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History of Vietnam

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Turning point and ending

A major event that I believe to be an understated yet pivotal moment in the Vietnam War is contained within the recount of My Lai by Larry Colburn. The most compelling line of the work within its entirety is the very first line. It is, at least, the quote which stirred me up the most, it is:

“We weren’t pacifists. We did our job and when we had to kill people we did.” (Apy 346)

I believe that Larry Colburn’s experience and witnessing of the slaughter of presumably innocent people to be an accurate turning point in the war in the hearts of men. With warfare raging and revenge looming in the air, American soldiers, the booby-trapped and far from home men began to become monsters themselves. With television and the news media changing the way we view war, it would be found out that a lot of the people labeled Enemy KIA were not exactly military combatants but thought to be harmful, realistically innocent unarmed and bewildered civilians. Not as significant as the Tet offensive, the My Lai tragedy remains an incredibly important piece in the turning point of the Vietnam war and its eventual end.

The best example of an ending that I could find to the Vietnam War was Alexander M. Haig’s retelling of the events that surrounded his experience with serving as a high level military officer and political advisor. I think that the likely end is in the bombing of the North. The initiative, in its entirety began to be thought of as politically based, and due to the high amount of unpopularity with American citizens was abandoned soon after it started and considered a failed offensive. Haig believes that more bombing, in a much more strategic fashion would have possibly won the war for the South Vietnamese and American supporters. This is not the most popular ending of the war, but I do believe it is an important one because it shows the opinions of a self-proclaimed “war-hawk”

and his ultimate understanding of a failed agenda and the politics which drive the war machine forward in biased ways.

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