

Vietnam War—Background

Why were we there in the first place? What was going on?

- From 1800s—Vietnam was controlled by other countries – China, France, and Japan
- After WWII, (Sept. 1945) Ho Chi Minh (a communist from Vietnam) declared Vietnam an independent nation but France would not let go
- 1950-1954—French Indochina War—U.S. helped France fight against the Vietminh (Ho Chi Minh's people) b/c of the *domino theory* – China had fallen, Korean War, if one falls then all countries will fall to communism
 - President Eisenhower continued support— pays for ¾ of France's war costs
- Geneva Accords 1954—Resolution (end of French Indochina War)— Vietnam was temporarily divided at the 17th parallel (supposed to hold elections to unify in 1956)
 - Ho Chi Minh (he was a communist) would control North
 - South was pro West (U.S.) led by Ngo Diem

Why DID we stay in Vietnam?

- JFK continued support for South Vietnam to show a “tough” stand on communism
- Ho Chi Minh was gaining popularity (North) and JFK thought it was b/c of the rule of Diem (South)
 - Buddhists began protesting against him (Diem was a Catholic)
 - U.S. helped overthrow and execute Diem
 - U.S. deeply involved b/c South Vietnam's government was very weak and unstable

Ho Chi Minh

- Vietnamese communist revolutionary
- 1917-1923—lived in France—became a socialist
- 1930—created Indochinese Communist Party
 - Lived in exile in USSR & China
- WWII—Japan occupied Vietnam during
- 1941—he returned & created Vietminh—org. w/ goal to win Vietnam's independence
- Sept. 1945—Ho Chi Minh declares Vietnam independent



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