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Mexico, in this book and in his previous works, Sims has clarified the damages caused by the expulsion of the Spaniards.

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Kinnard, Douglas. *The Certain Trumpet: Maxwell Taylor & the American Experience in Vietnam*. Washington, DC: Brassey's (US), 1991.

All those interested in the progress of the American war in Viet Nam have been long grateful to Douglas Kinnard for giving us his earlier book, *The War Managers* (1977). Now he offers another work, a study of the life and career of General Maxwell Davenport Taylor, focused primarily on those crucial years when America fought to ensure the continued independence of the southern Republic of Viet Nam. Kinnard's choice of subject was worthwhile for no first-rate biography has been written. Only General Taylor's eldest son, John, has previously tried to provide a biographical examination of this important cold warrior in his *General Maxwell Taylor* (New York: Doubleday, 1989). Unfortunately, Kinnard's study fails to do justice to his subject.

Taylor had an interesting career. Graduating from West Point in 1922, he saw service at Schofield Barracks, Camp Lewis, Fort Sill, and Fort Leavenworth. He taught Spanish and French at the United States Military Academy for five years and by 1935 was a military observer in Japan. With Colonel Joseph W. Stilwell, Taylor watched the Japanese army spread across China. By D-Day 1944 he was an airborne general, commander of the 101st Division. After the war he became Superintendent of the Military Academy and later served as US military commander in Berlin. Following a stint as Army deputy chief of staff at the Pentagon, Taylor became commander of the US 8th Army in Korea in the last days of conflict there. He was army chief of staff from 1955 to his retirement in 1959. Called back to active duty by John Kennedy, he served as the president's White House military representative (1961-62) and then as chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (1962-64). President Johnson named him Ambassador to Vietnam, (1964-65), after which he served three more years as a presidential consultant on Vietnam. All this would be fascinating grist for a biographer.

It was not his purpose, however, Kinnard tells us, to write a well-rounded biography: "The main subject of this book is the American experience in Vietnam. The public life of Maxwell Taylor is used as a prism to tell the story of high-level American decision making and its consequence in Vietnam." (p. 204) Notwithstanding the late announcement of his purpose, Kinnard has

avoided what was needed — a good biography — and has failed in his effort to reveal the intricacies of the process by which the US stumbled blindly into the quagmire of the Viet Nam conflict.

The text is marred with errors. Kinnard states (p. 87) that France annexed Vietnam in 1879, as if the whole were acquired at once. Not only is the date incorrect, but the author ignores several treaties that gradually ceded more control to France culminating in the Patenotre Treaty (June 1884) which granted France the right to control Vietnam's foreign affairs and to oversee the Viets' internal policies. Kinnard asserts (p. 90) that the battle of Dien Bien Phu began in November 1953 rather than March 1954. He describes (p. 90) the situation at Dien Bien Phu in January 1954 as "foreboding" prior to the firing of the first shot. Kinnard writes (p. 87) that in 1930 the forty-year-old Ho Chi Minh was a "young revolutionary." Despite recent research, Kinnard believes that North Vietnamese torpedo boats twice attacked American naval vessels in the Tonkin Gulf in November 1964. (p. 138)

His writing is often clumsy as, for example (p. 59), when he tells us that Robert MacNamara "spent World War II working in statistical control in the Army Air Corps and was for a time under Curtis LeMay." His conclusions are occasionally bizarre as when (p. 65) he writes that "In retrospect, the [Berlin] wall was probably a good thing in that it put a cap on tensions" Throughout the book, Kinnard's style includes an alphabet soup more fitted for military memos than for the reading public: MILREP, MRBM, SACEUR, BNSP, CNO, PENTANA, JSOP, USCOB, EXCOM, NSAM, COMUSMACV, US/GVN, RVNAF, and others. He includes page after page of block-indented quotes, undigested material readily skipped by readers and his text is unnecessarily filled with points a, b, and c, or 1, 2, and 3 that interrupt the flow of his story.

In his discussion of the crucial early years of the regime of southern president Ngo Dinh Diem, Kinnard omits any mention of the key role played by Colonel Edward Geary Lansdale. The author's fullest comment about Lansdale is relegated to note 4 of chapter three when he tells us that "Lansdale was not one of Taylor's favorites. He considered many of Lansdale's ideas to be not feasible." There is no indication given as to why Taylor felt that way, for the note makes a sudden turn-around and concludes with the thought that "In the early 1950s Lansdale had been an adviser to Philippine Defense Minister Ramon Magsaysay in the successful campaign against the communist guerrilla movement." If that is true (and it was), then the reader needs to know *why* Taylor repudiated Lansdale's regularly-proffered advice. There were not that many experts with proven records of success then available to the American government and it would be instructive to know why Taylor was convinced that Lansdale's ideas were "not feasible."

Kinnard quotes without comment (p. 140) Taylor's remark that the southern failure to develop a "truly national spirit" was caused by a Vietnamese

“national attribute which makes for factionalism.” Elsewhere (p. 208), he writes approvingly that Taylor was “the very model of a modern major general,” perhaps ignorant of the fact that the phrase from Gilbert and Sullivan’s light opera, “The Pirates of Penzance” was part of a ditty ridiculing military leaders who knew as much of artillery “as a novice in a nunnery” and who were barely able to tell a Mauser rifle “from a javelin.”

Describing his subject as an “unregenerate hawk to the very end” (p. 216), Kinnard agrees with Taylor (p. 211) that “American forces in sufficient numbers could have prevented the fall of Dien Bien Phu.” Such an assertion is a profound overestimation of American strength and capability at that time and demonstrates a lack of understanding of what was happening in Vietnam.

Maxwell Taylor seems never to have considered any solutions for the conflict in Vietnam other than military ones. Kinnard tells us that Taylor “was the father of the American buildup” (p. 107) who, although doubting that escalation would “lead [either] to a settlement or to putting down the Viet Cong threat” (p. 144), still recommended increased bombing of the North. Then, in a statement the power of which even Kinnard seems not to recognize, he writes (p. 213) that Taylor’s tour as ambassador (1964–65) “was the most important year for presidential decisions leading to the US combat role. In the summer of 1964 most options were still open for Lyndon Johnson; by the following summer there were none — except to escalate the war.” If his advice was that crucial and that wrong-headed, Taylor certainly deserves a better study than this one. One clear conclusion emerges. It seems that none of the policy makers had any idea what the real issues were, but we already knew that from the writings of others.

Kinnard does reveal an important part of Taylor’s personality when he concedes (p. 213) that the man typically failed “to stand up and be counted when in the minority.” What a poverty of spirit in a man given such great responsibility. One also suspects that it was not a trait that suddenly revealed itself only after Taylor rose to the top of his profession.

Kinnard’s closing paragraph contains these words (p. 219): “Taylor possessed a vision ... perhaps ... sometimes flawed or perhaps he failed to communicate it ... Others may judge that for themselves.” No. That is precisely the task of Kinnard; insofar as he refuses to take up that burden, by that measure does he fail to provide us with a worthwhile analysis, supposedly his very reason for writing this book. Kinnard’s final sentence is troubling. “Of [only] one thing I am certain: few twentieth-century Americans have lived fuller or more dedicated lives.” (p. 219) This sweeping generalization is entirely unwarranted and impossible to prove and even if true would be irrelevant. Why should we care how full or dedicated Taylor’s life was? We want to know how his actions affected *us*, and Kinnard does not give us an answer.

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