



Andrew Wiest (editor), *Rolling Thunder in a Gentle Land. The Vietnam War Revisited*.
Osprey Publishing, Great Britain 2006. 336 pp. Price not stated. ISBN 10 1 84603 020X.
Reviewed by *Petra Müllerová*.

Despite the fact that the Vietnam War happened more than 30 years ago, this subject is still alive. Every year a lot of books dealing with the topic are being published all over the world, mainly in English speaking countries. The following book edited by Andrew Wiest, professor of History at the University of Southern Mississippi, where he co-directs the Vietnam Studies Program and the Centre for the Study War and Society, brings a new view of the most important aspects of the Vietnam War.

Authors of individual chapters are historians, journalists and war participants. They are seeking to start a historical debate and research by searching for new contextual answers to questions that many historians had thought long since answered – sometimes calling for a revision of the historical orthodoxy of the conflict.

The book starts with the chronology of modern wars in Vietnam (pp. 12–15) and main political events in the country. From its beginnings in the Colonial War with France in the 1940s and 50s, through to the final evacuation of Saigon in 1975 and beyond, each chapter of *Rolling Thunder in a Gentle Land: The Vietnam War Revisited* focuses on a different aspect of the Vietnam War. Officers from both the North Vietnamese Army (Mr. Bui Tin) and Army of Republic Viet Nam (General Lam Quang Thi) take a first-hand look at the strategy and tactics of both sides and give critical assessments of where the war went wrong. Le Ly Hayslip provides harrowing account of life for the typical South Vietnamese civilian caught up in the war. Acclaimed historians and journalists, such as Bernard Edelman and Arnold Isaacs, take a critical view of the many aspects of the war from the river war and the air war through to the strategy and doctrine used by the US forces.

The main aim of the book is to place the Vietnam War in its proper context. The book cannot pretend to answer all the nagging questions that still surround the conflict, but it can at least begin to pose new questions that have too often been left unasked or ignored.

A detailed content follows:

- 1) Introduction: An American War? – Professor Andrew Wiest (pp. 16–33).
- 2) The French Indochina War: 1946–54 – Martin Windrow (pp. 34–51).
- 3) Fight for the Long Haul: The War as Seen by a Soldier in the People's Army of Vietnam – Bui Tin (pp. 52–73.)

- 4) The Road South: The Ho Chi Minh Trail – Dr John Prados (pp. 74–95).
- 5) The War outside Vietnam: Cambodia and Laos – Professor Kenton Clymer (pp. 96–115).
- 6) A View from the Other Side of the Story: Reflections of a South Vietnamese Soldier – Lieutenant General Lam Quang Thi (pp.116–135).
- 7) Caught in the Crossfire: The Civilian Experience – Le Ly Hayslip (pp. 136–155).
- 8) Diggers and Kiwis: Australian and New Zealand Experience in Vietnam – Professor Jeffrey Grey (pp. 156–173).
- 9) The Conduct of the War: Strategy, Doctrines, Tactics, and Policy – Lewis Sorley (pp. 174–191).
- 10) On the Ground: The US Experience – Bernard Edelman (pp. 192–211).
- 11) “Swatting Flies with a Sledgehammer:” The Air War – Professor Ronald B. Frankum, Jr. (pp. 212–233).
- 12) Battle for the Mekong: The River War in Vietnam – Professor R. Blake Dunnavent (pp. 234–255).
- 13) Tactics in a Different War: Adapting US Doctrine – Gordon L. Rottman (pp.256–275).
- 14) The “Living-Room War:” Media and Public Opinion in a Limited War – Professor Daniel C. Hallin (pp.276-291).
- 15) The Final Act – and After: The Legacy of War – Arnold R. Isaacs (pp. 292–310).

The publication concludes with endnotes (pp. 311–319), bibliography (pp. 320–326), glossary (pp. 327–329) and index (pp. 330–336). The book is supplemented with number of detailed maps helping the reader to orient well in the text. Photos are not overused and many of them are probably being published for the first time.

The publication is aimed at those who would like to investigate a new view of the Vietnam War and those trying to widen their knowledge of modern history. It is likely that the book will be published in Czech language very soon.