

### **Events which led to the final Exit of the French from Indo-China**

The Great Depression of 1930s had a terrible impact on Vietnam. The prices of rubber and rice fell leading to huge rural debts, unemployment and uprisings in rural areas. The French suppressed these uprisings with great severity, even using planes to bomb demonstrations. These events angered and united the people of Vietnam against the French occupation.

Meanwhile, in 1940 Japan occupied Vietnam. Now the nationalists had to fight against the Japanese as well as the French. The Vietminh fought the Japanese occupation and recaptured Hanoi in September 1945. The Democratic Republic of Vietnam was formed and Ho Chi Minh became its chairman.

The new republic faced many challenges. The French tried to control the tide of opposition by using emperor Bao Dai as their puppet. Faced with severe French offensive, the Vietminh were forced to retreat to the hills and stage fight from there. After eight years of fighting, the French were finally defeated in 1954 at Dien Bien Phu.

At Dien Bien Phu the French were outwitted by the Vietminh forces led by General Vo Nguyen Giap. The French Commander, Navarre, had not thought of all the problems he would face in the battle. The valley where French garrisons were located was flooded in the monsoon and the area was covered with bushes, making it difficult to move troops and tanks, or trace the Vietminh anti-aircraft guns hidden in the jungle.

From their base in the hills, the Vietminh surrounded the French garrisons in the valley below, digging trenches and tunnels to move without being detected. Supplies and reinforcements could not reach the besieged French garrison, the wounded French soldiers could not be moved, and the French airstrip became unusable because of continuous artillery fire.

Dien Bien Phu became a very important symbol of struggle. It strengthened Vietminh conviction in their capacity to fight powerful imperial forces through determination and proper strategy. Stories of the battle were retold in villages and cities to inspire people.

Way back in 1953, the Supreme Commander of the French armies, General Henry Navarre had declared confidently that the French would be victorious. But on 7 May, 1954 the Vietminh destroyed and captured more than 16,000 French soldiers. The entire commanding staff, including a General, 16 colonels and 1749 officers were taken prisoner.

At the peace negotiations in Geneva following the French defeat, the Vietnamese were forced to accept the division of the country into North Vietnam and South Vietnam. Ho Chi Minh and the Communists took control of North while Bao Dai's regime took the reins of power in the South.

France set up independent monarchies in Cambodia and Laos, whose territorial integrity was to be respected by all. The Geneva Conference led to the end of French claim to any territory in the Indochina peninsula. Thus, the French finally exited from Indochina.

## Some More MCQs

1. The colonial economy in Vietnam was primarily based on
  - (a) Rice cultivation
  - (b) Rubber plantation
  - (c) Industrialisation
  - (d) Both (a) and (b)
2. When was Tonkin Free School started?
  - (a) 1907
  - (b) 1910
  - (c) 1912
  - (d) 1914
3. Why did the USA enter into Vietnam War?
  - (a) To help the French
  - (b) To help the Japanese
  - (c) To check the spread of communism in the area
  - (d) All of these
4. When was the peace settlement signed in Paris ending the War between Vietnam and USA?
  - (a) January 1975
  - (b) January 1974
  - (c) April 1975
  - (d) January 1976
5. Who was the author of the book 'The History of Loss of Vietnam'?
  - (a) Ho Chi Minh
  - (b) Phan Boi Chau
  - (c) Cuong be
  - (d) Liang Qichao

