

REDCATCHER



QUOTE WITHOUT COMMENT

A Vietnam Postscript

In a recent interview published in The Wall Street Journal, former colonel Bui Tin who served on the general staff of the North Vietnamese Army and received the unconditional surrender of South Vietnam on April 30, 1975 confirmed the American Tet 1968 military victory: "Our losses were staggering and a complete surprise. Giap later told me that Tet had been a military defeat, though we had gained the planned political advantages when Johnson agreed to negotiate and did not run for reelection. The second and third waves in May and September were, in retrospect, mistakes. Our forces in the South were nearly wiped out by all the fighting in 1968. It took us until 1971 to reestablish our presence but we had to use North Vietnamese troops as local guerrillas. If the American forces had not begun to withdraw under Nixon in 1969, they could have punished us severely. We suffered badly in 1969 and 1970 as it was." And on strategy: "If Johnson had granted Wetmoreland's requests to enter Laos and block the Ho Chi Minh trail, Hanoi could not have won the war.... it was the only way to bring sufficient military power to bear on the fighting in the South. Building and maintaining the trail was a huge effort involving tens of thousands of soldiers, drivers, repair teams, medical stations, communication units our operations were never compromised by attacks on the trail. At times, accurate B-52 strikes would cause real damage, but we put so much in at the top of the trail that enough men and weapons to prolong the war always came out the bottom if all the bombing had been concentrated at one time, it would have hurt our efforts. But the bombing was expanded in slow stages under Johnson and it didn't worry us. We had plenty of time to prepare alternative routes and facilities. We always had stockpiles of rice ready to feed the people for months if a harvest was damaged. The Soviets bought rice from Thailand for us. And the left: "Support for the war from our rear was completely secure while the American rear was vulnerable. Every day our leadership would listen to world news over the radio at 9AM to follow the growth of the antiwar movement. Visits to Hanoi by Jane Fonda and former Attorney General Ramsey Clark and ministers gave us confidence that we should hold on in the face of battlefield reverses. We were elated when Jane Fonda, wearing a red Vietnamese dress, said at a press conference that she was ashamed of American actions in the war and would struggle along with us those people represented the conscience of America part of it's war making capability, and we turning that power in our favor." Bui Tin went on to serve as the editor of the People's Daily the official newspaper of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam. Disillusioned with the reality of Vietnamese communism Bui Tin now lives in Paris.