

HST 195: History of Vietnam War Sp18 (Escobar 41945)

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Week 2 Forum Patriots and PBS

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Patriots and PBS

by [Joe Escobar](#) - Saturday, April 7, 2018, 10:16 AM

This thread is for discussions on the Patriots and PBS topic.

To make your POSTS, click the reply link in this, MY post. To reply to another student's post, be sure to click the reply link within in THEIR post.

IMPORTANT - SUBJECT LINES

BE SURE to use an informative subject line for your post, something that describes which one of the questions you are addressing. Do NOT simply leave it RE: Patriots and PBS

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Re: Patriots and PBS

by [Danielle Mendez](#) - Monday, April 9, 2018, 9:05 PM

by [Danielle Wardrip](#) - Monday, April 9, 2018, 3:25 PM

In Christian Appy's stories about Commanders, Bernard Trainor's tale is most significantly related to the event of the United States' involvement in the Vietnam War. In his recount, General Trainor makes several comments regarding Ho Chi Minh's Communism. He says, "We were on a holy crusade to stop the spread of godless Communism and to give the budding democracy in South Vietnam an opportunity to take root." This statement shows the United States' desire for the whole world to adopt democracy and for the complete destruction of Communism. President Truman gave a speech about "imperialist Communism". (38:01 into Episode 1 of Vietnam a Television History video) Due to the possibility of Communism growing in Vietnam, the U.S. decided to aid France in the war against Ho Chi Minh. This is significant because it was the driving force behind American troops in Vietnam. If not for the presence of Communism, we may have never been involved in the war. But, we thought that we were responsible for getting rid of any and all Communist ideas and thoughts. "I left Vietnam in 1966 as totally convinced of the nobility of our cause as I was when I arrived." (Appy, p. unknown, General Bernard Trainor speaker) It was not so much a war for or against people, as it was a war against an ideal.

Sum of ratings: 2 (1) [Permalink](#) | [Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Split](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)**Re: Patriots and PBS**by [Jacob Fagan](#) - Tuesday, April 10, 2018, 10:00 PM

It was interesting to me that America supported Diem, a nationalist whose ideals didn't match those of America, but they supported him and South Vietnam just to stop the spread of communism, at least that's what they said. Appy said, "Many concluded that South Vietnam was neither a democratic nor an independent nation, but a corrupt and unpopular regime entirely dependent on U.S. support that preserving it was not vital to national security and that the U.S. was itself acting as an aggressor" (Appy p.XIX, Appy speaker). It's tough to get my head around the idea that they were fighting against an ideal, not people.

Sum of ratings: 1 (1) [Permalink](#) | [Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Split](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)**America's War Against Communism**by [Danielle Wardrip](#) - Thursday, April 12, 2018, 6:16 PM

I apologize. I thought that I had titled my post with the above title. It must not have saved. 😊 😊

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Disillusionment after serving for many troops

by [Paul Geu](#) - Friday, April 13, 2018, 11:16 AM

It is interesting that General Trainor mentioned in his interview that everyone was "inflamed by Kennedy's rhetoric to bear any burden, pay any price for liberty," (Appy, Pg 4, Gen. Bernard Trainor speaker) when it comes to the mindset of the soldiers coming into the conflict at the beginning. He also mentions that between his two tours in Vietnam he taught at Command and Staff College and saw that many returning soldiers were disillusioned and unhappy towards the strategy of the war (Appy, pg 5 Gen. Bernard Trainor speaker). He also stated that when he returned for his second tour in 1970 he discovered that the "budding democracy" was in fact very corrupt and that the enemy's cause was partially nationalistic and anticolonial in addition to being communist (Appy, pg 5 Gen Bernard Trainor speaker). This only shows that while the driving force at the beginning seemed so black and white the true picture on the ground seemed so much more gray than most realized.

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Re: Patriots and PBS

by [Andrea Kuipers](#) - Sunday, April 15, 2018, 11:50 PM

General Trainor said during his second tour in Vietnam, "There was also the realization that our enemy's cause was partially nationalistic and anticolonial as well as Communist." (Appy pg 5) After being there and returning, he has seen first hand how devastating the war is and how it changes everyone on both sides of the line. After his second tour in Vietnam you can tell he was really questioning their motive of the war, and the motive of the war of their enemies. They were fighting for their country, for their ability to not be ruled by another country, and to be able to pursue a communist style government.

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The greatest Weapon of War: Hearts and Minds

by [Jonathen Gray](#) - Monday, April 9, 2018, 4:59 PM

The story of Vo Nguyen Giap, a Vietnamese general, encapsulates so much of the historical complications the US would have going into Vietnam. That problem being that believing technological superiority is more important than local support. This difficulty for America would manifest early and continue throughout the war. One example was when Vo Nguyen Giap was in a discussion with Ho Chi Minh in which he

was worried about the lack of firearms. He then quoted Ho Chi Minh as he said "don't worry, if we have the people, we have the weapons" (Appy, p.42, Vo Nguyen Giap). When Ho Chi Minh said this he was highlighting the trend with Vietnamese battles against the Chinese and the French: where there is the will, there is the way.

Nguyen Thi Dinh, a Deputy Supreme Commander of the National Liberation Front, echoed this concept when discussing her need for guns. "Uncle Ho said that the central government could only supply us with so many guns because the government did not have many at that time. The main thing, he said, was to capture the enemy's guns and use these guns against them. (35:57 into Episode 1, Vietnam Television History video).

This is the trend of adaptable thinking that has the potential to direct a war. By using the enemies' technological advantages against them it allows the defending army to use attrition and allows public support to quickly turn against America. Ho Chi Minh was fighting the same war he fought against the French.

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Re: The greatest Weapon of War: Hearts and Minds

by [Danielle Wardrip](#) - Monday, April 9, 2018, 5:50 PM

This relates to what Christian Appy wrote in his War Heroes section; "Every time they pulled back I crawled out of my hole to seize more weapons" (Appy, Tran Thi Gung). The Vietnamese knew the land and used that knowledge to win the war. They dug their holes and hid in them until it was clear. Then, they jumped out and scavenged whatever they could from what the enemies left in their hasty retreat.

They may not have had the newest physical weapons, such as air power, sniper rifles, chemical weapons, etc., but they had their minds. The enemy thought they had the upper hand because they had all the firepower, but they were soon proven wrong. In this war, mind won over matter.

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Willing to do what it takes to win

by [Paul Geu](#) - Saturday, April 14, 2018, 10:18 PM

I also enjoyed the story from Giap mainly because he told the real reason why his people prevailed. "We won the war because we would rather die than live in slavery," he said but also included, "Our deepest aspiration has always been self-determination." (Appy, pg 42 Vo Nguyen Giap Speaker). This determination was a

common theme in both episodes of the documentary in terms of how they fought against the French in the First Indochina War but also how they fought against the Americans in the Vietnam War.

The Viet Minh and later named Viet Cong continued to fight until their enemy threw in the towel whether it was the French or the Americans after them. Giap quoted "Uncle Ho" as saying "The Americans can send hundreds of thousands, even millions of soldiers; the war can last ten years, twenty years, maybe more, but our people will keep fighting until they win." (Appy, pg 42 Vo Nguyen Giap speaker). After the French left after their defeat it is incredible that American policy makers did not see that the chances of victory against such determination was small that we should not have entered into conflict and let the Vietnam people determine their fate. That is what the Geneva Convention asked for.

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Re: Patriots and PBS

by [Jacob Fagan](#) - Tuesday, April 10, 2018, 7:50 PM

South Vietnam was full of nationalistic pride and while the Americans were trying to help them get freedom or "find out what the Vietnamese people want and help them get it," Rufus Phillips would say (51 Appy, *Patriots*). Prime Minister Ngo Dinh Diem wanted the Americans help via resources but didn't want tips or any negotiations, as PBS's "Vietnam: A Television History" stated. America sent many, including Phillips, to train the South Vietnamese and based on the book, the first hand quotes had each reported member being confused while the PBS showed focused on members being helpful and understanding of what they're supposed to do. John F Kennedy even put together a Strategic Hamlet program to lessen the impact of communist thinking and gain support from local Vietnamese people around the countryside. I thought it was interesting in the show that propaganda was a huge part of the North Vietnamese tactics, which corresponded to the Americans' propaganda when they got more involved in the war. They had different ideals, one anti-communist and one for it. It was the first time in American history that a war was being broadcasted on tv nightly or weekly and it was strategically implemented to gain support throughout the country. Meanwhile, America supported Diem, an anti-communist leader until they thought his political agenda wasn't to their liking and assassinated him. This is significant because American political ideals and strategy weren't easily identified in either Patriots nor the PBS show and it was important that this act of imperialism be noticed by Americans.

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Impact of Trenches and Tunnels

by [Andrea Kuipers](#) - Tuesday, April 10, 2018, 9:51 PM

Bernard Trainor was a commander in the Marine Corps. During one of his tours in Vietnam, they had managed to capture a high-ranking Viet Cong intelligence officer and later accidentally discovered a hole that led to a very large cavern that could sleep two hundred troops (Appy pg. 7). Trenches and tunnels were dug by the Vietnamese to provide stealth, shelter, and cover for those waiting and had a huge impact on the way the war was fought. The tunnels and trenches would help to hide the Vietnamese, and then when the enemy came near or supply planes flew overhead, they would attack them and take the supplies and reinforcements from the planes for themselves (Vietnam a Television History Episode 1, 47:56). The structure of the land of Vietnam and the formation of the trenches and tunnels gave a huge advantage to the Vietnamese troops. They were used to the types of vegetation and weather, while the French and Americans had to learn a completely different style of landscape and atmosphere while trying to avoid being killed. Eventually, adaptations of using trenches were taken on by the Americans so they could try and keep up with the Vietnamese.

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"It turned out the mayor of Danang was a double agent"

by [Kishahn Fellows](#) - Tuesday, April 10, 2018, 10:54 PM

I found several comparisons between Bernard Trainor's story in the Appy book and the second episode of the Vietnam television series, most notably the inspiration felt by the troops following Kennedy's speech about "bearing any burden and paying any price" and the use of U.S. "advisers" in the early stages of the war. Trainor parrots the "gung ho" spirit that was made out to be common among troops in the early days of the war within the documentary as well as the differing views on combat when comparing U.S. troops and south Vietnamese troops. While the south Vietnamese were passionate about taking back their country, they were less interested in the actual killing of their fellow countryman, whom they still viewed as brothers that have gone astray, than they were in reaching peace as soon as possible, sans communism. Trainor mentions this when speaking about his time as an adviser. Noting that he often had to tailor his plan of action to the Vietnamese way of fighting. "when Americans get into action, you aim to kill em all, but the idea of a battle of annihilation was not part of their culture and i had to accommodate my plans to take this into account." (Appy, p.4 Bernard Trainor speaker) Another key theme brought up within Trainor's story and episode two of the documentary was trust, or lack thereof, between the U.S. troops and aide and the south Vietnamese. The example given in Trainor's story was a raid on what U.S. intelligence thought was a communist outpost, opposed to the hospital the local troops

were sure it was. "My intelligence said it was a communist R and R center so that was that. We sent a team in there firing as they went , and they killed a lot of people. It turned out to be a leper hospital just as the Vietnamese officer had predicted" (Appy, p.5 Bernard Trainor speaker) I believe these developments were significant as they show a side to the popularity of the war that is often forgotten as well as the wary and bleak position of the south Vietnamese. To have your fellow countrymen to the north trying to force this awful authoritarian world on you and to have help that is just as likely to try take control of your country must have instilled quite the sense of anxiety and trepidation.

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Malcolm Browne opened Vietnam to the US through his famous photograph

by [Paul Geu](#) - Tuesday, April 10, 2018, 10:54 PM

I believe the most significant story from the Appy book that can apply to us Americans was the story told by Malcolm Browne, the associated press photographer that took the famous photo of Buddhist Monk Quang Duc as he burnt himself to protest the actions of the Diem government. Before this powerful photographs were put in many American newspapers, most did not even know where Vietnam was let alone that there was a conflict going on there with Americans being involved. This is evident with the Jo Collins story where she thought she was going to Europe when she first heard that she was being sent to Vietnam (Appy, pg 28 Jo Collins speaker). After the suicide of this monk, and the powerful picture that captured it, everyone in America knew where Vietnam was. Malcolm Browne interview gave his a first hand account of the event but also discussed the development of Viet Cong tactics against a superior force but also how the government isolated the villagers in protected "Potemkin Villages." (Appy, pg 65 Malcolm Browne speaker) The story also talked about other topics as well such as the increased use of American soldiers past the official advisor roles to an anecdote of talking to John Wayne at the local bar. Finally Browne also discusses how Vietnam "was probably the most technologically oriented war the Americans had ever waged," and how the Viet Cong were able to adapt and finally defeat the American forces. (Appy, pg 70-71, Malcolm Browne speaker).

This story ties in directly with episode two where it discussed the increased demonstrations by the Buddhists against the Diem government and their United States supporters and how the government responded to those demonstrations led to increased support of the Viet Minh by the local population. Beginning on minute 34 of the episode, the Buddhist monks began to demonstrate against the catholic lead government due to the harsh policies of the Diem Government and its secret police. (34:00 into episode 2, Vietnam Television history video). During the demonstration, one

monk named Quang Duc sat in the middle of the street, had gasoline pour on him and lit himself aflame. The photographs taken by Browne were in the papers the next day and were on President Kennedy's desk as well (35:44 into episode 2, Vietnam Television history video). After Duc had martyred himself, the demonstrations led to riots by the people in the streets and comments by Diem wife referring the Duc as a "Barbequed" monk (36:30 in episode 2, Vietnam Television history video) led to more anger in Vietnam and aboard. The events in Vietnam were spinning out of the governments control and due to Diem harsh tactics to deal with them directly led to his own generals launching a coup d'état against him which finally led to increased US intervention in Vietnam.

The significance of this event in the timeline of the collapse of the Diem government is very clear but the event itself also allowed the average American to know what was actually happening in the Southeast Asia. If Malcolm Browne was not there to take his famous photograph what could have happened to the events that transpired? While the likelihood of the population demonstrating against the government was still going to happen, this event was the straw that broke the camel's back and led Vietnam down the path to war with the United States. They say that a picture is worth a thousand words, but to me this photograph and story are actually priceless.

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Re: Malcolm Browne opened Vietnam to the US through his famous photograph

by [Jonathen Gray](#) - Wednesday, April 11, 2018, 6:10 PM

Malcolm Browne certainly was "lucky" to get the shot of Quang Duc because it did help introduce the Vietnamese civil unrest to Americans daily lives but even if he missed it the Buddhists had already set themselves on a path of getting American sympathies. The advent of the portable camera and roving reporters going to Vietnam meant that it was pretty much inevitable that the Anti-American activists would target the average American sentimentality.

According to Roger Hilsman the "[Buddhist] finally began to use American television. They would -- none of them spoke English but their signs were all in English." (37:02 into Episode 2, Vietnam Television History video). To me, this demonstrates a much larger strategy. It's worth mentioning that Quang Duc was not the last Buddhist monk to self-immolate and self-immolation / protest suicides have precedent in Buddhist culture. Even if Malcolm Brown missed his opportunity someone else would eventually have theirs. The act itself is certainly an incredibly powerful motivator. Especially to Western audiences. The one danger I see photojournalists

having is with the censorship imposed on outgoing film from that point on (Appy, pg 69, Malcolm Browne). However, seeing as additional photos of immolated monks persisted it doesn't seem like too harsh an obstacle

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3

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All it took was a spark to set things into motion

by [Paul Geu](#) - Friday, April 13, 2018, 12:12 AM

I agree that there were certainly other monks that completed self-immolation as well as the Buddhist monks using the media to get their message out to the public at large especially the United States. I think that while there certainly was a plan in action to get the word out, I feel that this photograph is a very important piece that started everything in motion because I was like you said a "lucky" shot and became an iconic image of the struggles in Vietnam.

I am glad that you motioned the censorship that occurred during the crisis and I liked how the Appy book also contained an interview of Browne's wife Le Lieu Browne where she worked for the Diem government in the Department of Information. There she basically worked as a censor for the media. The story even included her asking her boyfriend at the time to "soften it up a little bit," when the government did not like the article he wrote (Appy, pg 73, Le Lieu Brown). She also mentions that after the photograph was sent in the police became more aggressive even to the point of searching their home and checking their identifications (Appy, pg 74 Le Lieu Browne).

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Re: Malcolm Browne opened Vietnam to the US through his famous photograph

by [Jonathan Haskell](#) - Thursday, April 12, 2018, 9:23 PM

I remember the first time I saw that picture on the Rage Against the Machine first album. It definitely leaves an imprint on your mind. I can completely understand why you would choose this as the most significant story. It absolutely gave President Kennedy all sorts of problems. "No news picture in history has generated so much emotion around the world as that one." he said. That picture was used as propaganda in places like China and Russia to show American imperialism due to our support of the

China and Russia to show American imperialism due to our support of the corrupt Diem regime. It is hard to understand especially now how we could support such a regime, when the religious persecution that the Catholic Diem subjugated his Buddhist people was so harsh. It must of had a lot to do with us also supporting the coup d'etat against him as well. Like you stated, the ugliness of the Diem government also had to push many towards the communist path. Considering the aftermath of the picture as a whole with it being a stain on both the U.S. and South Vietnam ally, and its effect as a tool to swell the Viet Cong ranks, as well as propaganda for both the communist powers and the later anti-war efforts at home it has to be considered of great historical importance.

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Re: The Uncertainty of Vietnam

by [Kaitlynn Linnell](#) - Tuesday, April 10, 2018, 11:35 PM

In both the PBS episode and the Appy book, the uncertain feelings about going to war are conveyed. In the Appy book, it is specifically stated by Jo Collins that, "they didn't know where Vietnam was. They were going because they were fighting for their country." (Appy 30) Jo Collins conveys in her story the patriotism that was felt by soldiers despite their lack of knowledge about where they were going, they just knew they had to for their country.

This is directly connected to the documentary in that this same picture is painted within it. The soldiers felt they had to for their country, even if they didn't want to. This is significant because it shows the strength of patriotism following WWII and the feelings of many as soldiers went to Vietnam to fight.

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Re: The Uncertainty of Vietnam

by [Jonathen Gray](#) - Thursday, April 12, 2018, 12:50 PM

Today most people have a general idea where Vietnam is ("Southwest Asia... Like near Korea" is an approximate answer you'd get from the average American). The concept of not knowing where your country is going to war is one that seems to repeat itself. "Iraq? Sounds like Africa" is an answer you'd hear for the Gulf War and "Afghani-what" is an answer you might hear for the war in Afghanistan. In the Deidre English story she was reading Posters at the University of Chicago when sh read "Most Americans don't even know where it was in a little Southeast Asian country in

MOST AMERICANS DON'T EVEN KNOW WE'RE AT WAR IN A LITTLE SOUTHEAST ASIAN COUNTRY IN Vietnam and she thought "I'm most Americans (Appy, p.30, English). Such a brief story that sums up what Jo Collins, the soldiers entering Vietnam, and the average American total knowledge of the wars that were supposedly fought on their behalf. A trend that seemingly cannot be broken.

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Re: The Uncertainty of Vietnam

by [Danielle Wardrip](#) - Thursday, April 12, 2018, 6:36 PM

This is a very real concern, I think. The fact that almost no one knew where we were fighting in past wars is very scary. I think that technology and the updates school system will lessen those moments, but there will always be people who do not know enough about the world outside their own lives. Many people tend to think that everyone else's life is just like theirs, or at least should be when it is not, and should not. Again, that thought is becoming less of an occurrence, but if history has taught us anything it's that it repeats itself. Over, and over. This is why America has been involved in so many wars since it started. I mean, our country was created from a war. I hurt for the deaths during the Revolutionary and Civil Wars because they were absolutely unnecessary. While I respect what they believed in and were fighting for, their deaths started a chain of America's rise to self-righteousness. I am a complete patriot and will support my country no matter what, (my favorite colors are red, white, and blue for golly sake) but our government's need to control the rest of the world is the sole reason that we have lost so many soldiers fighting foreign wars. Vietnam is a perfect example of this. Just like Ngo Dinh Diem, we wanted to "confront and defy all opposition." (13:55) Closer to his death, Kennedy said: "It's their war." (43:10) If we had just taken that stance before our initial involvement (that includes the indirect one), we could have prevented so many lives from being taken.

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Re: The Uncertainty of Vietnam

by [Andrea Kuipers](#) - Sunday, April 15, 2018, 10:14 PM

Patriotism is a huge concept that is very well known in America. People want to fight for their country and what they believe in, so they will do anything and go to war because their country needs them. Once overseas, they feel like they are protecting their family, their lives, and the ability to do the things they want and love back at home. However, once they get overseas realization sets in and they begin to

question the real reason behind all of the patriotism of them being there. This situation was exactly what happened in Vietnam, and the story from Jo Collins' point of view was a perfect example of this. As said she stated that, "They didn't know where Vietnam was. They were going because they were fighting for their country." (Appy pg. 30). All of the soldiers she encountered felt they were doing what was right because they were doing what they were doing for America, but not really understanding the bigger picture of what was going on.

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Re: The Uncertainty of Vietnam

by [Jacob Fagan](#) - Sunday, April 15, 2018, 10:29 PM

This goes with what George Watkins said in Appy's text, "I know very little about Vietnam. I mean what I know now about it and what I knowed that we was fighting over there against Communism, so-called it. I started doing more thinking about it after I got drafted, in basis training, trying to find out more, but in there it was hard to find out anything" (Watkins, 22, Patriots). This is the scary thought of it all, it seemed nobody had intel about what they were going to do there and Watkins even mentioned handling a machine gun with no basic training and got a quick lesson, "Here's the safety, here's the trigger, and here's the bolt (Watkins, 22, Patriots). This is a metaphor of the war not being the United States' to fight.

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Vo Nguyen Giap

by [Jonathan Haskell](#) - Thursday, April 12, 2018, 9:20 AM

Whose or which single story in the Patriots book in the first two parts, is in my opinion the most significant in comparison and connection with the first two videos of "Vietnam a Television History" is the actual question I believe in this part of the forum though I admit I for some reason I got mind boggled and could be wrong. It is why I answered the other question first because for some reason my mind couldn't circle this question but we are going to give a go. After deciding to answer finding just one single story was difficult because I could not choose between two of them. Mr. Henry Prunier who I admit interested me the most and a man that he continually talked about Vo Nguyen Giap. In the end after reading both over again no matter how Mr. Prunier words interest the historian mind in me and explained the history of

the country prior to the conflict of study, I went with Vo Nguyen Giap. The reason I chose him is his relative importance in comparison. Mr Pruiner was there to help the people and fight the Japanese, so his importance to this war is irrelevant other than an explanation about the relations between the two countries.

In my opinion then it is without question that the most important historical figure whose actions and victories changed the development of the world not just his country is Vo Nguyen Giap. His life story can be used as binoculars to see the situation at the time in his country. His father was a nationalist who fought and was killed by the French, he had family members and loved one's including a wife and children I believe that were killed by or died in French custody. His anger and hatred for the way his country was being run can then be understood. He did attend an elite French ran school in Hanoi where the future President of South Vietnam Ngo Dinh Diem also would go. When the Japanese came, Uncle Sam who of course helped all enemies of his enemy gave the armies ran by Giap for Ho Chi Minh weapons. He fought and hope for the future sovereignty of his nation. When the Japanese left and the French returned, his victories against the colonization yet again of his country, which would expel the French eventually would lead to the uprisings in other places around the world especially in places like Northwest Africa who would see it was possible to fight and achieve such freedom through his achievements. Roosevelt died, who I believe was anti-colonization and for some reason had no love loss for the French, and then new President Truman declared that the friendships of old would remain and we would be supporting the reestablishing of French Indochina. Mr. Giap life would take yet another turn.

I had of course heard of Ho Chi Minh but not Mr. Giap. It was he who ran Mr. Minh armies against the United States and it was he who deserves the credit for their successes, or at least some of them. I understand he was against the Tet offensive which of course ended up being very successful in the greater perspective of the war, and after the victory against America political intrigue would be his downfall, but he should at least in the eyes of historians who desire the truth be a very influential figure.

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