

Due date: Sunday, 1 May 2011, 11:55 PM

Last edited: Thursday, 28 April 2011, 06:00 PM (896 words)

Darin Richardson

L00527224

April 28, 2011

History of the Vietnam War

Assignment #2

Civilians. In every war, it is the civilians that suffer. World War I saw hundreds of thousands of civilians die in Europe. World War II saw millions of civilians die, again in Europe and in Asia. And in both wars, civilians in Europe were horribly disabled and disfigured by the thousands. The same can be said for civilians in Asia during World War II. And again in the Vietnam War, an estimated two million Vietnamese civilians were killed by Americans and Vietnamese soldiers, both North and South.

This essay is about the Vietnamese civilians that suffered during the Vietnam War. American civilians suffered at home, too, but what they experienced was nothing compared to the horrors the populace of Vietnam, both North and South, experienced. The "war zone" in Vietnam and the "war zone" in America, which was in the form of civil unrest towards the war and antiwar demonstrations, were vastly different. The American populace was not right in the middle of the conflict per se; they did not live in a country that experienced daily bombings, napalm, Agent Orange, defoliants, and constant killing everywhere. The Vietnamese populace was in the midst of all of this.

I chose to write this particular essay on the Vietnamese civilians because it seemed to be one of the constants I was finding in all the stories in the book "Patriots". It is the one subject that has been speaking to me the most while I was reading the book. I thought it might be a form of remembrance if I focused this essay on the Vietnamese civilians who experienced man's inhumanity to man during the Vietnam War. I have chosen three accounts for "Part Three: Escalation" from the book that show how these poor civilians suffered during the Vietnam War.

The first account I chose that shows what the Vietnamese civilians had to endure is the story by veteran Jim Soular, in the "Free Fire"

zone section of "Part Three- Escalations." He talks about how as a crew member on a big Chinook helicopter, he was called upon to move Vietnamese villagers from suspected Viet Cong-controlled areas.

On one of these forced-evacuation missions of Vietnamese civilians, he told how they forced sixty villagers to board the helicopter at gunpoint, and these villagers had never been near a helicopter before. They were frightened to death. They packed these poor civilians into the helicopter like sardines and they were so frightened that they were urinating and defecating in the helicopter. Soular said that after the helicopter started to lift off, one of the male Vietnamese civilians stood up and started going crazy out of fear and one of Soular's crewmates just pitched the poor man out the back of the helicopter to his death sixty feet below. Soular also mentioned that he always flew refugees out, but never any back in.

The second story I chose is by Truong My Hoa from the "Prisoners of War" section of "Part Three- Escalations." She was a civilian who joined the Communist Party in 1963 and was arrested in 1964 by South Vietnamese officials for supposedly causing trouble. She endured prison for eleven years, and one of those years she was imprisoned in a tiger cage with four other women.

Truong was tortured repeatedly and she had to eat, urinate, and defecate in the tiger cage. She wasn't given any clothing and her captors tried to force her to go against her beliefs and the Communist Party. Truong was a civilian who did support North Vietnam, but she had not committed any violent acts against South Vietnam or the Americans. For her political affiliation and her beliefs, she was imprisoned and tortured. This is another example of the suffering of civilians during the Vietnam War.

The third and final story I chose to show how the civilians in Vietnam suffered is by Phillip Jones Griffiths from the "Cameras, Books, and Guns" section of "Part Three- Escalations." Griffiths' story wasn't very long, but he did give two examples of civilian suffering. He visited a napalm ward in Quang Ngai's provincial hospital where he encountered a young civilian boy who had happened to be in an area that had been bombed with napalm. Griffiths said that the boy's eyelids, lips, and nose had been burnt off, but he was still alive, and he wanted Griffiths to take his picture. Griffiths did as the boy asked. He could hardly look at the boy's skull-like features. That story touched me. The poor boy had done nothing wrong except be in the wrong place at the wrong time. Griffiths also tells how American GIs tried to coerce a young Vietnamese boy into telling them the location of a local Viet Cong group or they would kill his father, but the boy had absolutely no

idea what they were talking about. Griffiths said he would always remember that incident.

The above three accounts are only a sampling of stories of civilian suffering I have found thus far in the book "Patriots." Although the Vietnam War ended thirty-six years ago, the suffering of the civilians was felt for many years afterward. It seemed as if no Vietnamese family escaped the horrors of the war.

Close this window

 [Moodle Docs for this page](#)