

Following ho chi  
minh: bui tin



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

Following Ho Chi Minh: Bui Tin Bui Tin who served on the general staff of North Vietnam's army received the unconditional surrender of South Vietnam. Tin later became the editor of Vietnam's official newspaper, the "Peoples Daily". Tin then immigrated to Paris after becoming disillusioned with the fruits of Vietnamese Communism. Following Ho Chi Minh allows the reader to gain valuable insight into how the North Vietnamese forces planned and executed the war, through military and psychological strategies. Bui Tin effectively explains the decisions the United States made during the Vietnam conflict, their mistakes, and missed opportunities.

Bui Tin accurately describes the emotion of the people in the Vietnam conflict, especially those in the south. Through Bui Tin the reader is able to gain an inside view of the Vietnamese people, learning more inside information than any western book could ever reveal. The initial strategy with the Americans had been the same in dealing with the French previously. By fighting a long war which would break the Americans will, to help South Vietnam (Pg.

7). Ho Chi Minh said, " We don't need to win military victories, we only need to hit them until they give up and get out". Bui Tin explains the initial mistakes on how the Americans planned to win the war. On the event of full out war, the U.

S. planned to win as quickly as possible, using the least amount of troops as possible (Pg. 57). The U. S. Believed such a small primitive enemy could not last long against one of the world's superpowers.

Throughout the book Bui Tin explains how important the Ho Chi Minh trail was for the North in their efforts in the war. It was the only way to bring sufficient military supplies into the south. Building and maintaining the trail was a huge effort, involving soldiers, truck drivers, repair teams, medical stations, and communication units. Bui Tin explains due to the trails importance if the U. S.

could have effectively cut the Ho Chi Minh trail off leading inside of Laos and effectively blocked it, the NVA could not have won the war. Vietnam was known as the first televised war. With media coverage brought with it a damaging effect on the United States long standing values, justice and public support. The media showed the American public for the first time the horrors of war (ex: SV chief of police shooting a NV patriot in cold blood during the Tet Offensive). For the first time the American public could see American soldiers in the field.

The media proved to create negative feelings and thoughts against the war within the American public. This would prove to work against the American Government in their efforts in Vietnam. Bui Tin explains the anti-war movement as essential in the NVA strategy. Support of the war was completely supported by the North Vietnamese public while the American public was uncertain and therefore vulnerable.

Everyday top NVA leaders would gather information on the growth of the anti-war movement. The more U. S. citizens who rallied behind the movement only intensified the resentment of the war in Vietnam, giving the NVA the confidence to hold position on the battlefield.

Tin explains their goal through the media was to affect the sense of right and wrong in America. Believed it to be part of America's war making capability, Bui Tin along with the NVA, was turning the power into their favor. America lost the war because of its democracy; through dissent and public protest, America lost its ability to unite together and win. Initially the Tet Offensive was to relieve pressure American forces were placing on the NVA, and to weaken American resolve during a presidential election year. The offensive was a great victory, psychologically.

The NVA took advantage of the over confident Americans. Bui Tin explains the media played an integral role, exaggerating the damage caused by the offensive, which left negative feelings within the U. S. public, placing added pressure on the U. S.

government to seek negotiations (Pg. 62). However the NVA had incurred staggering losses, the Tet Offensive militarily had been seen as a defeat. The NVA forces in the south had been nearly wiped out fighting the U.

S. If the American forces had not begun to withdraw Bui Tin feared the Americans could have inflicted severe damage to the NVA. A major weak point Bui Tin points out is American soldiers were forced into military service due to the draft. Many soldiers harbored the same mentalities: serve out your time and return home. This mentality led many soldiers to become increasingly cautious and hesitant in the face of battle. Many soldiers did not possess adequate knowledge of Vietnam or Indo-China (pg.

58→). Psychological training among American troops seemed to be poor; Bui Tin believed the U. S. greatest mistake was placing too much faith in weapons and fire power while devaluating the human element (Pg. 58).

American bombing efforts aimed to achieve victory through destruction of war causing such enormous losses that NVA would have no other choice but to surrender. However, the Americans did not take in to account that the Vietnamese were poor and had little to lose. Tin explains since the Vietnamese cared little about material losses, they were able to fully commit to the struggle against the enemy (Pg. 5).

Tin claims although the U. S. possessed superior military force over North Vietnam, the NVA was able to tap into the love the people felt towards their country, appealing to their moral values and long tradition of resisting foreign aggression. In essence, the NVA were able to do the very thing President Johnson himself said the U. S. must do in order to achieve victory in Vietnam, “ Win over the hearts and minds of the people” in Vietnam.

Bui Tin explains how the U. S. bombing campaigns proved to be highly ineffective. U.

S. bombardment of the Ho Chi Minh trail never compromised operations. At times, accurate air strikes could cause real damage, but enough men and weapons came through the trail in order to prolong the war. Bombing by smaller planes rarely hit their targets. Tin also explains if the U.

S. had concentrated its bombing efforts at one time in the north it could have proved to be more successful. Bombing however was expanded and in slow

stages, providing the NVA time to prepare alternative routes of escape.

Soviet aid was also given in the event that harvests were ruined by the U.

S. bombing. Overall the U. S. bombing efforts were used to demoralize the NVA efforts in hopes to quickly end the war in the U.

S. favor (Ex: Rolling thunder). However all this did was raise the levels of bitterness and hatred, re-emphasizing commitment within the NV ranks.

Traditional patriotism was strengthened as a result of persistent U. S. bombing efforts (Pg.

64). Besides ineffective air strikes the Saigon army was shaky and unstable, having fallen under American influence. Saigon's army was left weak and vulnerable in the absence of U. S.

forces. Tin argues that leadership was a problem among the South Vietnam generals. Junior officers were good, competent andourageous, but lacked leadership in the face of battle (Pg. 63). During the war the Vietnamese public was told their efforts were to help liberate the country. Many people were swept up in the movement and many believed Vietnam would be rebuilt after the war.

Many placed false hopes on international friends to assist in the reconstruction. Bui Tin argues, " Communist propaganda is good at painting one sided pictures. It never depicts the real problem" (Pg. 88).

Tin explains that the Vietnamese were too short sighted in viewing the rest of the world objectively and learning from others (Pg. 8). The government placed in power initially claimed to be servants for the people, however in

reality rarely listened to what the public had to say (Pg. 89). Tin blames the Vietnamese with being drunk with victory (Pg.

98). Leadership became lax, intoxicated by victory. Most leaders were elderly and tended to focus more on their families and homes and properties. Many government officials became corrupt and succumbed to the lure of materialism, mainly because they lacked the education which forms the basis of human dignity (Pg. 98) (Uneducated leaders proved costly). Along with poor, corrupt leadership strict political views and heavy and lengthy punishments were enforced on members of the former Saigon regime.

Bui Tin argues these acts deliberately went against the original goals set during the fight to liberate and unite Vietnam. It lacked wisdom, belittling those in the south, Tin believed poor treatment in the south stemmed from a lack of moral values, many had become cruel under a Communist leadership. The government believed they were the only ones who mattered (Pg. 95) (education camps, in reality prisons for war and political prisoners). This in the long run wasted a great deal of the nation's talents (Children were punished because of who their parents were, from the south.

Viewed as capitalists themselves, children were forced to go to work either in factories or in the country side, making it difficult to obtain a formal education. ) During the war the people of Vietnam united together in order to achieve victory in the face of foreign aggression. However, after the war people became more realistic, interested in profits while at the same time becoming less trusting. The effects of post war Communism left Vietnam in

decline, people's standard of living was pitiful. Corruption flourished, spreading through the entire country (Pg. 102).

Useless government projects only emphasized the government's uselessness and close mindedness (" we cannot operate like capitalists" Pg. 105). " In the old days the party was clean, people had a high sense of self respect" (pg. 111). In the end Bui Tin questions whether the struggle for liberation was even necessary, and wonders if everyone would have been better off without it (pg.

65).