

Summary: The Vietnam War

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.



Before You Read

Find and underline each vocabulary word.

overthrow *verb*, to remove from power

demonstration *noun*, a gathering of people who want to express their opinions to the public and to the government

cease-fire *noun*, an agreement to stop all fighting



After You Read

REVIEW What did the Vietcong do to fight against the technology of the United States military? Circle the sentence that tells how the Vietcong fought the war.

REVIEW Why did many people in the United States protest against the war in Vietnam? Highlight sentences that tell what people in America learned and saw on television as the war continued. Circle the sentence that tells why people protested against the war.