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In part four of Appy's book, Nguyen Qui Duc's story best illustrated a discernible turning point. As the son of a South Vietnamese government official, Nguyen described himself as living a double life, overwhelmed and conflicted by the different cultures and ideologies infiltrating his country. It took a terrifying night and a life changing experience for him to truly have a stance on the war. Nguyen depicted his confused self by saying, "I was friendly toward Western culture, went to a French school, and had contact with Americans. But inside I was struggling to understand why the enemy was fighting. Did they have a real reason (297)?" At ten years old, one can only imagine how confused he must have been, living an affluent life supporting the South Vietnamese cause and then to suddenly start questioning if the enemy did have a legitimate reason.

The turning point of Nguyen's story took place the night that Northern soldiers stormed his house. He chronicled his young ignorance to the war when he said "All night we heard explosions and kept thinking they were just New Year fire crackers. We could not believe that Communist soldiers were fighting in Hue itself. It didn't even enter our mind (295)." It's hard for me to fathom how ~~him~~^{he}, his parents and the people around them actually thought that they were completely out of harms way. This was a war that consumed the entire country of Vietnam, where government officials and people of power were prime targets. Especially with his father working for the South Vietnam government, his family would be perfect ransom for Northern soldiers. His mixed feelings at that point were further detailed when he was describing being lectured by one of the Northern soldiers and he said, "...there was passion in his speech and I was moved by the way he talked about the nation. I knew I wasn't supposed to feel admiration. I should be fearful of these people and feel hatred for them. I did have fear – I could feel it in my stomach – but also that surprising admiration (296)." Picture this young boy huddled in this crowded room looking up at the North Vietnamese soldier with obvious fear but also a hue of wonderment as the man talked with great intensity and devotion, as he sits there contemplating "what do I stand for?" At ten years old he surely was unaware of the politics of the war and the reasoning's behind it but Nguyen undeniably struggled with what his side, the South Vietnamese, stood and fought for. This is evident because otherwise he wouldn't have constantly been questioning if, just maybe, the enemy did have plausible reasons.

It wasn't until ten days after being captured that Nguyen's thoughts toward the North Vietnamese became more clear and he seemed to take a defiant stance on the war. He recounted the turning point for him when he said, "On the way, we saw that the bridge over the Perfume River had been blown up by Communist soldiers. It was lying in the water. I was so shocked. That bridge was an incredibly graphic symbol of Hue, a symbol of the whole nation (296)." It's evident that the bridge meant something personal and deep to him as his words are tinged with sadness and resentment, even years later, as an older man reflecting back on what he saw that day. His anger towards the Communists for destroying the bridge, their national symbol, is shown when he said, "You expect war to have it's casualties and for people to be killed, but even then I thought that if you go so far as to blow up that bridge, a bridge that had so much significance for so many

Vietnamese, then you no longer have respect for history or culture. You no longer have respect for the nation (296)." It seems as though losing that bridge would be like the United States having one of our national landmarks obliterated, such as; the Golden Gate bridge in San Francisco is significant to West Coasters or the Brooklyn bridge is momentous to East Coasters.

At the end of Nguyen Qui Duc's story he compared himself to a modern day nomad reasoning that "So much of my life has been colored by having to leave my homeland. When I go to Vietnam I am not seen as Vietnamese and it hurts. And I could never be what other people see as American (297)." He had to learn about war at such a young age and just how destructive it is, that it seems to have haunted him the rest of his life, making him uncomfortable wherever he went. It's appalling that his own native country refused to recognize him and held a cloud over his head in which he had no control over.

Is the conclusion that he is "lost" between 2 worlds?

Morton Halperin's account was the best example I read of an "ending" of the war in Part five of Appy's book. Morton seemed to have his doubts from day one on U.S involvement in Vietnam as he expressed by saying, "Many things troubled me. When we were bombing the North, it wasn't doing any good and was probably interfering with efforts to stop the war. And we did not understand the depth of corruption of the South Vietnamese government and the fact that it had no credibility in its own society, that it was comprised of people who had fought on the French side and worked with the Japanese (403)." Hindsight 20/20, Morton was correct and had his fellow colleagues saw what he saw so early on, the outcome certainly would've been different.

Unfortunately for Morton he was under a paranoid Nixon administration that would do just about anything to test the loyalty of his people, even as far as wiretapping Morton's phone. It would seem plausible that Morton was wiretapped solely because he was against Nixon's ideology and approach towards Vietnam, which is a complete preposterous and immature handling for people of such stature and supposed intelligence. Morton's concerns were legitimate and ultimately realistic. To counter the mindless way in which the U.S was fighting the war Morton suggested, "The data was very clear that you could drastically cut American casualties by having two – year combat tours because the critical factor in U.S casualties was how long the commissioned officer had been in command of the unit (403)." In context, that seemed like a reasonable and valid suggestion and at least he was thinking of ways to cut the American casualties so our men could come home safely, most of the other politicians wanted to keep drafting more men to feed into the war. Sadly, Morton said, "There was no interest in fixing any of that stuff (403)." *remember the "ending's" theme*

Morton touched on the subject of the antiwar movement and I really appreciated what he had to say about it. He said, "I always thought the antiwar movement was totally irresponsible because of the assumption a lot of people had that you could negotiate this magic thing called neutral, democratic, independent South Vietnam (406)." It's ludicrous that people believed that we, the U.S, could go into Vietnam and force a divided nation into one common belief. It was arrogant thinking like that, that had the war doomed from day one. I understand that during this time the thought of Communism was terrifying for

Careful here the theme is ... would 2 year tours have really "fixed" anything?

many American's, however I truly don't think Vietnam was our battle to fight. Just as the United States had went through it's very own civil war, Vietnam was experiencing it's own. The difference was that nobody else got involved in America's civil war, it was the North vs the South with the country trying to figure it out for itself. Unfortunate America allowed it's fears and need for control to step in and lead the way into Vietnam, costing many young lives and was ultimately a lost battle. Morton's statement sums it all up when he said, "... the U.S is powerful enough to survive in a world in which not only China and North Vietnam are Communist, but also this one more tiny sliver of the Asian mainland (406)."

Yes

not true

questionable

no ... following France

oh no
Russia & Chinese interventions
are forgotten here ???

True,
but when
was he interviewed?
After his boy
had proven him
correct?

Part 2

Story choice free ...

Started well ...

But really fell apart at the
end w/ historical inaccuracies,overwhelming claims, but most important ...
a departure from the "endings"
theme AND an attempt to
"end" ~~the~~ & explain the
whole war.

Not good