

## First Indochina War

### Key Vocabulary:

- Indochina
- V-J Day
- Ho Chi Minh
- Vietminh
- DRV
- Saigon
- Guerilla warfare
- Carpet-bombing
- Battle of Nà Sản
- Operation Castor
- Battle of Dien Bien Phu
- Vo Nguyen Giap
- 1954 Geneva Accords

### Key Information:

- Back to the imperial age (1800s) when France was colonizing in Southeast Asia, it took control over the area called Indochina, which are now collectively Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia.
- During WW2, France was quickly overrun by Germany giving the Japanese a chance to take over.
- Japan lost the war and Japanese forces located in Southern Vietnam surrendered to British command.
- Vietnamese had the chance to raise an independence movement led by the Vietminh and Ho Chi Minh.
- On V-J Day, Ho Chi Minh proclaimed the establishment of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV).
- France refused to accept the DRV and wanted the former colony back. On 23 September 1945, with the knowledge of the British Commander in the South (Saigon), French forces overthrew the DRV government in the north, and declared French authority restored.
- Guerilla warfare began around Saigon immediately after.
- France could only use troops from other French colonies because the use of homeland recruits was banned to prevent the war from becoming more unpopular at home.



### ➤ Battle of Nà Sản:

- French forces pushed the Vietminh to attack well-defended bases in remote areas but the base was relatively weak because it was built on trenches.
- French forces were weakened even more due to the difficulty moving tanks through the jungles and the lack of air force for carpet-bombing.

➤ **Operation Castor:**

- After the Vietminh attacked Lai Chau (the capital of upper Tonkin loyal to France), French commander **Henri Navarre** came up with Operation Castor and launched paratroops into the valley of Dien Bien Phu nearby because Lai Chau was considered impossible to defend.

➤ **Battle of Dien Bien Phu:**

- A decisive battle that resulted in a comprehensive Vietminh victory.
- Viet Minh commander Vo Nguyen Giap gathered troops and placed heavy artillery in caves in the mountains overlooking the French camp in the valley of Dien Bien Phu.
- The geography had limited the defense from the French side because the enemies had surrounded them.
- Vietminh commander **Vo Nguyen Giap** launched massive assault on the forts of French force.
- The French were reduced to airdrops for supplies and reinforcement because the ground road was cut off. They were also unable to evacuate their wounded and still under constant artillery bombardment. At the extreme limit of air range, morale of the French began to fail.
- The French force was gradually reduced until resistance ceased on May 7.



➤ **1954 Geneva Accords:**

- Held in Geneva, Switzerland.
- France agreed to withdraw forces from all of Indochina.
- The First Indochina war ends.

**Review questions:**

1. What events gave the Vietminh a chance to rise up?
2. What was preventing France from using metropolitan recruits?
3. List three difficulties that the French forces had encountered with and explain why they were significant.
4. What was Operation Castor and why was it significant?

5. What factors contributed to the victory of the Vietminh in the Battle of Dien Bien Phu?
6. Explain the significance of the Geneva Accord.

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