A poster with a red background. At the top, the words "VIETNAM WAR" are written in large, bold, black letters. A large yellow star is positioned behind the word "WAR". In the foreground, a silver military helmet is shown from a side profile, resting on a surface. The bottom left corner of the poster features a blue field with white stars, resembling the American flag.

**Power Point to accompany Carolina K-12's Lessons: *"The Vietnam War and Protest Music"* and/or *"Presidential Decisions & the Vietnam War"*, available in the Database of K-12 Resources**

**To view this PDF as a projectable presentation, save the file, click "View" in the top menu bar of the file, and select "Full Screen Mode"**

**To request an editable PPT version of this presentation, send a request to [CarolinaK12@unc.edu](mailto:CarolinaK12@unc.edu)**

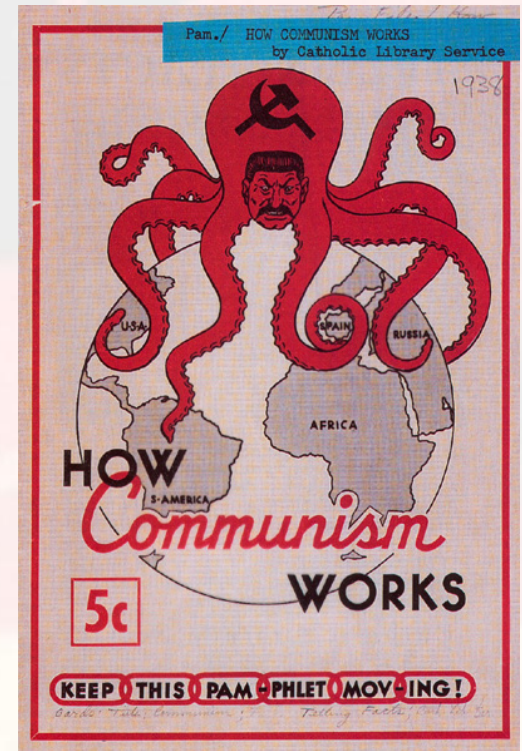
# France and Vietnam (1945 - 1953)

- **Indochina** (later Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia) was a French colony and after WWII they wanted to be free
- France denied the Vietnamese independence, so they fought back.
- **Vietminh**
  - Vietnamese freedom fighters led by **Ho Chi Minh**



# The US and Vietnam

- The US did not get involved in the conflict until **1949 – 1950**.
- The US did not support French colonialism, but they did not support Ho Chi Minh's communism.
- Two events caused the US to support France:
  1. China becomes communist in 1949
  2. The Korean War
- Presidents Truman and Eisenhower believed in the **Domino Theory**.
  - the idea that if one country falls to communism, the surrounding countries will too.



# France Falls (1954 - 1956)

- France could not defeat the resistance – the Vietminh **guerilla war** tactics were too difficult to defend against
- **Dien Bien Phu (1954)**
  - Battle where the French were badly beaten by the Vietminh. This loss convinced the French to leave Vietnam



# Geneva Accords (1954)

- Agreement to end fighting between French and Vietminh
- Divided **Indochina** into three countries
  1. Vietnam
  2. Cambodia
  3. Laos



- Also divided Vietnam into two sections:
  1. Communist north led by Ho Chi Minh →
  2. Pro-Western south led by Ngo Dinh Diem



# Geneva Accords

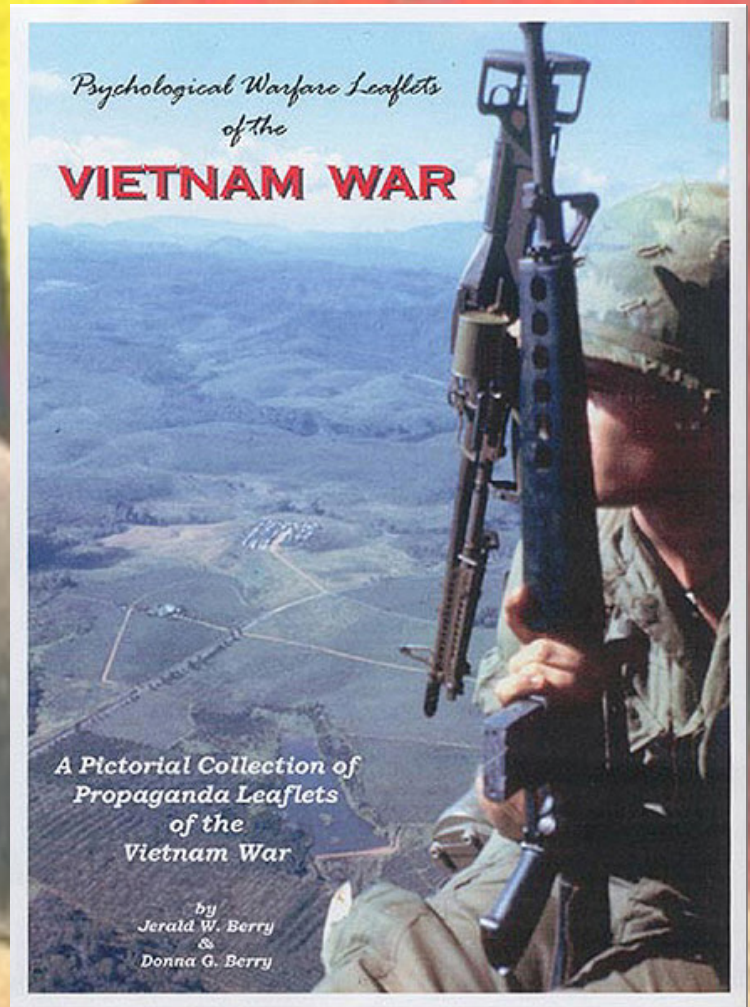
- Elections were to be held in 1956 to determine the governments of North and South Vietnam
- Diem refused to hold elections because he knew he would lose.
- Now the country was headed towards **civil war** with the US caught in the middle



Ngo Dinh Diem

# Vietnam: Escalation

• 1961 - 1965



# Vietcong



- The newly organized N. Vietnamese Guerilla Army that was based in S. Vietnam
- Effective at staging guerilla attacks
- Difficult to defeat, so Diem began to look to US for more help in fighting the Vietcong (VC)

# John F. Kennedy Becomes President



- Kennedy needed to appear tough on communism, so he increased aid and advisors to Vietnam
- He also urged Diem to make democratic reforms to increase his popularity --> these reforms had little effect



JFK explaining the Vietnam situation to reporters shortly after being elected.

# Diem's Unpopularity

- Diem was a Catholic and persecuted the Buddhists
- As a response some Buddhist monks committed self-immolation

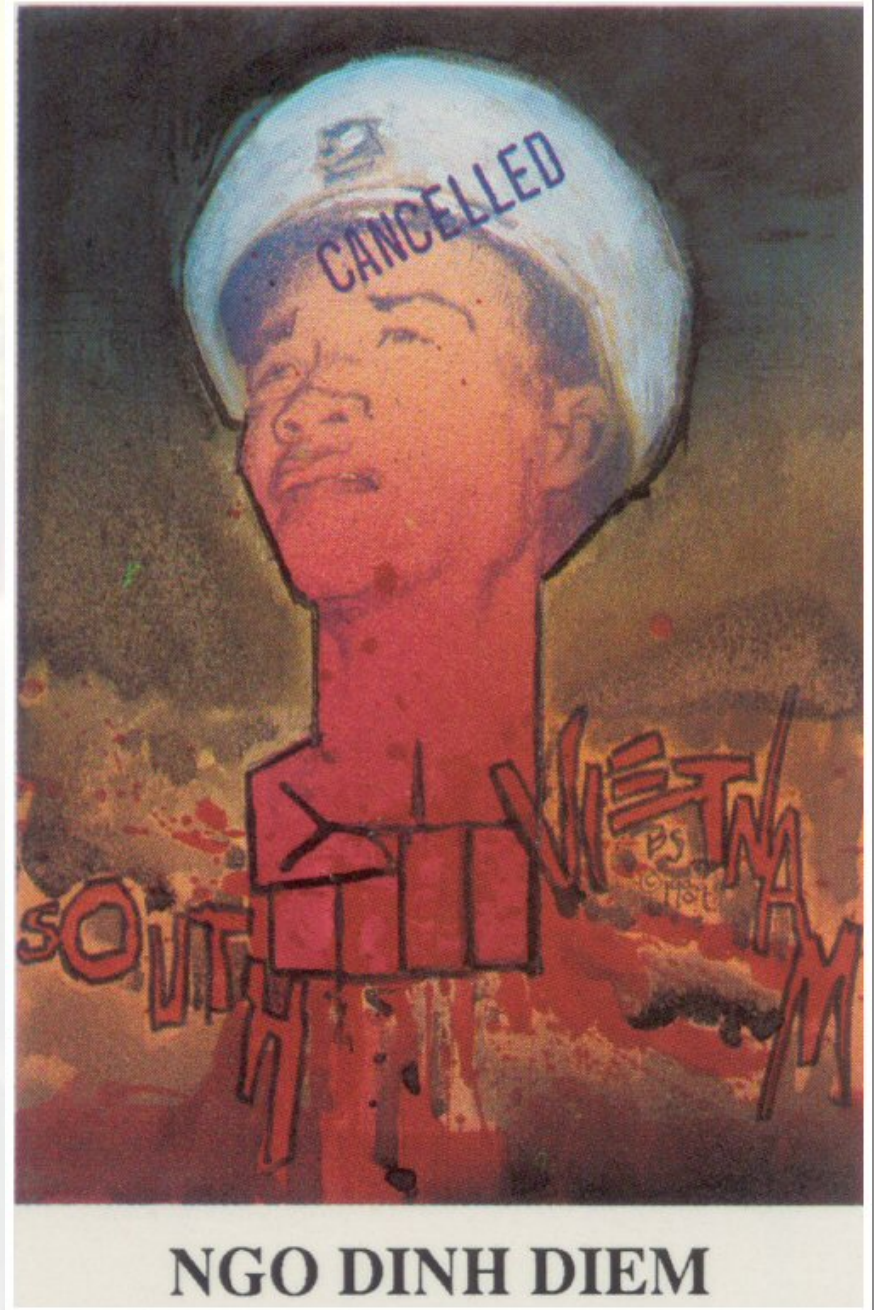


# Self-Immolation



# Diem's Downfall

- With US approval, he was overthrown and executed by his generals on Nov 2, 1963
- This severely weakened the S. Vietnamese gov't and forced the US to get more involved to help the S. Vietnamese
- President Kennedy was assassinated a few weeks later on November 22<sup>nd</sup>. VP Lyndon Baines Johnson replaces JFK.



# Gulf of Tonkin Incident

- August 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> 1964
- President Lyndon Johnson tells the nation that Vietnamese ships have fired upon US destroyers
- He asks Congress to authorize the use of force to defend American forces
- In 2005 a declassified study stated that the second incident never happened



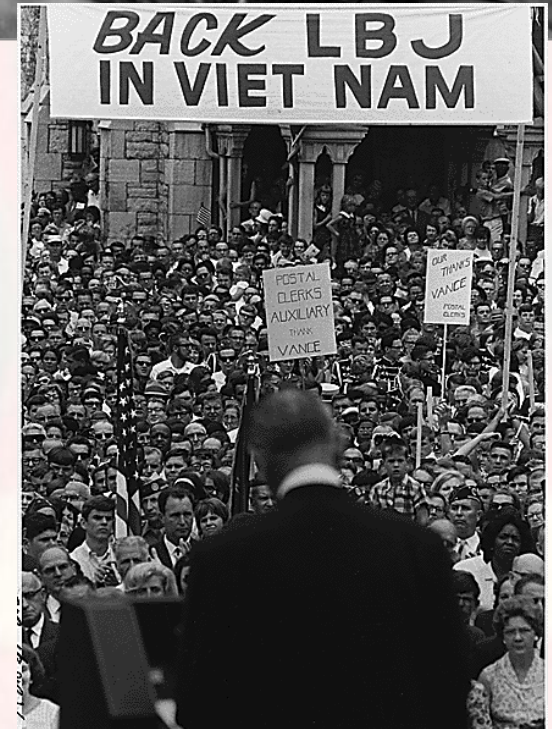
# Gulf of Tonkin Resolution

- August 7, 1964
- Gulf of Tonkin Resolution authorized the President to “take all necessary measure to repel any armed attack against the forces of the US and to prevent further aggression.”



# War

- The US began to increase the amount of troops in 1964 - 66
- The US was supremely confident it would be an “easy” war and a majority of the US public supported the war too
- But as we quickly found out, the war wasn’t easy



# VC tactics

- Blend in with general population by not wearing uniforms.
  - Who is friend?
  - Who is foe?
- Ambushes
- Booby traps
- Guerilla warfare



Vietcong



Traditional Vietnamese Farmer

# US Response to VC tactics

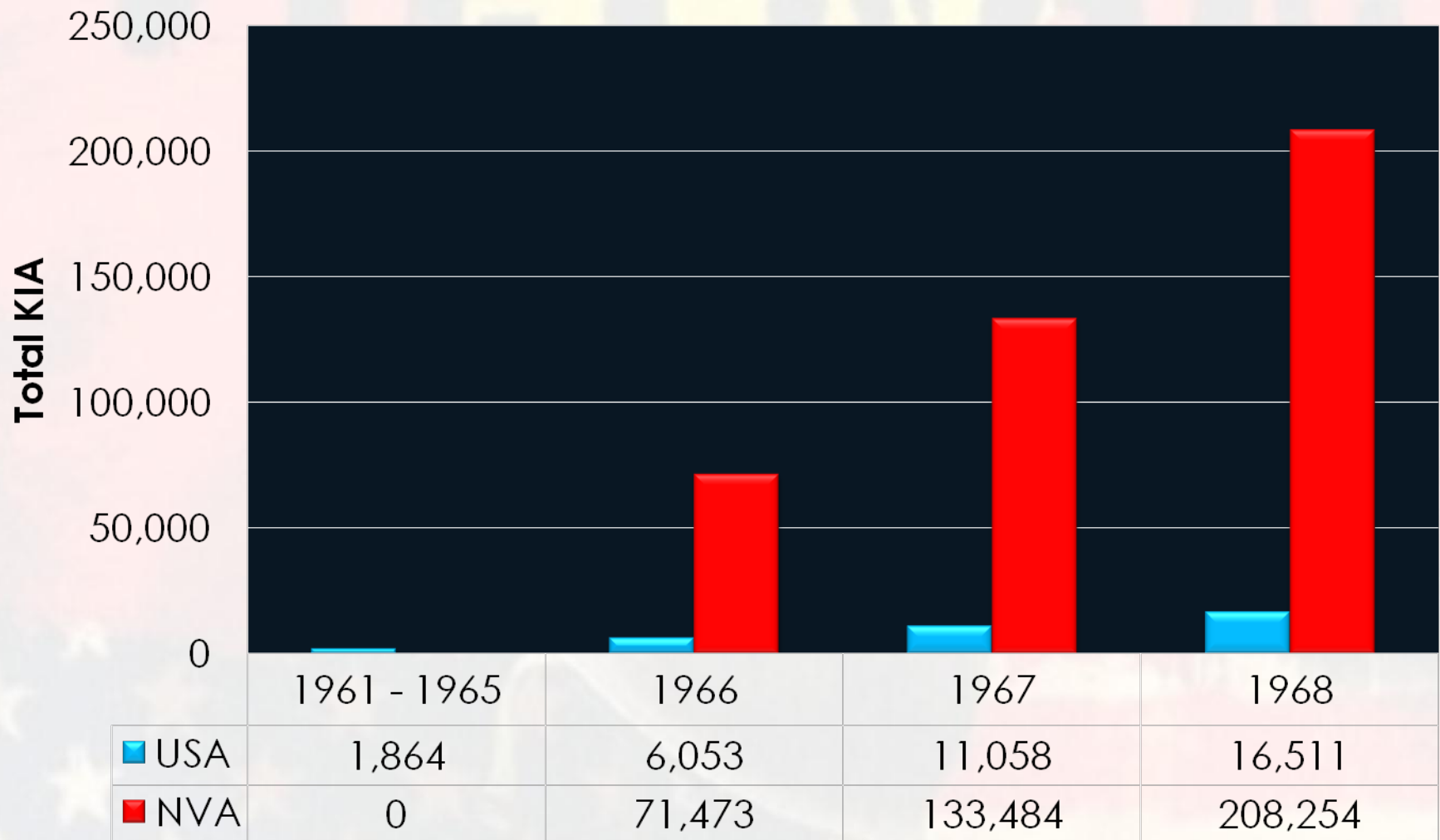
- “Search and destroy” missions
- Destroy landscape to get rid of VC cover
  - Napalm
    - Jellied gasoline that explodes and sticks to surfaces. It is very difficult to extinguish
  - Agent Orange
    - a chemical that destroys the foliage so the US could see troop movement from the sky



**Agent Orange being sprayed from a helicopter**



# Killed in Action 1961 - 1968



Note: KIA figures for the NVA are unknown from 1961 - 1965

# Increasing Difficulties

- The VC did not surrender despite our tactics
- They were not going to give up their homeland easily and they were willing to accept massive amounts of casualties
- The US also refused to invade N. Vietnam because we didn't want a full scale war with China
- This made it very difficult to win for the US



# Ho Chi Min Trail

- The N. Vietnamese's series of jungle supply paths
- Passed through the countries of Laos and Cambodia
- Because Laos and Cambodia weren't involved in the war, LBJ refused the order to bomb the trail



A poster for a Vietnam War teach-in. The background features a large, stylized yellow star on a red field, with the words "VIETNAM WAR" in large, dark, block letters. In the foreground, a silver military helmet is positioned over a portion of the American flag, which shows the stars and stripes. The text "Vietnam Part II: Teach-ins to Tet" is centered over the helmet and star.

# **Vietnam Part II: Teach-ins to Tet**

**1965 - 1968**

# Post Gulf of Tonkin

- Many of the President's advisors supported an expansion of the war.
- **Robert McNamara** the **Secretary of Defense** was one of the biggest supporters.
- In March 1965, Johnson expanded the war by continuously **bombing** North Vietnam – this became known as **Operation Rolling Thunder**.



Robert McNamara

# Operation Rolling Thunder

- Sustained bombing campaign against N. Vietnam
- Goal was to overwhelm the N. Vietnamese and convince them to stop supplying the Viet Cong.



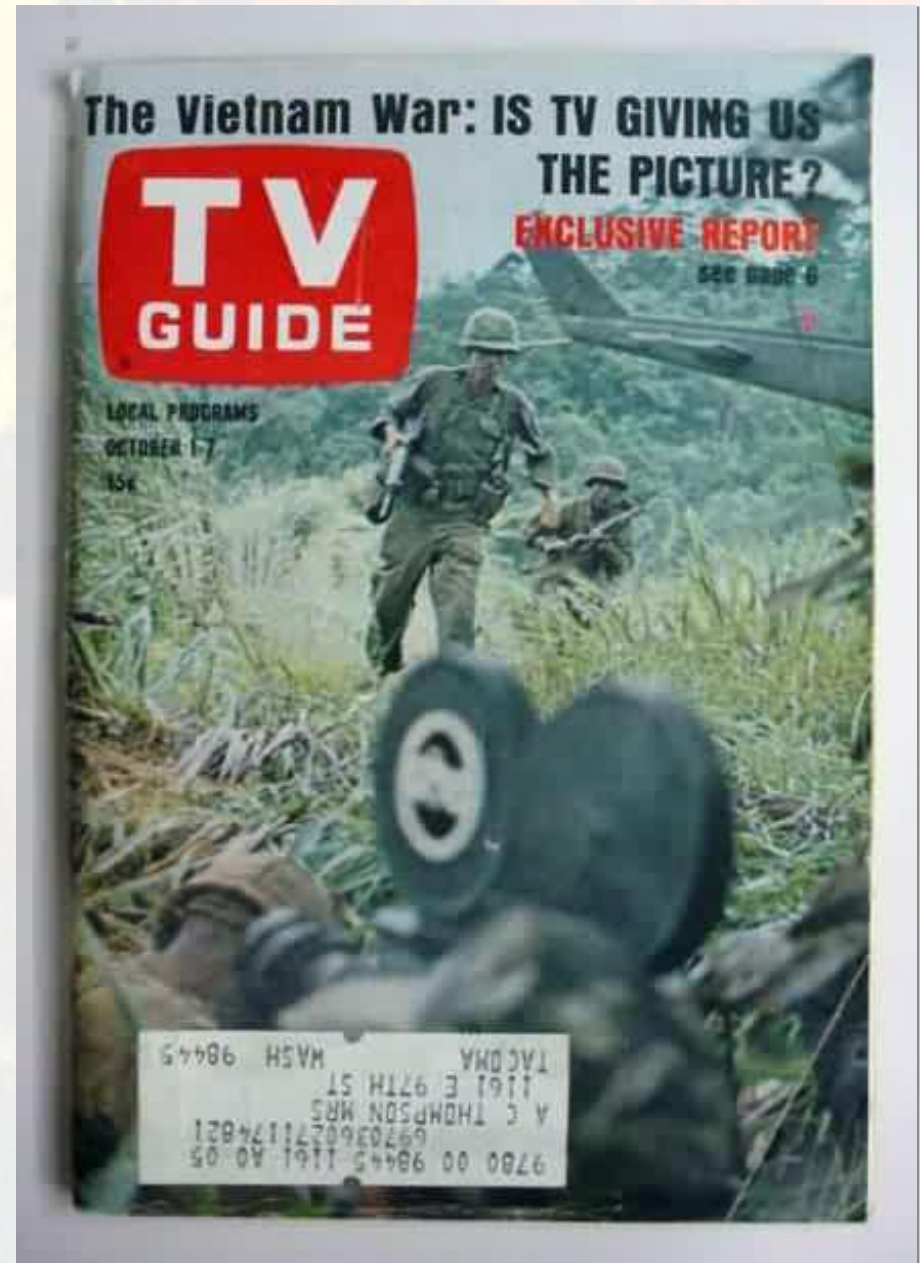
# Television War

- At the beginning of the war, **General William Westmoreland** kept declaring that the enemy is on the brink of defeat
- The TV news reports showed a different story. Every night Americans saw young men dying and wounded and began to doubt the reports.



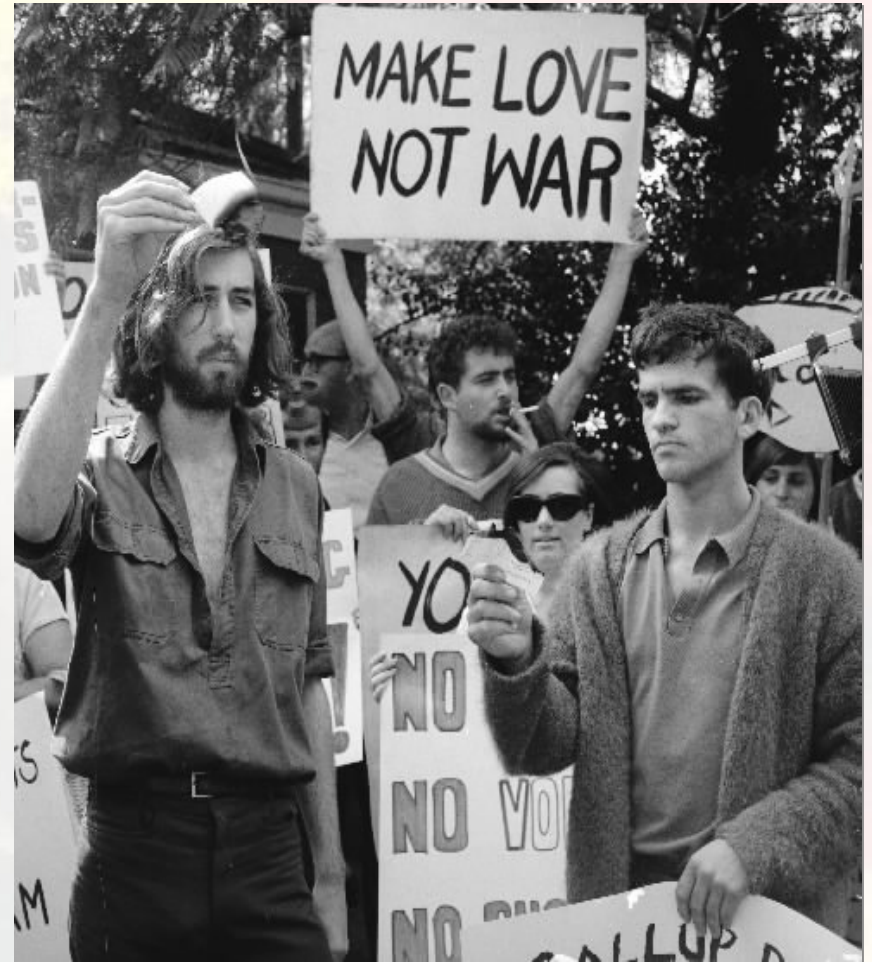
# Television War

- A **Credibility Gap** developed, meaning it was hard to believe the rosy government reports.
- Vietnam was the first **Television War** because **footage of combat was shown nightly**.
- This helped lead to an anti-war movement.

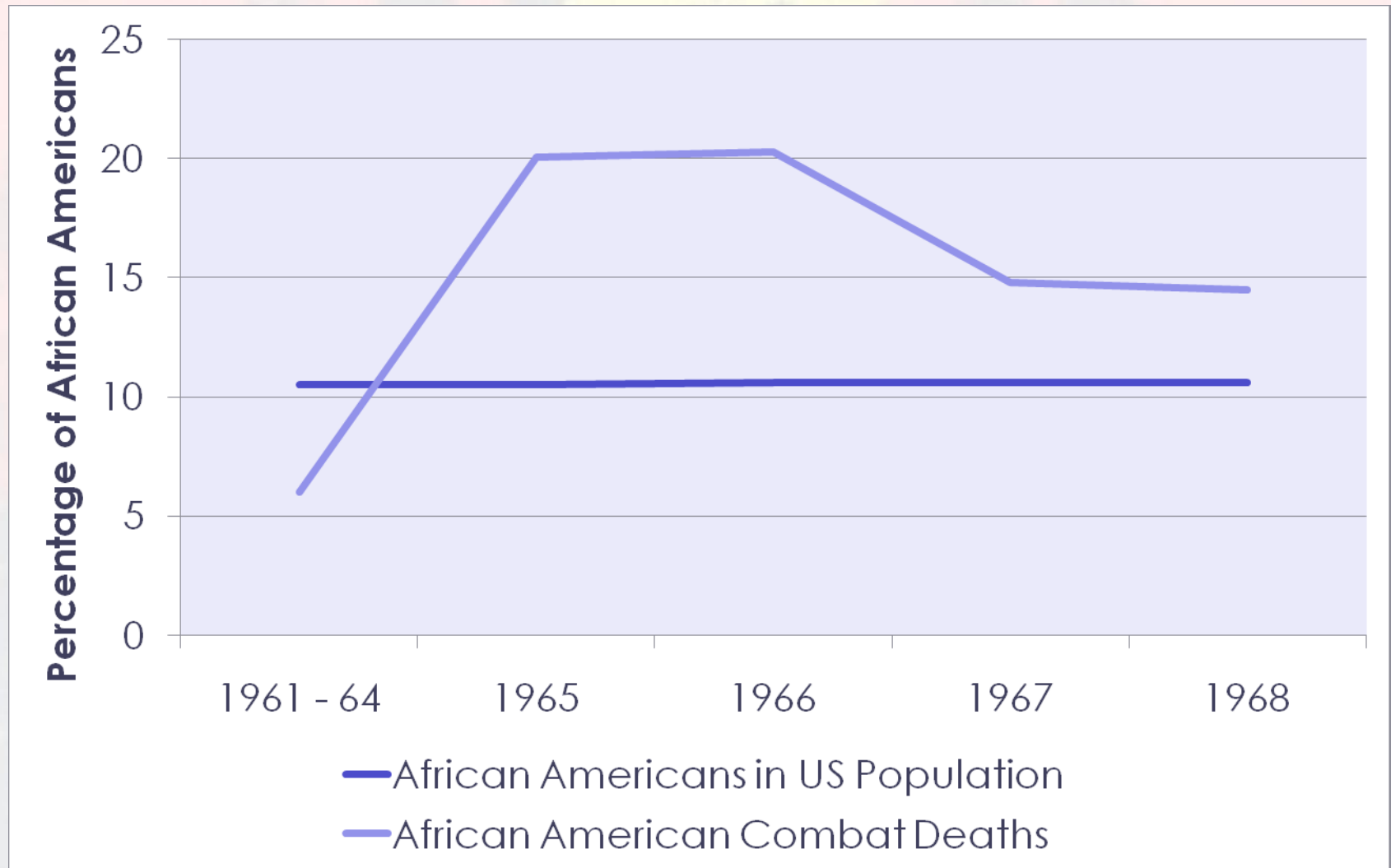


# Anti-War Movement

- The anti-war movement was heavily influenced by the Civil Rights Movement
- **Teach-ins** – students and teachers across US colleges abandoned their classes to discuss the Vietnam War and their opposition to it
- **Burning Draft Cards** – many young men did not want to fight in a conflict they felt was wrong so they burned **draft cards** to protest



**Dr. King Protests the War** – King began to publicly criticize the war when it became apparent that many of the soldiers fighting and dying were poor and African American.



# Hawks and Doves

- By 1968 polls showed that the country was almost **split down the middle** on support for Vietnam.
- **Doves**
  - Americans who wanted to withdraw from Vietnam
- **Hawks**
  - Americans who wanted to stay in Vietnam



# 1968 - Boom Goes the Dynamite

- **Tet Offensive**

- The year started with a **Vietcong** surprise attack on US troops
- The VC managed to attack almost all major US airbases and many Southern Vietnamese cities – this became known as the **Tet Offensive**.
- The **Tet Offensive** was a huge **military failure** for the VC, but it still shocked the **American public**.
- How could an enemy that is so close to defeat launch an attack of that size?



# Famous Tet Photo...



# Famous Tet Photo

“The general killed the Viet Cong; I killed the general with my camera. Still photographs are the most powerful weapon in the world. People believe them, but photographs do lie, even without manipulation. They are only half-truths...What the photograph didn't say was, 'What would you do if you were the general at that time and place on that hot day, and you caught the so-called bad guy after he blew away one, two or three American soldiers? How do you know you wouldn't have pulled the trigger yourself?’”

- Eddie Adams, Photographer

# 1968 - Boom Goes the Dynamite

- Johnson does not run for re-election
- Due to **unpopularity over the Vietnam War** and two strong Democratic candidates, Johnson decides not to run for President.



# 1968

## – Dr. Martin Luther King

- Dr. King is assassinated in Memphis by **James Earl Ray**.

## – Robert Kennedy

- JFK's younger brother and Democratic presidential candidate is killed by **Sirhan Sirhan**.

## – Riots in Chicago

- at the **Democratic National Convention** in Chicago, **police and protesters** clashed in a highly publicized riot – it was all over TV.



Assassination of Dr. King

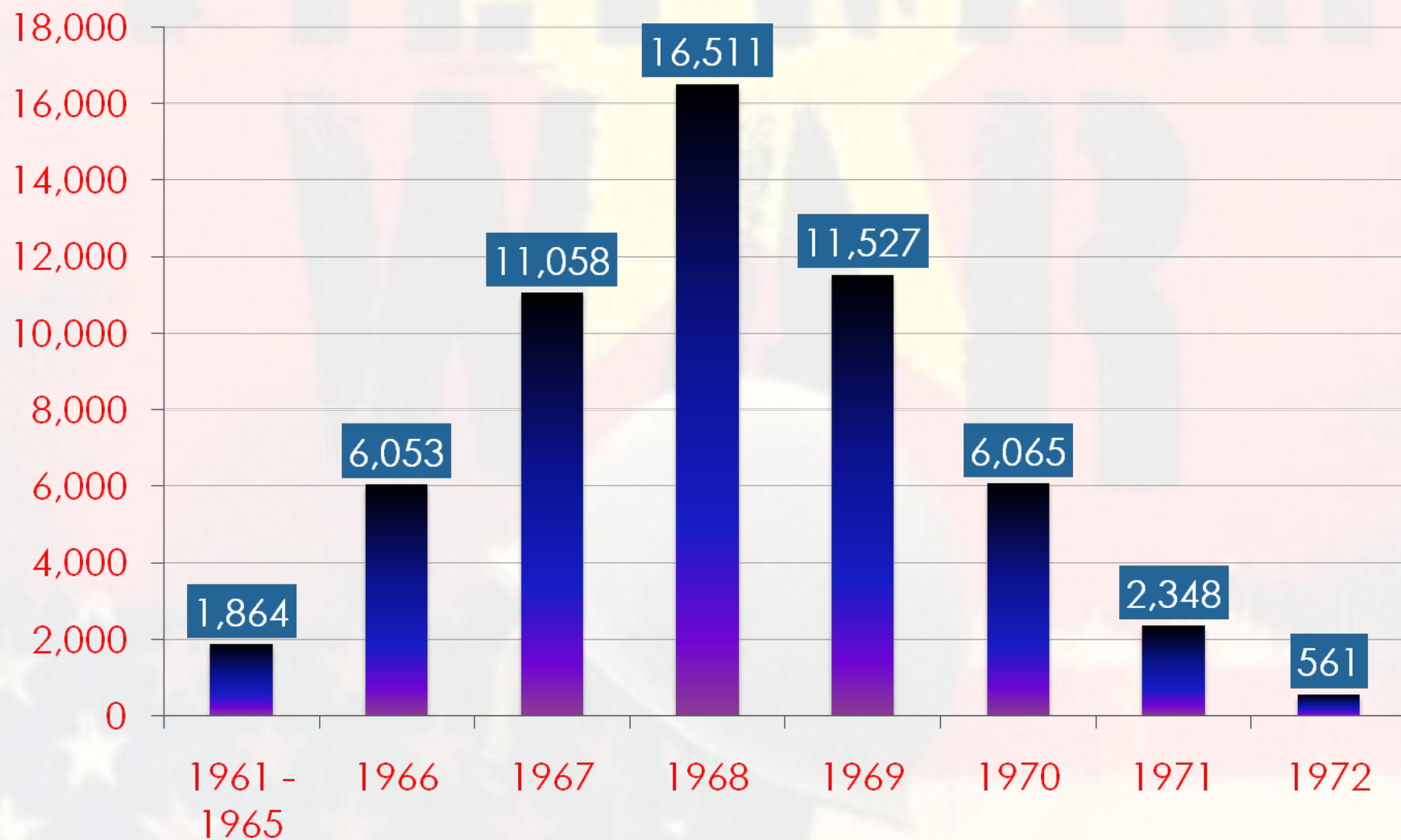


Robert F. Kennedy's  
Assassination



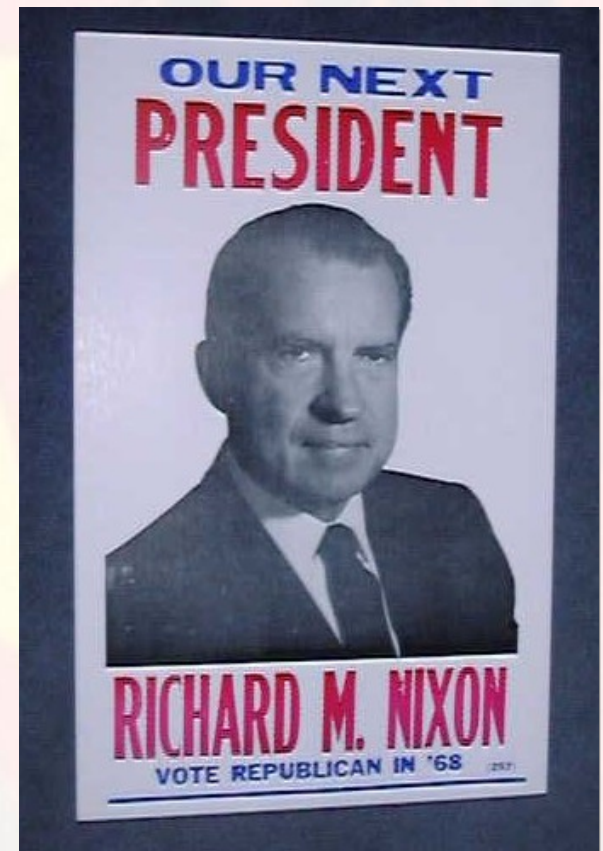
Clashes at the Democratic  
National Convention in Chicago

## US Troops Killed in Action 1961 - 1972



# Election of 1968

- **Richard Nixon (Republican) vs. Hubert Humphrey (Democrat) vs. George Wallace (American Independent)**
- **Nixon wins and he promises to “Bring Us Together,” and also end the war**



# My Lai Massacre

- March 16, 1968
- US Soldiers killed 347 to 504 unarmed citizens in South Vietnam
- When the incident became public knowledge in 1969, it prompted widespread outrage around the world. The massacre also reduced U.S. support at home for the Vietnam War.



# Nixon and 'Nam



Famous image from  
Kent State Shootings

- **Vietnamization**
  - Nixon's strategy for "peace with honor"
  - a gradual withdrawal of US troops from Vietnam
  - Turn control of the war over to the S. Vietnamese
- **Invasion of Cambodia**
  - Nixon expanded the war into Cambodia to stop VC
  - sparked protests
- **Kent State University Protests**
  - Response to expansion of war into Cambodia
  - College protesters killed by National Guard

# Nixon and 'Nam



Famous Image from the  
Fall of Saigon in 1975

- Paris Peace Accords
  - January 19, 1973
  - US and N. Vietnam reach peace
- South Vietnam falls 1975

# Legacy of 'Nam

- Cost \$150 Billion
- Over 58,000 American Deaths
- Over 3 million total Vietnamese deaths (civilians/military)
- Considered by many to be the first US military defeat
- Disrespect of troops upon returning home
  - “That was the feeling in the air that we were unclean.” – Jan Scruggs, founder of Vietnam Veterans Memorial



# Legacy of 'Nam

- Americans became more distrustful of government
  - Pentagon Papers: Secret study of US involvement in Vietnam that was leaked to the NY Times
  - Revealed that American leaders lied to Congress and the American people regarding Vietnam
- War Powers Act
  - limited President's powers, had to get consent from Congress before sending troops

