

The Vietnam War

By D.H. Coop

The year 1968 was seen as a turning point in the Vietnam War. In the Battle of Huế, considered the bloodiest in the war, American troops reclaimed the city in a 24-day siege, virtually destroying the city and killing more than 5,000 Vietnamese citizens.

Located on the Perfume River, Huế had been considered a cultural and intellectual center of the Vietnamese people for more than seven centuries. It was also the site of the Imperial Palace, which was established in 1802 when the Nguyen Dynasty came to power. This historic city became a focal point in the struggle for victory in the Tet (New Year) Offensive.

The attack of the Army of the Republic of Vietnam and the Viet Cong that launched the Tet Offensive surprised the U.S. troops that occupied the city of Huế. Thought it was the base for the Army supply boats and a significant location on the U.S. military supply route, the city was poorly defended. Despite of the fact that the attack was plagued with strategic difficulties, the Tet Offensive served its purpose, and Vietnamese troops soon took the city. However, over the next month, they were driven out by brutal combat in the streets and homes of the city. Though U.S. military leadership viewed this as an indication of impending American victory, the bloody battle was a turning point in public opinion about the war, causing many on the homefront to withdraw support for U.S. military efforts in Vietnam.

Mark Bowden's book *Hue 1968* tells the story of the battle for the city, commemorating the efforts of the Army and Marine troops that fought in the struggle. Ken Burns recently released a documentary series on the Vietnam War on PBS with images that tell the story of the Vietnam War for new generations.

In addition, an innovative exhibit at the Newseum in Washington D.C., sponsored by the National Federation of the Blind, Nikon, and Stars and Stripes, shares information about the Vietnam War and the Battle of Huế through tactile presentations of the photos of John Olson, allowing those with sight impairment to experience these unforgettable images. This exhibit brings history to life, recalling the memories of so many who lived through the experience.

Time provides opportunities to collect information from multiple points of view and construct a more complete perspective of the events. As new information about the Vietnam War is revealed, new interpretations will arise to study and discuss, and new understandings will emerge.

If you are in Washington D.C., stop by the Newseum to see the exhibit on Huế and form your own interpretations.

D.H.Coop is a retired fire/paramedic and retired teacher having taught IB and AP World History 30 years. He continues to substitute, tutor and consult. www.HistoryDepot.com

The Vietnam War (Vietnamese: Chiến tranh Việt Nam), also known as the Second Indochina War, and in Vietnam as the Resistance War Against America (Vietnamese: Kháng chiến chống Mỹ¹) or simply the American War, was a conflict in Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia from 1 November 1955 to the fall of Saigon on 30 April 1975. It was the second of the Indochina Wars and was officially fought between North Vietnam and South Vietnam. North Vietnam was supported by the Soviet Union, China, and other communist allies. After the first World War, in an attempt to creating an independent Vietnam against the French and a nationalist government, Hồ Chí Minh petitions US President Woodrow Wilson for assistance, but is refused. The reason may be due to the Communist leanings of Hồ Chí Minh. On March of 1945, Japan successfully defeats the French authority ruling Indochina resulting in Vietnam becoming a puppet state. Previous (Vietnam Veterans Memorial). Next (Vietnamese art). The Vietnam War was a military conflict in which communist forces of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV or North Vietnam) and the indigenous forces of the National Front for the Liberation of South Vietnam, (also known as the Mặt Trận Giải Phóng Miền Nam) fought against the anti-communist Republic of Vietnam (RVN or South Vietnam) and its allies—most notably the United States—in an effort to unify Vietnam into a single state that would be based on