

Hearts and minds (1974)

Business, Human Resources



of the of the Teacher 17 December Hearts and Minds (1974) Hearts and Minds is a documentary directed by Peter Davis. This documentary focuses on the Vietnam War. It is true that many other documentaries on Vietnam War do convey a sanitized coverage of the war. However, Hearts and Minds is a documentary that extends a balanced and realistic view of the Vietnam War. The surprising thing is that Hearts and Minds is less to do with the military and strategic aspects of the Vietnam War. Rather the documentary reveals the human face of the Vietnam War.

While compiling and editing this moving documentary, the director Peter Davis did use the old newsreels availed from the US media sources that covered the war. Besides, he also shot much new material and footage. This documentary relies on interviews of many common and important people related to the Vietnam War, interviews of a number of soldiers and policy makers, and many important civil and military leaders directly linked to the Vietnam War.

Right from the start the movie tries to analyze and showcase the rise of the US as a superpower after the World War I and the American insistence on exercising dominance over nations and political groups unacceptable to it. The movie unravels the utter militarization of the American political thought and culture which made the nation arrogant enough to engage in senseless military adventurism as the Vietnam War. The essential thing about the movie Hearts and Minds is that it tries to extend to people an insight into the mindset, beliefs, goals and ideology of a generation of political leaders, military policy makers and soldiers who envisaged, carried out and justified the Vietnam War. It exposes the prejudices and biases of the American civil

and military leadership that managed and conducted the Vietnam War. For instance, one finds it really shocking to hear American general William Westmoreland saying that “ The Oriental doesn’t put the same high price on life as a Westerners”, in the back ground of clips showing Vietnamese fathers, children, mothers and wives weeping and wailing by the graves of their loved one’s lost to war. In one other footage the movie shows US Lieutenant Coker, a prisoner of war, expressing his views about Vietnam as “ If it wasn’t for the people, it was very pretty. They just make a mess of everything.” The movie shows as to how many of the American military generals, officers, pilots and soldiers harbored a highly dehumanized view of the Vietnamese military opposition and common people. One is surprised to find the pilots and technicians who dropped napalm over many civilian locations in Vietnam, describing their missions as being satisfying and fulfilling. The impact gets further accentuated by such images as that of a Vietnamese kid running for life with a badly burnt back or a local coffin maker working day and night, making small coffins for Vietnamese children. Simply speaking, the movie Hearts and Minds puts to question the human credentials, sanity and morality of the American actions in the Vietnam War.