DIEN BIEN PHU, THE SECRET REPORT

Director(s): Patrick JEUDY

The battle of Dien Bien Phu heralded the end of French Indochina - ceasefire had been decreed on 7 May 1954. Thousands died in the narrow basin, the French expeditionary corps had been beaten by Vietminh forces!
A few months after the fall of Dien Bien Phu, two generals tore each other apart, accusing one another to be responsible for this defeat. The press got hold of the affair and fanned the flames. Henri Navarre, commander-in-chief of Indochina demands a full inquiry in order to thwart René Cogny, commander of the Tonkin forces.
The commission began its hearings in April 1955, headed by General Catroux, summoning the top echelon of the battle - Generals Navarre, Cogny and de Castries - as well as colonels and unit commanders to testify. They did and they did not spare each other...
The commission's final report blamed General Cogny who had been leading the battle. The commission concluded that he was at fault for not having blindly obeyed his superior officer. The army has always been very pernickety on this subject.

The report of the inquiry has never been made public. This secret file sets the stage for Patrick Jeudy's film retracing the battle through the prism of blame, wrong-doing and faults as established by the commission. The report serves as the thread that weaves together the testimonies of politicians at Dien Bien Phu before the battle, as well as those of members of the expeditionary forces who fell victim to the rivalry of two men.

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