

Part 1

Dang Vu Hiep's account of his experience in the war stuck with me the most. The way he describes the attack on Hanoi as "just a normal battle, part of a long term dry season offensive in the highlands" seemed very aloof. Or the way he shares the song of Cassava as if it were a national anthem gave me chills. However I can understand his point of view. After all it was war; nothing in war makes any sense. And yet while I read his interview and many others it becomes clear to me that this wasn't just a giant war but several small pointless battles that caused death and destruction to not only soldiers but civilians as well. These battles were fought with ever changing enemies depending on who you asked, and when you did ask you were given a different answer every time. It's beginning to become very clear that we were our own worst enemy the whole time. Certainly when you hear the accounts of the war from each side you are going to get a different answer. You are asking people who each fought for what they believed in, or were ordered to do so. I do feel that the parties interviewed are credible to what they saw and felt was real. Judging the truth in war is a difficult task. When a person watches their family and world destroyed by other countries, the men of that country will instantly become evil no matter what the truth is. Many good and virtuous men did a lot of unthinkable acts based on their need to survive, orders given or the belief that they were justified in their actions. This doesn't make them evil. Thus the "truth" becomes subjective to the acts of the men involved.

Part 2

Reading Ngo Vinh Long's accounts of the war were very disheartening. Especially his description of America. He grew up with such an idealistic view of our great country thru his father and yet our actions throughout the war were anything but great or beautiful. He speaks of prisons disguised as villages. Places where people of all ages were treated like caged animals, left to starve or die at the hands of the government that was supposed to help them. The way Long was dismissed when he tried many times to help these people just sickens me. Listening to the way these humans were made to suffer for political reasons, to help us gain French alliances in future

wars is appalling at best. American leadership at the time was no better than the French or Chinese. In fact we were probably worse since we were supposed to help not hinder their independence.

That being said when I read Rufus Phillips interview I do see a renewed sense of hope in humanity. The way Lansdale was trying so hard to do right by the Vietnamese in a time when all political figure heads were doing so much wrong. Or how he was able to gain the Vietnamese trust so easily because he was working to rebuild their independence and self-confidence. He taught his troops how to treat the Vietnamese with civility and respect. Thus earning their loyalty and debunking everything the Viet Minh had said about the troops being there to destroy and pillage their lives. Instead it destroyed Diem's credibility.