The Conflict in Vietnam
During the 1950s and 1960s, the United States fought wars to stop communism. Vietnam had been a French colony since the 1880s. The Vietnamese fought for independence and won in 1954. The country was split into communist North Vietnam and non-communist South Vietnam. Communists in South Vietnam were called the Vietcong. In the early 1960s, they tried to overthrow the government. North Vietnam helped the Vietcong. The United States sent military advisers and supplies to help South Vietnam fight the Vietcong. In 1965, the U.S. sent soldiers to Vietnam. The U.S. troops had better technology and weapons. They had jet bombers, tanks, and helicopters. The Vietcong fought in small groups that hid in the jungle. They controlled most of South Vietnam.

The Antiwar Movement
The U.S. was spending billions of dollars on the war. Many American soldiers were dying. On television people saw soldiers fighting dangerous battles and the terrible results of U.S. bombs on Vietnamese people. Some people thought the United States had to fight communism everywhere. Others thought the United States should stay out of a war between North and South Vietnam. The government drafted young men into the army. Many did not want to fight in a war they believed was wrong. People had antiwar demonstrations in many parts of the country. In 1969, Richard Nixon was elected President. He started bringing soldiers home. But U.S. planes also increased bombing of North Vietnam and started bombing Cambodia, a country west of Vietnam. In 1973, North Vietnam, South Vietnam, and the United States agreed to a cease-fire. U.S. soldiers went home. The North Vietnamese won the war in 1975. Over 55,000 Americans died in the war. Communism was not stopped in Vietnam.