

The Major Events of the Vietnam War:

(first, looked at from point of view of American interests)

go back to presidency of John F. Kennedy:

John F. Kennedy, elected in November, 1960, at the age of 43
War had been going on in Indo-China for a long time...

But, oddly enough, Vietnam wasn't of great concern to
President Kennedy early in his administration...

His inaugural speech: called for national dedication to a worldwide
struggle against tyranny, poverty, disease, and war...

Major event early in the administration...the Cuban crisis.
October 1962...

~~Soviet~~ Soviet Russia had installed ballistic missiles
capable of attacking the U.S. in Cuba...
President ordered a naval quarantine of Cuba to
prevent ~~Russia~~ Russia from delivering additional
missiles to the island...

5 - tense days -- then Russia agreed to
dismantle the missiles...and withdraw its troops...

Kennedy was assassinated, ~~July~~ November 22, 1963.

President Johnson took the oath of office..

the 36th president of the U.S.

in his 1964 state of the union message, he declared
war -- "an unconditional war on poverty"

Other components: vocational training schools
and work camps for underprivileged
youth...

the Peace Corps, started by Kennedy,
became very strong...

loans were made to small businessmen,
and to farmers...

1965 -- Johnson announced THE GREAT SOCIETY in his
state-of-the-union message...

new things: Medicare...

new legislation on health care, immigration,
disarmament, tax reduction, housing,

TWO DEPARTMENTS ADDED TO THE CABINET
in 1965-66, DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND
URBAN DEVELOPMENT

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION....

new deals: minimum wages for farm workers...

civil rights legislation (particularly
~~in~~ banning discrimination in
the sale or rental of housing...

other things: riots in the negro slums...Detroit,
Watts....

Martin Luther King assassinated, in April, 1968.

During this time...Americans had been assisting South Vietnam defend itself against the Viet Cong, who were aided by North Vietnam...

in 1964...aid consisted of military advisers and military supplies...

But because of increased successes of the Viet Cong, number of advisers and amount of supplies increased too...

In August 1964, U.S. ~~wax~~ warships patrolling the Gulf of Tonkin were attacked by torpedo boats...

Pres. Johnson ordered retaliatory air strikes against North Vietnamese torpedo boat ~~ab~~ bases...

Congress approved THE GULF OF TONKIN resolution --- authorizing "all necessary measures to repel any armed attack against U.S. forces and to prevent further aggression."

(Senator Wayne Morse opposed this....)

In 1965, the President sent more and more troops to Vietnam. by 1968 there were 500,000...

President proceeded on two fronts: (1) he bombed North Vietnamese military targets

(2) he repeated his plea to negotiate a peace settlement...

(called in United Nations to help with this...but efforts failed...)

Christmas 1965 -- temporary halt to the bombings... but efforts failed...

FEBRUARY 1966: Johnson and his advisers conferred in Hawaii with South Vietnamese leaders... expressed a determination to continue the war and to work for democratic self-determination in the South Vietnam...

Then, in October, 1966, Johnson went to Southeast Asia... offered to withdraw all troops if the other side would withdraw from the south...and stop all acts of violence....

North Vietnam rejected the offer...

1967-68 opposition to the war at home grew sharply...

Johnson announced that he would not seek or accept the Democratic nomination for another term...

in May 1968, discussion between North Vietnam and the U.S. began in Paris...

on November 1, 1968, ~~xxxxxx~~ U.S. bombing of North Vietnam ceased...

ELECTION OF 1968: Hubert Humphrey against Richard Nixon...against Eugene McCarthy against Robert Kennedy:

Kennedy shot and killed, June 5 -- in Los Angeles...
Nixon-Spiro Agnew ran against Humphrey/Muskie...

c Nixon won a decisive majority of the electoral votes...
but the popular election between Nixon and Humphrey was very close...

THE NIXON ADMINISTRATION:

Nixon made a round-the-world tour in 1969...
a new "Nixon Doctrine" -- meaning: U.S. would maintain a presence in the Far East...but the Asian nations ~~would~~ would have to carry the main burden of their own defense...

1969 -- level of fighting decreases....
peace talks in Paris prove ~~inconclusive~~ inconclusive...

1970 -- fighting spreads to Cambodia....

then, in 1970, there is withdrawal from Cambodia...
and Nixon announces his policy of ~~Vietnamization~~ "Vietnamization"

By 1972...American ground forces in Vietnam were reduced to 70,000....

in April 1972, North Vietnamese launched an invasion of South Vietnam...

Paris peace talks temporarily broken off...
bombing of the north resumed....

U.S. ground forces took little part in the expanding warfare on the ground...
but U.S. air power was heavily employed....

PEACE TALKS RESUMED.... ~~Le Duc Tho~~ Le Duc Tho and Henry Kissinger...
the long-awaited cease fire agreement was finally signed on January 27, 1973...

AGREEMENT: called for exchange of prisoners of war
U.S. withdrawal from South Vietnam without any similar commitment from the North Vietnamese
-- ended 12 years of U.S. military effort
cost: 46,000 American lives...

Kennedy added: The United States has special obligations to Vietnam....

"It is our offspring, we cannot abandon it, we cannot ignore its needs."

MAJOR PRINCIPLE: If Vietnam fell to Communism, all of ~~S&E~~ Southeast Asia would go with it...

Eisenhower Administration's intention: to create in the southern part of the country a nation that would stand as a bulwark against communist expansion....

Symbolically: South Vietnam =
(1) a bulwark against communist expansion
(2) a proving ground for democracy in Asia
(3) the cornerstone of the Free World in Southeast Asia

U. S. set up South Vietnamese premier...
Ngo Dinh Diem...

supported by American Catholics....
fighting breaks out again....

Diem has trouble at home....

but is supported by American aid...

The elections of 1956, called for by the Geneva accords, were blocked by Diem....

no chance for reunification of Vietnam....

From 1955 to 1961, U.S. poured more than \$1 billion in economic aid and military assistance into Vietnam...

South Vietnam ranked 5th among recipients of U.S. aid....

Goal: to build strong South Vietnamese army

but Americans didn't know how to train people for guerilla warfare....

south Vietnamese lacked military leadership....

U.S. army personnel found South Vietnamese military officers of "marginal quality"

ANYWAY.... in the midst of great apparent economic expansion.... lots of goods and services...the trouble continued. dissension at home....increase infiltration of military activities from the North... READ p. 71 SUMMARY...

Dienbienphu -- symbolic significance:

both sides had committed major forces....

French lost badly...

and surrendered to Vietninh forces, May 7, 1954...

ALSO in 1954... Geneva Peace Talks --

participants: China, Russia, England, United States
~~Rx~~ France...

ACCORDS:

(1) Vietnam was to be partitioned along the 17th parallel --
agreements stressed that division is only temporary....and should not be interpreted as constituting a political or territorial boundary...

(2) elections were to take place in 1956
purpose: to reunify the entire country
elections were to be supervised by Poland, Canada, and India

(3) forces were to be withdrawn within 300 days...
to insure against renewed military hostilities...

BY NOW, UNITED STATES SENTIMENT IS CLEAR:

Senator William Knowland: "the greatest victory the Communists have won in twenty years."

Administration said: "loss of northern Vietnam is the keystone to the arch of Southeast Asia..."

U .S. knew that if elections were held today, Ho Chi Minh would be winner....
but two-year delay gave U.S. good time to get ready...

U.S. INTENTION FROM HERE ON: to build viable ~~an~~
non-Communist alternative to the Vietninh...
read President Eisenhower's statement,
p. 42...

BUT EISENHOWER NOT ~~AKM~~ ALONE:

Senator John F. Kennedy, 1956, said:
"Vietnam represents the cornerstone of the Free World in Southeast Asia, the keystone in the arch, the finger in the dike..." and should the "red tide of Communism" pour into it, Kennedy warned, much of Asia would be threatened."