

98/100

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I'm not a military strategist, but it seems to me that if you are involved in the civil war of another nation that what you are fighting for is the hearts and minds of the populace first and traditional military targets second. The trend that stands out to me in this section of Appy's book is that while we clearly recognized the threat from enemy sympathy amongst the locals, we failed to react to it in a thoughtful way. The American method for dealing with locals grew increasingly hostile as our sense of unease from the locals increased. Consequently we inflamed any dislike they may have had and created our own enemy. The cliché about putting a fire out with gasoline could be well used here. This negative feedback model was sure to foster increased sympathy for both the enemy and eventually for their cause. If we ever had a chance to motivate the people of South Vietnam to stand with us against a communist movement we squandered it with our callousness towards their people, property and their customs.

Jonathan Schell spells out the problem wonderfully in his interview. He refers to operation Cedar Falls, in which we attempted to completely clear out an area call the Iron triangle. While he states that the operation was considered a success we can read his doubt about the long-term consequences. "But they left out what I believed was fundamental---that we were destroying villages and throwing people off their land. The unmistakable fact was that the general population despised the United States and that if they hadn't despised it before we arrived, they soon did after we destroyed their villages." Throughout the interview with Schell he expresses his amazement that this was happening. It was clear to him that this kind of approach to the war was counter-productive. How much of this kind of treatment was happening can be judged by how unaffected some of the American soldiers were by it. Jim Soular recounts another village depopulation in which helicopters were used to transport the locals out of a village. It's important to remember that these very simple people were being forcibly removed from their homes in a very loud, very intimidating way. "There were only four of us with sixty of them.... We started lifting off and one of the Vietnamese in the back stood up and freaked out....We were probably sixty feet off the ground, maybe more. The crew chief just thought, fuck it, your out of here, and pitched the man out the back end....when he hit the ground. He just laid there." Later Jim Soular remembers asking the crew chief what happened and is answered with what seems like an off handed explanation about making a point by throwing "...his ass out of there." Jim says

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