

# ❖ REMEMBER VIETNAM ❖



## VIETNAM HOLOCAUST

140 YEARS OF PILLAGE, SLAUGHTER AND PERSECUTION

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### THE FRENCH WAR

THE RAPE OF VIETNAM by western powers began in 1858, when French troops landed near Danang to establish colonial rule in Indochina— Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia. It came to be regarded as one of the most brutal and exploitative colonial regimes in Asia, including elements of slavery and other forms of oppression.

At the Versailles Conference in 1919 after World War I, a man who came to be known as Ho Chi Minh attempted to get a hearing for Vietnam's plight, but was totally ignored. It was during this time that he became a founding member of the French Communist Party, attracted by its strong condemnation of colonialism.

In 1941, the French submitted meekly to Japan, then administered Indochina as servants of the Japanese empire. U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt was determined that France should not resume control after the war, because: "The case is perfectly clear. France has had the country for nearly 100 years, and the people are worse off than they were at the beginning. They are entitled to something better than that."

But Roosevelt died and his successors chose to accommodate France, partly to ensure its support in the emerging Cold War. The French were helped to reoccupy Vietnam, ostensibly to supervise a "peaceful transition" to national autonomy. Instead, they attempted to reinstate colonial rule, and a war of independence broke out.

Numerous resistance groups had emerged over the years, but the most effective was the coalition led by Ho Chi Minh. Known as the Viet Minh, the movement was firmly rooted in the rural masses that comprised over 80 percent of the population. An admirer of the principles enshrined in the U.S. Declaration of Independence, Ho Chi Minh entreated the U.S. on several occasions to support Vietnam's liberation, basing his appeals on the U.N. Charter. He never got a reply.

As it became evident to France that it had little hope of defeating the Viet Minh, it prepared to withdraw. But the 1949 Communist victory in China had unleashed hysteria in the United States, which now paid the French to keep fighting, eventually covering 80 percent of the costs.

**POSTER FORMAT**  
A condensed version of this text is available in poster format; see page 6.

As late as 1948, U.S. experts had found that there was no evidence of outside influence over the Viet Minh. But with escalating French/U.S. aggression, the liberation army was forced into increasing reliance on "Red" China and the Soviet Union.

The French were finally defeated in the spring of 1954, after having destroyed much of the country and a great many of its people. But that was a mere foretaste of what was to come.

## THE AMERICAN WAR

At the 1954 peace conference in Geneva, the Viet Minh were pressured by the U.S., China and the Soviet Union into accepting a temporary division of Vietnam into two sectors, with national elections and unification to take place in 1956.

By the terms of the agreement, outside forces were prohibited from interfering with the reunification process. But the U.S. had already begun to take over in the south and cause havoc in the north while the conference was still in progress. The puppet regime it set up in the south was comprised mainly of the urban Catholic elite, representing about ten per cent of the population that had flourished under French rule.

The vast majority of the population consisted of Buddhist peasants who rejected the U.S.-imposed dictatorship, which soon gained a reputation as the worst violator of human rights on earth. It also refused to honour the agreement on elections in 1956 because, as U.S. President Eisenhower observed, Ho Chi Minh was certain to get some 80 percent of the vote.

As resistance grew among the people, the U.S. increased its efforts to impose its puppet regime upon them, but to no avail. The dictatorship's unpopularity was so intense and widespread that no amount of money and munitions could enable it to survive on its own. The U.S. then decided to invade the south and attack the north. Before it was done, nearly 2.5 million troops would pass through Vietnam, and 15 million tons of explosives would rain down upon the land and its people.

After the 1956 election was scuttled, the north was entitled under international law to seize control of the entire country. Instead, it adopted a cautious approach, as resistance grew among the southern population. No northern troops were reported in the south until 1964, when some 25,000 U.S. troops were already present, along with vast quantities of war materiel.

There followed eight years of intensifying destruction, as the U.S. tried in vain to pummel and terrorize the people of Vietnam into submission. Its leaders soon realized, like the French before them, that their project was doomed to failure. But the slaughter persisted year after year, due mainly to anxieties over the predictably ferocious reaction of rabid anti-communists at home if the government were to admit defeat and withdraw.

In this way, the people of Vietnam and the world they lived in were sacrificed on the twin altars of anti-communism and moral cowardice.

Over 58,00 U.S. soldiers lost their lives in the process. For the Vietnamese, the full consequences defy description, but they include the following:

- The total amount of munitions exploded by the U.S. and its allies was more than twice that used all over the planet by all sides during World War II, on an area less than four percent the size of the United States. Some 23 million bomb craters were gouged into the landscape.
- Some 72 million litres (ca. 19 million gallons) of toxic chemicals were sprayed from the air to destroy ca. 40 percent of the south's forests, one-third of its valuable mangrove swamps, and large areas of prime cropland. It is also suspected that the chemicals may have resulted in widespread health problems, including cancer and birth defects.
- One-third of the south's population became "internal refugees", their traditional way of life destroyed, forced to live for years in the misery of refugee camps and overcrowded cities, with widespread prostitution and other social problems as a result.

## Spreading Tales of Horror in the North

To create Diem's [puppet] government, Lansdale's men, operating in teams in North Vietnam, stimulated North Vietnamese Catholics and the Catholic armies deserted by the French to flee south. SMM teams promised Catholic Vietnamese assistance and new opportunities if they would emigrate. To help them make up their minds, the teams circulated leaflets falsely attributed to the Viet Minh, telling what was expected of citizens under the new government. The day following distribution of the leaflets, refugee registration tripled. The teams spread horror stories of Chinese Communist regiments raping Vietnamese girls and taking reprisals against villages. This confirmed fears of Chinese occupation under the Viet Minh. The team distributed other pamphlets showing the circumference of destruction around Hanoi should the United States decide to use atomic weapons....

A medical doctor, [Lieutenant Tom] Dooley was a supreme propagandist.... Dr. Dooley's concocted tales of the Viet Minh disemboweling 1000 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, aroused American citizens to anger and action.

— Ralph McGehee, CIA agent in Vietnam, from his memoir *Deadly Deceits*





*The Vietnam War Memorial, an inscribed wall of some 164 yards' length, is an invisible pinprick on this map of the Washington capitol region. A similar wall with the names of the Vietnamese dead would have to be nearly 30 miles (45 km) long—and that is only part of the story.*

- Although it is for several reasons impossible to determine exactly how many Vietnamese were killed directly by the war (estimates range from 2 – 5 million) a reasonable figure is 3.5 million. Proportionately, this corresponds to 17.5 million citizens of the U.S., its population being ca. five times larger at the time. This is the figure used to calculate the length of the "American War Memorial" (see illustration).
- Since the war ended for the U.S. in 1975, nearly 40,000 Vietnamese (U.S. equivalent = 200,000) have been killed by residual explosives, including an estimated 3.5 million land mines. Many more have been crippled for life.
- A decade after the war, over 13 percent of Vietnam's population (corresponding to ca. 33 million U.S. citizens) were still suffering from some war-related physical injury. The psychological, social, and cultural effects were and are much greater.
- The destruction of the environment, infrastructure and way of life has led to starvation and malnutrition for tens of millions.

These and related factors ensure that the effects of the American War will continue to haunt the land and the people of Vietnam for many generations to come. The same can be said of neighbouring Laos and Cambodia, which were also drawn into the war.

## THE ECONOMIC WAR

After World War II, the U.S. invested heavily in reconstructing the economies of defeated Germany and Japan. But having inflicted on the United States its first military defeat in history, Vietnam was to receive a very different treatment.

The U.S. continued its assault by means of propaganda and economic aggression. By leaning on allied countries and international lending agencies, it set out to further damage Vietnam's already shattered economy. It blocked loans, pressured allies to refuse or restrict foreign aid, and imposed an embargo on trade with Vietnam.

The U.S. did not begin to loosen its grip until the 1990s, after the end of the Cold War. But, first, Vietnam was required to assume a large portion of the debt incurred by the U.S. puppet regime in the south. In effect, the victors are being forced to reimburse the U.S. for the war of aggression it conducted against them. As for the reparations that the U.S. promised in a 1973 agreement, not a penny has been paid.

Vietnam has also been submitted to the economic policies of international lending agencies dominated by the U.S., with devastating effects on public health, education, poverty levels, and society in general.

According to some analysts, the accumulated social and economic damage resulting from all this is beginning to rival the devastation of the military war.

## THE PROPAGANDA WAR

During the military war, the U.S. had promised the world a blood bath if the country were ever reunited under Communist rule. When that did not happen, other events were made to perform the same propaganda function.

Although many in the south had helped a foreign power to destroy the land and slaughter millions of their countrymen, the worst that happened in most cases was that they lost their privileged positions. Some were herded into "re-education camps" for a year or two, along with a large number of prostitutes and other victims of the occupation.

The purpose of the camps was to make good Communist citizens of former collaborators and camp followers — a fairly mild treatment compared, for example, with Europe after World War II when tens of thousands were executed, and hundreds of thousands more were otherwise abused for similar or lesser offences. Nevertheless, the re-education facilities were loudly and repeatedly denounced in the world press as "concentration camps" which, if not as useful as a blood bath, were made to sound almost as horrifying.

Even better media opportunities arose when a wave of largely ethnic Chinese fled the country in confusion, and when Vietnam invaded Cambodia. Both were highly complex events, involving deep-rooted historical conflicts and ongoing tensions with the U.S. and China. But they were depicted in the world press as plain and simple evidence of Vietnamese depravity.

Space does not permit a discussion of all the complexities involved. But it may be noted that the invasion of Cambodia was not without provocation, and it put an end to the Khmer Rouge's genocidal assault on their countrymen— a process that had been initiated some years earlier by the violent intrusion of the U.S.

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**“I cannot recall a people so tormented, yet so devoid of the failings of their tormentors. I do not know of any other conflict in which the disparity in physical power was so vast. I have no memory of any people so enduring, or of any nation with a spirit of resistance so unquenchable.”**

**— Bertrand Russel, founder of the  
International War Crimes Tribunal on Vietnam**

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Afterward, the U.S. continued to support the genocidal Khmer Rouge, forcing its acceptance by the U.N. as the legitimate representative of Cambodia, while blocking Vietnam’s admission to that institution. This it did in close co-operation with China—in 1949 regarded as the source of Communist aggression throughout Indochina, but since 1970 chief ally of the U.S. against Vietnam.

Grotesque as it may seem, the United States has got away with all this. Through its domination of international politics and news media, the U.S. has largely succeeded in alienating world opinion from Vietnam, including a large portion of wartime sympathizers.

It would appear that the world has little noted nor long remembered what has been done to Vietnam in the name of freedom and democracy.

*— Al Burke  
February 2001*

Note: A fully documented and more detailed account of this history is provided in the report, *Ethics • Law • Policy*. For that and related information, see [www.nnn.se/vietnam.htm](http://www.nnn.se/vietnam.htm)

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## POSTER FORMAT

A condensed version of “Vietnam Holocaust” is also available in the form of a poster in A3 format (roughly 30 x 42 cm. or 11.75 x 16.5 inches). Those who do not have access to a printer large enough to process A3 paper should be able to order a print-out from a graphic services provider, print shop or the like.

The poster is a PDF document that can be printed in A4 and similar formats at a reduced size of 70-75 percent. It can also be reduced or enlarged with a standard photocopier, but usually with some loss of quality.

In any event, it may be necessary to adjust the printer specifications in order to obtain a suitable print-out. Instructions are provided in the “Help” section of Acrobat Reader, the program that is used to view and print PDF documents. Acrobat Reader is included in most computers; otherwise, it may be downloaded free of charge from the website of Adobe Systems: [www.adobe.com](http://www.adobe.com)

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