

STOCKTON

THEORIES ABOUT THE WAR:

Absolutistic Theories

Black/And/White Theories:

- (1) THE HAWK VIEW -- War was legitimate; problem: forces never allowed to win... RONALD REAGAN:
- (2) THE DOVE VIEW -- War was a mistake from the first; we should never have been there.....  
McGovern's position: war divided the democratic party first...then divided the nation....  
nation: still divided....  
  
variation: war is wrong in any case....

Miscalculation Theories:

- (1) We didn't calculate the damaging effects of television on the progress of the war....  
"first war we watched on television...."  
Tet Offensive -- shows that we were getting beat...  
burning of the villages....  
shooting of villagers....
- (2) Didn't calculate the damaging effects of the political frustration and infighting at home....  
note: war belonged to context which included civil rights ~~movement~~ movement....  
end result: we learned we couldn't win the war in Asia until there was clarity at home....  
NEVER BEFORE HAD THIS BEEN A REALITY....  
  
War = an extension of the internal conflict within the American soul....
- (3) Didn't calculate the tenacity of the Vietnamese People...  
Ho Chi Minh -- we're prepared to accommodate you...  
fighting the birth rate....  
  
A corollary: we thought it a military venture -- Ho Chi Minh knew it was political first of all.
- (4) Didn't appropriately calculate the terms of winning & losing.  
World War I -- retaking land  
World War II -- retaking land....  
we thought winning meant: KILLING MORE PEOPLE DAILY THAN THE V.C. KILLED....."WAR OF ATTRITION"  
But we found ourselves fighting the Vietnamese birthrate...  
NO DESTINATION -- NO DIRECTION -- NO TELEOLOGY  
Bill Mahedy: "it don't mean nothin'"
- (5) Military strategy ill suited to Vietnamese terrain...  
Viet Cong -- guerillas  
war was fought in jungles  
America fighting a textbook war....  
Some critics said: "the model was still that of World War II"

1964  
I just cut  
Ho's piece  
off - "

Point: military superiority didn't translate into political domination.....

(6) Confusion with American Collective identity:

U.S. declares itself to be anti-colonialist....  
but continues to function as an imperialist nation.  
David Halberstam: inconsistency here:

~~7~~ U.S. intentions out of synch with Vietnamese realities:

Art Blank: U.S. saw ~~xxxxxxkxkxkxkxkxkxk~~ Ho Chi Minh's  
venture as being an effort on behalf of  
communism.....

And, on behalf of communism's intrinsic desire to  
control and dominate the world....

Another view: Vietnam is a 3rd world country....  
just emerging from colonialism.

U.S. -- perceived to be of assistance in  
effecting the revolution (Ho quotes  
Thomas Jefferson)

INSTEAD: U.S. takes the place of France as  
the colonial power that had to be overthrown....

Another way of putting it: what U.S. offered Vietnam  
was out of line with Vietnam's real social, cultural,  
political and economic needs....

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BROADER THEORIES:

- (1) War = a decisive context between two diametrically opposed ways of life....  
COMMUNIST TOTALITARIANISM vs. DEMOCRATIC FREEDOMS.
- (2) WAR = represents conflict, then contest, between Orient and the Occident....  
Asian World and the Western World....  
(note how this plays itself out in education....)  
-- by the year 2000, Asia will be the economic center of the world.  
-- Pacific Rim studies
- (3) War = is about colonialism.....  
a third-world phenomenon....  
  
my friend: Carole Watson....on South Africa....  
you know how it is going to turn out....  
the oppressors won't be able to keep them down forever...  
Vietnam signals that colonialism...as a way of life for the world....  
is on its way out....  
or, at least, is being severely challenged....
- (4) Psycho-historical interpretation: (explain)  
War is about HO CHI MINH....  
as civil rights struggle is about Martin Luther King, Jr.  
as native American struggle is about Caesar Chavez....  
as Indian fight for independence is about Gandhi...  
HO -- no other figure.... no one on the American side who quite matches up....  
Westmoreland....  
Nixon  
Johnson.... all tragic figures....  
(even from a heavily patriotic American view...  
THE WAR IS ABOUT HO....
- (5) War is about the MYTH OF AMERICA....  
about America's growing maturity...  
  
about some confusion....  
LAST WEEK'S NEW YORK TIMES MAGAZINE...  
article about Israel....  
"the big story...." with cosmic proportions....  
  
a cosmic theory about how the dynamics of the world are being played out....  
clash within the theory....

Do the theory work? -