

French Indochina 1935



Colonialism in Vietnam

In the 1860s Indochina consisted of three countries: Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam. France took advantage of a dynastic struggle inside Vietnam to establish a colony which eventually grew to control all of Indochina by the 1890s.

October 1930: Ho Chi Minh helps to establish the Indochinese Communist Party. The party activity was based around 10 points:

1. To overthrow French imperialism and Vietnamese feudalism and reactionary bourgeoisie;
2. To make Indochina completely independent;
3. To establish a worker-peasant-soldier government;
4. To confiscate the banks and other enterprises belonging to the imperialists and put them under the control of the worker-peasant-soldier government;
5. To confiscate all the plantations and property belonging to the imperialists and the Vietnamese reactionary bourgeoisie and distribute them to the poor peasants;
6. To implement the 8-hour working day;
7. To abolish the forced buying of government bonds, the poll-tax and all unjust taxes hitting the poor;
8. To bring democratic freedoms to the masses;
9. To dispense education to all the people;
10. To realize equality between man and woman.

June 1940: United States moves its Pacific Fleet from San Diego, California to Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. Its intent was to deter Japan's aggression in the Pacific.

May 1941: Ho Chi Minh establishes the Viet Minh (League for the Independence of Vietnam).

July 26, 1941: United States places an embargo on raw materials to Japan including oil, scrap metal etc.

September 1941: Japan invades Indochina, main reason was the rubber plantations and Germany already has occupied France.

December 1941: Japan attacks the Naval Base at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii.

March 8, 1942 : Japan occupies the Dutch East Indies. The reason is mainly it's oil and rubber resources and cheap labor. Germany also has occupied The Netherlands.

September 1945: Japanese surrender to British troops. Ho Chi Minh declares Vietnam and independent state.

September 1945: France rebuffs demands for independent Vietnam. Reclaims Indochina colonies, but allows a Democratic Republic of Vietnam to become a "free state" within the French Union. French troops return, battles break out between French and Communist Viet Minh and Nationalist forces.

December 1946: Communist Viet Minh launches war for independence against France, rejecting "free state" offer.

March 1949: France establishes an independent Vietnam and names Bao Dai as its leader.

January 1950: China recognizes the Republic of Vietnam with Ho Chi Minh as its leader.

March 1950: United States makes its first financial aid to pro-French Vietnam, aid is channeled through France.

June 1950: First U.S. military advisors arrive. They are called MAAG (Military Assistance Advisorly Group).

September 1951: U.S. aid to France is substantially increased and includes military equipment.

1952/1953: French troops equipped with U.S. material fight the Viet Minh. Period is marked by terrorist attacks in various cities including Hanoi and Siagon.

March 1954: Battle at Dien Bien Phu begins. The garrison surrenders in May to Viet Minh forces.

April 1954: President Dwight D. Eisenhower first used the term “domino theory” in a news conference.

June 1954: Bao Dai appoints Ngo Dinh Diem as Prime Minister.

July 1954: Vietnam divided at the 17th parallel into two separate states. The Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV) and the Republic of South Vietnam. The U.S. and South Vietnam do not sign the agreement.

August 1954: Estimated at more than one million refugees leave North Vietnam for the South.

September 1954: SEATO (Southeast Asia Treaty Organization) formed to contain Communist expansion in the region.

October 1954: President Eisenhower gives aid directly to South Vietnam. U.S. agrees to train South Vietnamese military. French military forces leave Hanoi and the Viet Minh control North Vietnam.

February 1955: U.S. advisors begin direct training of South Vietnamese military.

October 1955: Ngo Dinh Diem deposes Bao Dai and becomes unchallenged President of South Vietnam.

April 1956: U.S. advisors take over full training of South Vietnamese army. Last French troops leave Vietnam.

October 1956: Three U.S. installations in Saigon are bombed.

November 1956: Dwight D. Eisenhower is re-elected president.

May 1958: U.S. sends more military advisors requested by South Vietnam.

December 1958: North Vietnam says it will undertake covert activities in the South.

May 1959: North Vietnam calls for armed struggle to reunite Vietnam. Hanoi supports the National Liberation Front (NLF), or the Viet Cong (shorthand for Vietnam Communist). U.S. begins to build up its forces.

July 1959: Viet Cong attacks U.S. military installation at Bien Hoa, killing two and wounding several U.S. advisors. These are the first U.S. casualties in the area.

November 1959: John F. Kennedy is elected president.

January 1960: Large communist insurgency operation overruns a Vietnamese army installation in Tay Ninh province, capturing weapons and ammunition.

November 1960: President Diem's Presidential Palace is surrounded by South Vietnamese paratroops demanding reforms. The coup attempt is put down.

May 1961: President Kennedy says use of American troops in Vietnam is under consideration.

September 1961: Viet Cong force seize provincial capital only 50 miles from Saigon.

November 1961: President Kennedy sends more advisors.

January 1962: Defoliation begins (Agent Orange) with Operation Ranch Hand.

February 1962: South Vietnamese aircraft bomb and strafe Presidential Palace in Saigon. President Diem escapes injury. Military Assistance Command-Vietnam (MACV) created with General Paul D. Harkins, its first commander.

December 1962: U.S. troops in Vietnam number 11,000.

May 1963: Government forces fire on Buddhists flying the Buddhist flag in Hue. Nine die in riots which continue nationwide that summer.

June 1963: Buddhist monks commits public suicide by setting themselves on fire. By October seven monks burn to death.

November 1963: President Diem and his family murdered in military coupe. Council of Generals lead by General Doung Van Minh assumes power.

November 1963: President Kennedy is assassinated in Dallas, Texas. Lyndon B. Johnson sworn in as President.

December 1963: U.S. troops in Vietnam number 15,000.

January 1964: Military coup led by General Nguyen Khanh outs government of General Doung Van Minh after three months in power.

June 1964: General William C. Westmoreland succeeds General Paul D. Harkins as commander of MAC-V.

August 1964: North Vietnamese torpedo boats attack U.S. destroyers, Maddox and C. Turner Joy, in the Gulf of Tonkin. U.S. congress passes Gulf of Tonkin resolution giving President Johnson wide military powers.

November 1964: Lyndon B. Johnson re-elected president.

December 1964: Terrorist bombings in Saigon kill more Americans. Bombing of Ho Chi Minh trail in Laos begins. U.S. troops in Vietnam number 23,000.

January 1965: Buddhist demonstrations continue by committing fiery suicide.

February 1965: General Nguyen Khanh ousted as head of government.

March 1965: First combat force arrives in Danang. Terrorist bomb explodes at U.S. embassy killing two, many injured.

March 1965: Operation Rolling Thunder begins sustains bombing of North Vietnam. By end of 1965, 171 U.S. aircraft are lost.

April 1965: President Johnson offers aid to North Vietnam if peace is secured.

June 1965: General Nhuyen Cao Ky is named as new head of the South Vietnamese government. President Johnson authorizes use of U.S. forces in direct combat.

November 1965: U.S. troops and NVA troops meet for the first time at Ia Drang. Both sides sustain heavy losses

November 1965: Ho Chi Minh rejects U.S. peace offer.

December 1965: U.S. troop strength numbers 181,000.

May 1966: More than 250,000 gather in Washington D.C. to demonstrate against the war.

August 1966: U.S. troop in Vietnam number 292,000.

April 1967: 100,000 protest the war in New York City.

May 19, 1967: **Richard O. Lozenski** (Marine Corps) is killed in action in Quang Tri Province.

September 1967: General Nguyen Van Thieu elected President of South Vietnam, Nhuyen Cao Ky becomes Vice President.

November 1967: U.S. casualties reach 15,000 killed.

December 1967: U.S. troops number nearly 500,000 in Vietnam.

January 1968: Marine base at Khe Sanh comes under siege by NVA. The Tet Offensive begins, most major cities come under attack. The U.S. embassy in Saigon is attacked by Viet Cong sappers. Hue becomes major Tet battleground. Heavy fighting begins in Saigon with heavy casualties on both sides. This is a turning point in the war.

March 1968: Battle for Hue ends with NVA repulsed. My Lai massacre occurs. Tet Offensive battle for Saigon ends.

April 1968: Khe Sanh siege lifted. Letters exchanged between Hanoi and Washington indicated possibility for peace talks.

May 1968: Participants agree on Paris as the site for peace talks, negotiators arrive for preliminary discussions. New fighting breaks out on the outskirts of Saigon. NVA troop fight inside Saigon for the first time.

June 1968: Le Duc Tho, chief North Vietnamese negotiator leaves Paris and returns to Hanoi.

July 1968: General Creighton Abrams succeeds General William C. Westmoreland and commander of MAC-V.

August 1968: Chicago Democratic National Convention is the scene of major anti-war demonstrations that lead to riots.

October 1968: President Johnson halts the bombing of North Vietnam. His statements anger South Vietnamese government.

November 1968: Richard M. Nixon is elected president.

November 1968: Le Duc Tho returns to Paris for peace talks.

December 22, 1968: **Donald I. Culshaw** (Army) is killed in action in Tay Ninh Province.

December 1968: Paris peace negotiators squabble over the shape of the talk table.. U.S. troop strength now numbers 536,000. U. S. casualties reach 30,000 killed.

January 1969: Formal peace talks open in Paris.

March 1969: Mass graves of hundreds of civilians executed by Viet Cong uncovered in Hue.

April 1969: U.S. troop strength peaks at 543,482 in-country.

June 1969: Bombing of North Vietnam resumes. President Nixon plans to withdraw 25,000 troops as part of his Vietnamization program.

June 19, 1969: **Thomas J. Bradley** (Army) is killed in action in Hua Nghia Province.

July 1969: Secret letters are exchanged between President Nixon and Ho Chi Minh in which agreement is reached to work for peace.

August 5, 1969: **Lyle G. Leppke** (Army) is killed in action in Thua Thien Province.

September 1969: 25,000 troops are withdrawn. President Nixon announces 35,000 more will depart. Ho Chi Minh dies at age 79.

October 1969: Millions across the country participate in the Moratorium, largest one day demonstration against the war.

November 1969: My Lai massacre revealed. Some 250,000 protestors gather in Washington D.C. for the largest anti-war demonstration at that time in American history.

December 1969: President Nixon announces that 75,000 more troops will be withdrawn by Spring 1970. Troop strength now number 475,000, U.S. casualties total 40,000 killed.

February 1970: Henry Kissinger begins secret talks with North Vietnam in Paris.

May 1970: Campus anti-war demonstrations are wide spread, at Kent State four students are killed by National Guard gunfire.

October 1970: President Nixon announces a withdrawal of another 40,000 troops.

December 1970: Troop strength is numbered at 334,000.

March 1971: Lt. William Calley is found guilty of the My Lai massacre and sentenced to life in prison by Army Court Martial.

April 1971: President Nixon announces 100,000 more troops to be withdrawn by the end of 1971. Some 500,000 anti-war demonstrators rally in Washington D.C. while another 150,000 rally in San Francisco.

May 1971: Paris peace talks enter their fourth year still in deadlock.

December 1, 1971: Delbert L. Ahlschlager (Navy) dies aboard the USS Mobile in international waters two days after leaving Vietnam.

January 1972: President Nixon announces that he will reduce troop levels to 70,000 by early spring.

March 1972: NVA cross the DMZ, what is known as the Easter Offensive.

April 1972: NVA offensive for Quang Tri begins, thousands of refugees flee to Hue. Heavy fighting pits ARVN against NVA at An Loc and Khe Sanh.

May 1972: Secret meetings between Henry Kissinger and Le Duc Tho resume.

June 1972: General Frederick C. Weyland succeeds General Creighton Abrams as commander of MAC-V.

July 23, 1972: Stephen H. Gravrock (Air Force) is killed in action in Binh Long Province.

July 1972: The siege of An Loc is broken. NVA retreats into Laos.

August 1972: Last American combat unit depart South Vietnam.

September 1972: Quang Tri is recaptured by ARVN.

November 1972: Richard M. Nixon is re-elected president.

December 1972: Paris peace talks collapse. Heaviest bombing of the war is resumed with Hanoi the target. U.S. troop strength is at 24,000.

January 1973: Henry Kissinger and Le Duc Tho resume talks in Paris. Peace agreement is signed. President Nixon suspends military action against North Vietnam.

February 1973: Last military forces leave Vietnam, POWs are released by NVA and VC. U.S. casualties top 50,000 killed.

January 1974: The war continues.

December 1974: North Vietnamese attack Phuoc Long to see what the U.S. reaction will be. There is none.

January 1975: Phuoc Long falls. NVA plans general offensive.

March 1975: NVA launches a massive assault on South Vietnam.

April 1975: South Vietnam surrenders. NVA tanks roll through the gates of the Presidential Palace in Siagon.

July 1976: Vietnam is unified as a communist country, the Socialist Republic of Vietnam.

The Other Vietnamese Flag

Symbolism

The Vietnamese flag has a yellow background and three horizontal red stripes along its entire length. The yellow has been the traditional color of Vietnam for over two thousand years. It is also the color of earth, as understood in universal scheme of five elements in Oriental cosmology. The three stripes represent three regions of Vietnam: the North, Central and South Vietnam as united in a national community. The vibrant red color of the stripes is the color of blood flowing through ones veins, symbolic of Vietnam's unflagging struggle for independence throughout its recorded history.



Viet Cong Flag (Type #1)



Viet Cong Flag (Type #2)



Viet Cong Flag (Type #3)



Viet Cong Flag (Type #4)

The National Liberation Front Flags 1955-1976

The Viet Cong, or National Liberation Front, was the patriot/rebel army based in South Vietnam that fought the South Vietnamese government and the supporting United States troops during the Vietnam War (1959-75). They fought mainly as guerrilla units and rarely as regular army units. They also provided a network of cadre who organized the peasants against the government in the territory they controlled.

The Viet Cong were closely allied with the government of North Vietnam. The group was formed in the 1950s by former members of the Viet Minh acting on orders from Hanoi. They proved highly effective against both ARVN (Army of the Republic of Vietnam) and later against the better equipped American troops.

There were at least four types of flags, probably more, seen being carried by the Viet Cong. Type #1 had a small yellow star centered over a red and blue striped background, Type #2 had a larger white star centered on the red and blue striped background, Type #3 had either a large or small yellow star centered on a red

and white striped background, and Type #4 had three vertical stripes of red/white/red with a small gold star centered on the white stripe. Like the early flags of the American Revolution, most flags were handmade and each flag was a little different. Some examples of these variant flags also had Vietnamese text added to them.

An interesting story about the Type #3 Viet Cong Flag shown here was that it probably is the only flag ever captured by a hovering helicopter in a combat zone. In 1969, the flag was snatched by a helicopter crew about 100 yards from Firebase Barbara by the door gunner as the helicopter hovered above the flag left on a pole by Viet Cong soldiers. Fearing the flag to be booby trapped, the helicopter crew first exploded a hand grenade near the flag before swooping down to grab it. The pilot was Warrant Officer Harry Oberg of the First Brigade, First Air Calvary, stationed near Tay Ninh, Vietnam. Apparently, some people will do anything to get a souvenir flag.

The Type #4 flag was seen occasionally in the northern part of South Vietnam, especially around the old imperial capitol of Hue, where one was captured by Marines involved in the fighting there during the

Tet Offensive. It was unusual because it had three, rather than two stripes and versions of this flag have also been reported with a light pale-blue stripe (similar to the future National Democratic and Peaceful Forces of Vietnam flag of 1968) instead of the white striped version shown here. "Charlie" (the nickname used by US troops for the Viet Cong), like the "Yankees" of an earlier fight for freedom, had yet to develop any design standards for their early flags.