

Due date: Saturday, 20 November 2010, 09:05 PM

Last edited: Friday, 19 November 2010, 10:45 PM (994 words)

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History of the Vietnam War

11-18-10

When I came across the interview with A.J. Langguth he immediately started talking about several turning points in the war both literal and metaphorical, all of them in the few years following Tet. In the first paragraph of **her** interview **he** talks about how the Tet offensives demoralized the troops, not right away but by 1970 most of the soldiers had peace signs on their helmets and were getting high all the time instead of focusing on the war and what they needed to be doing. None of them wanted to be there any more, to quote Mr. Langguth "none of them wanted to be last one to get killed."

In a more physical sense in 1970 Nixon had begun to pull American troops out and replace them with ARVN soldiers. Even this didn't do anything to help the cause in the Vietnam War because Nixon at the same time announced that he was going to send South Vietnamese troops into Cambodia which not only sparked protests at home, but because the ARVN troops weren't properly equipped so many more died then was necessary.

The ARVN also knew that at some point in the future, probably not too far off, the US was going to be withdrawing all of its troops and that made them very apprehensive. Also lastly because of the problems with desertion in the South Vietnamese army there were more and more Vietnamese citizens being drafted against their will which did nothing but cause morale problems which caused a decreased interest in winning the war and lead to a complacent attitude and people just wanting out and to go home. Once the US attitude got to that point overseas and with all the protesting going on at home, there was no way to turn it back around.

As I got into this week's reading in the Appy book I came read the interview with Frank Maguire. He served three tours in Vietnam so he really had an interesting perspective on the war from start to finish and the finish is what he spent most of his interview talking about. I know that we are picking **to** separate stories, one to demonstrate the turning point and another the end, but the story

from Mr. Langguth and Mr. Maguire's story tie so closely together it's a little hard for me to separate them. To me it seems that the turning point may as well have been the end of the war because we got into a place we couldn't come back from.

Early on in his first tour in Vietnam Mr. Maguire speaks of how positive his outlook on the war was. He felt as though he was making a real difference in the lives of the Vietnamese people and making Vietnam a much better place. He worked with the 2nd ARVN Division where he helped provide security and reconstruction for the people. One of the lines in his interview said that he made speeches about how the Americans weren't just running around killing people; they were there to help the Vietnamese build and to make their lives better. His goal was not only to help them, but to make them self reliant so that they could sustain with what we gave them and move forward on their own, and they were doing it.

When he returned to Vietnam in 1967 he was in a different area and he was immediately discouraged because instead of the Vietnamese building roads and schools for themselves they would rely on the 1st Cav to do it for them, not that there was much wrong with that but we never stopped to think about what they really needed, all we did was give them what we thought they wanted and then left it alone without really finishing the job. If we built a school we didn't bother to provide teachers or books for student use, that sort of thoughtlessness. We just decided we knew how to do it better and we kind of forgot to make sure they could stand on their own. That attitude was reflected in the civilians and in the military. We wanted to win the war on our own and shelter the Vietnamese.

Mr. Maguire said that by the time he made it back to Vietnam in 1970 the ARVN troops would always rely on the US troops to take care of whatever skirmishes they got into. If the Americans weren't around they didn't want to fight, not that anyway could really blame them, they had no training or support to speak of. When they went out on patrol with American's they knew they had American support they could fall back on, but even then they were always looking back to make sure they American's were still with them.

Beyond that, Maguire also discussed the attitude of the higher ups so to speak. He noted that by 1970 nobody was really interested in winning the war; they were all more interested in how they could make a buck off of it. He said that one guy asked him to find out where he could sell three P-51's with ammo.

I could keep going on and on with examples but what I saw in his interview doesn't really require that. By the time that Mr. Maguire was on his 3rd tour no one cared any more. No one in country wanted to be there and no one was willing to work at anything unless there was something in it for them, other than just serving their country. That is the reason I have a hard time separating the turning point from the end. We lost interest and we lost motivation both at home and in country. Once we made that turn there was no coming back from it.



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