

EMBASSY OF VIET NAM
2251 R Street, N. W.
Washington, D. C.

May 1, 1957

SHORT BIOGRAPHY OF PRESIDENT NGO DINH DIEM

President Ngo Dinh Diem was born on January 3, 1901, in Hue, capital of the former Viet-Nam Kingdom, the third son to the late Ngo Dinh Kha, Minister and Counselor of Emperor Thanh Thai, in a family of strong Catholic faith.

Educated entirely in Viet Nam, Ngo Dinh Diem received schooling that was a composite of classical Vietnamese studies and the humanistic philosophy of the West. In 1921 he graduated at the top of his class from the School of Administration in Hanoi and entered the mandarinat, in which he rose rapidly.

After a most brilliant administrative career, first as Chief of District then as Governor of Province, he was made Minister of the Interior at 32, but resigned a few months after, when he found that all real power was held by the French Governor, and when his demands for reforms aiming at the modernization of the country and a real participation of the people in public affairs were not accepted.

From then on he was considered as a living symbol of uncompromising integrity and patriotism.

This reputation was confirmed and enhanced during the communist revolution of 1945, when the Viet Minh arrested him for a few months and murdered his elder brother Ngo Dinh Khoi, and during the Indochina War, when he was offered and consistently declined to form a government under a regime of false independence.

Convinced that only complete genuine national independence could rally the Vietnamese people against the communist-led Viet Minh, President Ngo Dinh Diem left Viet Nam in 1950 and visited several countries of Asia, America and Europe, in particular Japan, the Philippines, the United States, and Belgium. Everywhere he pleaded the cause of his country and of freedom. He stayed several months in the United States as the guest of Mary Knoll College, and in Belgium at Saint Andre Abbey, Bruges.

On June 19, 1954, however, he accepted full delegation of civil and military powers from Chief of State Bao Dai because Viet Nam was in great danger and because the French Government, at last, promised full independence. But it was six weeks after the French disaster of Dien Bien Phu and a month before the Geneva armistice of July 21, 1954, which was going to partition the country, so that he had to face all the tragic consequences of eight years of war, mismanagement and corruption, of military defeat and territorial partition.

The whole country seemed to break and crumble on his shoulders... It was infested by vice lords in Saigon, by war lords in the countryside, by defeatists and communist agents everywhere! Almost everyone believed that it was going to fall into the hands of the communist-led Viet Minh, like a rotten fruit.

The Vietnamese people, however, instinctively followed this man of courage and dedication who, for over twenty years, had personified uncompromising integrity and patriotism. This, and unselfish American aid, was enough to help him overcome almost incredible odds!

He firmly requested and obtained, first the real transfer of all public services from the French to the Vietnamese authorities, then the closing of all gambling houses and of opium and vice dens, and the gradual withdrawal of the French Expeditionary Corps.

He resettled 850,000 refugees from North Viet Nam.

He unified the National Armed Forces by rallying some of the private armies of the politico-religious sects. This unified army helped him overcome the rebellion of its own Chief of Staff and of the Chiefs of the Security Police that had been appointed under French rule. It also helped him to rid the country of the private armies of the remaining Hoa Hao and Binh Xuyen war lords and the innumerable communist cadres and depots of arms that the Viet Minh had left behind for eventual subversion.

On October 23, 1955, in a referendum for the choice of the Chief of State and the form of Government, Bao Dai was deposed and President Ngo Dinh Diem was elected by an overwhelming majority.

The Republic was proclaimed by President Ngo Dinh Diem on October 26. On March 4, general elections were held in South Viet Nam for a National Constituent Assembly, which convened on March 15 for its inaugural session. The National Constitution was adopted, and promulgated on October 26, 1956.

President Ngo Dinh Diem thus became the first President of the free Republic of Viet Nam, which he saved from chaos following the war in Indochina.

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PRINCIPAL EVENTS SINCE PRESIDENT NGO DINH DIEM
TOOK OFFICE

- July 7, 1954 Establishment of the Ngo dinh Diem Government.
- July 20, 1954 Foreign Minister Tran Van Do protests against the Geneva Accords partitioning the national territory.
Conclusion of the Geneva Agreements (without the ratification and signature of the Vietnamese National Government).
- August 10, 1954 First evacuation of the refugees from the North by air-lift.
The first group of the International Control Commission arrived in Hanoi.
- August 11, 1954 Armistice in South Viet Nam.
- August 17, 1954 The first U.S. ship "Menard" arrived in Saigon with 2,000 refugees aboard.
- September 7, 1954 Transfer of the Independence Palace to the Government of Viet Nam.
- September 15, 1954 Transfer of the Maritime Service to Viet Nam.
- September 16, 1954 Transfer of the Justice and National Security Services to Viet Nam.
- September 24, 1954 The 100,000th refugee arrived in Saigon.
- September 25, 1954 Reshuffle of the Government with the participation of the Cao Dai and Hoa Hao religious sects.
- October 20, 1954 The 200,000th refugee arrived in Saigon.
- October 23, 1954 President Eisenhower sent a letter to Premier Ngo dinh Diem confirming that the United States would give direct aid to Viet Nam.
- December 21, 1954 Great Britain, France and the United States signed the agreements of the protection of Viet Nam and support to the Ngo dinh Diem government.
- December 28, 1954 France and the three Associated States signed an agreement abolishing the Pau Accords of 1950 and recognizing full sovereignty of these states.
- December 31, 1954 Transfer of the Port of Commerce of Saigon

January 1, 1955	Establishment of the National Bank.
January 12, 1955	Transfer of the Saigon Port to Viet Nam.
February 28, 1955	U.S. Secretary Dulles visits the Vietnamese Government.
March 29, 1955	The Binh Xuyen rebels start their first revolt but are immediately stopped by the National Army.
March 31, 1955	Solemn ceremony of the integration of the Cao Dai troops into the Vietnamese National Army.
April 15, 1955	Participation of Viet Nam in the Afro-Asian Conference in Bandung.
May 15, 1955	National Revolutionary Forces demonstrated for the deposition of Bao Dai.
June 5, 1955	The National Army of Viet Nam launched an offensive against the rebel armies of Tran Van Soai and Ba Cut.
July 7, 1955	First Anniversary of the Ngo dinh Diem Government.
July 24, 1955	Premier Ngo dinh Diem inaugurated the Vietnamese-American Friendship Association.
September 18, 1955	Launching of the Hoang-Dieu operation at Rung-Sat.
October 14, 1955	Referendum in Free Viet Nam (from 6:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m.)
October 26, 1955	Establishment of the Republic of Viet Nam. The United States, Britain, France, Australia, Italy, New Zealand, Japan, and Thailand recognize the Republic of Viet Nam.
October 29, 1955	First government of the Republic of Viet Nam with Mr. Ngo dinh Diem as President and Secretary of State for National Defense.
November 11, 1955	Launching of the anti-opium campaign.
November 14, 1955	A Vietnamese mission goes to Colombo to take part in the Political Conference of the Technical Cooperation Council for S.E.A.
December 13, 1955	Inauguration of the New York-Saigon sea line.
December 14, 1955	The Bank of Indochina is sold to Free Viet Nam, and becomes the National Bank of Viet Nam.
December 27, 1955	Presidential Ordinance abolishing the system of regional government, effective beginning January 1, 1956.
March 4, 1956	General Election for a National Constituent Assembly.
March 15, 1956	Inauguration of the National Assembly.
April 12, 1956	President Ngo inaugurates the National Institute of Administration.
April 13, 1956	Capture of Ba Cut, the last war lord in Viet Nam.
April 28, 1956	Withdrawal of the French Expeditionary Corps and dissolution of the French High Command.
October, 1956	Promulgation of a Constitution.