

Chapter 18 - The Impossible Victory: Vietnam

Quotes from this phony history book are in **red**.

p 469 - From 1964 to 1972, the wealthiest and most powerful nation in the history of the world made a maximum military effort, with everything short of atomic bombs, to defeat a nationalist revolutionary movement in a tiny, peasant country-and failed. When the United States fought in Vietnam, it was organized modern technology versus organized human beings, and the human beings won.(1)

Comment -

1. Communist Howard Zinn can hardly contain his glee with the communist North Vietnamese victory though it must be pointed out that the North couldn't win until after the US withdrew. It's also very important to know that the US did NOT make a maximum military effort to win the war. If we had, the war have started and ended in 1965. Johnson was concerned that the world's greatest military power pounding a backward nation into submission was unethical. So LBJ made a deliberate decision to use MINIMUM force to change attitudes in N. Vietnam. This policy forced the US to fight the war on North Vietnamese terms - and doomed 50,000 young Americans to die and thousands more to be maimed for life. Lyndon Johnson sent America to war without a plan for winning the war.

The advancement of Communism in Asia was a leading factor in deciding to aid S. Vietnam. China fell to communism in 1949. In June 1950, North Korea invaded South Korea. Late in 1950, China sent hundreds of thousands of troops to fight for N. Korea. The US did not want communism to overtake all of Indochina. This is why we gave aid to the French.

In World War Two, we destroyed Germany and Japan by destroying their homeland. We never invaded N. Vietnam or destroyed their ability to wage war.

p 469 - In the fall of 1945 Japan, defeated, was forced to leave Indochina, the former French colony it had occupied at the start of the war. In the meantime, a revolutionary movement had grown there, determined to end colonial control and to achieve a new life for the peasants of Indochina. Led by a Communist named Ho Chi Minh, the revolutionists fought against the Japanese,(2) and when they were gone held a spectacular celebration in Hanoi in late 1945, with a million people in the streets,(3) and issued a Declaration of Independence. It borrowed from the Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen, in the French Revolution, and from the American Declaration of Independence, and began: "All men are created equal. They are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights; among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness."(4)

2. Ho Chi Minh did NOT drive out the Japanese. Ho's army only launched one attack of significance against the Japanese. On 17 July 1945, when the war was all but over, 500 Viet Minh soldiers attacked the Tam Dao gendarmery. Eight Japanese soldiers were killed.(A) Japan conquered French Indochina in 1940 and didn't leave until after they surrendered to the US in August 1945. A. Vietnam: A Dragon Embattled, pub 1967, p299

3. No one claims one million people in the square except Zinn who doesn't cite a source. Other sources claim one half million.(B)

B. The August Revolution by Truong Chinh, p8. It must be noted that Truong Chinh worked for Ho Chi Minh and since official communist publications nearly always exaggerate, the half million figure is also probably high.

4. Zinn wants you to think that Ho Chi Minh was comparable to America's Founding Fathers. Nothing could be further from the truth. Ho Chi Minh gave lip service to believing in the principles of freedom. **It was all a scam.** Ho, like other communist "freedom fighters" used lofty rhetoric to brainwash foolish people (like Howard Zinn) into believing they wanted to free the people from oppression, when in reality, Ho wanted to overthrow French colonial rule so he could establish his own communist dictatorship. Ho was a brutal murderer dedicated to spreading communism throughout Indochina no matter how many people he had to kill. After Ho killed a personal friend, he proclaimed: "Anyone who does not follow the line determined by me will be smashed."(C)



Communist dictators loved massive pictures of themselves.

Ho became a hard core Marxist revolutionary in 1920 (at the age of 30) and later studied revolutionary tactics in the Soviet Union. He attended the Fifth Communist International Congress (Comintern) in June 1924.(D) When Vladimir Lenin, the Soviet Union's first communist dictator died in 1924, Ho declared: ". . . he is the bright star showing us the way to the socialist revolution."(E)

In order to eliminate rivals, Ho secretly collaborated with the French and sold them out for money. The most famous fighter against French colonial rule in Indochina (France took control in the 1860s) was Phan Boi Chau. Ho Chi Minh set him up so the French could arrest him and he received a life sentence. Other foes of Ho were vanquished this same way. Ho was superb at sweet talking rivals until they were no longer needed and then he would have them eliminated.(F) By August 1945, Ho had successfully eliminated all of his opposition and became undisputed leader of Vietnam. In the Hanoi area alone about 10,000 opponents were killed. The number of executions in the rest of Vietnam is unknown.

During the war against France from 1946 to 1954, Ho Chi Minh's Viet Minh Army assassinated between 100,000 and 150,000 opponents of communism.[G] During Ho Chi Minh's "land reform" in the mid 1950s, anyone who was not sufficiently supportive of Communism was classified a "landlord" and executed or imprisoned and their property confiscated. About 50,000 farmers were killed. In addition, about 300,000 wives, children and sometimes parents of those executed were now homeless and perished from starvation or sickness. Communist authorities forbid anyone from helping them.(H)

C. Ngo, Van (November 2, 2010). In *The Crossfire: Adventures of a Vietnamese Revolutionary*. Oakland, CA: AK Press. p. 163. ISBN 978-1849350136.

D. *Vietnamese Communism* by Robert Turner, pub. 1975, p 4-7

E. <https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/ho-chi-minh/works/1924/01/27.htm>

F. *Vietnamese Communism* by Robert Turner, pub. 1975, p 9-13

G. Dommen, Arthur J. (2001), *The Indochinese Experience of the French and the Americans*, Indiana Univ. Press, p 252.

H. *Vietnamese Communism* by Robert Turner, pub. 1975, p 130,131,141-143

p 470-471 - **Between October 1945 and February 1946, Ho Chi Minh wrote eight letters to President Truman, reminding him of the self-determination promises of the Atlantic Charter. . . Truman never replied.**(5)

5. Not exactly true. On September 12, 1946, George M. Abbott, of the Foreign Service Institute at America's Department of State met with Ho Chi Minh for an hour in Paris. In the letter Abbott sent to US officials, Abbott declared that Ho Chi Minh denied being connected to communists. "Ho Chi-minh pointed out that there are no Communist ministers in his government and that the Viet-Nam constitution opens with a guarantee of personal liberties and the so-called rights of man and also guarantees the right to personal property. He admits that there are Communists in Annam but claims that the Communist Party as such dissolved itself several months ago." Ho Chi Minh also demanded the French give in to his demands for freedom of the press, freedom of assembly, and the release of political prisoners.(A)

EVERYTHING Ho Chi Minh told George Abbott was a LIE. The communist Constitution of N. Vietnam wasn't worth the paper it was written on. Harry Truman knew Ho was a master con man, liar and a mass murderer. The US gave Ho Chi Minh considerable aid during WW2, but got little in return. After the war, the US was not about to help a known communist like Ho Chi Minh.

A. <http://www.historyisaweapon.com/defcon2/hochiminh/>

Scroll down to "Memorandum of Discussion with Ho Chi Minh, September 12, 1946"

p 472 - **An international assemblage at Geneva presided over the peace agreement between the French and the Vietminh. It was agreed that the French would temporarily withdraw into the southern part of Vietnam, that the Vietminh would remain in the north, and that an election would take place in two years in a unified Vietnam to enable the Vietnamese to choose their own government.**(6)

The United States moved quickly to prevent the unification and to establish South Vietnam as an American sphere.(7) It set up in Saigon as head of the government a former Vietnamese official named Ngo Dinh Diem, who had recently been living in New Jersey,(8) and encouraged him not to hold the scheduled elections for unification.(9) A memo in early 1954 of the joint Chiefs of Staff said that intelligence estimates showed "a settlement based on free elections would be attended by almost certain loss of the Associated States [Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam-the three parts of Indochina created by the Geneva Conference] to Communist control."(10) Diem again and again blocked the elections requested by the Vietminh, and with American money and arms his government became more and more firmly established. As the Pentagon Papers put it: "South Viet Nam was essentially the creation of the United States."(11)

Comment -

6. Neither South Vietnam nor the United States signed the Geneva Convention due to its severe shortcomings. Consequently, the US and S. Vietnam were not bound to the treaty. North Vietnam, under Ho Chi Minh, which DID sign the agreement, had no intentions of keeping this agreement and violated it immediately. Articles 16 and 17 forbid any military buildup or reinforcements for either sides' a military, but Ho Chi Minh reinforced his army with the aid of Communist China. Within four months after the signing, North Vietnam had doubled the size of their army while South Vietnam had reduced their army by 20,000 men. Under Article 14, anyone was permitted to leave North Vietnam and move to South Vietnam and vice versa. One MILLION people fled to South Vietnam who didn't want liberated by Ho Chi Minh and up to two million more would have left had they not been stopped by Ho Chi Minh's army.(A)

It must be pointed out that Zinn never mentioned treaty violations or atrocities committed by Ho Chi Minh.

A. Vietnamese Communism by Robert Turner, pub. 1975, p 101-105

7. Ho Chi Minh's main negotiator at the Geneva Convention over Indochina was the first to suggest that Vietnam be temporarily partitioned at the 17th Parallel which would result in physical separation of Ho Chi Minh's forces and anti-communist forces. Each side would have full administrative, military and economic control in its zone.(B) **Delegates from Free Vietnam opposed dividing Vietnam(C) as did the United States.(D)** Communism was strongest in North Vietnam and it is probable that the separation of Vietnam by the communists was done to give Ho Chi Minh time to eliminate all opposition to communist rule in North Vietnam.

The Geneva agreement was signed on 20 July 1954 by only two countries: France and Ho Chi Minh's North Vietnam. The French only cared about getting their prisoners of war out of Vietnam. Everything else was of secondary importance to the French and this agreement left many details on the election unresolved. The US, Britain and free Vietnam wanted the UN to oversee the election to unite north and south Vietnam but the Soviet Union rejected this idea.(E) Communist Vietnam wanted the elections to be "locally supervised"(F) which meant the elections in communist controlled areas would be rigged like the last elections run by Ho Chi Minh in 1946.

On 6 September 1945, after Ho had killed thousands of his opponents, he announced that elections would be held on 23 December 1945 so he could claim he was the "duly elected" leader of Vietnam. After Chinese troops moved in to disarm Japanese troops, Ho Chi Minh postponed the elections until 6 Jan 1946. This election was a complete fraud. The anti communist nationalists complained they had little time to find candidates, because so many of their people had been killed by Ho Chi Minh. The candidates they did put up were not allowed on the ballot because Ho Chi Minh charged them with anti government activities. As a result, most Ho Chi Minh's candidates ran unopposed. But most importantly, the vote was NOT secret - voters had to tell Ho's henchmen who they were voting for. Saying you were not going to vote for Ho Chi Minh was a death sentence. Voting totals were also inflated. The population of Hanoi in 1946 was about 119,000 but Ho received 169,222 votes. Not surprisingly, Ho Chi Minh's Viet Minh party won a landslide victory.(G)

B. Vietnamese Communism by Robert Turner, pub. 1975, p 92

C. Vietnamese Communism by Robert Turner, pub. 1975, p 94

D. Vietnamese Communism by Robert Turner, pub. 1975, p 95

E. Vietnamese Communism by Robert Turner, pub. 1975, p 97,98,100

F. Vietnamese Communism by Robert Turner, pub. 1975, p 97

G. Vietnamese Communism by Robert Turner, pub. 1975, p 45-48

8. The US did NOT set up Diem as our puppet leader in S. Vietnam and Zinn's comment about living in New Jersey is unfair. Diem lived in exile from August 1950 to 25 June 1954, spending his 4 years seeking support for Vietnamese anti-communists in the US, Europe and Japan. On 16 June 1954, Diem met with Vietnamese emperor Bao Dai in France. Bao Dai was unpopular in Vietnam due to his cooperation with French colonial rulers. Bao Dai, like Diem, opposed communism and Bao Dai wanted Diem to be Prime Minister. Diem agreed and Bao Dai thus became the country's final emperor. His family had ruled Vietnam for 143 years. Bao Dai moved to Paris, but remained "Head of State" of South Vietnam which caused problems for Diem. Diem called for a referendum vote to decide the country's future. Diem had learned a lot from Ho Chi Minh. Diem ousted Bao Dai for good in a fraudulent referendum vote in 1955.

9. The election in North Vietnam would be rigged which is why the US and South Vietnam continued to call for UN supervision of the election.(H) The refusal by Ho Chi Minh to allow for free and fair elections is why the US and South Vietnam cancelled the election. Diem showed he could manipulate elections too, but it would have been possible for the international community to supervise a fair vote in S. Vietnam but was not possible in N. Vietnam.

Another fact ignored by Zinn is that the population of North Vietnam in 1956 was 17 million while South Vietnam was 14 million. This was another reason why the communists wanted Vietnam divided into two. This gave Ho Chi Minh 2 years to consolidate his hold on N. Vietnam and then conquer S. Vietnam through a fraudulent election. Since 99.9% of real voters in North Vietnam would have to vote for Ho Chi Minh, the outcome was obvious. Thousands of ghost voters would be voting for Ho Chi Minh as well. This is also why Ho Chi Minh wouldn't allow any more people to flee to South Vietnam.

H. <http://www.nytimes.com/1955/07/07/archives/saigon-backs-unity-vote-but-only-through-unguided-ballot-foreign.html?url=http%3A%2F%2Ftimesmachine.nytimes.com%2Ftimesmachine%2F1955%2F07%2F07%2F80775556.html>

10. Zinn ignores why the JCS came to this conclusion. Here is the whole paragraph: *"The Communists, by virtue of their superior capability in the field of propaganda, could readily pervert the issue as being a choice between national independence and French Colonial rule. Furthermore, it would be militarily infeasible to prevent widespread intimidation of voters by Communist partisans. While it is obviously impossible to make a dependable forecast as to the outcome of a free election, current intelligence leads the Joint Chiefs to the belief that a settlement based upon free elections would be attended by almost certain loss of the Associated States to Communist control."*(1)

I. <https://nara-media-001.s3.amazonaws.com/arcmedia/research/pentagon-papers/Pentagon-Papers-Part-III.pdf> p A-5, A-6

You can read the Pentagon Papers for yourself at: <https://www.archives.gov/research/pentagon-papers>

11. South Vietnam was created at the Geneva Convention by the communist nations.

p 473 - Pike wrote: *"The Communists have brought to the villages of South Vietnam significant social change and have done so largely by means of the communication process."*(12) That is, they were organizers much more than they were warriors. *"What struck me most forcibly about the NLF was its totality as a social revolution first and as a war second."*(13) Pike was impressed with the mass involvement of the peasants in the movement. *"The rural Vietnamese was not regarded simply as a pawn in a power struggle but as the active element in the thrust. He was the thrust."*(14)

"The purpose of this vast organizational effort was ... to restructure the social order of the village and train the villages to control themselves. This was the NLF's one undeviating thrust from the start. Not the killing of ARVN (Saigon) soldiers, not the occupation of real estate, not the preparation for some great pitched battle... but organization in depth of the rural population through the instrument of self-control."(15)

CORRECTION: Zinn is quoting *Viet Cong: The organization and techniques of the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam*, published in 1966 by Douglas Pike. Zinn wants you to believe that the villagers of South Vietnam wanted liberated by the NLF and that Pike is supportive of the communist uprising in S. Viet Nam. Not true. If you read Pike's book, it quickly becomes obvious that Pike strongly opposes the actions of the NLF. Pike is simply revealing the superb organizational and manipulative skills of the NLF in recruiting villagers and eliminating opponents.

Zinn, a true con artist, is quoting 3 sentences from 3 different parts of the book and blending them into one paragraph to give you a wrong impression of Pike's beliefs.

12. The first sentence - *"The Communists have brought to the villages of South Vietnam significant social change and have done so largely by means of the communication process."* is from the Preface, page ix. Here is the idea Pike wanted to get across:

"What the NLF produced was a major, if not necessarily beneficial, contribution to the sociology of revolution. From this the reader must surmise that I take a communicational view of social change. The fundamental assumption here is that when people, especially those in developing societies, are exposed to new ideas, new methods, new social structures, certain things happen, and neither they nor their society are ever again quite the same. This assumption seems to me to be beyond debate. The Communists have brought to the villages of South Vietnam significant social change and have done so largely by means of the communication process. This process is what this book is about."

13. The second sentence - *"What struck me most forcibly about the NLF was its totality as a social revolution first and as a war second"* is on page 55. Here is Pike's complete thoughts:

"The third basic difference was the social milieu of the struggle. The great fact of the Viet Minh war was the French presence. To the Vietnamese the French colonialist was an assertive and proprietary foreigner who imposed restrictions

that added up to a condition of discrimination or second-class citizenry that the Vietnamese was helpless to oppose. This condition was absent later in the South, and efforts by the NLF to pin the neocolonialist label on the United States lacked saliency in rural areas, for the case simply could not be proved to the satisfaction of the skeptical Vietnamese. The general condition in the South was one of confusion. There was, many Vietnamese felt, no clear right or wrong. One could be a patriot and support the NLF, or one could be a patriot and support the GVN (South Vietnam). Families were split, individuals were genuinely puzzled. In short, there was no convenient line, like nationalism, that could be drawn to divide the two camps. The social milieu of the NLF was far broader than that employed by the Viet Minh. **What struck one most forcibly about the NLF was its totality as a social revolution first and as a war second.** It sought drastic change, not a modification of sociopolitical institutions: . . .”

14. The third sentence - *"The rural Vietnamese was not regarded simply as a pawn in a power struggle but as the active element in the thrust. He was the thrust"* is on page 84. Here is Pike's complete thoughts:

*"As for the Communists, in the most fundamental sense their purpose in the NLF was to achieve political control of the area below the 17th parallel, thus completing the 1945 August Revolution. The Communists had several alternatives but chose the socio-organizational one that had been successful during the Viet Minh Resistance. First they established the front organization. Then they sought to engage as many Vietnamese as possible - but in any case the vast majority - in a revolt against the state. This was to be accomplished by organizing the population, or to be more precise the rural 85 per cent of that population, into manageable units to conduct the revolt. **The rural Vietnamese was not regarded simply as a pawn in a power struggle but as the active element in the thrust. He was the thrust.** He would carry on the struggle movement that would lead to the General Uprising and the Communist take-over."*

15. This paragraph is from page 111. Here is the preceding paragraph with shows Pike's true beliefs:

"Beginning in 1960 the NLF grew into a structure that reached to some degree into virtually every village in the country. In the NLF-controlled areas it threw a net of associations over the rural Vietnamese that could seduce him into voluntarily supporting the NLF or, failing that, bring the full weight of social pressure to bear on him, or, if both of these failed, could compel his support. It could subject him effectively to surveillance, indoctrination, and exploitation. It could order his life. It could artificially create grievances and develop voluntary support where logically such support ought not to have been forthcoming."(p111)

Here are some excerpts from Pike's book that are indicative of his true feelings about the NLF.

Pike says the NLF is guilty of genocide against South Vietnamese villagers:

"The common characteristic of this activity against individuals is that it was directed at the village leader, usually the natural leader - that individual who, because of age, sagacity, or strength of character, is the one to whom people turn for advice or leadership. Many were religious figures, schoolteachers, or simply people of integrity and honor. Since they were superior individuals these persons were more likely to stand up to the insurgents when they came to the village and thus most likely to be the first victims. Potential opposition leadership was the NLF's most feared enemy. Steadily, quietly, and with a systematic ruthlessness the NLF in six years wiped out virtually an entire class of Vietnamese villagers. The assassination rate declined steadily. . . .from 1960 to 1965 for the simple reason that there was only a finite number of persons to be assassinated. Many villages by 1966 were virtually depopulated of their natural leaders, who are the single most important element in any society. They represent a human resource of incalculable value. This loss to South Vietnam is inestimable, and it will take a generation or more to repair the damage to the society. By any definition, this NLF action against village leaders amounts to genocide."(p248)

How communist agitators manipulated villagers:

"The outer limits of accomplishment of the agit-prop cadres, in objective terms, appeared to be these: At best they hoped to shape villager opinion to such a degree that the villager would support the cause of his own volition; the least they tried to do, when greater achievement was not possible, was to confuse the opinions and emotions of the villager so that he became indecisive and thus ineffectual in providing support to the GVN [South Vietnam]. Within this range the agit-prop cadres sought to instigate strife along class lines. They dealt in misinformation, exaggeration, and distortion. They concealed or mistated Communist intentions. They drew attention to and inflated real or trumped-up village grievances."(p130)

NLF made skilled use of terror and hate:

*"If one were obliged to write the history of the NLF [communist National Liberation Front in South Vietnam] in a single word, it would be **hate**. Every NLF act was surrounded by an aura of hate. . . . The indoctrination system decreed that the best cadres were those with the greatest capacity for hate."*(Pike, Viet Cong. p284)

In 1970, Pike wrote *"The Viet-Cong Strategy of Terror."* Some quotes:

"Terror is an essential ingredient of nearly all their programs."(p 9)

"The average communist in Viet-Nam thinks of his system not in moral but in utilitarian terms. He finds terror to be the single greatest advantage he has over the government, one which he credits for making possible most of his successes. This being the case, he can intellectualize and semanticize its use and easily come to regard himself as a finer person than those whom he terrorizes."(p 19)

*"A host of social organizations at the village level enmesh the villager in a web of social control. Strong social sanctions - physical, psychological and economic - are used to force conformity. There is no escape except to flee the village for the government area. This villagers have done by the tens of thousands. Most of the so-called refugees in Viet-Nam are not refugees from battle but are self-displaced war victims, having as much attempted to escape the repressive hand of the communists in their villages as to escape dangers of war. **"Refugees" do not come from secure government-controlled areas.**"*(p 24)

Naturally, Zinn ignores Pike's 1970 book: *The Viet-Cong Strategy of Terror.*

You can download a pdf of *The Viet-Cong Strategy of Terror* at:

<http://www.faculty.virginia.edu/jnmoore/vietnam/vietcongstrat.pdf>

p 475 - Earlier in 1963, Kennedy's Undersecretary of State, U. Alexis Johnson, was speaking before the Economic Club of Detroit:

"What is the attraction that Southeast Asia has exerted for centuries on the great powers flanking it on all sides? Why is it desirable, and why is it important? First, it provides a lush climate, fertile soil, rich natural resources, a relatively sparse population in most areas, and room to expand. The countries of Southeast Asia produce rich exportable surpluses such as rice, rubber, teak, corn, tin, spices, oil, and many others. ..."

This is not the language that was used by President Kennedy in his explanations to the American public. He talked of Communism and freedom. In a news conference February 14, 1962, he said; "Yes, as you know, the U.S. for more than a decade has been assisting the government, the people of Vietnam, to maintain their independence."

CORRECTION: Once again, con artist Zinn picks out a part of a paragraph of Alexis Johnson's speech in order to mislead the reader into believing that the US wanted control over Southeast Asia to exploit it's resources. The truth is that Johnson was concerned about the **communist** desire to conquer Southeast Asia for it's resources and impose a communist dictatorship on its people. Here is the ENTIRE paragraph and additional excerpts from Alexis Johnson's speech that show his real fear was communist imperialism:

"What is the attraction that Southeast Asia has exerted for centuries on the great powers flanking it on all sides? Why is it desirable, and why is it important? First, it provides a lush climate, fertile soil, rich natural resources, a relatively sparse population in most areas, and room to expand. The countries of Southeast Asia produce rich exportable surpluses such as rice, rubber, teak, corn, tin, spices, oil, and many others. It is especially attractive to Communist China, with its burgeoning population and its food shortages."

"Although still thinly populated for the most part, the human resources of this area are considerable and growing. Taken together, the peoples of Southeast Asia represent an important segment of the free world and a target of prime importance to Communist imperialism."

"As my colleague Under Secretary Averell Harriman said recently, 'I don't know how you can distinguish between Chinese communism and Chinese imperialism. Chinese communism and all communism is imperialist.'"

"Even before World War II, Communist parties of varying strengths existed in all Southeast Asian countries, from Burma to the Philippines. After the war the signal was given for armed Communist-led uprisings, and these occurred in Burma, Indonesia, Malaya, Indochina, and the Philippines. Even Thailand, the one country in Southeast Asia that had not known colonial rule, was threatened. By 1952 the revolts were crushed in all but Malaya and Indochina. It took the British and the new Malay Federation until 1958 to quell Communist guerrilla forces there. . ."

"The efforts of some powers following World War II to restore colonial rule along the pre-war pattern permitted the Communists more effectively to wave the banner of anticolonialism and, for example, through Ho Chi Minh, at that time largely to capture the nationalist movement in Viet-Nam."

". . . All of us who were at Geneva in 1954 recognized that Communist domination of the Red River Delta of North Viet-Nam would make it much more difficult to defend the remaining areas. This has been true. However, for the Communists to advance any further in the area would render the defense problem very much more difficult, if not well-nigh impossible. This is why the valiant struggle now being waged in South Viet-Nam has implications far beyond the borders of that troubled country.

"Our massive assistance to free Viet-Nam is designed to avoid just such a catastrophe."

Read Alexis Johnson's entire speech here:

<https://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/pentagon2/ps30.htm>

p 475 - In early August 1964, President Johnson used a murky set of events in the Gulf of Tonkin, off the coast of North Vietnam, to launch full-scale war on Vietnam. Johnson and Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara told the American public there was an attack by North Vietnamese torpedo boats on American destroyers. "While on routine patrol in international waters," McNamara said, "the U.S. destroyer Maddox underwent an unprovoked attack." It later turned out that the Gulf of Tonkin episode was a fake, that the highest American officials had lied to the public—just as they had in the invasion of Cuba under Kennedy. In fact, the CIA had engaged in a secret operation attacking North Vietnamese coastal installations—so if there had been an attack it would not have been "unprovoked." It was not a "routine patrol," because the Maddox was on a special electronic spying mission. And it was not in international waters but in Vietnamese territorial waters. It turned out that no torpedoes were fired at the Maddox, as McNamara said. Another reported attack on another destroyer, two nights later, which Johnson called "open aggression on the high seas," seems also to have been an invention.

CORRECTION: Here's the truth. There were 2 incidents. The first one occurred, the second did not.

The first one occurred on August 2, 1964, when the US Destroyer *Maddox* intercepted enemy communications reporting North Vietnamese vessels getting under way, possibly intent on attacking the destroyer. The *Maddox* was in international waters. At 1440 hours (2:40pm), the destroyer detected three North Vietnamese patrol boats approaching her position at high speed. The Captain, John J. Herrick ordered gun crews to open fire if the vessels closed to within 10,000 yards of the destroyer, and at about 1505 hours, three 5-inch shots were fired across the bow of the closest boat. The first torpedo boat then launched a torpedo and veered away. A second boat then launched two torpedos at the destroyer but was hit by gunfire from the *Maddox*. The first vessel then launched a second torpedo and opened fire with her 14.5-mm guns, but shell fire from the *Maddox* hit that boat. Then four fighter jets from the Aircraft Carrier USS *Ticonderoga* attacked the enemy vessels leaving two boats damaged.



John J. Herrick

Two days later, on August 4, *Maddox* returned to the area, supported by the destroyer USS *Turner Joy*. On the morning of 4 August, U.S. intelligence intercepted a report indicating North Vietnam intended to conduct offensive operations in the Gulf of Tonkin. In contrast to the clear conditions two days earlier, bad weather reduced visibility and increased wave heights to six feet. In addition to the difficult detection conditions, the *Maddox's* SPS-40 long-range air-search radar and the *Turner Joy's* SPG-53 fire-control radar were both inoperative.



USS Maddox

The *Maddox* nevertheless reported at 2040 that she was tracking unidentified vessels. The approaching vessels seemed to come at the ships from multiple directions. Targets would appear - and then disappear. Over the next three hours, the two ships repeatedly maneuvered at high speeds to evade perceived enemy boat attacks. The destroyers fired over 350 shells at false targets. Air support was called in.

Herrick questioned his crew and reviewed the preceding hours' events. He sent a highest priority message to Honolulu, which was received in Washington at 1327 on 4 August, declaring his doubts: "Review of action makes many reported contacts and torpedoes fired appear doubtful. Freak weather effects on radar and overeager sonar men may have accounted for many reports. No actual visual sightings by MADDUX. Suggest complete evaluation before any further action taken."

One of the Navy pilots flying overhead that night was squadron commander James Stockdale, who became famous later as a POW and then Ross Perot's vice presidential candidate. "I had the best seat in the house to watch that event, and our destroyers were just shooting at phantom targets -- there were no PT boats there.... There was nothing there but black water and American fire power."



James Stockdale

Had the August 2 attack not taken place, it is likely that Johnson would not have jumped to conclusions and ordered air strikes against North Vietnam. But with the first attack confirmed, Johnson unwisely assumed the second one on Aug 4 had occurred as well. President Johnson then gave this televised message to the nation: "The initial attack on the destroyer Maddox, on August 2, was repeated today by a number of hostile vessels attacking two U.S. destroyers with torpedoes.... Air action is now in execution against gunboats and certain supporting facilities in North Vietnam which have been used in these hostile operations."

Why was the US Navy in the Gulf of Tonkin in the first place? By 1958, North Vietnam's infiltration into the South with men and material was known. North Vietnam had occupied areas of eastern Laos, using it as a transit route for men and supplies destined for the insurgency in South Vietnam. By 1964, South Vietnam was losing its fight against Communist Viet Cong guerrillas, which received military support from the north. The South then began Commando raids against North Vietnamese coastal installations in retaliation. The US Navy was attempting to determine the extent of North Vietnam's maritime infiltration into the South and to identify the North's coastal defenses so that the US could better support South Vietnam's commando operations against the North.



Lyndon Johnson

In April 1965, it was estimated that a total of 39,000 North Vietnamese had infiltrated to the South since 1960.(A)

A. *Viet Cong: The organization and techniques of the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam*, published by M.I.T Press in 1966 by Douglas Pike, p 324,325

Sources:

<http://www.usni.org/magazines/navalhistory/2008-02/truth-about-tonkin>

<http://www.historynet.com/case-closed-the-gulf-of-tonkin-incident.htm>

p 478 - The CIA in Vietnam, in a program called "Operation Phoenix," secretly, without trial, executed at least twenty thousand civilians in South Vietnam who were suspected of being members of the Communist underground. A pro-administration analyst wrote in the journal *Foreign Affairs* in January 1975: "Although the Phoenix program did undoubtedly kill or incarcerate many innocent civilians, it did also eliminate many members of the Communist infrastructure."

CORRECTION -

The Phoenix program was an effort to penetrate and destroy the Viet Cong Infrastructure(VCI) in South Vietnam. Phoenix was arguably the most misunderstood program undertaken by the governments of the United States and South Vietnam during the Vietnam War. Phoenix and all other pacification programs were controlled by one entity called Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support (CORDS).

CIA-veteran Robert H. Komer initially headed Phoenix, but it was most active and successful under William E. Colby, who replaced Komer in 1968. Colonel Andrew R. Finlayson, USMC (Ret.), spent 10 months as the adviser for Phoenix in Tay Ninh Province in 1969-1970. He stated that Phoenix was misunderstood because it was classified and the information obtained by the press and others was often anecdotal, unsubstantiated, or false. The program was controversial because the antiwar movement and critical scholars in the US and elsewhere portrayed it as an immoral assassination program targeting civilians.

The truth is that the communist National Liberation Front targeted civilian leaders of the villages - school teachers, social workers, Priests and low level governmental officials - like civil servants in the US. The Phoenix program targeted these murderous individual NLF members - not civilians.

Here is just one example of Zinn's beloved NLF in action. "On September 28, 1961 Father Hoang Ngoc Minh, a well-loved priest of Kontum parish, was ambushed by guerrillas at the edge of Kondela village. A roadblock stopped his car. He was taken from it, and the guerrillas drove bamboo spears into his body. Then the leader fired a *coup de grace* into his brain. The driver, Huynh Huu, Father Minh's nephew, was seriously wounded."(A)

The goal for pacification was to convince peasants that the government of South Vietnam and the United States was sincerely interested in protecting them from the Viet Cong and training them to defend themselves. Then large areas of the South Vietnamese countryside could be secured or won back from the enemy without direct engagement by the US military.

Phoenix attempted to identify VC operatives at the village level. Once identified, US or South Vietnamese forces - officially known as Provincial Reconnaissance Units (PRUs) went to the villages and attempted to arrest or capture the individual for interrogation. If they resisted, they were killed.

Despite claims that the PRUs were nothing more than assassination teams, only 14 percent of the VCI killed under Phoenix were killed by PRUs. Most of the rest died in skirmishes and raids involving South Vietnamese soldiers and police and the US military.

In 1972 CORDS reported that since the 1968 Tet Offensive, Phoenix had removed over 5,000 VCI from action, and that conventional military actions and desertions--some prompted by Phoenix--accounted for over 20,000 more. The US claimed that Phoenix and the US military's response to the Tet Offensive, along with other rural security, and militia programs, had eliminated upwards of 80,000 VCI through defection, detention, or death.

That figure lies on the high end of estimates, all of which were dependent on statistics of varying reliability. By most accounts, however--including those of Vietnamese communists--Phoenix (which ended in 1971) and other pacification programs drove the VCI so far underground that it was unable to operate effectively. In the 1972 Easter offensive, and again in 1975, there was no sign of the VCI or the Viet Cong military because Phoenix and its allied activities had dealt them a very serious blow. The fact that the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese government wanted to destroy the Phoenix Program is a testament to it's effectiveness.(B)

Zinn ignores the thousands of South Vietnamese assassinated by the Viet Cong for refusing to join communism.(C) The Viet Cong assassinated at least 6,000 local villagers between 1964-1967. These were the hamlet chiefs, school teachers and social workers.(D) Between 1957-1972, the VC assassinated a total of 36,725 people and abducted 58,499.(E) Zinn was a willing believer in North Vietnamese propaganda.(F)

It is important to recognize that many people who claimed they witnessed US atrocities were proven to be liars and in some cases never were in Vietnam or the US military.

A. *Viet Cong: The organization and techniques of the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam*, published by M.I.T Press in 1966 by Douglas Pike, p 247

B. <http://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/communists-vow-to-smash-phoenix-program>

C. *Vietnamese Communism* by Robert Turner, pub. 1975, p174-176

D. *America in Vietnam*, (Oxford University Press, 1978), by Guenter Lewy, p88

E. *America in Vietnam*, (Oxford University Press, 1978), by Guenter Lewy, p272

F. *Vietnamese Communism* by Robert Turner, pub. 1975, p225 fn

Other sources:

<http://www.warbirdforum.com/phoenix.htm>

<https://www.cia.gov/library/center-for-the-study-of-intelligence/csi-publications/csi-studies/studies/vol51no2/a-retrospective-on-counterinsurgency-operations.html>

<http://www.mcspotlight.org/cgi-bin/zv/debate/anything/messages/4078.html>

<http://www.freerepublic.com/focus/news/1088533/posts>