

# Vietnamese Americans

LESSONS IN AMERICAN HISTORY

## Vietnam Before 1975

### **2800 B.C. - 300 B.C.**

The Vietnamese have numerous legends about the origin of their state. According to the most famous legend, a Vietnamese prince named Lạc Long Quân comes to northern Việt Nam from his home in the sea. He marries Âu Cơ, a princess from the mountain, on the top of Mount Tản Viên some time around 2800 B.C. The union results in the princess laying 100 eggs, with a son eventually hatching from each. For some unknown reason, the parents separate, the mother leading half the progeny across the northern mountains, where they become the ancestors of the Mường people, and the father leading the remaining fifty sons to the sea, where they become ancestors of the Vietnamese. The most valiant of the sons later becomes the first of the eighteen Hùng kings. Lạc Long Quân and Âu Cơ are regarded by the Vietnamese as their primal ancestors.

King Hùng establishes Văn Lang, the earliest name for Việt Nam. Another seventeen Hùng kings or generations succeed him, ruling throughout the Bronze Age. The new state prospers under an elaborate irrigation system of dikes and canals that control and channel the supplies of water in the Red River Delta. Văn Lang comprises the northern parts of present-day Việt Nam.

### **300 B.C.**

The historical evidence does not establish the reasons for the fall of the Hùng kingdom of Văn Lang. But by 300 B.C., the people in this region seem to be divided into Tay Au (Vietnamese of the highlands) and Lạc Việt (Vietnamese of the plains). The two groups are politically united by An Dương Vương into the kingdom of Âu Lạc, with its capital at Cổ Loa, about 20 miles north of present-day Hà Nội.

### **207 B.C.**

*Zhao Tuo*, a renegade Chinese general, conquers Âu Lạc and proclaims himself emperor of a newly independent kingdom called Nam Việt (Nam means south), with its capital in modern Canton, China. The kingdom retains its independence for roughly a century.

### **111 B.C.**

The expansionist *Han Dynasty* emperor Wu Ti sends his forces against Nam Việt, liquidating its independence and incorporating it as a province of the Chinese Empire.

### **111 B.C. – 939 A.D.**

During this period, Việt Nam is a directly ruled province of the Chinese Empire. The Chinese seize important natural resources from Việt Nam, such as salt and iron, and also conduct a program of Vietnamese conversion to Chinese culture. The Vietnamese fight throughout this period to free themselves from Chinese occupation.

### **39-41**

Trung Trắc and Trung Nhi, two sisters, lead the first Vietnamese revolt against the Chinese. The Trưng Sisters

raise troops and drive out the Chinese. They proclaim themselves joint queens of Nam Việt for two years until the Chinese return and crush the revolt in 41. The sisters commit suicide in defiance. The martyred Trưng Sisters are later deified by the Vietnamese, and their story of bravery and patriotism becomes an inspiration for Vietnamese resistance to foreign domination.

### 939 – 968

Ngô Quyền, leader of an independence movement, and his forces end the thousand-year Chinese rule. Ngô Quyền, known as a brilliant strategist, restores the country's name to Nam Việt and its capital in the ancient city of Cổ Loa, which reflects the intense nationalism of the new Vietnamese leadership. Before he could consolidate his kingdom and establish an institutional structure, Ngô Quyền dies five years after the removal of the Chinese. Ambitious feudal lords divide the territory.

### 968 – 980

Đinh Bộ Lĩnh, of peasant background, puts down the feudal lords, consolidates the kingdom and calls the new state Đại Cồ Việt (country of the great Việt people). Đinh Bộ Lĩnh starts triennial payments of tribute to the Chinese emperor in return for assurance that China would not interfere in his country's internal affairs.

### 939 – 1800S

Việt Nam enjoys a thousand years of freedom from alien rule, with the exception of a brief Chinese invasion in the early 1400s. The Vietnamese continue to fight off Chinese imperialism throughout this period. Several dynastic families rule the country during this extensive period, including in succession: Ngô Dynasty (939-968), Đinh Dynasty (968-980), early Lê Dynasty (980-1009), Lý Dynasty (1010-1225), Trần Dynasty (1225-1400), Hồ Dynasty (1400-1407), later Lê Dynasty (1428-1526, 1533-1540), Mạc Dynasty (1527-1533, 1540-1592), Lê Dynasty/Nguyễn and Trịnh families (1592-1788), Tây Sơn/Nguyễn Dynasty (1788-1802), and Nguyễn Dynasty (1802-1955).

Việt Nam becomes an independent monarchy in the tenth century. However, it is only in the first half of the following century that major institutional changes come about. The Lý and Trần dynasties produce a number of great leaders. During this period, the Lý rulers rename the kingdom Đại Việt, move the capital to Thăng Long (present-day Hà Nội), and give the kingdom a strong centralized government. The Lý Dynasty builds a network of roads and adopts a Confucian government bureaucracy. The most significant ruler of the Trần Dynasty is Trần Thái Tông, who is known for his successful defense of the country, in addition to his innovative agrarian, administrative and economic measures.

### 1257

In their quest to conquer all of China, the *Mongols* attack Đại Việt to consolidate its southern areas. Later deemed as a significant achievement of the Trần Dynasty, Trần Thái Tông and his troops push the Mongols back into China.

### 1284 – 1287

After conquering all of China, the Mongols seek to annex the *Champa kingdom*, which is located in present-day central Việt Nam. To support their naval attacks on Champa, Mongol troops pass through Đại Việt on foot to reach the central nation, despite Vietnamese opposition. The Mongols are met with strong Vietnamese resistance that eventually defeats them.

### 1407 – 1428

The Chinese Empire invades Đại Việt and again brings it under direct Chinese rule. Lê Lợi, an aristocratic landowner, leads a resistance movement that finally expels the Chinese troops and officials from Đại Việt in 1428.

**1471**

Led by the emperor Lê Thánh Tông, Đại Việt conquers the kingdom of Champa, which makes it possible for Vietnamese expansion into present-day central Việt Nam.

**1516 – MID-1700S**

The reign of Lê Chiêu Tông, the last real Lê ruler, is marked by rivalries for power between three families – the Mạc, the Nguyễn, and the Trịnh. After Tông's death in 1526, the Mạc family seizes power in northern Việt Nam, but eventually loses control six years later. These events signify the beginning of a protracted civil war with intervals of truce that does not really end until the middle of the eighteenth century. In 1673, a durable peace is worked out with Chinese intervention. The territory is partitioned near the 17<sup>th</sup> parallel, with the Trịnh ruling in the north and the Nguyễn in the south. Both families rule under the name of the Lê Dynasty.

**1615**

French Jesuits open the first mission near the city of Đà Nẵng (in central Việt Nam), and begins the long history of Catholic influence in Việt Nam. *Alexandre de Rhodes*, a French missionary and scholar, invents the quốc ngữ, a method of writing the Vietnamese language in Roman script, instead of the traditional Chinese characters. The quốc ngữ continues to be used today.

**MID-1700S**

With peace established with the Trịnh in the north, the Nguyễn ruling family expands its territory further south, first liquidating remaining areas of the old Champa kingdom and then capturing all the Khmer territories of present-day southern Việt Nam.

**1773 – 1802**

In 1773, three brothers from the village of Tây Sơn in central Việt Nam – Nguyễn Văn Nhạc, Nguyễn Văn Lữ, and Nguyễn Văn Huệ (adopting the name of the southern ruling family) – topple the Nguyễn family. In 1787, the Tây Sơn brothers also eliminate the Trịnh and thus depose the Lê Dynasty. In the north, the brothers are hailed as deliverers, freeing the people from the corrupt Trịnh government. But in the south, they are seen as unscrupulous usurpers. The Nguyễn king does not leave an adult heir upon his death, and the southerners accuse the Tây Sơn brothers of taking advantage of this family tragedy. Many believe that the mandate of heaven must pass on from the Lê-Trịnh to the Nguyễn, and not to the Tây Sơn brothers. The teenage prince, Nguyễn Ánh, receives support from numerous family allies and revolt against the Tây Sơn brothers.

**1802**

Nguyễn Ánh ends thirty years of civil war and unites the three regions of Việt Nam (south, central, and north) and declares himself *Emperor Gia Long*. The Nguyễn Dynasty, the last Vietnamese monarchy, begins. He revives the imperial government in Huế and completes significant public works, including restoration of the irrigation system and construction of the Mandarin Road, which connects the cities of Hà Nội, Huế and Sài Gòn. Emperor Gia Long is considered by the Vietnamese people as their country's unifier and greatest monarch ever, although he is later lambasted by Vietnamese Communists for accepting minor assistance from the French during his quest for unification.

**1858 – 1862**

France first attacks and occupies Đà Nẵng under the guise that Catholics are facing religious persecution under the Vietnamese. After three years of fighting, Emperor Tự Đức is forced to cede Sài Gòn and adjacent areas to France.

**1883 – 1887**

Việt Nam loses its independence to the French, which extends its colonial control into northern Việt Nam. In 1887,

the new French colony, called the *Indochinese Union* or *Indochina*, is founded, covering Việt Nam, Cambodia, and Laos. Vietnamese resistance to French rule starts immediately thereafter.

**1914**

World War I breaks out in Europe. The French ship some hundred thousand Vietnamese to France as labor battalions.

**1920S**

A new class of young, educated Vietnamese people emerges. This new elite consists of government employees, professionals, French-trained college and university students, educated landowners and businesspeople. They soon demand important positions in high administration as well as legislation to equalize the Vietnamese status with that of French settlers. Above all, they demand freedom of speech, association and press.

**1926**

Phan Bội Châu, one of Việt Nam's most prominent nationalist leaders and a non-Marxist, is seized by the French secret police in Shanghai, China, while in hiding. Apparently, the French government acted upon information on his whereabouts provided by Hồ Chí Minh in exchange for 100,000 French piasters. The Communists believe Châu is a threat to Vietnamese Communism. Châu is sentenced to death by the French, though later, because of widespread public protests, the sentence is commuted to life. The great patriot languishes and dies in 1940.

**1927**

The *Vietnamese Nationalist Party*, or Việt Nam Quốc Dân Đảng, is founded, becoming the most prominent non-Marxist organization of the 1920s and holding far greater appeal among the Vietnamese masses than do the Communists during this period. The party adopts the principles of nationalism, democracy and people's livelihood, and commits itself to overthrowing the French colonial rule in Việt Nam.

**1929-1930**

French authorities suspect the Vietnamese Nationalist Party of assassinating a high-ranking French official in 1929 (possibly at Communist instigation). The French imprison party supporters and launch a thorough but clandestine investigation of the party's underground activities. Fearing that French retaliation will destroy the party, the party orders nationwide insurrection in 1930, but the French are able to suppress the uprisings and conclusively destroy the effectiveness of the party. Many members flee to China, and others are arrested and executed. The French destruction of the party opens immediate opportunity for Hồ Chí Minh and the Communists, and virtually guarantees their ultimate control of the nationalist movement.

**1932**

Bảo Đại, theoretically emperor since 1925, returns to Việt Nam from school in France to ascend the throne of a puppet monarchy. He is Việt Nam's last emperor.

**1940 – 1945**

*Japan* occupies Việt Nam during World War II with approval of the Vichy government in France. The Japanese utilize French military facilities and economic resources in Việt Nam (rice, coal, rubber and other raw materials) to launch massive attacks of major targets in Asia. The French colonial administration remains intact. Throughout this period, some two million Vietnamese die of famine in the north.

**1945**

When Japan surrenders to the Allies on August 7, 1945, the French, with the support of the Allies, repositions

itself for colonial control of Việt Nam.

#### 1946 – 1954

The *First Indochina War* breaks out all over Việt Nam between the French and Vietnamese, including both non-Communist and Communist forces.

On May 5, 1954, the Việt Minh, the Communist forces led by Hồ Chí Minh, hand French troops their worse defeat at Điện Biên Phủ, completely demoralizing the French troops in Việt Nam and the French politicians and diplomats.

On July 21, 1954, the *Geneva Agreements* temporarily divide Việt Nam along the 17th parallel into two zones for the two rival military forces: the pro-democracy forces in the south and the Communist Việt Minh in the north. The question of reunification is to be decided by a Việt Nam-wide election in 1956. The United States refuses to sign the declaration and proceeds to support the government of the new Republic of Việt Nam (South Việt Nam) under the leadership of *Emperor* Bảo Đại and Ngô Đình Diệm as prime minister. The Communist north declares its own separate state, the Democratic Republic of Việt Nam, with Hồ Chí Minh as its president. Nearly one million refugees, mostly Catholics, flee the north to the south in fear of persecution.

#### 1955

Ngô Đình Diệm wins a referendum and becomes president of the Republic of Việt Nam, removing Emperor Bảo Đại. Although Diệm is praised for his handling of northern refugees, for his crackdown of corrupt religio-military sects in South Việt Nam and for his call for the elections of a national assembly, he is influenced by his corrupt family and becomes increasingly unpopular after issuing oppressive measures.

Land reform in North Việt Nam reaches its most radical phase as landlords go before “people’s tribunals.”

In Moscow, Hồ Chí Minh accepts aid from the *Soviet Union*, having earlier negotiated in Beijing for assistance from *China*.

#### 1956 – 1959

In 1956 – 1957, Diệm uses emergency powers to crackdown on Việt Minh suspects and other dissidents in South Việt Nam. In 1959, he signs a law authorizing intense repression of Communist suspects and other dissidents.

Communist insurgent activity in South Việt Nam begins, with the decision to organize thirty-seven armed companies in the *Mekong Delta* (southern Việt Nam). During 1957, guerillas assassinate more than four hundred minor South Vietnamese officials.

#### 1960

North Việt Nam leaders form the National Liberation Front for South Việt Nam, or Việt Nam Cộng Sản (Vietnamese Communists). The U.S. and South Vietnamese governments begin to use the contraction, “Việt Cộng,” to name the Communist insurgents.

#### 1963

On November 2, Ngô Đình Diệm and his chief aide and brother, Ngô Đình Nhu, are assassinated in Sài Gòn by Diệm’s own generals in a military coup d’etat. Political confusion ensues for the next several years with a succession of individuals assuming political leadership. General Nguyễn Văn Thiệu and Air Marshal Nguyễn Cao Kỳ emerge four years later as the country’s president and vice president, respectively.

**1964**

On August 2, President Lyndon Johnson charges that the North Vietnamese have attacked American battleships in the Gulf of Tongkin. Three days later, Congress passes the *Gulf of Tongkin Resolution* authorizing the president to take military actions against any armed attacks on American forces in the area. The United States enters the *Second Indochina War*. American aircraft bomb North Việt Nam for the first time.

**1965**

In March, the U.S. Air Force starts *Operation Rolling Thunder*, the wide-scale American bombardment of North Việt Nam. During the following three-and-a-half years, more than twice as many bombs are dropped over North Việt Nam than were dropped during the entire World War II.

**1968**

On January 31, during national celebration of the Tết, the Lunar New Year, North Việt Nam and the Việt Cộng launch a major offensive on all the main cities and towns of South Việt Nam. The Tết Offensive proves to be a military failure for North Việt Nam, but it has a tremendous impact on U.S. politics. Washington questions the potential costs of continuing the war as the American public sees on television the devastation that was occurring in Việt Nam. The United States decides to disengage from involvement in Việt Nam. American troop strength in Việt Nam at year's end is 540,000.

In March, 450 unarmed South Vietnamese civilians in Mỹ Lai village are killed by U.S. troops. Known as the Mỹ Lai Massacre, this incident, along with many other significant events in Việt Nam and in the United States, escalates American public opposition to U.S. involvement. Anti-war movements continue to grow. The U.S. troops in Mỹ Lai were under the command of Lieutenant William Calley, who is later convicted of the mass murder and sentenced to life in prison. However, in 1974, Calley is released from prison after many legal appeals.

**1969**

President Richard Nixon begins the policy of "*Vietnamization*," slowly withdrawing U.S. troops, while building up South Vietnamese troops and beginning to secretly bomb Communist supply lines in Cambodia.

**1970 – 1972**

In 1970, U.S. National Security Advisor *Henry Kissinger* begins secret talks in Paris with North Vietnamese Lê Đức Thọ regarding a cease-fire agreement. American and South Vietnamese forces attack Communist sanctuaries in Cambodia.

In 1971, South Vietnamese forces begin incursions in Laos against the Hồ Chí Minh Trail.

In 1972, Kissinger and Thọ meet several times to again discuss a cease-fire. North Việt Nam launches offensive across the demilitarized zone. American bombing of areas near Hà Nội and Hải Phòng begins in May and intensifies in December.

**1973**

On January 27, the United States and North Việt Nam sign cease-fire agreements, called the *Paris Peace Accords*, which provide, among other things, for the withdrawal of U.S. troops, the return of prisoners of war, and the ceasefire. President Thiệu of South Việt Nam rejects the agreement, as he had not been party to the talks. By the end of March, the remaining U.S. combat troops begin withdrawing from Việt Nam. By year's end, the war between South Việt Nam and North Việt Nam resumes, although the level of military operations is low-key on both sides.

**1974**

President Thiệu declares in January that the war has begun again. The Communist buildup of troops and supplies in South Việt Nam proceeds in June.

**1975**

During the week leading up to April 30, hundreds of thousands of South Vietnamese attempt to escape Việt Nam under chaotic conditions before the Communist takeover.

North Việt Nam launches a sudden and major military offensive and ends the civil war, capturing Sài Gòn on April 30, a date significant to both Vietnamese and Vietnamese Americans today.

# Vietnamese Americans

LESSONS IN AMERICAN HISTORY

## Vietnam and Vietnamese Americans after 1975

### 1975

**VIETNAM** The new Communist regime begins rounding up former political officials and military personnel tied to the South Vietnamese government. They are sent to re-education camps, where they are “re-educated” in Communist ideology and forced into hard labor. Later, intellectuals, writers, religious leaders and leaders of ethnic minority groups are interned. Most are imprisoned on average in re-education camps for 4 to 8 years. Some are incarcerated for as long as 17 years.

**VIETNAMESE IN AMERICA** President Gerald Ford signs the Indochina Migration and Refugee Act, admitting 130,000 Southeast Asian refugees into the U.S. Of this cap, almost 120,000 are Vietnamese, with Cambodians comprising the remainder. Refugees first stay in Guam, Wake Island, or the Philippines, and then arrive in the U.S. at four relocation camps: Camp Pendleton, California; Fort Chaffee, Arkansas; Eglin Air Force Base, Florida; and Fort Indiantown Gap, Pennsylvania.

### 1976

**VIETNAM** Sài Gòn, the capital of the fallen Republic of Việt Nam, is renamed Hồ Chí Minh City, to commemorate the father of Vietnamese Communism. However, many residents continue to call the city by its original name. Hà Nội becomes the seat of government of the new Socialist Republic of Việt Nam.

The 4th Party Congress calls for rapid socialization in the southern economy, with mass relocation of people and forced collectivization of agriculture, small industry and commerce. This leads to an economic disaster, provoking new waves of refugees.

### 1977

**VIETNAM** The U.S. continues its embargo on Việt Nam, and the nation was isolated from most of the non-Communist world, which meant little aid and investment.

A steady stream of Vietnamese were escaping Việt Nam to other Southeast Asian countries at about 2,000 refugees per month, starting the “Second Wave” of Vietnamese refugees.

Prime Minister Phạm Văn Đồng issues Resolution 297 to forbid the “spread of superstitions,” by severely restricting religious practices in Việt Nam and allowing the government to confiscate church properties. This is one of the first among a list of government actions in the next 25 years to restrict religious freedom in Việt Nam.

**VIETNAMESE IN AMERICA** Senator Edward Kennedy (D-MA) sponsors a bill to change a refugee from a parolee to a permanent resident. This is called the 1977 Adjustment of Status Clause and is added to the 1975 Indochina Migration and Refugee Act. Prior to this amendment, the McCarran-Walter Act of 1952 indicated that a parolee’s stay is temporary.

### 1978

VIETNAM Việt Nam invades Cambodia to topple the Pol Pot regime and to expand Việt Nam's regional power. This brings on a new and costly cycle of war for Việt Nam.

Dr. Nguyễn Đan Quế is arrested for publishing two underground newspapers calling for human rights and democracy. He is imprisoned for ten years without trial. During this time, he endures torture, endless beatings and solitary confinement.

### 1979

VIETNAM China, in support of Cambodia, retaliates and attacks Việt Nam at the northern border. China's effort fails, and the 300,000 ethnic Chinese living in Việt Nam face persecution. Most flee Việt Nam into China or escape by sea.

The number of Vietnamese refugees leaving the country increases dramatically, with more than 50,000 in some months. The numbers are probably higher, since an estimated one-third die in passage. Some escape Việt Nam by land traveling north to China or west to Cambodia to end up in Thailand border camps. Others escape by boat, ending up in Malaysia, Thailand, the Philippines, or Hong Kong. Escaping Việt Nam was a hazardous journey, and the refugees leaving by sea became known as the "Boat People."

VIETNAMESE IN AMERICA The United Nations High Commission for Refugees and the Socialist Republic of Vietnam establishes the Orderly Departure Program, which accounts for about 5,000 Vietnamese to come annually to the United States. Hà Nội hopes a liberal emigration policy might help to improve its relations with the western nations.

By the spring of 1979, the plight of the "Boat People" has received enough international attention to prompt President Jimmy Carter to order the 7th Fleet of the U.S. Navy to seek out vessels in distress in the South China Sea.

Chùa Giác Quang in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, is among the first Vietnamese Buddhist temples built in the United States.

### 1980

VIETNAM A genuine economic crisis develops, with production shortages and extreme dependency on the Soviet Union. Việt Nam suffers from considerable food shortages resulting from bad harvests and from the disincentives of the collectivization system.

Việt Nam takes steps away from harsh economic controls by backing away from socializing family farms, accepting small-scale retail private enterprises and decentralizing decision-making in state-run enterprises. But, Việt Nam does not abandon plan to socialize the southern economy.

"Boat People" continue to escape Việt Nam throughout the 1980s. An estimated 500,000 refugees died at sea, or one-half of those attempting to escape Việt Nam.

VIETNAMESE IN AMERICA A second wave of immigrants peaks, largely "Boat People" escaping Vietnam by sea.

President Jimmy Carter signs the Refugee Act of 1980, which provides a definition of a refugee, creates the Office of Refugee Resettlement, sets the number of refugee admissions at 50,000 per year (unless in case of an emergency), and allows a refugee to adjust his/her status after one year to become a permanent resident and, after

four more years, to become a U.S. citizen.

Trường Hòa Bình Vietnamese Language School is established in San Leandro, California. Parents encourage their children to hold onto their Vietnamese roots.

### 1981

VIETNAM Additional actions are taken to liberalize agriculture, such as allowing peasants to keep some of what they produce and sell it on the open markets. By the mid-1980s, the measures taken in the late-1970s and early 1980s result in modest improvements in agricultural production.

Việt Nam dissolves the Unified Buddhist Church of Việt Nam (UBCV), the main Buddhist organization in south and central Việt Nam prior to 1975, and replaces it with a state-sponsored Việt Nam Buddhist Church. This event marks the beginning of ongoing tensions between the government and the UBCV.

VIETNAMESE IN AMERICA Boat People S.O.S. is formed in San Diego, California, to assist the Vietnamese refugees escaping Vietnam by sea.

The Southeast Asia Resource Action Center is formed in Washington, D.C., to provide services and resources to the Vietnamese refugee population in the United States.

In Galveston Bay, Texas, American fishermen turn to the Ku Klux Klan to terrorize Vietnamese fishermen, claiming unfair competition. The Southern Poverty Law Center advocates on behalf of the Vietnamese refugees and wins the case, securing protection from U.S. Marshals.

### 1982

VIETNAM The Venerable Thích Huyền Quang, the Supreme Patriarch of the UBCV, and Venerable Thích Quảng Độ, the second highest figure in the Church, are arrested for calling for official recognition of the Church. They are internally exiled to separate locations.

Pastor Nguyen Lap Ma, superintendent of the former protestant church of South Việt Nam, is arrested for refusing to hand over church buildings and to join the state church. He is under permanent house arrest.

VIETNAMESE IN AMERICA The Vietnam Veterans Memorial, “The Wall,” is dedicated in Washington, D.C.

### 1983

VIETNAM The Vietnamese government forms the Committee for the Solidarity of Patriotic Vietnamese Catholics in an attempt to separate the Vietnamese Roman Catholic church from papal authority. Nguyễn Kim Điền Philippe, archbishop of Hue, defied the formation of this committee and is later placed under house arrest until his death in 1988.

VIETNAMESE IN AMERICA By September, the United States has received a total of 678,057 refugees from Southeast Asia, close to two-thirds of whom entered the U.S. between 1979-82, during the period of the refugee crisis. Vietnamese refugees accounted for about two-thirds of all Southeast Asian refugees in United States.

### 1984

VIETNAM After nine years of efforts to socialize the country’s economy, more than 80% of the economy in the south remains in private hands; and little economic recovery has occurred in the north.

### 1985

**VIETNAMESE IN AMERICA** The National League of POW/MIA Families forms in the U.S., calling for tough sanctions on Vietnam for not helping locate U.S. troops considered “missing in action” during the Vietnam War. These public emotions block any potential normalization of U.S. policy towards Vietnam.

### 1986

**VIETNAM** There is widespread public dissatisfaction among the people who have been waiting for improvement in the standard of living. Inflation shoots up by 500-700 percent, making life more miserable for the people.

The Sixth Congress of the Việt Nam Communist Party meets in December. Economic reformers and younger officials gain more power and influence. Socioeconomic renovation policies, collectively called “Đổi Mới,” are adopted to further liberalize the economy.

**VIETNAMESE IN AMERICA** Mary Queen of Việt Nam is built in New Orleans, Louisiana, becoming the first church built and owned by Vietnamese Americans.

### 1987

**VIETNAM** Another major food crisis begins and forces the government to dismantle agricultural cooperatives. As a result, agricultural production grows and prompts capitalistic activities in urban areas.

Đổi Mới actually consists of a series of actions taken over a period from 1987 to 1998, but key decisions were adopted in the 1987-1989 period, including liberalization of agriculture, opening Việt Nam to international trade, establishment of a commercial banking sector, end of almost all centrally managed prices, and elimination of most subsidies to state enterprises. In subsequent years, a legal system is slowly developed, and major efforts to reduce corruption take place.

**VIETNAMESE IN AMERICA** Congress passes the Amerasian Homecoming Act, an effort to resettle Amerasians, the children of American servicemen and Vietnamese women, in the U.S. Amerasian children face severe social and economic discrimination in Vietnam. About 75,000 Amerasians and family members have come to the U.S. under this Act.

### 1988

**VIETNAMESE IN AMERICA** The television documentary *Rescue Mission on the High Seas*, with Vu Thanh Tuy is aired on national television, exposing the plight of Vietnamese Boat People to the American public.

Tùng Nguyễn, 26, sets a record at the prestigious Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) by earning seven undergraduate degrees. Such academic success stories coupled with news of increasing youth gang violence create and fuel extreme mainstream stereotypes of the younger Vietnamese American generation — that of academic wizard or violent gangster.

### 1989

**VIETNAM** Resettlement countries become increasingly impatient with the continuing outflow of Vietnamese refugees, and other Southeast Asian countries threaten to push back new arrivals.

The first forced repatriation of Vietnamese refugees in Southeast Asian camps occurs under Comprehensive Plan of Action by the United Nations High Commission for Refugees. The new Plan requires asylum-seekers from Việt Nam to be screened for refugee status. Many are deemed economic migrants, and not refugees. In the next 10 years, over 110,000 are forced to return to Việt Nam.

Việt Nam agrees to take back the boat people living in camps, and promises not to punish people for having escaped the country. The United Nations agrees to monitor the return of the boat people for government harassment or discrimination.

**VIETNAMESE IN AMERICA** The musical *Miss Saigon* appears on Broadway and quickly becomes a highly popular show. The play's racist and sexist undertones anger many Vietnamese and Asian American community members.

The Vietnam Center opens at the Texas Tech University. The Center focuses on the study of the American / Vietnam experience.

### 1990

**VIETNAM** Political dissident Dr. Nguyễn Đan Quế is rearrested for issuing an appeal calling for a non-violent struggle for democracy in Việt Nam, tried for treason and condemned to prison for another 20 years.

**VIETNAMESE IN AMERICA** Under the Special Release Reeducation Center Detainee Resettlement Program (known as the Humanitarian Operation or "H.O." Program), the first group of former Vietnamese political and reeducation camp prisoners is admitted to the United States.

Actor Dustin Nguyễn stars on the popular television drama series, *21 Jump Street*. The show ends after three successful seasons.

### 1991

**VIETNAM** The United States and Việt Nam begin a joint *MIA effort* designed to test Vietnamese willingness to cooperate and to begin a process that would lead to normalization of relations.

### 1992

**VIETNAM** First ratified in 1982, the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights* is ratified by the Vietnamese Constitution. The Covenant obligates governments to respect freedom of opinion and expression, including press freedom, as well as rights to peaceful assembly, freedom of association and other fundamental human rights. However, Việt Nam continues to fall short of Covenant standards.

**VIETNAMESE IN AMERICA** The flow of Vietnamese immigrants into the U.S. peaks once again, after an increase in refugees released from re-education camps through the H.O. Program and immigrants sponsored by families living in the United States.

University of Miami pre-med student Luyen Phan Nguyễn, 19, is chased down and brutally beaten to death outside a Coral Springs, Florida, college party by a mob of about 15 young white men who used their fists, feet and beer bottles. Nguyen had protested an insulting reference to his Vietnamese origin earlier at the party. The party crowd ignores the murder, as some chant "Gook, gook, gook," while the killers are heard screaming "Chink," "Gook," and "Việt Cộng." Six white men, between the ages of 18 and 22, are convicted of the hate crime and sentenced from 13 months to life in prison.

Dr. Eugene Trinh, a NASA astronaut, becomes the first Vietnamese American in space, when he serves as the primary payload specialist on the Space Shuttle Columbia, the 48th shuttle launch.

### 1993

**VIETNAM** Under President Bill Clinton, the United States takes several steps toward diplomatic normalization,

including agreeing to let multilateral lending agencies (like the World Bank and Asian Development Bank) make loans to Việt Nam.

**VIETNAMESE IN AMERICA** The motion picture, *Heaven and Earth*, directed by Oliver Stone, appears in theatres everywhere. The film is based on Lê Lý Hayslip’s autobiography, making it the first major motion picture from the perspective of a Vietnamese American woman.

**1994**

**VIETNAM** President Clinton lifts the U.S. trade embargo against Việt Nam that was in place since 1964, allowing U.S. firms to export to Việt Nam and to compete for business opportunities in Việt Nam that had been previously closed.

The Venerable Thích Quảng Độ is rearrested on charges of organizing a Church flood relief operation in the Mekong Delta and is sentenced to five years in prison.

**1995**

**VIETNAM** The U.S. opens normal diplomatic relations with Việt Nam. The U.S. Embassy opens in Hanoi.

**1996**

**VIETNAM** Malaysia and Indonesia end their refugee camps, shipping their final boat people “hold-outs” back to Việt Nam.

A CBS News program reports of labor abuses at several Nike shoe factories in Việt Nam, where workers have been hit, forced to kneel or physically abused as punishment for supposedly poor-quality work. Workers are typically paid \$40 per month, or 20 cents per hour. Nike Corporation takes no responsibility for their subcontractors in Việt Nam.

His Holiness the Dalai Lama calls on the Vietnamese government to release all imprisoned leaders of the Unified Buddhist Church of Việt Nam, including Thích Huyền Quang and Thích Quảng Độ.

**VIETNAMESE IN AMERICA** The U.S. Senate approves measure to compensate more than 200 Vietnamese commandos for time spent in Vietnamese prisons after the CIA and U.S. military infiltrated them into North Vietnam in the 1960s. Despite contracts assuring the commandos would be paid \$2,000 annually even if captured, they were written off as dead by the United States. Many of them languished in prisons for as long as 25 years before being freed. Public Law #105-18 earmarks \$20 million for reparation payments.

Danny Graves becomes the first Vietnamese-born player in Major League Baseball. In 2000, the half-Vietnamese relief pitcher for the Cincinnati Reds earns his first All-Star appearance.

**1997**

**VIETNAM** Douglas (“Pete”) Peterson, a former prisoner of war during the Việt Nam War, is named the first U.S. Ambassador to Việt Nam since the War. Việt Nam, in turn, names Le Van Bang as its Ambassador to the United States.

The last of Vietnamese boat people to voluntarily return home from Hong Kong refugee camps board a UN flight back to Việt Nam. Since the UN’s repatriation started almost ten years ago, about 57,000 people have returned voluntarily to Việt Nam. Nearly 3,000 people remain in Hong Kong. Also, Thailand empties its own refugee camps.

The Administrative Detention Decree 31/CP is implemented, allowing officials to detain individuals suspected of posing a threat to national security without a warrant or prior judicial approval.

**VIETNAMESE IN AMERICA** The Vietnamese American Studies Center is established at the San Francisco State University, dedicated to the study of the Vietnamese American experience.

In Santa Clara, California, Thăng Barrett becomes the first Vietnamese American judge to sit on a court of general jurisdiction in the United States.

Attorney and writer Lan Cao pens *Monkey Bridge*, the first fictional novel written by a Vietnamese American and published by a major publishing house.

### 1998

**VIETNAM** Twenty-four political and religious prisoners are released, including the Venerable Thích Quảng Độ and Dr. Nguyễn Đan Quế, as part of presidential amnesties. Under Article 30 of Việt Nam's criminal code, they continue to be under close and constant surveillance, and are often harassed.

Việt Nam becomes one of the fastest-growing economies in the world, averaging 8% annually (GDP) from 1990 to 1998. Investment grows threefold, and domestic savings quintuples. Agricultural production doubles, making Việt Nam the world's second largest rice exporter.

**VIETNAMESE IN AMERICA** Congresswoman Loretta Sanchez (D-CA) drafts and secures passage of legislation in the House National Security Committee honoring former Vietnamese commandos who worked for the U.S. during the Vietnam War. Some of the commandos were killed, and most were captured and imprisoned by the North Vietnamese for up to 25 years.

The U.S. grants the first waiver of the Jackson-Vanik Amendment extending U.S. export promotion and investment support programs to Vietnam. The waiver is then renewed in 1999 and 2000.

### 1999

**VIETNAM** The 1999 Press Law passes, allowing media outlets to be sued for defamation whether the information they publish is accurate or not. The Ministry of Culture also proposes new regulations that would triple the number of activities, from 200 to 650, defined as offensive to Vietnamese culture. Việt Nam continues to jam public access to certain international radio stations, to crackdown on some foreign publications, and to disallow media contact with prominent dissidents.

In an unprecedented demonstration of unity, leaders from four of Việt Nam's major religious institutions demand the restoration of religious freedom and a clear separation of church and state. The letter is signed by Thích Quảng Độ, Father Chân Tín of the Catholic Church of Việt Nam, senior priest Trần Quang Châu of the Cao Đài Church, and leader Lê Quang Liêm of the Hòa Hảo Buddhist Church.

**VIETNAMESE IN AMERICA** The film *Three Seasons*, directed by Vietnamese American Tony Bùi, receives recognition as the first American movie filmed entirely in Vietnam. The film won both the Grand Jury Award as well as the Audience Award at the 1999 Sundance Film Festival.

Đạt Nguyễn, the most productive linebacker in Texas A&M University history, becomes the first Vietnamese American drafted into the National Football League, despite the perception that he was too small to play professional football. Proving his critics wrong, he becomes the starting middle linebacker in his second year.

with the Dallas Cowboys.

Twenty-nine U.S. Congress members nominate the Venerable Thích Quảng Độ for the Nobel Peace Prize in recognition for his lifelong efforts for religious freedom and democratic reform in Vietnam.

## 2000

**VIETNAM** The U.S.-Việt Nam Trade Agreement is signed, clearing the way for an open economic relationship that is meant to reduce tariffs on goods and services, protect intellectual property and improve investment relations. The Agreement has yet to be ratified by Congress.

President Clinton visits Việt Nam, becoming the first U.S. president to do so since the Việt Nam War.

The last closing of Vietnamese refugee camps occurs in Hong Kong.

**VIETNAMESE IN AMERICA** Vietnamese Americans Tawny Binh, Michelle Đỗ, and Khoa Nguyễn participate in the 2000 Summer Olympics in Sydney, Australia, as members of the U.S. Olympic Team in the sport of table tennis. Binh and Nguyễn are Gold Medalists at the 1999 Pan American Games. Đỗ, 17, is the 1998 Nationals Under-22 Women's Singles Champion.

## 2001

**VIETNAM** In February, Việt Nam is swept by the worst protests in years by ethnic minorities in the Central Highlands who are angry over land rights. The protests trigger major crackdowns by authorities. Key reasons behind the protests are the government turning the hill tribes' ancestral forests into the country's largest coffee-growing region and government repression of Protestant churches, which have attracted many followers from ethnic minorities in recent years. The central highlands are home to many of the country's 54 ethnic minority hill tribes. Ethnic minorities make up 15% of the country's population.

The well-known and outspoken Rev. Nguyễn Văn Lý Thadeus is arrested and indefinitely detained for his recent activities advocating for religious freedom. The arrest is his third, having previously served 10 years in prison for similar charges. Lý was an Amnesty International-adopted prisoner of conscience.

**VIETNAMESE IN AMERICA** The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom urged the Treasury Department to oppose \$800 million in new loans to Vietnam pending before the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. The Commission cited surveillance, imprisonment and other restrictions imposed on Catholics, Buddhists and other religious followers.

Việt Đình, a law professor at Georgetown Law Center, is appointed by President George W. Bush as Assistant Attorney General for legal policy, becoming perhaps the highest-ranking Vietnamese American official in the U.S. federal government.