

1. The First Indochina War was an eight-year conflict in which French colonial
2. rule in Vietnam was challenged by the insurrectionist Viet Minh army. It
3. culminated in 1954 in a battle at the French fortified base in the town of Dien
4. Bien Phu. After defending this remote jungle base for two months, French
5. forces were overrun by troops, under the command of General Vo Nguyen Giap.
6. It was a defeat that effectively signaled the end of the French empire in
7. Southeast Asia. The French had established the isolated military base across
8. the bottom of a valley in Dien Bien Province in 1953, hoping to disrupt Viet
9. Minh supply lines. General Henri Navarre, commander in chief of French
10. forces in Indochina, then made the fatal error of trying to convert the base into
11. a defensive stronghold, defying the base military precept that defenders should
12. occupy higher ground.

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25. outclassed the French guns, but was extremely well camouflaged. When the
26. battle began, French gunners could not counter the lethal onslaught, nor could
27. they locate the Viet Minh artillery positions from the air. Events took a grave
28. turn for the French when the base's two airstrips—the besieged troops' lifeline
29. for supplies—were put out of action by Viet Minh guns.



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30. (38) Why does the author of the passage accuse the French of showing
31. “astonishing complacency”?
32. 1. They were convinced that their powerful artillery and airpower would
33. deter the Viet Minh from attempting to attack their base at Dien Bien Phu.
34. 2. They did not anticipate that Viet Minh troops could function effectively
35. because they believed the Viet Minh would need airborne reinforcements.
36. 3. They overestimated the capacity of their own military forces and, as a
37. result, were not in a position to deal with the attacks they faced from their
38. enemy.

39. 4. They saw no need to study the geography of the entire Dien Bien Phu area
40. because they foresaw the battle taking place within the confines of the valley

Further Questions

41. **3) Why did the French station only 13,000 troops at Dien Bien Phu while the
42. Viet Minh had 50,000?**

43. *They were confident that their superior air power, combined with the quantity
44. and quality of their artillery would crush the Viet Minh.*

45. **4) What happened when the battle began?**

46. *The French gunners could not counter the lethal onslaught.*

47. In the end, logistics carried the day for the Viet Minh. Giap's front line was
48. able to rely upon thousands of human porters who brought tons of food and
49. ammunition through the jungle on foot and by bicycle. By contrast, the French,
50. after losing their vital airstrips, had to rely on sporadic, inadequate airdrops of
51. supplies from cargo planes hampered by adverse weather and anti-aircraft fire.
52. The frontal infantry assaults Giap finally used to attack the French perimeter

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65. defense and ^{敷(し)く}paved the way for a swift and effective infantry operation.

Further Questions

66. **5) What was Giap's front line able to rely upon?**

67. *They were able to rely on thousands of human porters who brought tons of food
68. and ammunition through the jungle on foot and by bicycle.*

69. **6) What did the frontal infantry assaults Giap finally used result in?**

70. *They resulted in horrifyingly high casualties for his troops.*

71. According to historian Bernard Fall, the disagreement that emerged between
72. Navarre and his subordinate General René Cogny, the commander in charge of
73. troops in northern Vietnam, played a large part in the French defeat. Cogny,
74. despite having Dien Bien Phu within his area of command, did not share the
75. more politically minded Navarre's conviction that a Viet Minh victory there
76. would be a national disgrace for France. Feeling that greater priority should be
77. given to other military operations, Cogney was unwilling to commit the
78. reinforcements desperately needed at the beleaguered base. To exacerbate

79. matters, the government in Paris offered little guidance to its generals in
80. Vietnam. By 1954, the French had abandoned military victory as a goal.
81. Instead, their main objective was to avoid defeat and thereby strengthen their
82. position at the bargaining table. This would allow them to negotiate a political
83. settlement that would permit French forces to exit Vietnam with their honor
84. intact—a dignified withdrawal rather than a rout. Thanks to Dien Bien Phu,
85. this failed utterly. The base fell just one day before the scheduled peace talks
86. between the French and Vietnamese began in Geneva, Switzerland, on May 8,
87. all but guaranteeing a swift and humiliating removal of French forces in their
88. entirety.

89. **(40) What was the basis of the dispute between General Henri Navarre and**
90. **General René Cogny?**

91. 1. Cogny, believing the base at Dien Bien Phu to be of utmost importance,
92. was angered by Navarre's inability to plan a long-term strategy for its defense.
93. 2. Cogny felt that although Navarre spoke of the importance of Dien Bien

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103. 1954年までに、フランスにとっての主な目的は何になりましたか。

Their main objective was to avoid defeat and thereby strengthen their position at the bargaining table.

104. Algeria-based French anti-colonialist writer Frantz Fanon believed that the
105. Viet Minh victory took on a wider significance. In his 1961 book *The Wretched*
106. *of the Earth*, he asserted that Dien Bien Phu was “no longer, strictly speaking,
107. a Vietnamese victory,” but the start of the overthrow of colonial oppression
108. worldwide. Fanon claimed that for nations under Western colonial rule, “a
109. Dien Bien Phu was now within reach of every colonized subject.” While the
110. battle did galvanize opposition to French rule in Algeria, which broke out in
111. armed resistance six months later, Dien Bien Phu did not mark the worldwide
112. watershed that Fanon had predicted, least of all in Vietnam itself. Free of its
113. French colonizer though it was, it became divided into two states as a result of
114. peace talks. Like other newly autonomous Asian and African countries,
115. Vietnam then rapidly found itself caught up in the machinations of the Cold
116. War. As the Soviet Union and the United States solicited allies, smaller states

117. had little option but to choose sides in the super-powers' struggle for spheres of
118. influence. In Vietnam, this meant the North fell under the influence of the
119. Communist Soviets while the South was supported by the United States—a
120. situation that would ultimately lead to the Vietnam War.

121. **(41) What can be said of Frantz Fanon's comments about the battle of Dien
122. Bien Phu?**

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123. 1. He overstated the degree to which the Viet Minh had relied on the
124. support of people living in other colonized nations to achieve their victory.
125. 2. He credited the battle with inspiring an uprising in Algeria, which in
126. reality began while the outcome at Dien Bien Phu was still in doubt.
127. 3. He failed to anticipate the degree to which external pressures would limit
128. the independence gained by formerly colonized countries.
129. 4. He did not recognize the important role communism had played in the Viet
130. Minh's struggle to rid their country of colonial occupiers.

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