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History of Vietnam

Prof. Escobar

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Part one

Roger Donlon's story proved most impacting to me, due mostly to the amount of chaos it contained. Besides being so far away from home and in war time, a large amount of the forces fighting for him turned traitor and attacked him. The many references Donlon makes to a lack of higher intelligence shows just how chaotic the entire experience must have been, to all involved.

"..That shows you how bad our communications were with higher headquarters." (Appy 14)

The few terrible accounts of fellow soldiers being shot and dying serve to Donlon's credibility. He is believable because he was there, first hand, fighting and getting shot at. The information presented in his story is objective and is told according to his best recollection. Of course, A few details are potentially missing due to the sheer terror and confusion of the early morning attack in the complete dark and the traitorous regiment that was expected to be on his side. Donlon's mention of the fact that respect is really just a deep, deep love forces one to conclude that he is not bending reality for any sort of political gain and his story is an authentic one.

Part 2

Of the many disappointing stories contained within the second part of the Appy's book, Tillman and Thomson's remarks appear most troubling to me. These men were not listened to and were at the same time aware of the general consensus being that President Johnson and his administration were unapproachable in certain respects. This shows that a huge amount of confusion and a large lack of checks and balances were used to make major decisions in dealing with Vietnam and the overall attempt to negate communism. In Thomson's account, he admits to signing paperwork which he believed to be reconnaissance but also involved murder:

"They were taking pictures and shooting at anything they wanted to. I was

authorizing quite a bit of killing with no knowledge of what it was all about and it staggered me.” (Appy 116)

It boggles the mind to think that in the making of war on another country, and with the amount of high level people involved in decision making that something like this could happen so easily.

There are positive lessons to be learned from these stories.

Transparency in information is very important before the making of real time war decisions. Checks and balances also should play a huge role in determining if and when striking is necessary. The whole affair should prove that ultimate faith should be placed on the President as he is only a man. Perhaps, even a more limited government would prove more useful to counter confusion and the mob minded mentality that caused such

“crazy and deceitful policy making.” (Appy 115)

The hope that comes out of all this is that we as a nation of people deemed it necessary to protect and purport the freedoms that we have come to love and believe in. Wars, I hope, are fought primarily on good intentions and only when of the utmost importance. I think that lesson was learned in Vietnam.

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