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Perhaps the most amazing story in the first part of "Patriots" is that of Phan Xuan Sinh. His recounting of his experiences in the war are remarkable. The fisherman fiasco, in particular, is difficult to read, let alone imagine. Most surprising, however, was the intensity of the North's hatred for the South. The disparity between the North's ambition and righteousness and the South's reluctance to engage in a war that they did not believe in was striking. Even Phan said that he was stunned at how much the North hated them, and how strong their spirit was. While Phan does tell a compelling, and shocking, story about his experiences in the war, it leaves one to wonder just how reliable his recounting is. After all, his story is based entirely off of personal experience, and so it is likely highly subjective, rather than objective and factual. How he perceived the hatred of the North towards the South from reading the letters is important – others could interpret it as their spirit of fortitude, the belief that they were fighting for a righteous cause and that they would not surrender, no matter what the cost. However, his presence in the battlefield could also give him more credibility, because he was there to see the events and experience it first-hand, whereas those who are documenting the stories were not. It could be argued either way. In the case of Phan, however, it appears that he is being rather objective, with a touch of subjectivity, of course. He was fighting a war he didn't believe in, but that doesn't change the fact that there were missions that became total fiascos. Slaughtering a number of fishermen who were mistaken for Viet Cong is not something that subjectivity can alter. It was an unfortunate fact of the war. It happened, despite the best intentions and the best possible intelligence. However, how he interpreted the letters found on the carrier might indicate some subjectivity. Certainly, the North was not happy that the South was fighting against them, but whether this level of hatred that he is referring to is presented in the letters or if the letters merely represent a patriotic spirit and an unwavering resolve is something that could be debated.

Perhaps the most disappointing story thus far is the one by Ngo Vinh Long. His relation of how his feelings toward American policy and government changed as he was exposed to the effects of the war was surprising, to say the least. It illustrated how even someone with an intense love of America, and a broad sense of patriotism, was disturbed and changed by the war. Perhaps most disappointing was to hear of how he went from supporting the war to standing against the war. It was sad to see that the war was so unpopular that even the most patriotic of citizens were beginning to question whether it was a legitimate war or not.

A story that gave me hope, however, was the one from Rufus Phillips. The way the commander connected with the natives was inspiring, to say the least. It was an excellent illustration of how, despite all of the atrocities, despite all of the mistakes that were made, there were still some people that had a head on their shoulders and knew how to connect with the native population. It kind of gives one hope that there were more men in Vietnam that saw a better, more effective way to connect with the populace.

Did you run out of time? PART 1 was top notch
May I have your permission to use it (anonymously)
as an A+ example for future students? Moodle message me.