D. Marks., p. 236.
- ⁸⁵*Ibid.*, Even Colby has admitted that serious abuses were committed under Phoenix. Former intelligence officers have come before congressional committees and elsewhere to describe repeated examples of torture and other particularly repugnant practices used by Phoenix operatives. However, according to David Wise, writing in the *New York Times Magazine* on July 1, 1973, "Not one of Colby's friends or neighbors, or even his critics on the Hill, would, in their wildest imagination, conceive of Bill Colby attaching electric wires to a man's genitals and personally turning the crank. "Not Bill Colby... He's a Princeton man."
- ⁸⁶Cited in *The CIA, A Forgotten History* by William Blum: *San Francisco Chronicle*, 9 January 1971 (New York Times Service); also see Telford Taylor, *Nuremberg and Vietnam: An American Tragedy* (New York, 1970).
- ⁸⁷*Ibid.*
- ⁸⁸CNN News.