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shrewd and penetrating study of one of the most successful of practitioners in that most trying of combat roles for modern armies.

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Rice, Edward E. *Wars of the Third Kind. Conflict in Underdeveloped Countries*. Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1988.

Peterson, Michael E. *The Combined Action Platoons. The U.S. Marines' Other War in Vietnam*. New York: Praeger, 1989.

America's seemingly impossible failure in South Vietnam continues to tax the minds of those involved. How might the lessons of Vietnam guide future US military intervention is the implicit question of both works reviewed here. Each draws on historical analysis and the personal reflections of the authors who participated, in one form or another, in the effort to save Vietnam from itself.

Edward Rice, is a former career Foreign Service Officer with assignments in China, 1937-45, the Philippines, 1949-51, the State Department Policy Planning Staff, 1959-61, and who served as Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs, 1961-63, and US consul general to Hong Kong, 1963-67. He is also author of the acclaimed *Mao's Way*. In this volume Rice contributes observations drawn from his exposure to conflict in Asia and from a survey of innumerable counter-guerrilla and counter-insurgency wars from throughout the ages and the world.

Rice's comparative analysis employs examples ranging from such diverse struggles as the Czarist suppression of various nationalities in the central Caucasus, the Chinese civil war, the Sino-Japanese war, the Malayan Emergency, urban insurrections in Hong Kong, Singapore, and Uruguay, the Peninsular War, the Huk rebellion, Algeria, and the thirty-year war in Vietnam, among others. Naturally, comparisons entail epistemological and practical problems, but after asserting these struggles were "in essence" the same, however much they differed "in their particulars," Rice spends no time addressing these concerns.

Such a broad sweep proves the work's major weakness, and strength. Problems first emerge with the very title — "wars of the third kind." Rice coins this phrase to describe wars that are neither nuclear nor conventional, and for which "guerrilla wars" in an inappropriate title because reliance on guerrilla operations "may be only partial." Such may be true, but surely partisan war, counter-insurgency, revolutionary war, small war, low-intensity conflict, or even the British phrase "warm war" would have sufficed. A more normative title for the set of rather discrete dirty little wars that have raged throughout history might be welcome, but Rice's is employed so indiscriminately that it is of little use. Dependence on secondary sources, and in at least one occasion the

misquoting of a memoir to support his point (p. 102), detract further from this work.

While deeply flawed in some scholarly respects, Rice's insights are many and often deep. Particularly important is the point that US doctrine and practice in Vietnam failed to accept the totality of the struggle at the village level, and to tailor the US presence accordingly. Other observations are simply wrong. Do democracies, as he asserts, enjoy the best chance of "abandoning a wrong course before it ends in disaster"? Stalin, Mao and Saddam Hussein might disagree.

And yet, despite all its problems, this is an extremely engaging, and useful work. It is a stimulating piece, rich with an eclectic series of examples, leavened by sage observations that many will find provocative. But, in the final analysis, it is an unsound guide to any one conflict, or to any future policy.

Within the subtext of Rice's account run two threads. First is an acceptance of American intervention in third world minor conflicts, and the second is that America got it wrong in Vietnam by virtually ignoring the village level insurgency. Michael Peterson's account focuses on the latter and questions the former.

Peterson served several tours in South Vietnam as a member of a Combined Action Platoon (CAP). Brainchild of the US Marine Corps, the CAP concept entailed assigning a twelve man Marine Corps rifle section, and a Navy medic, to a South Vietnamese Popular Force militia platoon of 35 men. So combined the force would jointly operate solely within an assigned village or set of hamlets to destroy what subversive guerrilla organization could be identified. Peterson's object is to present a historical overview of the CAP program, and a rudimentary analysis of its civil action/community development effort.

As Peterson observes, the program did not spring forth like Athena from the head of Zeus "mature and fully conscious." Instead, despite all the talk, and the actual doctrine of counter-insurgency once the vogue of the Kennedy administration, this effort of countering the people's war at its base was purely an *ad hoc* program. Consequently, it was slow to generate an institutional momentum and expand. The goal set in 1967 of establishing 114 CAPs was only achieved in 1970, just months before the entire effort was wound up. Peterson presents the most complete history of the development of the program to be made public to date. Although his style leaves much to be desired, and despite some unfortunate typos, Peterson's work is a welcome corrective to some of the grandiose claims made for this program.¹ The CAP program remained a novel and intriguing tactical contribution to the counter-insurgency effort, that at best demonstrated a much greater potential applicability than it ever achieved.

Peterson's account, however, has several flaws and omissions. The first problem is stylistic. The writing is often poor, and several key points are marred by typos. While the historical sections are sound, the author's penchant for unsupported editorial insights is a major distraction. Further, the introduction of his very rudimentary analysis of civic action/community development

programs in a chapter near the close of the book is extremely awkward, and certainly dispensable in the form presented.

A deeper failure is Peterson's inability to probe further the inability of the CAP program to expand. As he points out, while championed by many senior Marines, CAPs and its corollary enclave strategy was actively resisted by the commander of US forces in Vietnam, General Westmoreland. Peterson sheds little new light on this top level debate. He fails to acknowledge, however, that resources were not directed into the CAP program for quite another reason as well. While pointing out that NVA/VC forces escalated the hinterland war to draw US forces away from the villages, Peterson criticizes the decision by US forces to go after the bait. By late 1967, however, Lt. Gen. Lewis Walt, a founder of the program, and commander of all US Marines in Vietnam, acknowledged that the NVA threat could not be ignored. Consequently, it was not purely the misdirection of resources that hampered the growth of CAPs but rather the scarcity of total resources in face of a rapidly expanding threat that saw CAPs starved of support. Despite these problems, Peterson's account is presently an indispensable guide to America's village war in Vietnam.

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Endnotes

1. See Rice, pp. 101-103, and Andrew F. Krepinevich, *The Army and Vietnam* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), pp. 174-76.

Vu, Tran Tri (pseud.). *Lost Years: My 1,632 Days in Vietnamese Reeducation Camps*. Translated by Nguyen Phuc (pseud.). Berkeley, CA: Institute of East Asian Studies, University of California, 1989.

On 25 June 1975, Tran Tri Vu reported to Nguyen Lam School near Cholon for reeducation with some trepidation and a seven day supply of food and medicine. Vu was a former reserve ARVN lieutenant seconded to the Ministry of Education; reeducation for junior officers was supposed to last a week. He was released 23 December 1979, 1,632 days later. During that time he was indeed reeducated. (Given the Vietnamese fondness for puns, perhaps that gave him his pseudonym; "vu" means "wild or uncultivated." Another meaning, with diacritical mark, is "season or harvest.") In six jungle camps he learned much about himself, about human nature, and about the nature of the Vietnamese revolution.

Like the Chinese, the Vietnamese Communists were determined to modify the thoughts and actions of the southerners and make them supporters of the new regime. The camps were places to bend the prisoners' wills and to