

## Glossary/Chronology

for pages 1-27 and 39-61, 89-116 of *The Things They Carried*

(Terms in bold appear in O'Brien's text.)

- 1883 France establishes a colony in the southern part of present day Vietnam, names it Cochin China, and specifies Annam and Tonkin (the center and north areas of modern day Vietnam) as protectorates.
- 1940 Japan takes over Indochina, an area which includes Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia, but leaves its Vichy French (the Vichy regime collaborated with the Germans in WWII) government in place.
- 1941 Founding of the **Viet Minh** League for the independence of Vietnam, led by **Ho Chi Minh**.
- 1944 Vietnam formally becomes an ally of the U.S., U.S.S.R., and Great Britain, the Allied powers in WWII.
- 1945 March: Japan ends French rule in Indochina and creates "independent" Vietnam under the rule of Emperor **Bao Dai**.
- July: Potsdam Conference gives responsibility to Nationalist China for the northern part of Vietnam, and Britain for the southern part;
- August: the Viet Minh revolution, Bao Dai abdicates;
- September: Ho Chi Minh declares independence of Vietnam in a speech in **Hanoi**, capital of N. Vietnam, by quoting from the US Declaration of Independence; British military arrives and restores French control of South.
- October: Ho Chi Minh writes to Pres. Harry Truman, asking him to support Vietnamese quest for independence and self-determination, which he regards as similar to the American Colonies quest for independence. Truman does not reply.
- 1946 March: France and Vietnam agree that Cochin China, Annam, and Tonkin should be reunited and Vietnam should be a free state within the French Union.
- May-June: while Ho Chi Minh is in Paris for negotiations, the French High Commissioner reneges, declaring Cochin China a separate French colony.
- November: France bombs Haiphong Harbor, killing 6000 civilians.
- December: Viet Minh attacks French forces in Hanoi. War begins.
- 1948 Truman begins indirect funding of French in the war; Bao Dai named Head of State in Cochin China, though he refuses to live there, preferring his chateau near Cannes, France.
- 1950 Democratic Republic of Vietnam, led by Ho Chi Minh, recognized by USSR, Bao Dai's government formally recognized by US and England, France receives \$15 million in military aid from US; National Security Council Directive-68 (NSC-68) articulates Truman's Containment Doctrine to stop the spread of communism around the world.

- 1954 May 7: the French surrender at the battle of Dien Bien Phu, after being decimated (and humiliated) by a poorly equipped but strategically creative, highly motivated "army" of both military and civilian Vietnamese, led by the Viet Minh.
- July: Geneva Accords specify the division of Vietnam into two parts, north and south, at the 17<sup>th</sup> parallel (an area very sympathetic to Viet Minh but now part of South Vietnam); cease fire declares Viet Minh must regroup north of 17<sup>th</sup> parallel, French regroup south; forbids any future remilitarization of the conflict, i.e. no troop and weapon reinforcements; no foreign alliances to be created by either north or south zones; no retaliation against those who fought on either side of war against French; "free general elections to take place by secret ballot" in July of 1956.
- July: **Ngo Dinh Diem**, anti-French, anti-communist, anti-Ho Chi Minh, returns, with much American support, to Viet Nam as Bao Dai's prime minister. Diem is part of US long-term goal: creation of a separate, permanently anti-communist state in South Vietnam.
- 1955-56 Diem, with US support, controls Saigon, rejects country-wide elections called for by Geneva Accords, establishes Republic of Vietnam, with 4 of his siblings in top government posts. (605,000 voters, out of 450,000 total in Saigon, vote for Diem in a "referendum."). US concerned that electorate might have voted for Ho Chi Minh, and that Diem isn't well liked by southerners. US military advisors begin to train the Army of the Republic of Vietnam: **ARVN**. North Vietnam undertakes massive land reform to give peasants a way to make a living. South continues to support landlords instead of rural peasants.
- 1959 Diem passes law 10/59: anyone charged with committing or attempting to commit crimes against the security of the state is to be arrested, tried by military court, and executed within 3 days, without process of appeal. Thousands of S. Vietnamese are executed over the next several years. Ex-Viet Minh along with other persecuted dissenters in south organize for self-defense. North Vietnam starts sending freedom fighters to the south. Diem labels them Viet Cong; assumes they are communists. US assumes they are or soon will be allied with international communism.
- 1960 National Liberation Front (NLF), much the same people called Viet Cong by Diem, established with help and impetus from the North to protect against Diem government's repression. 900 US military personnel in South Vietnam
- 1961 3000 US military in S. Vietnam. *Strategic Hamlet* program begins.
- 1962 11,000 US military in S. Vietnam
- 1963 US considers coup to overthrow Diem, judging he and his family to be the main reason so many South Vietnamese seemed cooperative with NLF, uncooperative with US and ARVN forces.
- November 1, Diem and brother assassinated. Nov. 22 Kennedy assassinated. New military junta takes over, lead by Duong Van Minh. He releases many political prisoners, seems more interested in political than military issues in the South. 16,000 US military in S. Vietnam.
- 1964 Another junta: new leader is Nguyen Khanh. De Gaulle calls for end to foreign intervention in Vietnam, offers to mediate. In August, US destroyers report being attacked by North Vietnam patrol boats in Gulf of Tonkin, though there are no casualties or damage to either boat. 23,000 US military in S. Vietnam. 73,000 have deserted the Saigon army.

- 1965 6,500 North Vietnamese troops sent to S. Vietnam. Johnson authorizes *Rolling Thunder*, massive air bombing on N. Vietnam military and industrial targets, in retaliation for **Gulf of Tonkin** (p. 40, O'Brien) incident. Bombing of N. Vietnam targets increases over next 6 years, but does not achieve surrender of N. Vietnam. First US COMBAT ground troops arrive, 3500 Marines to Danang. Teach-ins against war held across US at universities, demonstrations in Washington D.C. and other cities. 184,300 US military in S. Vietnam. Total desertions of Saigon army grow to 113,000. Air Vice Marshall Nguyen Cao Ky heads 9<sup>th</sup> southern government since Diem.
- 1966 Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) sponsors anti-war rally in D.C.: 25,000 people attend. 362,000 US military in S. Vietnam. Wm. Fulbright, Chair of Senate Foreign Relations Committee, holds public hearings on the war.
- 1967 1,570,114 acres in S. Vietnam are defoliated with herbicides, a tactic the military believes will destroy enemy food lines and clear away jungle that the enemy can hide in. *The New Yorker* publishes a series of essays about the U.S. military's massive destruction of Quang Ngai and Quang Tin, provinces in South Vietnam, as part of its attempt to find the enemy. Americans learn that massive bombing is taking place throughout S. Vietnam, and that it is often impossible to differentiate between civilian and military targets. **Quang Ngai** (O'Brien, p.71) was one of the working locations of O'Brien's character, Tim's, unit.
- April: in San Francisco, 75,000 march at an anti-war rally on the same day that over 125,000 march in NYC. ML King marches in that rally, and for first time, begins to link the anti-war and civil rights movements.
- October: 100,000 anti-war protesters rally at the Pentagon. War is costing Americans \$20 billion per year. Robert McNamara, Secretary of Defense, has an aide direct a historical study of US policy in Vietnam since the 1940's. Rand Corp. employees, including Daniel Ellsberg, do much of the research and analysis work for McNamara. In August, McNamara testifies before Senate that massive, multi-year bombing of N. Vietnam cannot not break the will of the N. Vietnamese or win the war. Three months later Johnson removes him as Secretary of Defense. 485,000 US military in S. Vietnam
- 1968 Fictional character in O'Brien's novel, Tim, drafted. Tet Offensive by N. Vietnam deals serious blows to multiple S. Vietnam cities. Five million out of total population of 17 million S. Vietnamese are refugees. Speaking of recapturing a S. Vietnamese city from the NLF, an American officer tells the press, "We had to destroy the town to save it." Sen Eugene runs for president on a peace platform. His very strong showing in the New Hampshire primaries indicates American distaste for the war. Lyndon Johnson announces he will not run for president. US troops massacre civilian population of My Lai village. ML King assassinated. Nixon elected president. 535,000 US military in S. Vietnam.
- 1969 N. and S. Vietnam representatives meet in Paris for peace talks. Nixon promises troop reductions, but takes the war into Laos and Cambodia, with heavy air bombings. Laos population is 25% refugee status. Nixon keeps raids (3,630 sorties carrying 110,000 tons of bombs) on Cambodia secret, even from the Congress. Ho Chi Minh dies in September. My Lai massacre exposed in US, Americans learn that the massacre was unprovoked and covered up by the Army. 475,200 US military in S. Vietnam

- 1970      Admiral John D. McCain urges Nixon to invade Cambodia to protect departing American troops in S. Vietnam.
- April; US invades Cambodia
- December: US Congress bans US combat troops in Cambodia and Laos. 334,600 US military in S. Vietnam
- 1971      US supports ARVN invasion of Laos. Daniel Ellsberg, former aide to Kissinger and former Rand employee, offers secret report written in 1967 for McNamara, to the NY Times. It begins publishing excerpts, which came to be known as the Pentagon Papers. Vietnam Veterans begin demonstrating against the war, with a march on Washington, D.C. 156,800 US military in S. Vietnam.
- 1972      Hanoi launches Spring Offensive. US bombing in N. Vietnam intensifies and Nixon orders mining of Haiphong Harbor. Nixon wins second term by a landslide. 24,200 US military in S. Vietnam
- 1973      January 27, Peace agreements signed by US, N&S Vietnam, and NLF. Congress bans bombing of Cambodia. War Powers Act passed over presidential veto: Congress bans use of funds for US military anywhere in Indochina.