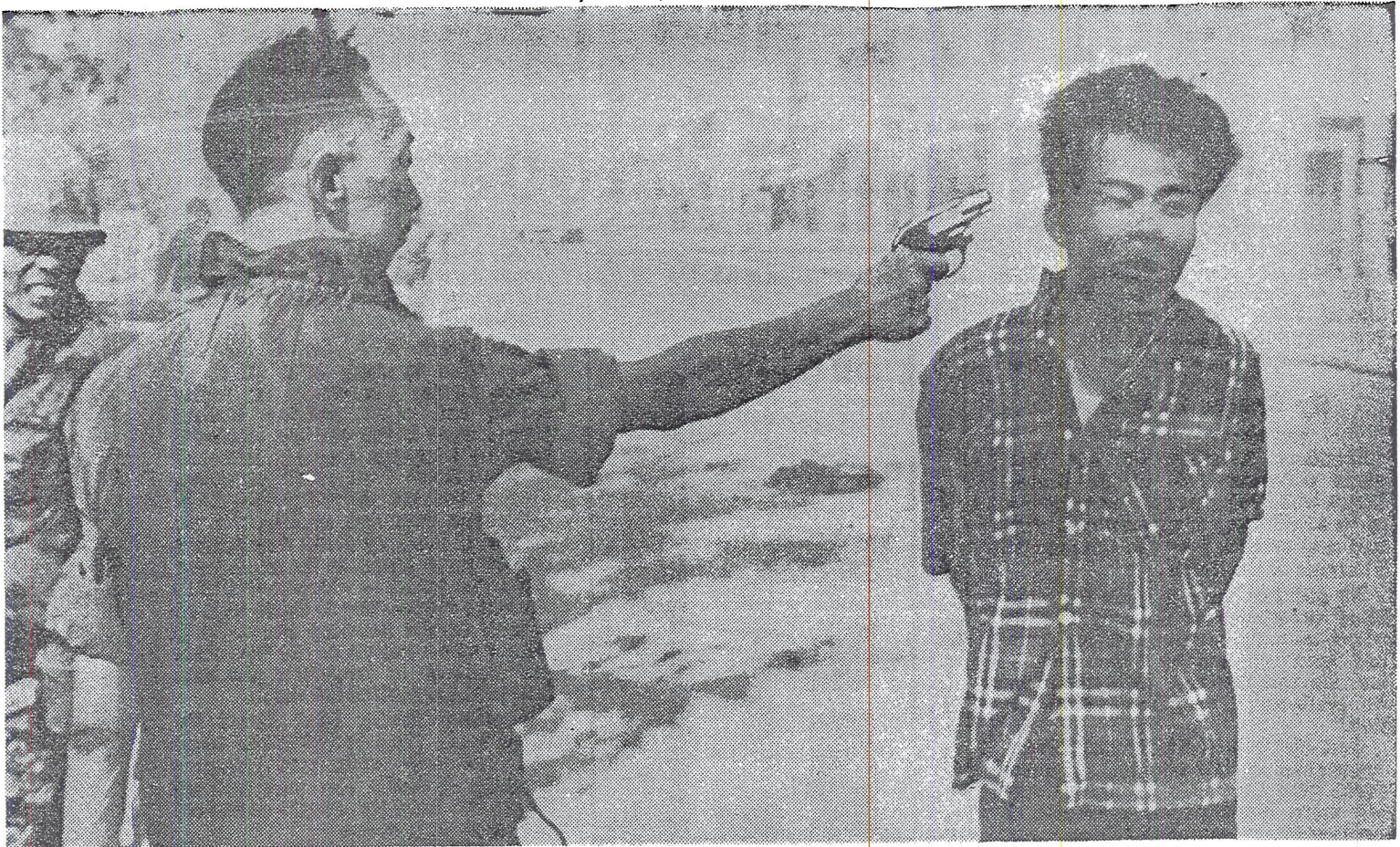




Associated Press

Immolation as protest: Beginning of the end for Diem.



By Eddie Adams, Associated Press

Execution as example: General Loan kills a VC prisoner on a Saigon street.

Images That Shocked a Nation



Associated Press

Civilian dead in a Mylai ditch: Pacification American style?



Associated Press

Civilian dead in a Hue mass grave: Pacification Communist style?

Year by Year, Date by Date, an Indochina Chronicle

America's involvement in the Vietnam war, the longest in the nation's history, grew inexorably after the failure of France's effort to regain possession of its Indochinese colony. Here is a chronology of Western involvement in Vietnam:

1862—The French colonized Vietnam.

1930—Ho Chi Minh, then living in Hong Kong under the name of Nguyen Ai Quoc (Nguyen the Patriot) formed the Indochinese Communist Party and vowed to overthrow French colonialism.

1941-1945—Vichy French ran Indochina under Japanese control and Japanese occupied it in 1945 just before the end of World War II.

Aug. 19, 1945—Ho and the Vietminh took power in Hanoi and soon afterwards proclaimed an independent "Democratic Republic of Vietnam."

December, 1946—Civil war broke out in Indochina against France.

January 1950—China and the Soviet Union recognized Ho's regime in the mountains.

Feb. 7, 1950—The United States and Britain recognized the French-installed government of Bao Dai.

May 30, 1950—The first U.S. aid mission to Vietnam arrived in Saigon. A military mission followed on July 15 and on Dec. 23 the military mission became a permanent military assistance and advisory group (MAAG).

Sept. 7, 1951—The United States signed an agreement with Vietnam for direct aid.

Nov. 20, 1953—French and Foreign Legion paratroopers established a base at Dienbienphu in an attempt to lure the Vietminh into a setpiece battle that would destroy the Communists. Gen. Vo Nguyen Giap accepted the challenge, overran the base and defeated the French on May 7, 1954.

May 8, 1954—The Geneva Conference on Korea and Indochina opened. The big-power conference began with the specter of defeat over the French and her allies. In effect, the loss at Dienbienphu forced the French to sue for peace.

July 20, 1954—Geneva accords signed by all present at Geneva except for the United States and the state of (South) Vietnam. Main terms included "temporary" division of Vietnam at the 17th Parallel; agreement on future elections, hopefully by 1956, and a ban on new military bases or acceptance of foreign military aid.

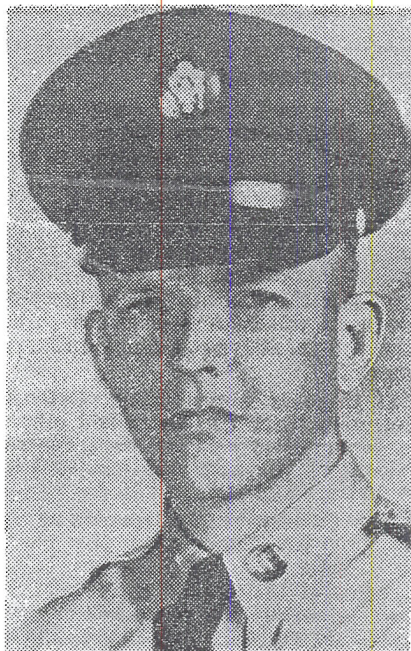
Oct. 10, 1954—Ho and the Vietminh again took control of Hanoi government.

Oct. 23, 1954—President Eisenhower offered direct military aid to Premier Ngo Dinh Diem of South Vietnam.

Jan. 20, 1955—U.S. advisers began training the South Vietnamese army.

September, 1960—Official Workers' (Communist) Party of North Vietnam set the official task of "liberating South Vietnam by means of a people's revolutionary struggle." On Dec. 20, The National Liberation Front was formed to direct the struggle. The NLF is known commonly as the Vietcong.

May 5, 1961—President Kennedy warned that the deteriorating situation in South Vietnam may require use of American combat forces. By Dec. 11,



Associated Press

The first to die: Tom Davis, 26, of Livingston, Tenn., in a 1961 ambush.

the first two helicopter units had arrived.

June 11, 1963—A building anti-Diem front led by militant Buddhists attracted world-wide attention when Thich (venerable) Quang Duc burned himself in a fiery suicide. Within two months, marital law and censorship had been imposed, and President Kennedy had agreed to a CIA-inspired coup to overthrow Diem.

Nov. 1, 1963—The coup was sprung by a group of generals and other officers. Diem and his brother fled, but were captured and killed. It was the first of eight coups in four years that created a political vacuum in Saigon. The Vietcong later admitted the government should have been ripe for Communist takeover, but the Communists were unable to fill the void.

May, 1964—Secret American bombing began in Laos.

Aug. 2-5, 1964—Tonkin Gulf Incident. U.S. destroyers attacked by North Vietnamese PT boats, according to U.S. officers, and President Johnson ordered the first American air raid on North Vietnam in retaliation. One plane was shot down and the first American prisoner of war was captured by North Vietnam. Congress passed the Tonkin resolution, giving Mr. Johnson an almost free hand in conducting the war.

Dec. 31, 1964—Documents and prisoners captured later pinpointed the 1965 New Year's Eve as the day the first man of the North Vietnamese regular army crossed into South Vietnam. He was a member of the 325C Division, one of Hanoi's best.

Feb. 7, 1965—The Vietcong mounted a mortar and ground attack on U.S. forces at Pleiku, 230 miles north of Saigon, causing Mr. Johnson to order the first raid in what became Operation Rolling Thunder, a 3½-year, round-the-clock bombing campaign designed to boost South Vietnamese morale; reduce infiltration of Communist

supplies to the South; force Vietnam to negotiate an end to the war; make the war costly to North Vietnam's civilians, and retaliate for Communist attacks in the South.

March 8, 1965—U.S. Marine battalion landed in South Vietnam, the first American combat unit in Indochina.

June 18, 1965—First B-52 raids in Indochina hit South Vietnam.

April 12, 1966—B-52s struck North Vietnam for the first time.

June 29, 1966—Hanoi and Haiphong petroleum stockpiles were hit in the first raids on the North Vietnamese heartland of the escalating air war.

Nov. 1, 1966—Rapidly increasing U.S. military strength reached 350,000.

Sept. 3, 1967—The military ticket of Nguyen Van Thieu and Nguyen Cao Ky received 35 per cent of popular vote to win presidential elections. Surprise second-place finisher is peace candidate Truong Dinh Dzu who is jailed within nine months for alleged pro-Communist activities including his advocating negotiations with the Vietcong for an end to the war.

Jan. 31, 1968—Vietcong launched Tet offensive with a suicide raid that penetrated the U.S. Embassy in Saigon. Fighting raged in every city and 36 of the 44 province capitals. A 77-day siege of Khesanh, an isolated U.S. Marine base, had already begun.

March 16, 1968—Lt. William Calley led his platoon through the hamlet of Mylai 4 and reported having killed 128 "enemy." In 1971, Calley was convicted by general court-martial of killing no less than 22 civilians. Independent investigating teams say the death toll was over 500.

April 1, 1968—President Johnson announced a partial bombing halt over North Vietnam and said he would not seek re-election. Hanoi accepted his proposal for peace talks, but promised that nothing concrete would be discussed until all bombing was stopped.

May 5, 1968—The "post-Tet" offensive began with renewed Communist attacks on Saigon. In a week, a record 562 Americans were killed. On May 19, the Communists began rocket attacks on Saigon that in three years left hundreds of civilians dead.

Oct. 31, 1968—After a month of intensive negotiating with Thieu, Mr. Johnson announced a total bomb halt in North Vietnam and proposed enlarging the peace talks to include the Vietcong and the Thieu government. American "sources" said the Communists agreed to negotiate seriously: stop rocket attacks on the cities, and stop infiltrating the Demilitarized Zone separating North and South Vietnam in return for the bombing halt. Hanoi quickly denied there was any such deal. A church in Saigon was rocketed Nov. 1 while services were being held and 19 Catholics were killed.

June 9, 1969—President Nixon and Thieu met on Midway Island. Mr. Nixon announced the first U.S. troop withdrawal of 25,000 men.

December, 1969—U.S. 82d Airborne brigade was withdrawn from Vietnam, leaving the defense of Saigon in Vietnamese hands for the first time since 1965.

April, 1970—Mr. Nixon announced American drive into Cambodia. He

said 25,000 men would take part in the 61-day operation designed to cut Communist supplies and overrun the Vietcong military headquarters.

June 29, 1970—U.S. forces withdrew from Cambodia, but South Vietnam announced its forces will remain behind "indefinitely." President Nixon secretly ordered U.S. units to give both the South Vietnamese and Cambodians air and logistics support, although he ordered American combat troops to remain in Vietnam.

December, 1971—After six months of battlefield lull, Vietnamese and American officers predicted a new Communist offensive in the Central Highlands. Air Force Gen. John Lavelle, however, detected a huge North Vietnamese buildup just above the Demilitarized Zone and ordered American pilots to bomb it.

January, 1972—President Nixon and Thieu announced a new allied peace plan, quickly rejected by the Communists. It called for a complete U.S. withdrawal in four months, and Thieu's resignation one month before proposed elections in South Vietnam.

March 30, 1972—The North Vietnamese began their spring offensive along the DMZ. On the northern front, the Communists routed South Vietnamese government forces and captured all of northernmost Quangtri Province. In the highlands, they routed another government force and captured almost all of Kontum Province, but were stopped at the province capital. North of Saigon, the South Vietnamese army fell back 15 miles, then stood and fought at Anloc Province capital. Both sides claimed victory, and political maneuvering increased the speculation that peace would soon be declared.

April 6, 1972—Hundreds of planes and warships struck targets in North Vietnam in reprisal for the one-week-old invasion of the South. On April 16, U.S. B-52s and tactical warplanes attacked the Hanoi-Haiphong area for the first time since 1969. On May 8, President Nixon ordered the mining of North Vietnamese ports.

Aug. 17, 1972—Henry Kissinger arrived in Saigon for two days of talks with President Thieu after conferring privately in Paris with Hanoi Politburo member Le Duc Tho for the 16th time since 1969.

Sept. 17, 1972—North Vietnam for the first time since 1969 released three American POWs, who traveled home with antiwar activists and relatives via Peking and Moscow.

Oct. 11, 1972—Kissinger returned to Washington from Paris after an unprecedented four days of secret talks with Le Duc Tho. Peace rumors abounded throughout the world.

Oct. 18, 1972—Kissinger arrived in Saigon for five days and six meetings with Thieu. In Paris, Hanoi delegation spokesman said there was "no sign" Mr. Nixon wanted to end the war.

Oct. 24, 1972—Thieu told television and radio audience he has agreed to no cease-fire.

Oct. 25, 1972—Vietcong delegation spokesman said the United States was hiding behind Thieu's back and if it really wanted peace, it could have it within hours.

Oct. 26, 1972—Hanoi Radio, in a surprise broadcast, said North Vietnam had reached a nine-point peace agreement in the Kissinger-Tho talks and was prepared to sign it Oct. 31, beginning immediately a cease-fire in Vietnam. Kissinger in Washington told newsmen there were some minor points still to be negotiated and he had asked Hanoi for one more session to resolve the remaining differences. Kissinger said settlement could come "within a matter of weeks."

December 13—Kissinger and Le Duc Tho broke off negotiations without reaching an agreement.

December 16 — Kissinger acknowledges in a White House press conference that the United States and North

Vietnam were locked in a fundamental impasse over whether they are negotiating an armistice or peace.

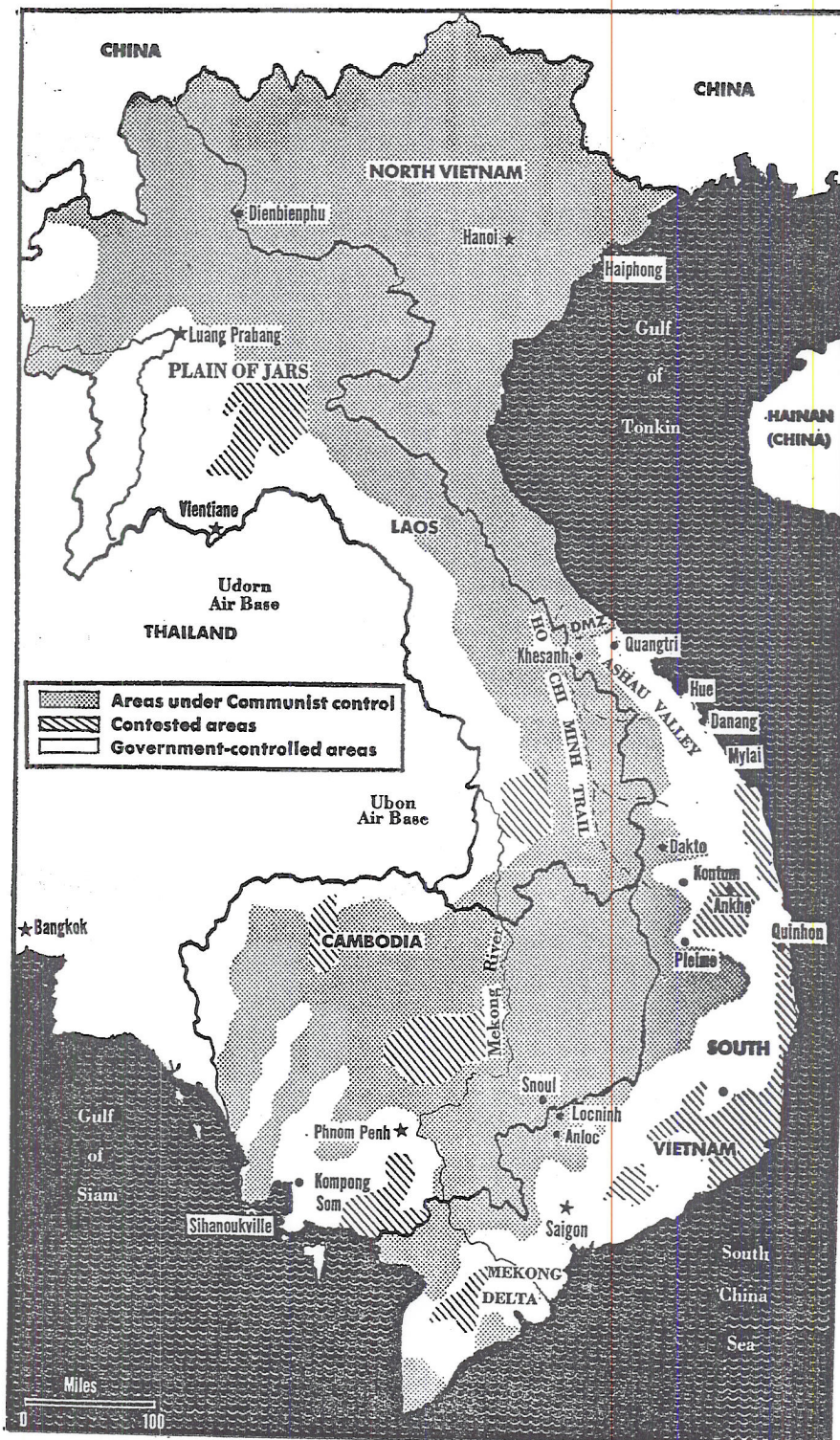
December 18 — Full resumption of American bombing of North Vietnam began.

December 21—The North Vietnamese and Vietcong delegations walked out of the formal Paris peace conference to protest against the bombing.

December 29 — President Nixon announced the resumption of peace negotiations and ordered all bombing discontinued above the 20th parallel.

January 8, 1973—Kissinger and Tho resumed peace talks.

January 15—President Nixon ordered all bombing, shelling and any further mining of North Vietnam suspended, because of progress in negotiations. □



By Joseph Mastrangelo—The Washington Post