

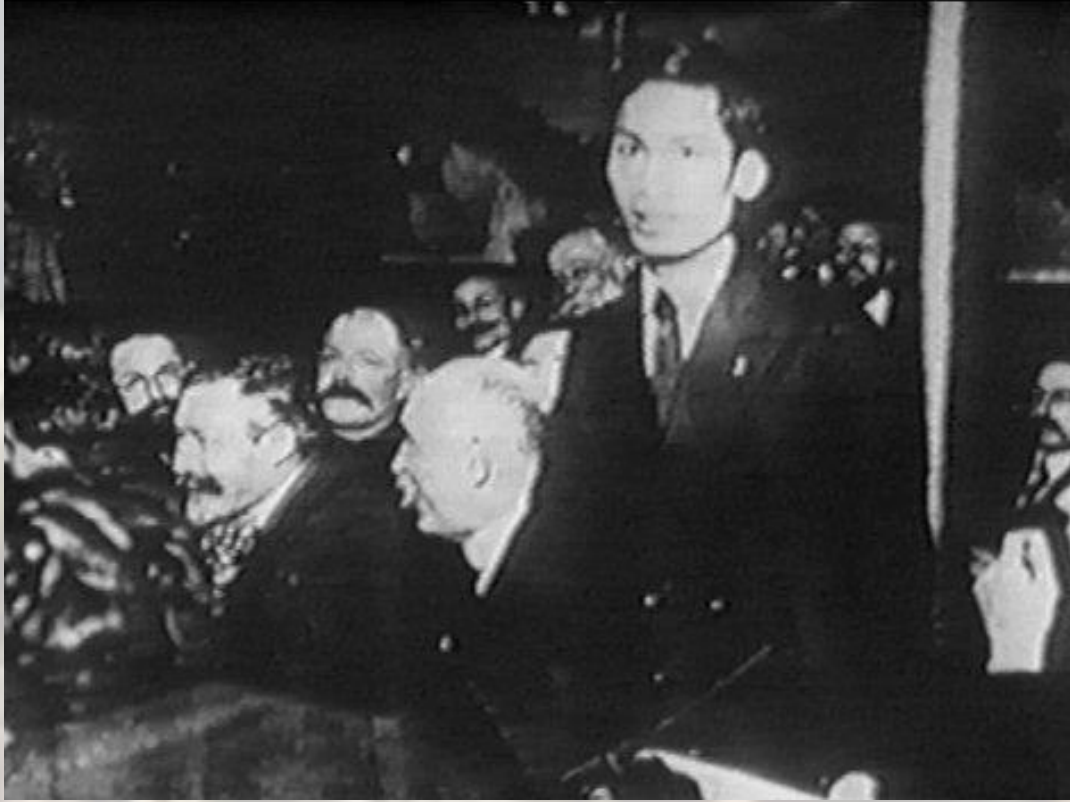


The Vietnam War

Southeast Asia's Colonial History



- ▶ France colonizes Vietnam by 1883:
 - Vietnamese wanted independence
- ▶ France combines Vietnam with Laos and Cambodia
 - “French Indochina”



- ▶ **Growing nationalist movement**
 - Led by Ho Chi Minh
 - Attended the Paris Peace Conference 1919 & attempted talks with Wilson about Vietnamese independence
- ▶ **During WWII: Japanese occupied Vietnam**
 - Vietminh fought against the Japanese occupation with the French
- ▶ **Following WWII: Vietminh declare independence in '45**
 - French move in quickly to reclaim Vietnam



Ho Chi Minh

- ▶ Participated in tax revolts against the French
- ▶ Joined the French Communist Party while studying there
- ▶ Believed that through a communist revolution Vietnam could be free of foreign rule

U.S. Policy in Vietnam

**Truman:
1945-1953**

- Saw Vietnam as part of the Cold War struggle → Supported France; unwilling to back the Vietminh because of communist ties

Events

- China fell to communism 1949
- Communist North Korea invaded South Korea in 1950
- Communists led revolts in Indonesia, Malaya (now Malaysia), and the Philippines

**Eisenhower:
1953-1961**

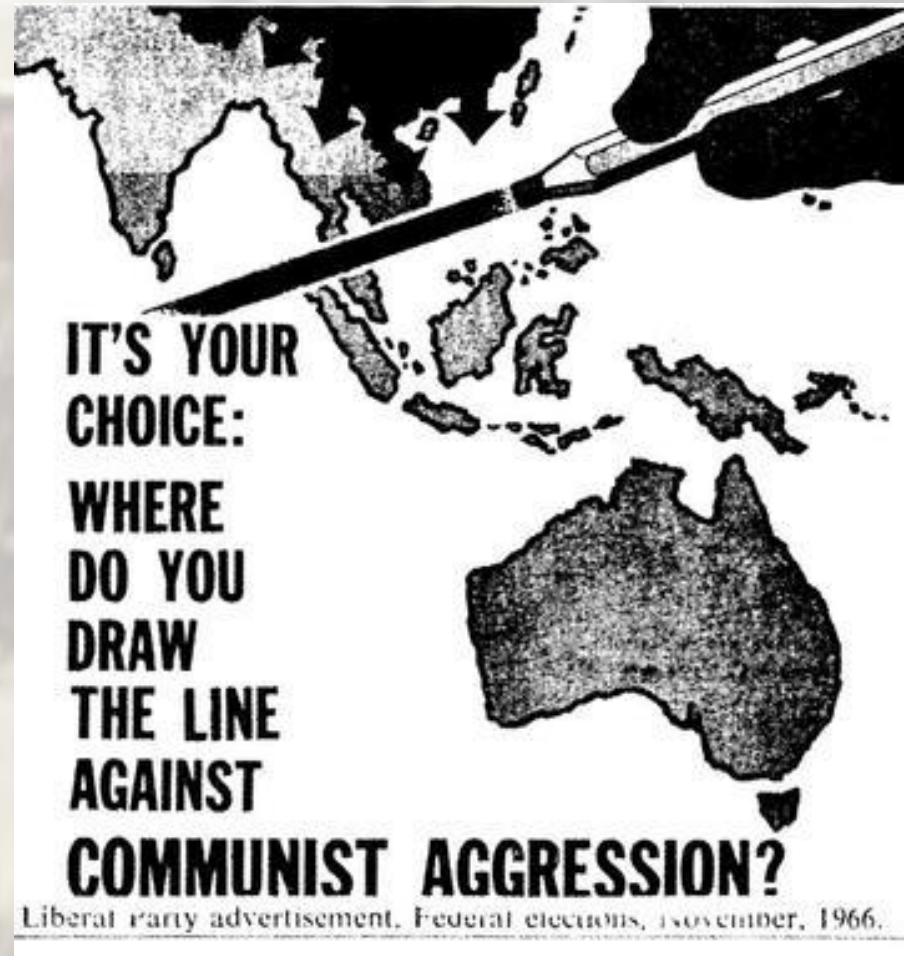
- **Domino Theorist**
- Sent arms, ammunition, supplies, and money to the French forces in Vietnam



French Indochina War

- ▶ By 1954: U.S. paying more than 75% of the cost of their war
 - French continued to lose battle after battle
 - Vietminh used guerilla tactics effectively
- ▶ France defeated at Dien Bien Phu:
 - Eisenhower refused to send U.S. soldiers so soon after Korea

French surrender 7 May 1954



What have the
Vietminh learned
about fighting?

1954: Geneva Conference

Goal: peace agreement for Indochina



Vietnam temporarily divided at the 17th parallel

- ▶ Vietminh control North
- ▶ French withdraw from country

General elections to be held July 1956; U.S. never fully supported peace agreement

- ▶ Feared Ho Chi Minh would win election and set up a communist govt

Vietnam's Leaders

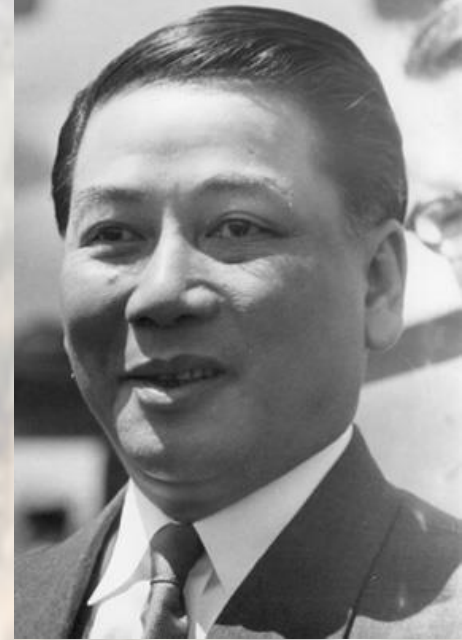
North Vietnam



Ho Chi Minh

- ▶ Totalitarian and repressive
- ▶ Gave land to peasants, which made him popular

South Vietnam



Ngo Dinh Diem

- ▶ Became president in 1954
- ▶ Corrupt, brutal, and unpopular
- ▶ Favored Catholics and wealthy
- ▶ 1956: cancelled election that would have re-united Vietnam

Conflict between North Vietnam and South Vietnam

- ▶ Eisenhower at this point hoped to prevent communism from spreading to South Vietnam
- ▶ 1950s: civil war broke out in South Vietnam
- ▶ 1960: Ho Chi Minh expanded the effort to unify North and South Vietnam under communist rule

“Oh, He’s A Great Anti-Communist — It’s Just That He Finds The Buddhists Are Easier To Get At”



Vietnamese Civil War

- ▶ Diem's opponents in SV began to revolt → NV supplied weapons to the Vietminh in South
- ▶ Vietminh in SV formed the National Liberation Front (NLF) and called military forces the Vietcong (VC)
- ▶ Vietcong assassinated many SV leaders and controlled much of countryside
 - 1960: Ho Chi Minh sent North Vietnamese Army (NVA) south to fight with Vietcong

Quick Reference:

ARVN – South
Vietnamese Army (good
guys we work with)

NLF – South
Vietnamese bad guys
(VC) working with the
North Vietnamese Army
(NVA) →



U.S. Involvement in Vietnam

Eisenhower

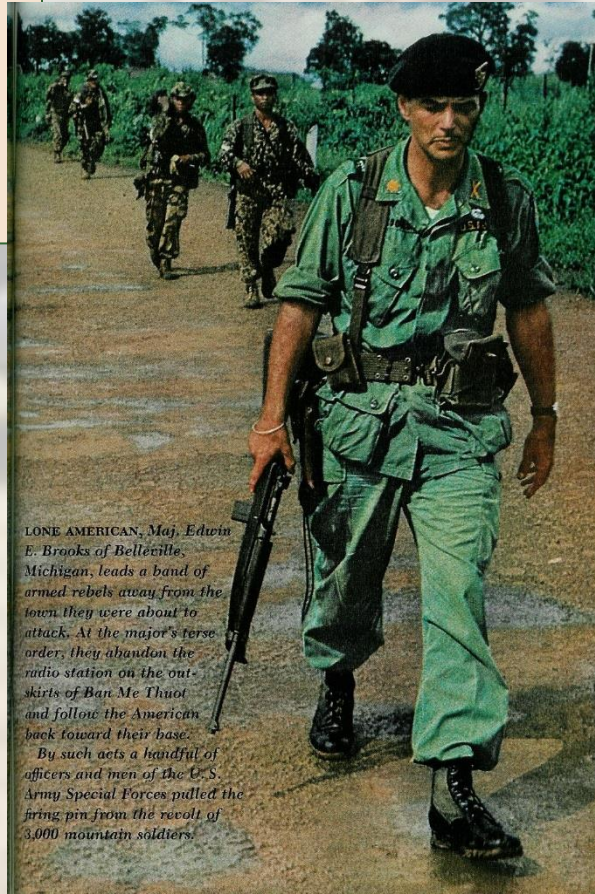
- Began sending money and weapons to SV
- Military advisors sent to train SV army (ARVN – Army of the Republic of Vietnam)

**Kennedy:
1961-1963**

- Domino Theorist
- Increased the number of “Military Advisors” and Army Special Forces (“Green Berets”)
- Advisors were not supposed to take part in combat, but many did →

**Johnson:
1963 - 1969**

- Believed an expanded U.S. effort was the only way to prevent a communist victory in Vietnam
- Asked Congress to pass the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution



LONE AMERICAN, Maj. Edwin E. Brooks of Belleville, Michigan, leads a band of armed rebels away from the town they were about to attack. At the major's terse order, they abandon the radio station on the outskirts of Ban Me Thuot and follow the American back toward their base.

By such acts a handful of officers and men of the U.S. Army Special Forces pulled the firing pin from the revolt of 3,000 mountain soldiers.

Overthrowing Diem

- ▶ Diem's govt grew more and more unpopular:
 - Arrested and killed Buddhist protesters
- ▶ U.S. leaders threatened to withdraw support if Diem didn't stop persecution →
- ▶ Diem refused
 - U.S. began to support plot to overthrow
- ▶ **November 1963:**
Diem murdered





Gulf of Tonkin Resolution

To increase American military effort in Vietnam, Johnson needed to obtain authority from Congress → the NVA torpedo attack on the *USS Maddox* was the perfect opportunity:

- Claimed attack was unprovoked, however, the *USS Maddox* had been on a spying mission
- Report falsely claims another attack days later
- Robert McNamara → Sec. Def.

Gulf of Tonkin Resolution (7 August 1964)

- Allowed U.S. to send troops in to Vietnam (aka “Blank Check” allowing Johnson to use whatever means necessary to defeat North Vietnam)



March '65: “Operation Rolling Thunder”



1965: “Operation Rolling Thunder”

- Bombing campaign over NV
- Goal: get the NVA govt to end their support of the National Liberation Front (Vietcong)
- “Carpet Bombing”
- Main target was the Ho Chi Minh Trail:
 - Supply route for the VC



Weapons of “Rolling Thunder”

Agent Orange

- Chemical defoliant
- Destroys vegetation
- Meant to strip the jungle and expose VCs in hiding

Napalm

- Jellied form of gasoline
- Used to create firebombs

Cluster Bombs

- Shrapnel-filled bombs that sprayed sharp metal fragments when exploded



“Firecrackers”

Cluster bombs

Nearly 100 countries are signing a treaty to ban cluster bombs, while the leading producers of the bombs, including the U.S., Russia, China and Israel, remain outside the pact.

How cluster bombs work



Failure of “Operation Rolling Thunder”

Flow of goods from NV to SV increased:

- Began crossing further into Laos & Cambodia

VC prove to be resilient:

- Repaired bridges at night
- Developed a system of underground bunkers
- Resupplied by the USSR and China

“The conventional army loses if it does not win. The guerilla wins if he does not lose.” –Mao Zedong



Ground War in Vietnam

1st U.S. strategy (1966):
“Search-and Destroy”
missions aka “Zippo
Missions”, “Zippo Raids”

- ▶ Original goal: tally up body count & force surrender (aka “War of Attrition”)
 - U.S. Commander of ground troops: William Westmoreland
 - Ground troops locate enemy → air strikes called in → led our troops to feel like bait

2nd strategy (1967):
“Pacification”

- New goal: win the “hearts and minds” of the South Vietnamese
 - Construction projects to improve infrastructure



Vietcong Tactics

Three Main Tactics:

1. Infiltrate the countryside:

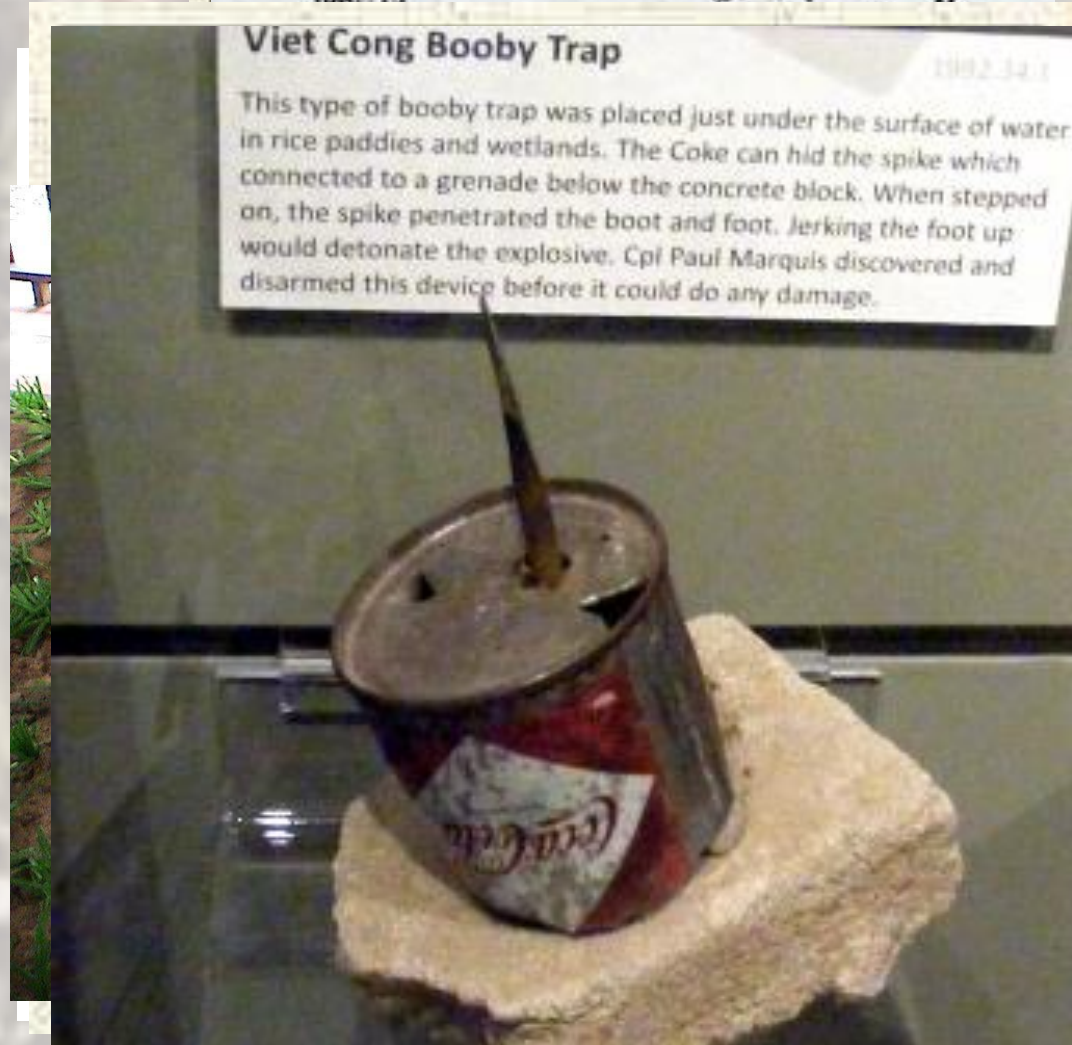
- Get to know SV civilians, gain their trust, spread the idea of revolution, sign new recruits

2. Guerilla Warfare:

- Ambush enemy vehicles, isolate units and outposts
- Use sabotage, terrorism, psychological warfare
- Plant mines and traps
- Move around undetected
- Use system of tunnels to avoid U.S. pursuit

3. Open Warfare:

- Once kindness didn't work to gain SV civilian trust, they would force cooperation through fear tactics (terrorism, torture, executions, etc.)



Declining Troop Morale

Troops faced many struggles:

- VC would strike quickly then fall back into heavily forested jungle
- Vietnamese peasants seemed peaceful during the day, but aided VC at night → led to mistrust of civilians
- Nearly impossible to tell difference between VC and civilian “doubtfuls”
- VC used the “Hang on to their belts” tactic
- One year enlistments



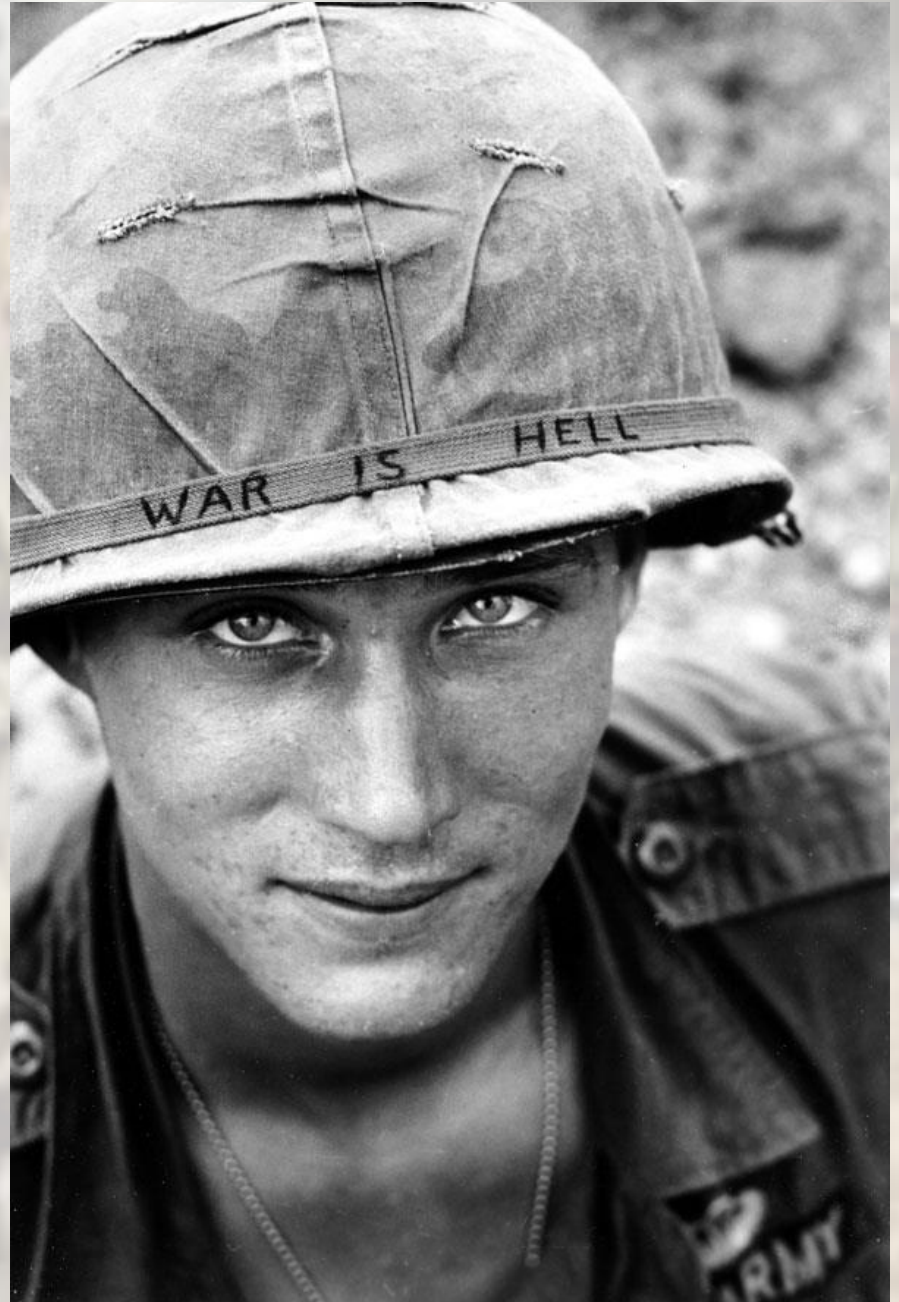
Enormous casualties on the VC did not lead to victory:

- Steady stream of supplies and soldiers (USSR, China, North Vietnam)
- VC continued to refill ranks with civilians
- U.S. air strikes turned many peasants into VC fighters



Mobilization

- ▶ More than 2.5 million Americans served
- ▶ At start of war: mostly professional soldiers
 - Volunteer enlistments
 - U.S. govt will eventually rely on the draft to maintain numbers
- ▶ On Average - U.S. Soldiers:
 - Slightly younger than soldiers in WWII and Korea
 - Not as well trained



Draft Lottery

Began in 1969, ended in 1973

- 25% excused for health reasons
- 30% received deferments or postponements of service:
 - College students - usually men from higher-income families
- High percentage of combat soldiers were black
- 3% of eligible men escaped by refusing to register or leaving the U.S.



Photo, above: Rep. Alexander Pirnie, R-NY, draws the first capsule in the lottery drawing held on December 1, 1969. The capsule contained the date, September 14.

Non-Combat Positions

Many Americans in Vietnam served in non-combat positions

- Administration
- Communications
- Engineering
- Medical care
- Transportation

▶ About 10,000 American women served

▶ 20,000 - 45,000 more women served in a civilian capacity

- Red Cross volunteers – “Donut Dollies”



Not all women wore
love beads in the sixties.

“Living Room War”

Reporters and TV crews went on patrol with soldiers for the 1st time in history

- Scenes of firefights and burning villages into American living rooms
- ▶ Led to skepticism of govt reports on the war



Television brought the brutality of war into the comfort of the living room. Vietnam was lost in the living rooms of America - not on the battlefields of Vietnam.

(Marshall McLuhan)

Public Opinion on Vietnam

People who supported the war's goals

- Wanted more troops and bombings

Hawks

vs.

Doves

People who opposed the war

- ▶ Multiple reasons

Both sides criticized how the war was handled

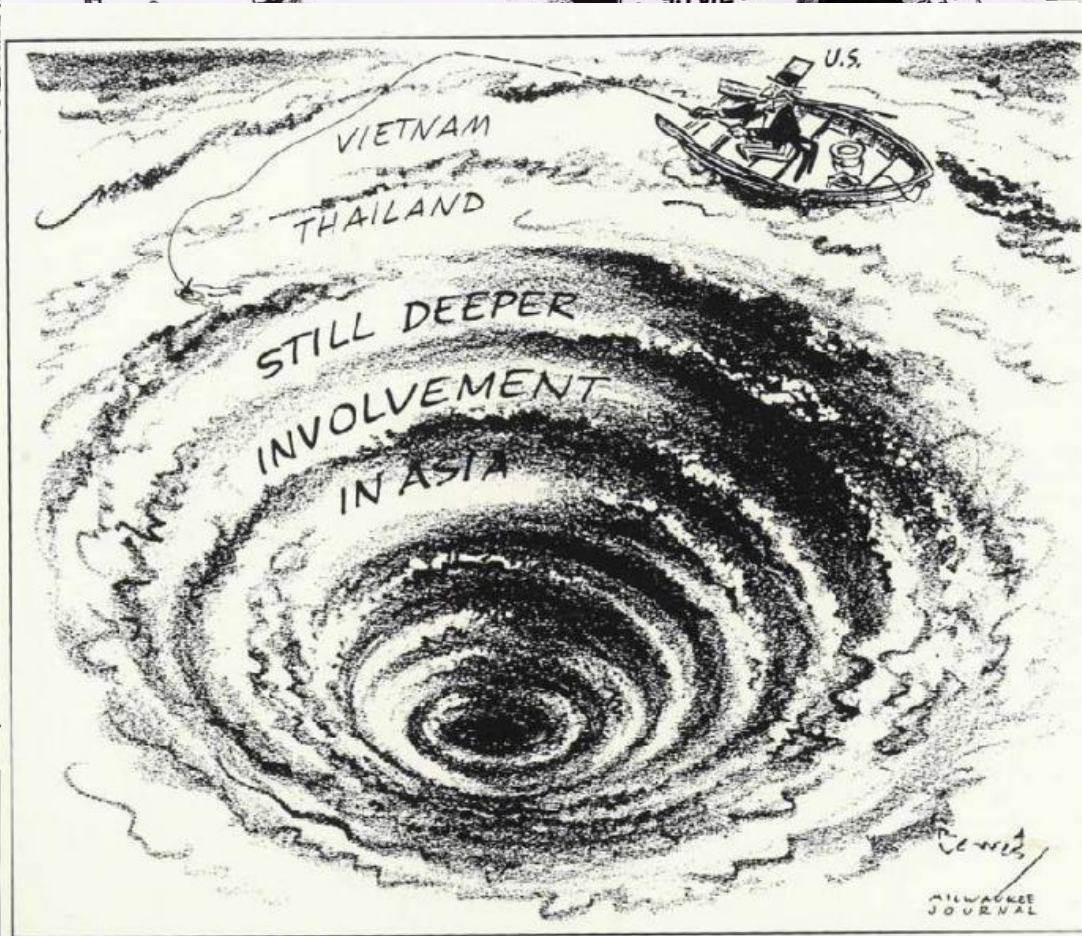


Doves' Arguments

- ▶ Vietnam was not crucial to U.S. national security (Ex. George Kennan)
- ▶ Fighting against the wishes of the majority of Vietnamese
- ▶ Draining much-needed resources from Great Society programs (Ex. Martin Luther King Jr.)
- ▶ Unfair for blacks to fight for democracy in a foreign land when discrimination continued at home
- ▶ Johnson's policies were too extreme

"THERE'S MONEY ENOUGH TO SUPPORT BOTH OF YOU
NOW, DOESN'T THAT MAKE YOU FEEL BETTER?"

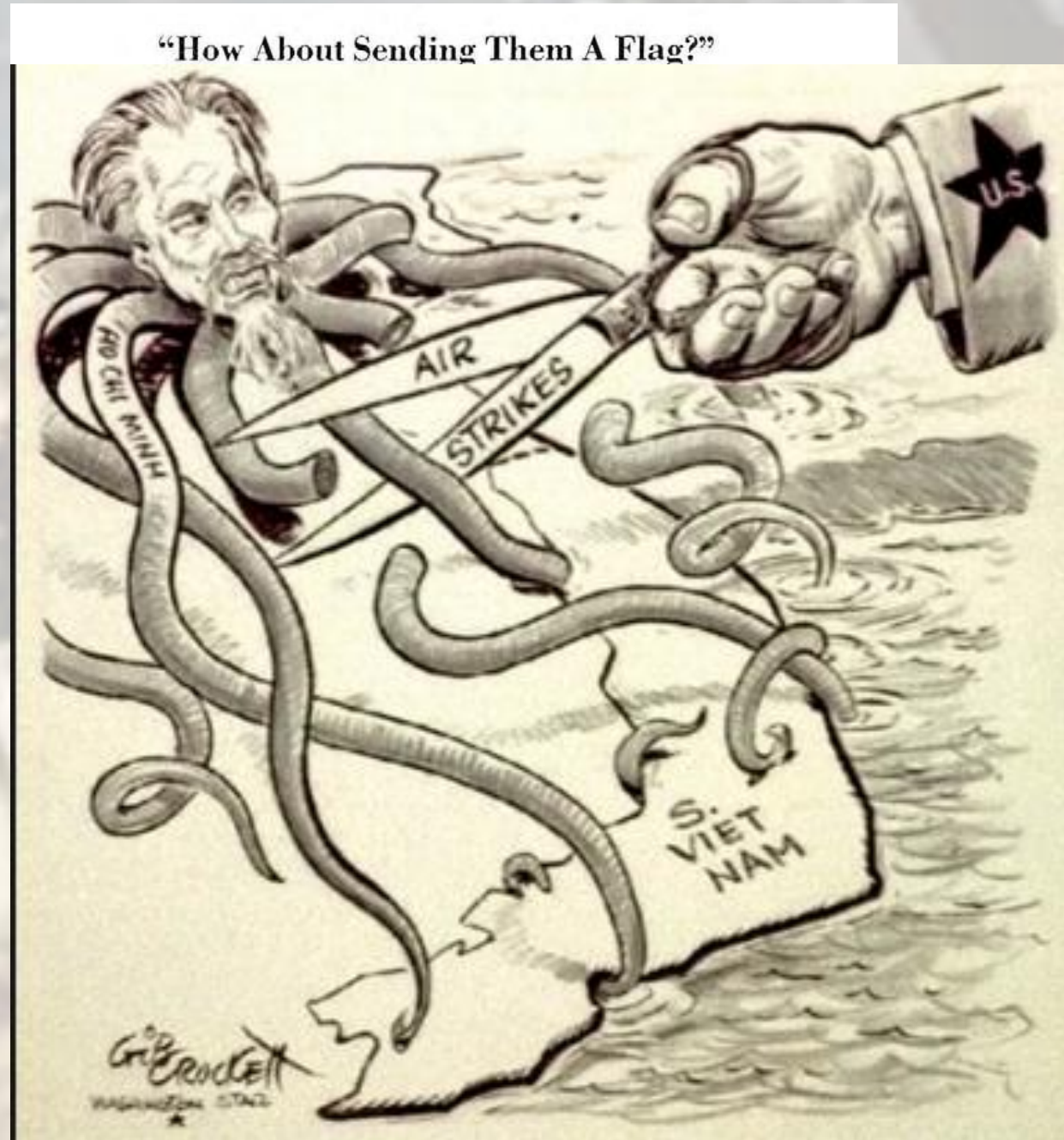
Opener Project, The Ohio State University Cartoon Research Center



A Letter from the Front

Hawks' Arguments

- ▶ Truman, Eisenhower and Kennedy received public support for actions taken in Vietnam
- ▶ Gulf of Tonkin Incident was justification
- ▶ Domino theorists
- ▶ Many originally thought the war would end quickly



The Tet Offensive: 31 January 1968 – 24 February

A series of massive coordinated attacks throughout South Vietnam:

Tet Offensive

Goals: 1) cause a rebellion among the South Vietnamese population 2) encourage the U.S. to scale back its support of the Saigon regime

In January 1968 thousands of NVA and VC troops attacked a U.S. military base in Khe Sanh

- This and other rural attacks were diversions to draw U.S. and South Vietnamese Army (ARVN) forces away from urban areas

Khe Sanh

Main communist offensive began on 30 January 1968, at the start of Tet, the Vietnamese New Year

- Some 84,000 communist soldiers attacked 12 U.S. military bases and more than 100 cities across South Vietnam

The Main Attacks



Effects of the TET Offensive

General Westmoreland called the TET Offensive a “decisive defeat for communists”

- Claimed there was a “light at the end of the tunnel”
- Wanted to launch a counteroffensive

► Realities of TET:

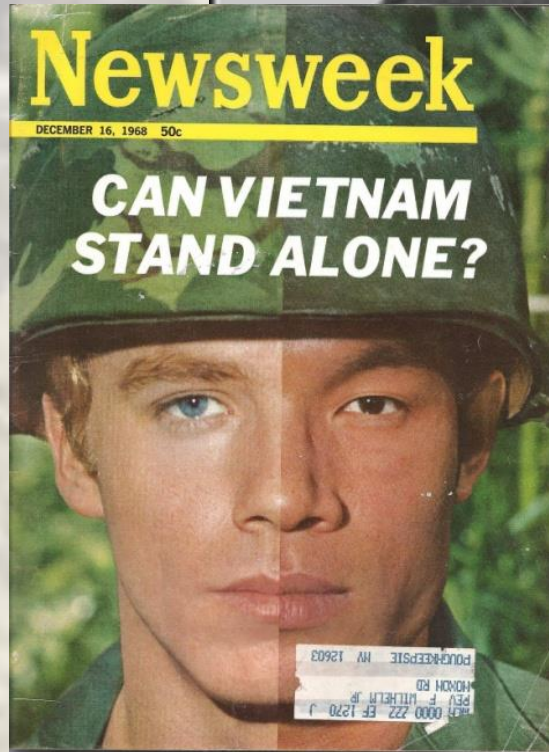
- VC/NVA showed they were determined to keep fighting
- Showed that no part of SV was safe from attack
- Americans began to question if the war could ever be won
- **Johnson announces he will not seek reelection**



Growing Doubts

27 Feb. '68: Walter Cronkite broadcast a report in which he gave personal assessment of situation in Vietnam:

- Trusted journalist for most Americans
- ▶ Major national magazines such as *Time* and *Newsweek* began to express doubts about the war and call for end



Political Challenges

Public criticism became louder and more intense:

- Leaders in Johnson's own administration began to criticize his policies
- ▶ Roughly 3 out of 4 Americans opposed the war



Johnson's Search for Solutions

Before leaving office, Johnson tried to bring war to an end:

- Denies Westmoreland's request for 206,000 more ground troops
- Attempted to negotiate with NV

Met in Paris where negotiations stalled:

- U.S. wanted all NVA troops out of SV
- NV would not accept temporary SV govt. with a U.S.-backed president



Election of 1968

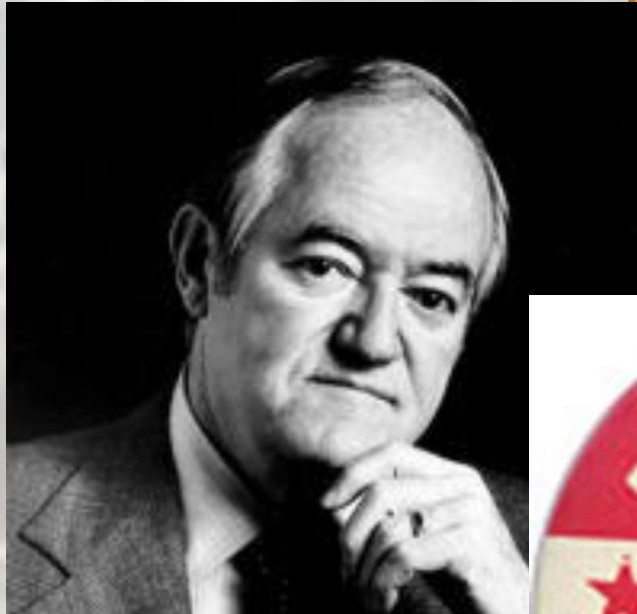
Democratic
Primary

Candidates:

- Hubert Humphrey: Johnson's VP; → defender of current policies
- Eugene McCarthy: Senator from Minnesota; called for rapid end to war
- Robert Kennedy: Senator from NY; called for end to war

▶ Primary results:

- Kennedy won major primaries in IN, NE, and CA



Bobby Kennedy Assassinated

**Daily
Mirror**

LOS ANGELES, WEDNESDAY, 12.15 am

Robert Kennedy lies with a bullet

in his head, and a supporter cries



SPRAWLED on a hotel floor lies Senator Bobby Kennedy... struck down suddenly in his moment of political triumph. Seconds before, his face was alight with gaiety, jubilation, the buoyancy of a young man who feels Fate beckoning him to a glittering prize. Now, felled by a

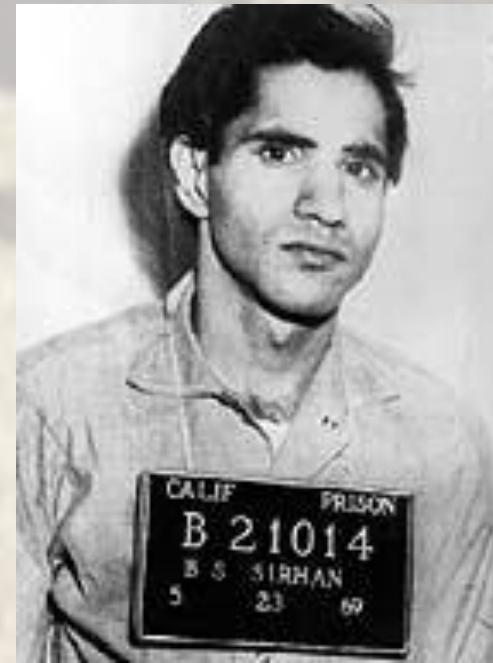
gunman's bullet, he lies with his face upwards. His eyes... registering only incomprehension, as if he were inquiring what had happened. He did not know—few indeed knew in the turmoil of that moment in Los Angeles early yesterday. "God! Not again!" cried a friend as he saw Bobby lying shot like his brother John before him.

JOHN PILGER, the Mirror's Journalist of the Year, and GEORGE GALE, the Mirror's columnist, were in the hotel. Pilger's report is on the Back Page. Gale's is on Page 2

More on Kennedy on Page 11 and Centre Pages

6 June 1968: shot while leaving a Las Vegas hotel

- By Sirhan Sirhan - a Jordanian immigrant angered by Kennedy's support of Israel



The Democratic Convention

- Delegates at the Democratic National Convention (DNC) in Chicago debated between McCarthy and Humphrey
- Outside the convention, protesters demanded an immediate end to the war
- Mayor Daley sent troops to maintain order but violence soon broke out
- TV crews captured violent scenes between protesters and police
- The chaos was one symptom of a growing “generation gap” over government, politics, and the Vietnam War



Other Candidates in '68

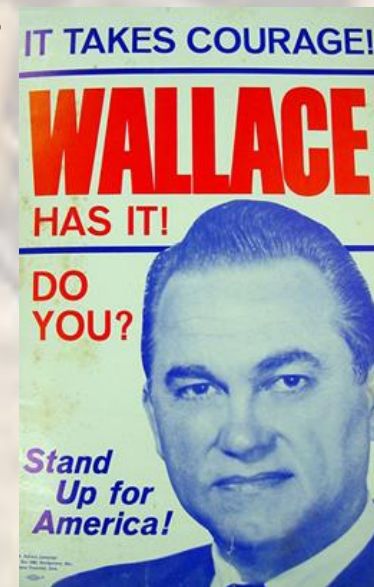
Richard Nixon

- ▶ Republican
- ▶ Won the nomination at the Republican National Convention
- ▶ Chose Spiro Agnew as his running mate (1st Greek to hold VP office)
- ▶ Appealed to the patriotism of mainstream Americans
- ▶ Promised “law and order”
- ▶ Claimed to have a secret plan to end the war and achieve “Peace with Honor”



George Wallace

- ▶ Independent
- ▶ Former Alabama governor
- ▶ Nominated by the American Independent Party
- ▶ Opposed civil rights progress and school desegregation and war protesters
- ▶ Appealed to conservative, Democratic white Southerners and working class whites



Nixon in Vietnam

- ▶ Nixon and his National Security Advisor **Henry Kissinger** devised plans to end the war
- ▶ 1969: Kissinger began secret peace negotiations in Paris with NV revolutionary Le Duc Tho



“Vietnamization”

- ▶ Turning over more of the fighting in Vietnam to the SV while gradually bringing U.S. ground troops home
- ▶ Nixon hoped this would give SV leaders time to create a stable, non-communist govt
- ▶ Nixon began to slowly withdraw U.S. forces*
- ▶ Antiwar activists opposed the plan calling for an immediate end to the war
- ▶ Nixon believed he had the backing of the “**silent majority**” of Americans



Tonight - to you, the great silent majority of my fellow Americans - I ask for your support.

(Richard Nixon)

Laos and Cambodia

*At the same time, Nixon was secretly expanding the war

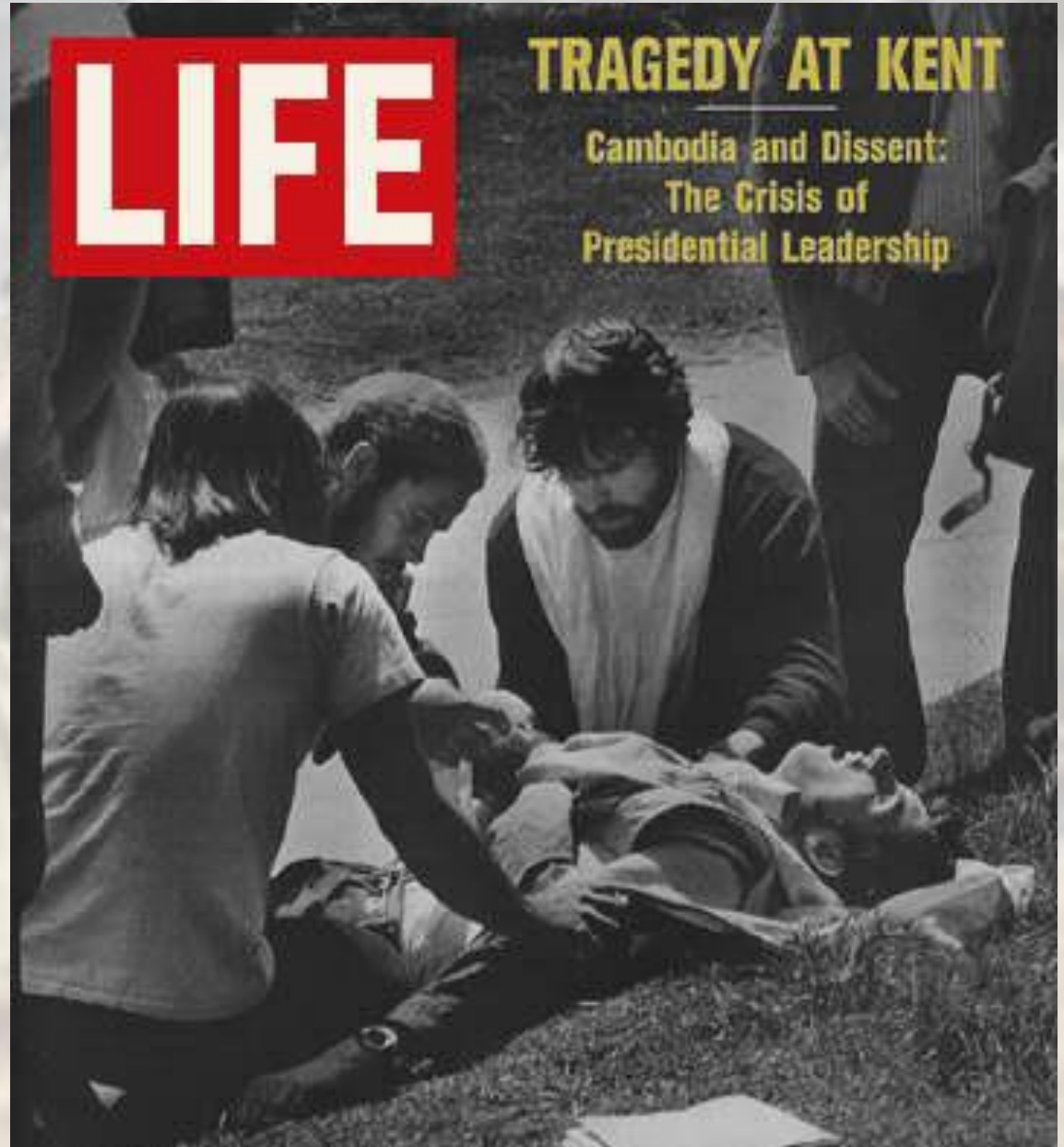
- ▶ He ordered the bombing of Cambodia to disrupt the flow of supplies on the Ho Chi Minh trail
- ▶ Hid the air strikes from the American people—including members of Congress
- ▶ Sent U.S. troops into Cambodia and Laos to destroy NVA bases
- ▶ Renewed bombing in NV to force peace treaty



Increasing Protests

Campus Violence

- Kent State University in Ohio
 - 4 students killed, 9 injured



-Jackson State College in Mississippi: 2 students killed; 12 injured by city and state police sent in to quell student protests

-Students, fed up with white people driving through campus shouting racial slurs, some throwing bottles and endangering black pedestrians → day of shooting, rocks had been thrown at white drivers; around midnight, police shot into the crowd after tension escalated

-Overshadowed by the shootings at Kent State 11 days earlier



**Phillip Gibbs and James Earl Green
killed at Jackson State
May 14, 1970**



Antiwar Movement

- Coalition of clergy, trade unionists, and veterans established nationwide protest on “Moratorium Day” (10/69 & 11/69)
- Boston, MA
- 250,000 protestors: largest anti-war protest in U.S. history



Radical protests

- Weather Underground aka the “Weathermen” – extreme faction of the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS)
- “You don’t need a weatherman to know which way the wind blows” – Bob Dylan, *Subterranean Homesick Blues*
- Set off more than 5,000 bombs aimed at govt bldgs. & incited riots (“Days of Rage”)



March 1968: My Lai Massacre



Troops under Lieutenant William Calley:

- Killed over 450 men, women, children in hamlet of My Lai while on a “Search-and-Destroy” mission
- No VC found in village
- ▶ Went unreported for a year until former soldiers began talking
- Intensified divisions between supporters and opponents
- ▶ 14 officers charged → Lt. Calley the only one convicted of murder, sentenced to life in prison
- Paroled in 1974 by Nixon

1971: Pentagon Papers

- ▶ Collection of secret govt docs that traced military involvement in Vietnam since the Truman Administration '45-'67
- ▶ Revealed govt had been misleading American people about the war for years; continued escalation to avoid embarrassing defeat
 - Papers leaked by Daniel Ellsberg (military analyst)
 - Govt tried to stop the leak, claiming reasons of “national security;” in *NY Times v. U.S.*



U.S. Involvement in Vietnam Ends

**26th
Amendment**

Becomes a campaign issue; would lower the voting age from 21 to 18; ratified March '71

**1972
Election**

Nixon stressed “law and order” at home and told voters he would end the war

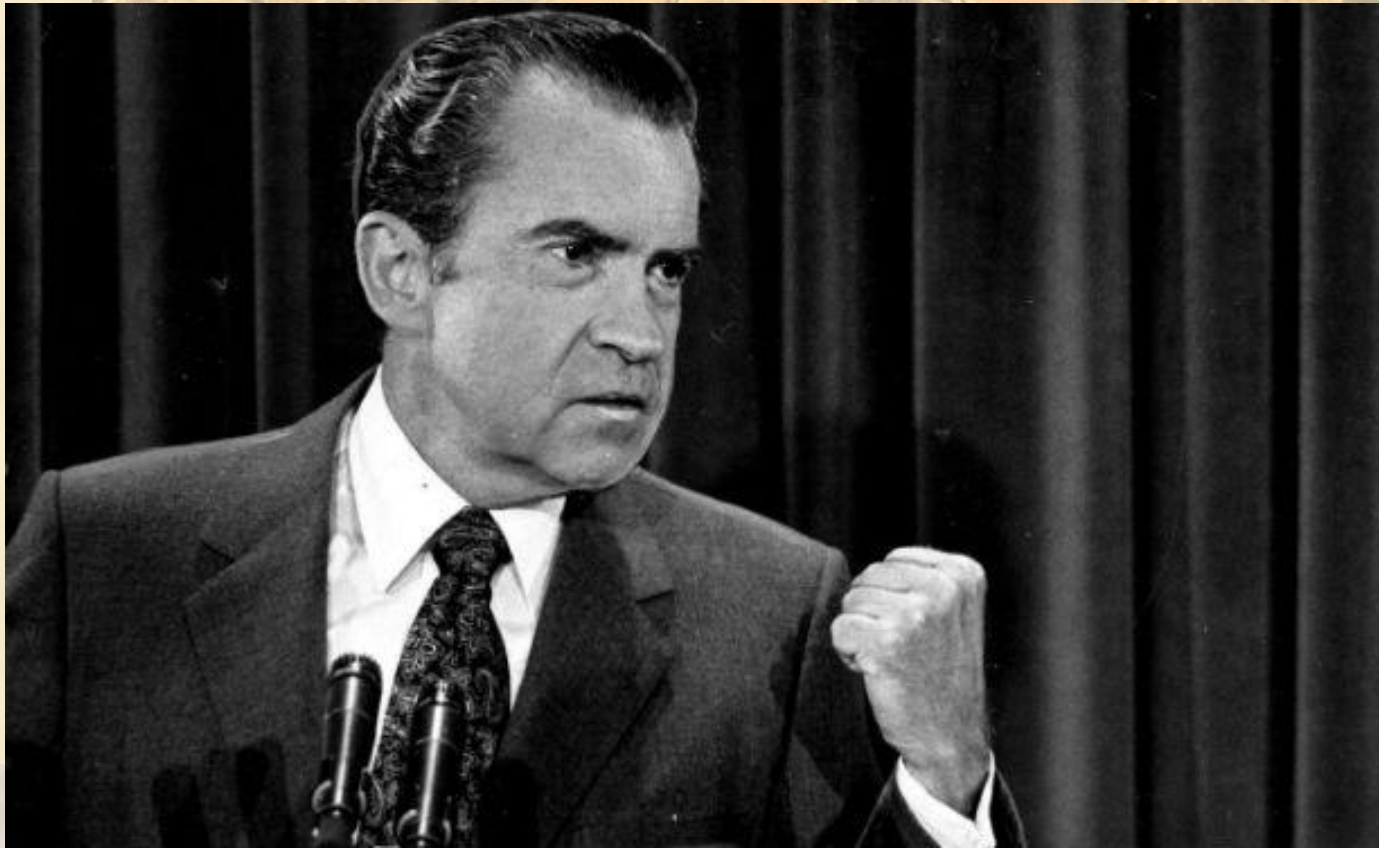
- Kissinger announced a breakthrough in the peace talks just weeks before the election → helped Nixon win by a landslide



Paris Peace Accords

Nixon tried to force NV to make peace concessions:

- Ordered the failed “Christmas Bombing”
- ▶ Officials from NV, SV, and the U.S. finally reached an agreement in January '73:
 - U.S. will withdraw all troops and help rebuild Vietnam
 - Both sides: release all POWs





Does not settle
the political
future of SV,
which was the
key issue
behind the
war from the
start



- ▶ 1975: NVA invades SV
- ▶ After a short amount of fighting, SV surrendered:
 - U.S. military rushed to evacuate embassy in Saigon along with 130,000 South Vietnamese who were flown to the U.S.



The Legacy of the War in Vietnam

1975: Vietnam reunited under communist government

- ▶ Communist forces gain control of Cambodia:
 - Khmer Rouge
 - Vietnamese forces invade Cambodia in 1979: overthrow govt and occupy country

*Cambodia Reds Are Uprooting Millions
As They Impose a 'Peasant Revolution'*



Communists entering Phnom Penh from the north on Monivong Boulevard on morning of April 17. To the left, one uses portable communications set.

Death Toll:

- 2 mil. Vietnamese; 5 mil. wounded; 11 mil. refugees

▶ Severe environmental damage:

- Bombs and defoliants cause health issues for all sides for years to come

▶ “Mass Exodus”:

- More than 1.5 million South Vietnamese fled country after the fall of Saigon



Veterans

Cost U.S. \$120 bil.

- ▶ U.S. death toll:
 - 58,000 Americans KIA
 - 600 POW
 - 2,500 MIA
 - 300,000 wounded
- ▶ Experienced negative reception upon return
- ▶ Trouble adjusting to civilian life
 - PTSD



Political Impact

- ▶ Containment failed in Vietnam
- ▶ Many Americans now lacked trust in govt
- ▶ Congress passed the **War Powers Act 1973**:
 - President as “Commander-in-Chief” has power to send U.S. troops to an armed conflict for 60 days without needing the consent of Congress (must notify Congress within 48 hrs. of sending troops initially)
 - After those 60 days, Congress must vote to:
 - a) Allow troops to remain
 - b) Declare war
 - c) Bring troops home

