

...ists.
 This book is mandatory reading
 not only for students of recent his-

...Era and who desperately
 wanted to understand the war it
 eventually would be America's

...tribution to this painful chap-
 ter of world history, we stand to
 benefit from the healing balm that
 comes from the knowledge gained

Trauma of Southeast Asian conflict

The Unfinished War: Vietnam and the American Conscience. By Walter H. Capps. Beacon Press, \$6.95 paperback.

By B. FRANKLIN COOLING

The basic premise of this book is simple. While hostilities of the Vietnam war ceased on May Day, 1975, the war isn't over. Perhaps if

we had won or lost — traditionally — via a surrender, then it might be over. Of course, it did pretty much end in a surrender, only we Americans haven't gotten it through our thick skulls that there wasn't much we could do about it one way or another.

We, like the French before us, had had a shot at bringing a solution to the jungles of Southeast Asia. We could not, they could not — it was a purely Vietnamese problem to solve — and they have solved it. We may not like how they solved it, but we — like they — must live with it!

Now, beyond the first sentence above, Capps goes on to explain why the way hasn't ended in many Americans' hearts and minds. His book will appeal to the growing corps of teachers using the Vietnam experience in the classroom.

It is succinct, but has a message, and it explores just about every facet of life in America after Vietnam. Beginning with a fast-paced historical background account, he shows how the United States got itself — quite willingly — sucked into the whirlpool of colonial politics between France and Indochina. Indochina, like Korea, then was a natural product of our trying to prop up democracy around the world against world-wide communism.

Capps then shows that once in, the United States and its messianic mission, mixture of religion, social consciousness and blatant colonial-militarism of its own could not get out. But, it could not bring about a battlefield solution either.

Capps suggests why in revealing passages about Ho Chi Minh, the disintegration of the American homefront, as well as the misguided leadership in the Oval office. Nothing of this is really very new — but Capps encapsulates it nicely.

What Capps really discusses is the impact of the war on America's sense of mission. We have always had it and it came to the front in two world wars whereby we "saved" civilization in Europe and Asia, or at least the Pacific. Korea gave us self-doubts — a fact that just about everyone has forgotten, and we probably need Capps to do a similar job on that "unwon" war like he has on Vietnam.

But Vietnam was simply an event whose time had come. Look at the situation — post-Kennedy's New Frontier, Peace Corps and all that. It was after the dull years of Ike and the Republicans whereby the New Frontier boys promised the moon and began to deliver until their man was snuffed out.

Then came Lyndon Johnson, bent on redeeming the New Frontier at home and abroad. Blustery Texan, there was simply no war — either against poverty or little yellow hordes — that couldn't be won a la John Wayne. Capps suggests that an awfully great number of young Americans got suckered into uniform on that play — only to become disillusioned by what they experienced in Vietnam. Hence, all the hoopla of the Vietnam veterans who came home to psychiatric disorders.

The bottom line for Capps is simply that we picked the wrong time and place to fight the wrong war

"Anne McCaffrey

Same," Len Deighton

Good Wives," Jackie Collins

ry of Henri Tod," William Buckley Jr.

me of the Rose," Umberto Eco

Women," Judy Blume

NON-FICTION

h of Excellence," Peters & Waterman

ood," Erma Bombeck

Times Never Last, but Tough People Do,"

atchers Fast and Fabulous Cookbook"

es Coco Diet"

gs of Eagles," Ken Follett

of James Herriott"

Down," Robert Allen

Wealth," Robert Allen

of Greatness," Denis Waitley

word

below are in the puzzle horizontally,
 onally and backwards. Find them and
 rs only; do not circle the word. Leftover
 Wonderword.

Solution: 8 letters

S T R Y S A T I N G W
 I R T S S R U P N O F
 P I E C E T O I O O A
 T B O L T S R L C D C
 O O O S T

Uncontested
 Divorce Cases

\$7500

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we offer you an opportunity to
 hearing aid for thirty days W

FREE HEARING AID

Southeast Asian conflict lingers

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against the wrong enemy. He suggests that the tragedy might have been avoided if we had chosen (a) to view the struggle as an internecine or civil battle between Vietnamese, (b) not to invest the struggle as some Armageddon with the Communist power of the world, (c) if we had seen the conflict as part of a simple colonialist-nationalist battle which had cut through most of Asia and Africa since the end of World War II.

"But, because it viewed the war as part of the fundamental conflict between the world's two great superpowers," says Capps, "the United States eventually felt a responsibility to commit its forces." Ah, doesn't that sound faintly familiar? There seems to be a presentist ring to that refrain — which is precisely what Capps is trying to get the reader to recognize.

The book will sadden and anger, stimulate and soothe — all at the same time. He entitles his final chapter "The Healing Process," which is only just. Meanwhile, the wails of Vietnam veterans make headlines, the atrocities of the united Vietnam sell copy, and everyone from the president to the lowliest schoolchild tries to fathom the meaning and "lessons" of those 10 years we wasted in southeast Asia.

Capps questions whether they were truly wasted years. He would suggest that they were only if we do not bind up the wounds of our psyche from that war and rediscover the wholeness of America "before the trauma of the unfinished war is reenacted."

B. Franklin Cooling is associated with the Office of Air Force History, Washington, D.C.