

The year that rocked the world

[History](#)



Full 1968: The Year that Rocked the World (History Essay) 29 April

(estimated word count = 623) Introduction

The year 1968 began like any new year in that people expected it to be auspicious but subsequent events made it otherwise. In retrospect, this year turned out badly for almost everyone as the Vietnam War escalated and American troops were having a hard time trying to defeat ill-equipped but well-motivated and ably-led communist troops from North Vietnam. It was a year dominated by negative news ranging from the arrests of prominent people like Dr. Benjamin Spock and other anti-war activists for violating military draft laws, the capture of an American intelligence ship (U. S. S. Pueblo and imprisonment of its crews for eleven months), and the assassination of Civil Rights Movement leader Martin Luther King in Memphis. The benefit of hindsight can determine it was indeed a bad year such that political activist, critic, and commentator Tomas Emmet Hayden remarked “ it was fitting that such a bad year would end with the election of Richard Nixon” (Kurlansky 366). His march to the presidency began in February 1968 when he entered the New Hampshire primary to declare his candidacy and eventually won only narrowly over his opponents. He promised to unite the nation but was a divisive figure and the first U. S. president in history to resign his office due to Watergate.

Discussion

However, there was one event which shocked everybody in America and everyone in the world. This was the My Lai Massacre in which American ground troops from the Charlie Company rampaged through a Vietnamese village in retaliation for guerrilla attacks and killed more than 500 helpless civilians (South Kingstown High School 1). This was not known for more than <https://assignbuster.com/the-year-that-rocked-the-world/>

a year but its significance was it made America lose its moral high ground. The Vietnam War was highly unpopular in America, especially among many college students who protested against it and evaded the military draft by absconding into Canada. In the My Lai Massacre, there was a complete breakdown of military discipline such that only an intervention by airborne troops stopped the rampaging soldiers from killing everybody in that Vietnamese hamlet. America got involved in the Vietnam War due to the Cold War proxy wars it had fought against client states of the Soviet Union and China; its justification is supposedly to make the whole world safe for democracy but the massacre exposed the hypocrisy of U. S. political rhetoric. This mass murder of innocent children, women, and old men is considered as the most shocking and revolting episode in the entire Vietnam War such that Americans who were initially ambivalent about the war were finally convinced on ending this war.

America got embroiled in the Vietnam War under the guise of sending over military advisers only who will not take part in direct combat operations but this eventually escalated due to the so-called "mission creep" in military parlance in which no specific mission leads to ever-widening objectives such that America found it hard to disengage and withdraw its troop deployments without losing face. This is the only war that America lost and became template for other overseas military misadventures similar to the Soviet involvement in Afghanistan. In this massacre, the American strategy of hamletting was found to be defective (Turse 12). After Vietnam, the nation of America became averse to involvement that it embraced isolationism.

Conclusion

Modern wars are waged under more humane conditions such as those

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mentioned in the United Nations Geneva Conventions that governed military conduct and the United States of America supplemented this with a formulation of its own rules of engagement (ROE) supposed to protect human rights in areas under warfare. The My Lai Massacre was a breakdown of this hallowed military doctrine and it made the year 1968 spectacularly bad.

Works Cited

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