

THE WAR IN VIETNAM

INDOCHINA. Indochina was a French colony. It was ruled by the Japanese in World War II. After the war, the French wanted to control the area again. They divided Indochina into three new nations: Cambodia (now called Kampuchea), Laos, and Vietnam. The French gave these new nations self-rule.

There were many communists in Vietnam. They fought against the French. The French could not win. The French could not control Vietnam again. In 1954, French soldiers left Vietnam. The people of Vietnam started to rule themselves. After the French left, Vietnam was divided into two nations. Most communists lived in the north. North Vietnam became a communist nation. South Vietnam wanted to be a free nation.

In the 1960's, the United States believed the communists in North Vietnam were very dangerous. From Vietnam, the communists might take control of many nations in Southeast Asia. The U.S. worried that other countries would fall to communism like a row of falling dominoes. This is called the **Domino Theory**. So the United States tried to help South Vietnam.

War broke out in South Vietnam. Some communists lived on South Vietnam. They were called the **Viet Cong**. The Viet Cong fought against the government of South Vietnam. The Viet Cong wanted South Vietnam to become a communist nation like North Vietnam. North Vietnam helped the Viet Cong.

The U.S. Wanted to help South Vietnam. The U.S. did not want communism in South Vietnam. The U.S. was afraid that, from Vietnam the communists might go into other countries in Southeast Asia. So the U.S. gave money, weapons, and training to South Vietnam.

In 1965, the U.S. sent more than 200,000 American soldiers to help South Vietnam. American war planes dropped bombs on North Vietnam. Americans wanted to stop people from the North fighting in the South. But the fighting went on and on. Many South Vietnamese, North Vietnamese, and American soldiers died. The United Nations was afraid that the Vietnam War might become a world war.

In 1968, there were about 550,000 American soldiers in South Vietnam. American soldiers fought more and more. Some Americans at home began to get angry. Many American said that the Vietnamese should fight by themselves. Other people said the war cost too much money. Americans wanted their soldiers to come home.

After 1969, President Nixon started to bring American soldiers home. Leaders held peace talks. During 1972, almost all the American soldiers were out of South Vietnam. In 1973, a peace settlement was reached. A cease-fire agreement was signed. North and South Vietnam promised to stop fighting. But soon they began to fight again. Without help from the United States, the army of South Vietnam was weak. It could not stop the North Vietnamese communists. The North defeated the South. In 1975, the South surrendered. North and South Vietnam became one communist country. Then the communists took over two of Vietnam's neighbors – Cambodia and Laos.

QUESTIONS: Answer the following questions based on your reading

1. What was the Domino Theory? _____

2. Who were the Viet Cong? _____

3. How did the United States increase its involvement in Vietnam in 1965? _____

4. How did the withdrawal of American troops affect South Vietnam? _____

5. What happened in Southeast Asia in 1975? _____

Directions: Answer the document based questions in the space provided.

Document #1

After World War II, France wanted to regain control of its colonies in Southeast Asia. In Vietnam, the French were opposed by a nationalist group led by Ho Chi Minh, a Communist. His group, the Vietcong, wanted to free his country from imperialist control. The Soviet Union backed the Vietcong and the United States backed the French. After eight years of fighting, the French lost an important battle at Dien Bien Phu and agreed to leave Vietnam.

Based on this document, how is Ho Chi Minh similar to Jomo Kenyatta and Mohandas Gandhi?

Document #2

Vietnam was split into two sections, Communist North Vietnam and an anti-Communist dictatorship in South Vietnam. HoChi Minh encouraged his soldiers as well as South Vietnamese people who agreed with him to use guerilla warfare to destroy the government of South Vietnam. Under attack, the United States responded with military troops to help South Vietnam. The US feared that if Vietnam went communist, all of the countries surrounding it would eventually be attacked and would also turn Communist. This was known as the domino theory.

Based on document #3, how is the Vietnam War similar to the Korean War?

Document #3

Eventually America send in over 536,000 soldiers to fight in Vietnam. Fifty six thousand of them lost their lives. By 1972, US President Nixon realized that the North Vietnamese would never be defeated. An agreement was reached and all US troops left by 1973. South Vietnam, without military help from America, was overrun by the Vietcong. In 1975, North and South Vietnam were united into one Communist nation. Cambodia and Laos also turned Communist after 1975 but the Communist unity that Americans feared in Southeast Asia never happened.

Based on this document, how is the Vietnam War different from the Korean War?
