

many proofreading errors
spelling/grammar

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History of the Vietnam War

Assignment 1

By the time Roger Donlan received his battle injuries and ultimately the medal of honor for his actions, the western cause in Vietnam had been doomed to fail for almost 9 years. The toleration of the recolonization of Vietnam by the allied forces after World War Two paved the way for a bloody conflict that no western power could have anticipated. Donlan's account sheds a stark light on the sheer ignorance to the threat at hand as well as the sheer unpreparedness of the United States when it finally dove into the conflict. This isn't to say they had not dipped a toe or two before that, the millions in military aid to France as well as the small number of special forces operating in country at the time (operating out of small bases just as Donlan did). The vivid descriptions of the combat, such as a man running on stumps after his legs were removed by an artillery shell, strike deep. One must note however an underlying theme throughout it. They weren't ready. One artillery shell takes out all communication, no idea that one third of their force are friendly to the enemy, the previous days hostile takeover of a similar base wasn't reported and the hanger housing the ground attack planes is locked due to the 4th of July. It seems to be a laundry list of errors that weren't addressed perhaps due to the light nature in which the US took the fight they were slowly wedging themselves into. One would have a hard time trying to discredit the information conveyed in his interview. A brutally honest description of the situation is easily gleanable from this account. Having taken part in the battle itself Donlan shows a credibility few talking about the war can convey. He has no one to protect by altering the story, in fact it almost feels as if he wants the reader to know both sides of the story no matter the outcome. Donlan's account mirrors so many that came before and after. Den Bien Phu is a perfect example, the French and their underinflated view of the opposition. Believing there was no way to get artillery up the surrounding mountains, or enough men to counter the twelve thousand French troops dropped there, the French were totally unprepared for the crushing defeat that followed. Donlan's vivid account of the five hour battle, and his humbleness regarding his deeds done and awards earned, make his story fascinating yet somber.

Part 2

People seem to forget that the story of the conflict ranges so much further than the United States' involvement, and yet the U.S. was there at the beginning; dropping Henry Prunier into Vietnam to meet with "Mr. Ho". The two accounts, one from Prunier and the other from Vo Nguyen Giap, tell of a disappointing missed opportunity for peace and a moderately clear reason why the U.S. had no chance at victory. Understandably the U.S. used "Uncle Ho" and his

fighters to clear the japanese from the territory during world war two. What is hard to understand is the complete rejection of any pleas for help from the Viet Minh before recolonization as well as during. They had nowhere else to turn, so why would they not accept help from red china and russia? The second story reveals that. Giap puts it quite honestly "We won the war because we would rather die than live in slavery". When the U.S. deployed troops, they were fighting a losing battle of attrition against an entire ^{Nor South Vietnamese?} people who had nowhere to go but to defend their homes. Westmoreland's strategy of search and destroy didn't help either but that's an entirely other can of worms. *cliche*

While the pages turned, it is very hard to find any hope, or compassion within them. Most comprise of confusion on why they are fighting or tales of hardships that are near unimaginable. Ngo Vinh Long recalls a story that has some glimmers of hope, even though they are crowded by the fog of war. One of the few in this book so far where an effort is made to distinguish between a country's government and its people. Long recalls her father explaining that the american people would not be replacing the french, it would be the american government and its soldiers. There is wisdom and a degree of understanding in that statement that seems to lack so far through these accounts of the war.

☆ In part 1, you try to do too much with a single story. It is as if you claim Donlon's story is an analogy to the entire Western involvement in the war. While interesting, it was not the question(s) I had asked

☆ Again in Part 2 ... too much from a single story. This time, your conclusions are less in accord with historical facts. You essentially "end the war" in week 2 of the term.