

## **Book Review**

**Patriots**, by Christian G. Appy. 2003 edition. 549 pages. Viking Penguin.

### **Hearsay History**

“One judgmental conclusion then is that America did not at the time and does not today understand the essence of the Viet Nam War. In this ignorance lie both past tragedy and future danger.”

Appy’s ***Patriots*** is simply another chapter in the display of American ignorance regarding Viet Nam. Lenin reportedly said “History is knowable,” i.e. the forces and dynamics of history can be identified, described, correlated, measured (if only in order of magnitude), causes and effects discerned, and hence produce a situation to which a village or a nation or a political party, can adapt in pursuit of its objectives. “Knowing history” demands ruthless intellectual discipline, a willingness to acknowledge facts not to one’s liking, or developments detrimental to one’s cause, or village, or political party. To extent possible, all factors must be identified, evaluated, measured, and constantly modified to changing conditions. To do otherwise is to risk failure and defeat. This is not a novel idea. Centuries ago Chinese military geographer Ku Tsu-yu made it very clear:

“Anyone who is to start military operations in one part of the country should know the condition of the country as a whole. To start such an operation without such knowledge is to court defeat regardless of whether it is a defensive or offensive operation.”

Christian Appy's *Patriots* appears on the surface to be an invaluable book, a profoundly comprehensive and tell-all oral history of what is called "the Viet Nam War." It will supposedly depict and explain history just as Lenin said could be done. Appy (pronounced "oppy") interviewed 350 people but editors dictated reduction to 135 whose accounts range from 2 to 12 pages. Amazon reviewers give it high praise. 73% give it 5 stars, and another 14% give it 4 stars for combined 87%. Most impressive. One reviewer states *Patriots* is "Possibly the most comprehensive and balanced account of the Viet Nam war that has yet been written..." Other reviewers write that if one is to read only one book on Viet Nam *Patriots* is the one. It is as if these 135 interviews are all the needed pieces to a jigsaw puzzle, explaining all in one big picture.

Regrettably, the book, its reviewers, interview subjects, all exhibit disturbing ignorance, gullibility, and an apparent inability to "know" history. To quote a line from an old Charley Chan movie: "What they do not know about Viet Nam would fill many books."

It purports to be the "Viet Nam war remembered from all sides" but does not come close to living up to this self-proclaimed accolade. Instead it is yet another chapter in America's embarrassingly moronic and inexcusable inability to grasp Viet Nam's realities, dynamics, and all other factors involved. In an ultimate irony, Mr. Appy's subjects display an ignorance equaled in magnitude and nature to that exhibited by Robert McNamara, McGeorge Bundy, Lyndon Johnson, as well as people pretending to be historians yet who are unable to break loose from the dictatorial clutches of almost hallucinatory conventional wisdom. This

indictment also extends, to lesser degree, to the military establishment.

It is impossible for any reader lacking background knowledge to properly evaluate *Patriots*. It is easy to be misled, misinformed. Without some grasp of greater realities no reader can detect the many flaws, omissions, and absolute falsehoods in *Patriots*. An ill-informed reader becomes transfixed by the book's constant drone of negative commentary, accepting invalid assertions as iron-clad truth. It is impossible for an ill-informed reader to notice when vital and important information is omitted, hidden from sight. An ill-informed reader cannot detect subliminal psychological and semantic manipulation. All of these issues will be discussed below.

Rather than explain and elucidate, *Patriots* implants false realities in a reader's mind, displacing capability to develop factual, real, honest understanding. Pseudo-history has an invidious effect, comparable to carbon monoxide, the molecules of which block ability of hemoglobin to carry oxygen needed for life. Ignorance likewise clogs the brain, rendering it impotent, dysfunctional, and vulnerable to all forms of seductive ignorance.

*Patriots* is simply another installment in common inability to see into Viet Nam's realities. It is also a manifestation of the too common naïve gullibility and willingness to accept Hanoi's propaganda without question. The entire "information industry," that being news media, academia, government, "infotainment," films, has failed abysmally, obscuring "knowable" factors Lenin spoke of. This applies to the left and the right, although the latter's shortcomings are not as egregious and inexcusable as the former...

Nothing said in this review is intended to exonerate the U.S. government for its absolutely inexcusable, ignorant, and criminally negligent travesty of failing to formulate and implement a strategy and attendant tactical doctrine demanded of the situation. This abomination is arguably the primary reason Hanoi's ideologues succeeded in their quest to establish communist hegemony in SE Asia.

### **A. Dissection of *Patriots***

The review will point out means by which a reader is misinformed, and otherwise subjected to semantic distortion and content deficiencies.

1. ***Patriots*** purportedly tells the story of "The Viet Nam War Remembered by All Sides." Readers infer they will learn all there is to know, including voices of all groups having a stake in the war's outcome. The result is neither balanced nor complete. It emphatically does **not** include "all sides." It reflects shallow understanding and predisposition to include only that information the author deems valid. First, Americans account for 96 of the 135 total interviews. 25 North Viet Nameese/Viet Cong are interviewed, and 12 South Viet Nameese. Only one Cambodian voice is heard. Not a single Laotian. 22 of the total 135 interviews are no more than partially positive while 113 are negative. Imbalances are evident, yet it becomes worse considering what "sides" were left out, effectively censored. Examining this aspect opens a much larger door to an extremely important and inexcusable omission: Hanoi's objectives for **all of SE Asia**.

Decades before American involvement Hanoi's communists began forming indigenous communist forces in Laos and Cambodia, and in 1962 began training Thai insurgents to ignite war in Thailand. As is all too common, the term "Viet Nam War" is perceived to refer only to Viet Nam, yet Hanoi's war in Laos, in Cambodia, and sponsored war in Thailand, are ignored. Hence "all sides" are not invited to the table to express their views. Ethnic lowland Lao, Lao Hmong, Viet Nam's Montagnards, Viet Nam's Khmer Krom, Hoa Hao Buddhists, Cao Dai, the Cambodians, Thai villagers in NE Thailand, are completely ignored, though they were subjected to Hanoi's military depredations. Hanoi's long term strategy, enabled by utterly obtuse U.S. policies, paid off. Laos and Cambodia are both under Hanoi's control or sphere of influence, to the enduring misfortune of their respective citizens.

2. This touches on the typically ridiculed "domino theory," generally depicted as the paranoid delusions of ignorant dolts. Appy mentions the "theory" only three times, briefly, with no explanation (pp. 46, 280, 404). It was **not** a theory at all. It was **not** an untested supposition in need of confirmation. It was a **syndrome**, a feature of military politics for centuries. This is ridiculously easy to verify. Genghis Khan rolled over "dominoes" of kingdoms and realms across Asia and Eastern Europe. In WW I and WW II countries fell like dominoes, then fell the other way when tides of war turned. Countries and colonies were "dominoes" falling under Japanese forces in WW II, then falling back the other way. In 1919 there was only one communist country. Poland, German, Hungary, Finland all fended off

Communist attempt to seize power in early 1920s. Later Hitler knocked over “dominoes”, and then they were knocked back. Finland was invaded by Russia in 1939 coming close to being another “domino.”

Following WW II country after country fell to communism. Poland...Romania...Albania...Hungary...Czechoslovakia...Latvia...Estonia...Lithuania. Almost Greece and Italy. In fact, there are five very real Asian “dominoes” staring sarcastic critics right in the face: Communist China came about because of Russian assistance. Chinese aid was an imperative for North Viet Nam defeat of France (whose eventual defeat was destined). Then Republic of Viet Nam, Laos, Cambodia fell. ***Patriots*** addresses none of this. This is censorship by omission.

SE Asia was volatile and highly unstable after WW II. A 12 year communist insurgency raged in Malaya. Two communist attempts were launched to seize in Indonesia (1948 and 1965). The Communist Huk rebellion broke out in the Philippines in mid-1950s.

**None of this** is examined or discussed in ***Patriots***, yet it is impossible to understand the situation without knowledge of these conditions. It is dishonest not to at least provide summary background information. In the 1950s and early 1960s Southeast Asia was a seething cauldron of instability, vulnerable to communist insurgencies and subversion.

Another “voice” censored out of the discussion, no remote hint of which can be found in ***Patriots***, is that of American advisors to indigenous people in Laos and Viet Nam. Recommended titles are

Robert L Black	<b><i>A Ranger Born</i></b>
Ronald Beckett	<b><i>Jack of All Trades</i></b>
Peter Scott	<b><i>Lost Crusade</i></b>
Robert Parrish	<b><i>My Year with ARVN</i></b>
John Cook	<b><i>The Advisor</i></b>
Jim Morris	<b><i>War Story</i></b>
Edward Metzner	<b><i>More than a Soldier's War</i></b>
Francis West	<b><i>The Village</i></b>
James Willbanks	<b><i>The Battle of An Loc</i></b>
David Donovan	<b><i>Once a Warrior King</i></b>
James Van Stratten	<b><i>A Different Face of War</i></b>
Robert Tonsetic	<b><i>Forsaken Warriors</i></b>
Robert Flynn	<b><i>A Personal War in Viet Nam</i></b>
Stuart Herrington	<b><i>Silence was a Weapon</i></b>
James Donahue	<b><i>Mobile Guerrilla Force</i></b>
Jack Estes	<b><i>Field of Innocence</i></b>
Andrew Finlayson	<b><i>Rice Paddy Recon</i></b>
Charles Weldon	<b><i>Trouble in Paradise</i></b>

In addition, accounts written by infantry troops depict something other than found in *Patriots*:

John M.G. Brown	<b><i>Rice Paddy Grunt</i></b>
Roger Hayes	<b><i>On Point</i></b>
James Humphries	<b><i>Through the Valley</i></b>
Lee Lanning	<b><i>The Only War we Had</i></b>
Lee Lanning	<b><i>Viet Nam, 1969-1970</i></b>
Al Santoli	<b><i>To Bear Any Burden</i></b>
Otto Lehrack	<b><i>No Shining Armor</i></b>

Together, these “voices” leave a completely different impression, telling the reader there was much more to Viet Nam than the dismal negativity portrayed in *Patriots* and similar works.

Nothing said here denies or excuses any examples of vile U.S. behavior. My Lai happened. It was and remains a vile disgrace, yet this does not and cannot negate these other voices.

3. ***Patriots*** frequently cites Ho Chi Minh's supposed nationalism as testimonial to his purported benign avuncular aspirations for his country. The truth is different. He was not a kindly, benevolent patriot and had all the moral constraints of the Chicago Mafia or Hitler. He had blood on his hands.

Adhering to training and indoctrination received studying in Moscow, Ho Chi Minh would accept no competition, that being antithetical to his Leninist education. Thus, in 1945 Ho's forces began eliminating, forever, any competition, to include anti-French Vietnamese nationalists. Appy mentions other non-communist groups (p. xix) but omits any hint of their being hunted down by Ho's communists. Main anti-French non-communist groups included the Viet Nam Quoc Dan Dang (Nationalist Party), the Dai Viets, the Dong Minh Hoi, the Hoa Hao Buddhists, and Cao Dai. Even another communist faction, the Trotskyites, was wiped out by Ho Chi Minh, to include leaders Phan Van Hum, Ta Thu Thau and Phan Van Chanh. They were shot. No deviance from Ho's Stalinist line was permitted, evidenced by the 1945 executions of Constitutionalist Bui Quang Chieu and monarchist Pham Quynh. Liquidation was often barbaric. Ngo Dinh Khoi was buried alive, along with his son Ngo Dinh Huan (Khoi was Ngo Dinh Diem's older brother). Communist defector Bui Tin, who accepted Saigon's surrender in 1975 and knew Ho Chi Minh personally, stated in a French interview that Vietnam could have achieved independence



much earlier and with much less bloodshed had Ho Chi Minh be willing to work with nationalist groups rather than eliminate them.

On pages 36-37 Appy's interview subject describes euphoria in Hanoi's Ba Dinh Square in September '45, when Viet Nam's independence appeared to be in reach. He cites Ho Chi Minh's quoting the American Declaration of Independence, implied proof of Ho Chi Minh's saintly nationalist purity. Excluded from narration was a chilling event occurring a week earlier, exhibiting the vengeful rabid blood-lust militancy of Ho's "nationalists." A leading Buddhist monk, Thich Duc Hai, was executed for being an alleged "country-selling traitor." As recalled by Thich Quang Do, another Buddhist monk, the Venerable Duc Hai was brought into the Bat village courtyard...

*"...with both arms tied with barbed wire behind his back and his neck carrying two placards, one covering his chest and the other his back, proclaiming him a "country-selling traitor". My master was then squeezed between two groups of men armed with trudgens and sticks, spears and lances, rakes and sickles. Another group of men, the so-called People's Court judges, were standing on the dinh platform to conduct the case. They ordered my master to kneel down and hang down his head while listening to vile charges; But my master refused to do so. One of the judges stepped down fm m the platform and planting himself in front of my master, declared: "You are a traitor and, therefore, you can't afford to be recalcitrant." Upon saying so, the judge hit my master a number of times on the chin, bloodying his mouth. The blood kept dripping on the placard covering his chest that proclaimed him to be a "country-selling traitor". Right then and there, they sentenced my master to death and took him to the village green in front of the dinh where his blood continued to drip on his robe and the place where he was standing. Then they forced my master to lie down and one of them shot point-blank three shots at his temple. Another spurt of blood gushed out and my master died on the spot."*

"Nationalism" does not justify invading sovereign countries. Tens of thousands of NVA regulars were in Laos and Cambodia, without the presence of which there would have been no war in these

countries. Does it necessarily follow that “nationalism” means banning all other political parties, as has been and **still is** the case in Viet Nam?

The subordination of nationalism to communist ideology has tragic and ample precedent, going back decades. During the independence war against the French in the 1940s and 1950s, Mrs. Nguyen Thi Nam, known as a “me khang chien,” or “Mother of the Resistance War,” a self-made wealthy businesswoman, gave money and land to the Viet Minh to support the cause for a free Viet Nam. She told her two sons to join the Viet Minh military; one became a regimental commander.

Mrs. Nam did not realize what there would be a two-phase revolution, following example established by Lenin in Russia (where Ho Chi Minh studied). First came the “national revolution,” the battle for control. Next, and with no forewarning, came the “social revolution,” in which a communist government would be forcibly imposed and “class enemies” exterminated. Wealthy landowners were not welcome in this proletarian utopia. Mrs. Nam’s fate was tragic. To make an example of her belonging to “the despotic landlord class” Mrs. Nguyen Thi Nam was arrested and subjected to diabolical abuse:

*“Patriotism was no longer sufficient to save her. In the summer of 1953, the Party put Nguyen Thi Nam on trial under a red banner which read ‘overthrow the despotic landlord Nguyen Thi Nam.’ Cadres placed Mrs. Nam before hundreds of poor peasants and led them in a hate-filled denunciation of this ‘atrocious landlord’ and her long list of crimes. **Whipped into a frenzy of hate, the crowd jeered at her, spat on her, and slapped her. At some point in July 1953, as land reform officially got underway, the Vietnamese communists executed her.**”*  
(Emphasis added)

(Christopher Goscha, Viet Nam, Basic books, New York, 2016, pp. 293-294.)

Nguyen Thi Nam:



So it went for scores of other true nationalists who did not adhere to Ho Chi Minh's edict, who were deemed "class enemies."

These are not actions of a benevolent "nationalist." Consider also that Hitler was a "nationalist." As was Stalin. As was Hideki Tojo. The KKK claims nationalist status. Paraphrasing Edmund Burke, this admonition must be borne in mind:

***"Before we praise them for their nationalism, let us see what they do with it."***

Appy repeatedly refers to Ho's drive for "reunification" as motive force driving Vietnamese to "fight Americans." This is duplicitous. Americans were not the primary enemy and Hanoi's regulars were not fighting only Americans. Hanoi's legions were killing other SE

Asians. Vietnamese. Laotian. Cambodian. Montagnard. Hmong. Khmer Krom. Hoa Hao. Cao Dai. Rather than “fighting Americans” to achieve “unification,” the more accurate description is “fighting other SE Asians to force upon them a dictatorial regime not of their liking.” Of all combat fatalities fighting against Hanoi’s invading legions, 18% were American. Most of the others were Vietnamese, while South Koreans, Thais, Australians; New Zealanders also had troops in the field.

It is true that the lure of simple “reunification” theme took hold, and was believed by millions, yet so too did many Germans enthusiastically embrace Hitler’s promises, convinced a better Germany would ensue.

## **B. Narrative Legerdemain**

A pattern is evident as Appy skews and slants his narrative, invents facts, or omits facts to sculpt a false history.

Slanted Data. Text routinely distorts via selective statistical assertions:

1. Page 46 assertion that an “estimated 8,000” were killed in Hanoi’s “land reform” program. This is far less than most estimates, extending from 60,000 to over 100,000, and even more once starvation is factored in. On page 47 Appy states “a considerable amount” of land was given back to its original owner after the “land reform” atrocity. The assertion is not true.
2. Page 102 states “at least half” of Viet Nam’s hamlets were destroyed in the war. Page 205, speaking of one province,

states 70%-80% of hamlets were destroyed, while page 496 states “nearly 2/3rds” of all hamlets were “in ruins.” Which is it? Why the disparity? There are no studies, there is **absolutely no evidence**, no proof that this many hamlets were “in ruins” nationwide. These are invented pseudo-facts. The statements are false. Between 1966 and 1974 Viet Nam’s tilled rice acreage **increased** by 10%, while rice production **increased** by over 30%. This would have been impossible were Appy’s allegations true.

3. Page 345 assertion: 5 million peasants were displaced. Again, no documentation, no proof. The statement is false. Over entire course of war this many people may have become refugees but most were eventually returned to their home hamlets. There was **never** any 5 million “displaced” peasants at any one time. One of the largest eruptions of refugees came as result of Hanoi’s 1972 massive invasion, generating over a million refugees, most returning to their homes once the invasion was repelled. Increase in tilled rice acreage and production could not have occurred with “5 million” displaced people.

Refugees also generated by plain simple fear. Fear of communist reprisal, assassinations, taxation, kidnapping of youth, etc.

**C. Omitted Facts** Important facts necessary for full comprehension, absence of which is inexcusable, producing false histories.

1. No mention of over 200,000 Hoi Chanh communist defectors. No small number of these defectors took up arms against their former comrades.

2. GVN land reform not mentioned. Approximately 2,500,000 acres of land given to 800,000 former impoverished tenant farmer families, beginning in 1970, nullifying what had been a communist selling point. This was important to rice farmers and the GVN economy but of no interest to Appy or his interview subjects.

3. Laotian communist Pathet Lao are briefly mentioned on 4 pages (217-219, 395). There is no mention, no hint, of the tens of thousands of NVA regulars without which there would have been no Laotian war.

4. The Cambodian Khmer Rouge are mentioned on pp. 378, 411-412, 495, 526-528. The anti-communist Lon Nol government is described as "American-backed" but there is no mention of a "Hanoi-backed" or "China-backed" Khmer Rouge. Appy cites American bombing and conjectural role in contributing to Khmer Rouge rise to power, but never, not once, says a word about tens of thousands of NVA regulars in combat in Cambodia, about NVA artillery, rockets, mortars raining death on Cambodian people. Had there been no Hanoi invasion, no aid and weapons to Khmer Rouge, no NVA regulars carrying combat burden, there would have been no war, as it came to be, in Cambodia.

5. Communist barbarity. Appy, to his credit, mentions the Hue Massacre, citing an estimated 2,000-3,000 civilians executed by communists, identified as “Saigon supporters” (p. 287). Once again, the carnage, the depravity, is understated. Upwards of 6,000 are believed to have been executed, many buried alive. Among victims were three Catholic priests, three German doctors and a nurse from the Hue medical faculty, along with janitors, street vendors, and others.

The American war crime atrocity at My Lai, with over 500 innocent civilians murdered, is cited, as it should be, to the everlasting shame of the United States and its military. Moral umbrage dictates mention of this barbarity, and should also apply to Hanoi’s forces. Nowhere in *Patriots* is there any hint Uncle Ho’s nephews used flame throwers to virtually melt over 250 Montagnards at Dak Son. Not a word is said of the over 100 villagers killed at Phu Thanh. No mention of NVA attack on Duc Duc refugee settlement, killing and wounding 250 people, burning their homes to the ground. No mention of almost daily rocket and mortar fire on populated areas.

Appy cites the Phoenix program saying it resulted in supposed assassination of “many thousands of Vietnamese believed to be guerrilla agents.” (p. 385) Left out is fact that the VC/NVA began their own “phoenix program” years before allies launched a counter-program. VC assassinated civil servants, hamlet chiefs, government officials, even teachers. VC assassins killed over 36,000 people, far more than alleged to have been “assassinated” under Phoenix. In fact Phoenix required three separate sources

confirming suspect was indeed a VC cadre or functionary. When possible the suspect was given opportunity to surrender, and about 26,000 did. Victims of VC killings received no such evidentiary protection. Appy makes no mention or provides no hint that such barbarity came at hands of those only seeking “reunification” of Viet Nam.

#### **D. Invented Facts - Falsehoods**

1. Appy alleges (p. 493) many of 9,000 US civilians, left after 1973 Peace (!!) agreement, were discharged U.S. military “...hired by the South Viet Namese to continue advising ARVN forces.” This is a **complete fabrication and does not belong in what is taken to be a history book**. It is unfounded rumor and gossip. [Note: this is example of mutation caused by pseudo-intellectual in-breeding. George Herring cites the same 9,000 figure in his profoundly over-rated book, America’s Longest War (p. 288).]

2. Page 443 allegation of whore houses for US State Dept. personnel. Fantasy. Invented fact. “Pulp” pseudo-history.

3. Page 495 allegation “Communist victory did not bring the “bloodbath” predicted. Appy is wrong. First, there already had been a bloodbath resulting from Hanoi’s war, a bloodbath extending for decades across Indochina. Secondly, by any definition there was a bloodbath after Hanoi’s conquest. Appy fails, again, to clearly spell out the regional nature of Hanoi’s war, targeting Viet Nam, Laos, Cambodia, and Thailand. Over the 15 years after 1975 research indicates that more people died violent deaths, on



an annual basis, in these four countries, than died during the years of open warfare. A much larger percentage of these people were innocent civilians, not armed combatants. Laos and Cambodia would not have been dragged into war's abyss of death were it not for Hanoi invasion. Laos had the highest percentage of refugees fleeing communist barbaric idiocy. Nearly two million died in an auto-genocide in Cambodia. In the former Republic of Viet Nam there were more than enough deaths to qualify for "bloodbath" status. The Jackson-Desbarats study indicated as many as 65,000 people were summarily executed in the five years after Hanoi's conquest.

Narrative accounts of "reeducation camp" misery and death tell of scores of deaths due to execution, disease, injuries, overwork, starvation. Annual mortality rate of some camps was 10%. Appy himself cites the "tens of thousands" of boat people dying at sea, dismissing their tragic fates and ignorant of research indicating around 250,000 perished at sea, much more so than Appy implies. Appy once again slants his numbers, a disturbing pattern of historical distortion.

The "bloodbath" need not come only by execution. It extended into civilian population. Death came through, poverty, endemic malnutrition, disease, suicide, forced relocation to remote inhospitable areas (New Economic Zones), and crushing agony and depression of living under the iron heel of a de facto fascist police state. Life in SE Asia was misery and death after communist conquest. Within a year Viet Nam's maternal and infant mortality rates doubled.

Appy's and his interviewees skirt over all of this as if nothing happened, as if peace had finally come to Vietnam, no mention made of Laos, Cambodia, Thailand. If Appy does outside reading he may stumble across this wisdom of and pay heed to Baruch Spinoza's words:

**“Peace is not an absence of war: It is a virtue, a state of mind, a disposition for beneficence, confidence, justice.”**

There was no “peace” in any sense of the word, in Viet Nam, Laos, Cambodia. All of the grandiose promises made by the puppet NLF –National Liberation Front- and People's Revolutionary Government (PRG) were disposed once they no longer served any purpose, as soon as there was no more need to feed enticing propaganda to gullible supporters. The NLF's 14 program promised everything imaginable. Freedoms of speech, religion, assembly, press, ad infinitum. Non-alignment. Non-interference in neighboring countries. Democracy. Hanoi's druids did not simply ignore the promises, they did the opposite. Appy and others bought into this, and still do. Their intellectual vision is occluded and fogged over by the cataracts of ideological fervor, the desire if not compulsion to pay homage, even grovel, before an imaginary romantic revolutionary, Ho Chi Minh, the lovable Yoda of SE Asia.

Appy's bias, his intellectual imprisonment, is evident. Few of his interview subjects have anything of substance to offer. Often smug sarcasm is provided lacking any substantive commentary. *Patriots* is polluted by a very obvious bias, producing a counterfeit history. Appy writes those supporting Saigon were “....engaged in a civil war against their own countrymen” (p. xxi). This is absurd. There were

no Republic of Vietnam, or Laotian, or Cambodian multi-divisional forces invading North Viet Nam. There were no Republic of Vietnam assassin teams working in North Vietnam.

Other syntactic techniques are used. Whenever Hanoi initiates offensive action it is described in passive voice, removing agency from Hanoi. P. xxi: "...fighting...spread to battle fields in neighboring Laos..." P. 35: After the '73 Peace Accords "...the war still continued for two years with American aid." The war continued because Hanoi violated the Paris Peace Accords it had signed. U.S. aid was minuscule. The war continued because Hanoi went on the offensive with abundant aid, weapons, munitions from Russia and China. Page 250 statement: "...war was escalating.....(in 1964)." All by itself? At this point Hanoi had already sent tens of thousands down the Ho Chi Minh trail and was about to send tens of thousands more. Hanoi was "escalating" its war. It deployed several thousand NVA troops to Laos. By July 1964 the RVN had already sustained 25,000 killed and assassinated, out of a population of about 15.0 million. Had U.S., with population of about 180.0 million, sustained proportional fatalities the death toll would have been 300,000. Passively stating the war "escalated" is misleading, the functional equivalent to an outright lie.

This pattern evident throughout the book, while actions undertaken by US or GVN are in active voice, implicitly signifying that U.S. and GVN are driving forces in waging an unnecessary war.

Page 113 statements read "LBJ **launched** Operation Rolling Thunder...." and "....United States **continued to intensify** its warfare." Page 377 statement: "[Nixon] ....**expanding the war** into

Cambodia where the Viet Cong and NVA had sanctuaries....” Left unsaid: Hanoi and the NVA blatantly violated the '54 Geneva Agreements, the '62 Laotian Neutrality Agreement, and international rules of law. Whatever the merits of either side, Johnson and Washington were responding to increased attacks by an ever growing NVA force, as distinct from indigenous VC.

Another reflection of ingrained bias is frequent use of term “American war,” a deflective term used to divert attention away from Hanoi’s war, foisting blame on America. One simple fact: Hanoi started the war. Viet Nam was impregnated with war in 1945, when Viet Nam blood was shed by Vietnamese as anti-communist nationalists, and Trotskyites, were killed by Ho’s communists. If Hanoi had not done this only stamp collectors would know about Viet Nam, Laos, Cambodia.

Neither Appy nor his subjects have one good word to say about the GVN. Yes, problems were evident but the '70 land reform was a revolutionary development. GVN military forces were improving and finally, correcting another instance of criminal negligence, provided with modern weaponry instead of WW II surplus. On page 396 Appy cites NVA capture of Quang Tri City during Hanoi’s Easter Offensive then neglects to report the city was retaken by GVN Airborne and Marine forces in fierce close quarters combat.

While book’s focus is on the war (and only parts of it) little mention is made of the aftermath, of how it all turned out. After five years of research and interviews with 350 people, one would suppose Appy might add a parenthetical addendum revealing how Viet Nam, Laos, Cambodia, became, and still remain, police-state socio-economic basket cases. Presently the average per capita gross

domestic product of the three Hanoi-dominated countries, Laos, Cambodia, Viet Nam is 36% of that of their four non-communist neighbors (Malaysia, Thailand, Philippines, Indonesia). Viet Nam's per capita income is 39% of Thailand's and will not catch up for decades, if then. Rural poverty is oppressive, compelling tens of thousands of young Viet Nameese girls, most from the Mekong Delta, to take husbands in Taiwan and Korea. This has **never occurred** in Viet Nam's history. Compounding the broken promises, the lies, is fact that Viet Nam is presently ranked 176<sup>th</sup> out of 180 countries in terms of press freedom (or lack thereof).

On page 537 Appy complains that a "...surprisingly narrow range of Viet Nam war experiences have gained widespread attention." On p. xv Appy bemoans, and correctly so, that most Americans know nothing of Viet Nam, Hanoi's war, "why it lasted so long." Their only information source is movies of American combat troops. ***Patriots*** does absolutely nothing to remedy this deplorable situation.

### Conclusion

***Patriots*** is an excellent catalog of myths and gossip, of conventional ignorance. It is not objective, honest history and should not be read as such. Some may dispute that indictment because the book seems to correspond with other books. "Everyone knows...." Viet Nam was "unwinnable" or (fill in the blank). That is not a guarantee of accuracy and truthfulness:

***"If 50 million people say a foolish thing, it is still a foolish thing."***-Anatole France

Nothing in ***Patriots*** explains major developments in the war, or allows a reader to infer these developments might occur. How, for

example, would the three major communist offensives, in '68, '72, and '75 be compared and contrasted? All were different. None are explained in depth. What were major developments taking place between '68 and '71? Why, for example, did Chieu Hoi defectors almost triple in '69 over three year preceding average? Is this important? Hanoi's ideologues thought so. Why? Why did 65% of American combat fatalities take place in 12 of RVN's 44 provinces? Why disparity? Where were these lethal 12 provinces? Answers to these and other important questions cannot be found in *Patriots*. Instead the reader is provided some relevant material but this is mixed in with utter useless fluff. It is not important that the weather girl got a butterfly tattooed on her butt.

Why did Appy choose not to interview author and former communist party member Duong Thu Huong? On page 552 he lists her as an influence on his views. An interview with her, in French exile, stripped of her communist party membership, would reveal why her novels describe communist cadre as "fat pigs," and why she stated if she had known what would come of it all she would never have joined the communist party, never joined an entertainment troupe to entertain front line NVA regulars. She learned, too late, that it was all one monstrous lie. Dr. Duong Quynh Hoa, former PRG member, Minister of Health, likewise discovered Hanoi was lying. She quit the communist party after dedicating her life, losing her only son to "the revolution, "a "revolution" that was not to be. . So did PRG Minister of Justice Truong Nhu Tang, who escaped as a boat person.

It was all a lie, an almost diabolically deceptive lie. While former Vietnamese adherents now realize their error, far too many would-be historians are locked into the grand myth. In the words of Samuel Taylor Coleridge

*“The wise only possess ideas; the greater part of mankind is possessed by them.”*

Thus are many who are so possessed, so entranced by the many Viet Nam myths and fantasies. Many are featured in ***Patriots***.