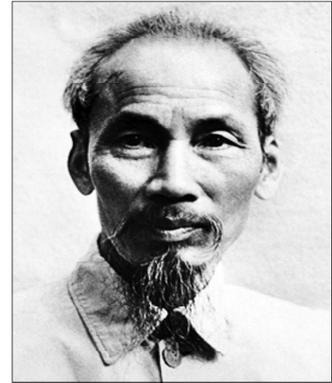


In Memory : 50th Death Anniversary

Life of Ho Chi Minh

Ho Chi Minh, real name Nguyen Tat Thanh (1890-1969) , Vietnamese Communist leader and the principal force behind the Vietnamese struggle against French colonial rule. Ho was born on May 19, 1890, in the village of Kimlien, Annam (central Vietnam) , the son of an official who had resigned in protest against French domination of his country. Ho attended school in Hue and then briefly taught at a private school in Phan Thiet. In 1911 he was employed as a cook on a French steamship liner and thereafter worked in London and Paris. After World War I, using the pseudonym Nguyen Ai Quoc (Nguyen the Patriot) , Ho engaged in radical activities and was in the



founding group of the French Communist party. He was summoned to Moscow for training and, in late 1924, he was sent to Canton, China, where he organized a revolutionary movement among Vietnamese exiles. He was forced to leave China when local authorities cracked down on Communist activities, but he returned in 1930 to found the Indochinese Communist party (ICP) . He stayed in Hong Kong as representative of the Communist International. In June 1931 Ho was arrested there by British police and remained in prison until his release in 1933. He then made his way back to the Soviet Union, where he reportedly spent several years recovering from tuberculosis. In 1938 he returned to China and served as an adviser with Chinese Communist armed forces. When Japan occupied Vietnam in 1941, he resumed contact with ICP leaders and helped to found a new Communist-dominated independence movement, popularly known as the Vietminh, that fought the Japanese. In August 1945, when Japan surrendered, the Vietminh seized power and proclaimed the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV) in Hanoi. Ho Chi Minh, now known by his final and best-known pseudonym (which means the "Enlightener"), became president. The French were unwilling to grant independence to their colonial subjects, and in late 1946 war broke out. For eight years Vietminh guerrillas fought French troops in the mountains and rice paddies of Vietnam, finally defeating them in the decisive Battle of Dien Bien Phu in 1954. Ho, however, was deprived of his victory. Subsequent negotiations at Geneva divided the country, with only the North assigned to the Vietminh. The DRV, with Ho still president, now devoted its efforts to constructing a Communist society in North Vietnam. In the early 1960s, however, conflict resumed in the South, where Communist-led guerrillas mounted an insurgency against the U.S.-supported regime in Saigon. Ho, now in poor health, was reduced to a largely ceremonial role, while policy was shaped by others. On September 3, 1969, he died in Hanoi of heart failure. In his honor, after the Communist conquest of the South in 1975, Saigon was renamed Ho Chi Minh City. Ho Chi Minh was not only the founder of Vietnamese communism, he was the very soul of the revolution and of Vietnam's struggle for independence. His personal qualities of simplicity, integrity, and determination were widely admired, not only within Vietnam but else where as well.
