

World hot spot

Ho Chi Minh, leader of North Vietnam is the senior of the two, and pertinent details of his life follow.

- He was born about 1890, 1891 or 1892 on May 19, in the village of Nghe-An in Central Vietnam.

- His name at birth has been given as Nguyen Ai-Quoc.

- He began his revolutionary career at the lycée Quoc-Hoc at Hue. He was expelled because of anti-French activities.

- At the beginning of the First World War, Ho went to London, where he supported Ireland in her struggle for independence.

- Early in 1917 or 1918, he became involved in the socialist debate in France, supporting the Communists because of their position on the colonies.

- He returned to Vietnam in 1924, and opened a school for party members, graduating between 20 and 30 political agitators per month.

This was a hard time for the Communist parties in East Asia. The Chinese party was dissolved, the British and the Dutch struck decisive blows against the Malay and Indoasian Communists organizations and a bitter intra-party struggle was taking place among the Indochinese Communist party, the Annamese Communist party and the League of Indochinese Communists. Ho began reorganization of the party in 1930.

After several years in Moscow during the 1930s, he returned to China and worked in low-ranking party positions, building up his image as a man of the people.

His experience with the Chinese and Russian Communists made him realize he could not trust either of them, and he turned to the Americans for aid. His actions were successful, and Ho and his guerillas were reinforced by several OSS intelligence units which had been operating in southern China. The OSS teams also supplied the Viet-Minh with arms and ammunition.

During the period, Ho abandoned his Communist trappings. Emphasis was laid on the nationalist aspects, and he stressed co-operation with Chinese overlords, all of which gave the United States confidence in his movement. When his forces took over Hanoi, the presence of the U.S. flag convinced the population that the U.S. had established official relations with the Viet-Minh. However, Ho soon learned the U.S. was supporting Bao-Dai in South Vietnam, and made a major policy switch, from supporting the U.S. to favoring the French.

French objectives in the Indochina war, were at first just an attempt at re-colonialization. They

attempted to use the "oil slick" method, capturing some large posts and then advancing over the surrounding area, but throughout the campaign France was hampered by insufficient men and arms.

On the Communist side, war aims were simple: "doc-lap" or "independence." Ho and his general, Giap, practised a modified version of guerilla warfare. Although they made several errors in the early part of the battle, Giap soon discovered the French abilities and limitations. His first successful drive, was to capture the highlands.

Later in a general offensive effort, the Viet-Minh successfully weakened the French, until the battle of Dien Bien Phu at which they destroyed the remaining French army. The war ended July 21, 1954.

By the Geneva Accord, the country was divided at the 17th Parallel.

The northern zone became a socialist state and began to rebuild its shattered economy. A constitution was adopted in 1946, but was modified in 1960.

In South Vietnam, Emperor Bao-Dai was able to obtain greater formal independence from the French after two years of bargaining than the Viet-Minh were able to even after years of bloody war. By 1954, the Saigon regime had received more international recognition than its northern counterparts, and the government began to take a relatively active role in international organizations. However, they have also had grave internal problems.

One of the most active individuals in South Vietnam during the period after the Second World War was Ngo Dinh Diem.

He was born Jan. 3, 1901, son of Ngo Dinh Kha, a well-educated mandarin whose family was among the early Catholic converts. From his father he inherited an ardent feeling of nationalism and the concept of reform through the use of Vietnamese elites, and also a religious fierceness bordering on fanaticism.

Like Ho, Diem hated foreign occupiers of the country, but his desire to change from within the elite made him join the civil service after completion of law studies. He took a post with Bao-Dai as minister of the interior, but after his reforms were not accepted, he resigned.

After resigning his post, Ngo Diem began a period of intense study. During this time, he was helped by the Japanese to escape from arrest by the French, but he never became actively committed to the Japanese cause.

The collapse of the Japanese led to his imprisonment by the Viet-Minh, and Ho, recognizing his organizational talents offered him a job as minister of the interior. Dien refused and was imprisoned until 1946, the date of signing accords by the French and Viet-Minh.

Returning to Hue, Diem took an active part in bring Bao-Dai back to power. But after achieving this, he refused to co-operate with the new Vietnamese state, although he was offered the premiership in May of 1949. Instead he founded the Phong Trao Quoc-Gia Qua Kich, or the Nationalist Extremist Movement. The group advocated resistance against both the French and the Viet-Minh, and hoped to obtain strength through the organization of Catholics.

Diem left on a trip through Japan and the United States in 1950. Involvement of the United States in the Indochina war gave him an opportunity to go on a speaking tour through the United States and gain many supporters. In 1954, Bao-Dai offered him the premiership again, but once gain he refused because of interference from the French army which had over-all military command.

The fall of the French after Dien Bien Phu convinced him this was the time demands would be met. On June 16, 1954 he was asked to form the new Vietnamese government.

Diem managed to avoid the mistake made by his predecessors and forced Bao-Dai to give him full and complete civilian and military powers. He retained these until Oct. 26, 1956 when the Constitution of the Republic of Vietnam was adopted. By provisions of the constitution he was made president with full dictatorial powers. The inflexibility of the system resulted in a military revolt on Nov. 1, 1963 and Diem was murdered the following day.

Throughout the Vietnam crisis the United States has followed an active policy. At the beginning of the Second World War the obsession of President Franklin Roosevelt led to the support of the Viet-Minh and disregard of the French resistance movement against the Japanese. As a consequence many Frenchmen were slaughtered in the ensuing battle.

Called the second U.S. mistake was the support of the corruption-ridden government of Diem in South Vietnam which served to undermine the U.S. claim they were supporting national rights, for the Diem regime in its totalitarian extremes could be con-

sidered as repressive as Ho's rule in the north.

The support of the domino theory, that if one nation in the Far East falls to communism, the rest will follow, is also seen as another fallacy in the U.S. administration.

Now the U.S. has more than 125,000 troops in the country and

is planning to have 150,000 troops by Jan. The U.S. position was clearly stated by President Lyndon Johnson when he said:

"We will fight as long as necessary not to stop the spread of Communism, but to build a regime conforming to the aspirations of the greatest number of our compatriots."

