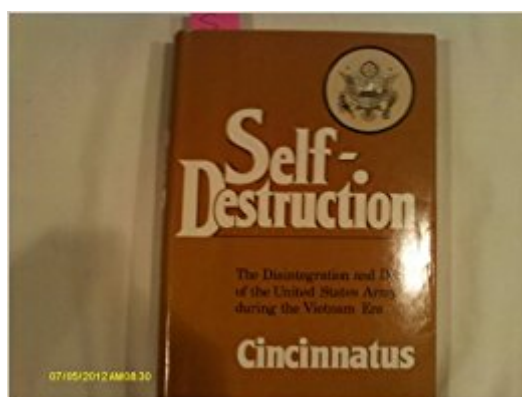


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Self-Destruction, The Disintegration And Decay Of The United States Army During The Vietnam Era



Synopsis

A powerful political statement about the Vietnam era.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

A powerful political statement about the Vietnam era.

Awesome read. If you've heard that ol' "...we didn't lose in Vietnam, the politicians lost it for us...", guess again. Staff officers lost it for us. Replete with AARs, reports, and other facts that 'cause one to observe our current involvement in the Middle East and slap one's self in the forehead. Sad but true. All these years later, and it's still largely "search and destroy". You cannot win if you do not take and HOLD ground.

EVERYBODY should read this book!

I have read this book and since then I was impressed. What the topic is and what we are speaking of that goes to the heart of the souls of people spoken in private moments that are not simply understood by performance reports and efficiency experts as are many of the Pentagon's planners. I found this a good book that from my assessment has been repressed because it goes to the heart of the military's failures. As with many classics perhaps there were some deficiencies in this book being written, as with *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* [Gibbons] [Mommsen] but to write off this book because of who wrote it as has been done to suppression it is injustice and blind ignorance, as the two most authoritative modern classics on the Roman Empire were written by

those who never were in Ancient Rome (Gibbons, Mommsen) This work seems bitterly attacked by some when it should not be.

I'm a US Army Vietnam combat veteran who served four tours in Vietnam (1967-68-69-70-71). Most of my tours were spent out in the field. For part of one tour I held a rear echelon clerical job that involved the use of intelligence documents up to my security clearance of Top Secret. Whenever someone asks me to recommend a good non-fiction book about the Vietnam war, this book is my first recommendation followed by "Fire in the Lake". I have bought about 30 copies of this book over the years to give to people I want to know the unvarnished truth about the war. It is a tough book to read. The author, a US Army officer compiled the book's content from after action reports written by officers who served in Vietnam. The author makes no secret of the fact that he did not serve in Vietnam. He uses the words of the US Army's own officers to create a damning indictment of the US Army's conduct of the war. The Army continues to ask its serving officers to prepare the type of "after action" reports summarized in this book. It is the Army's way of generating "lessons learned" educational materials to improve its performance in present and future wars. This type of self-criticism has greatly improved the conduct and caliber of US Army officers since the debacle of Vietnam. This book is not a criticism of every US Army officer who served in Vietnam. But it paints a horrible picture of the conduct of many Army officers and the US Army as an institution. It is important to remember while reading this work that many US Army officers in Vietnam were honourable men (West Pointers, ROTCS and OCS grads) who served bravely, risking their own lives to protect their men and the lives of innocent civilians. The majority of the officers I personally served with were men of impeccable character. Many were not. Some of them continued to speak the truth to the US Army in Vietnam even when honesty could be career suicide. Many did not. That is the sad tale told in this book. John Reid, Olympia, WA

This is a book a must for anyone who wants to understand what happened in Vietnam. The author, a Pentagon staffer in the early 1980's, based his work on interviews of U.S. Army Vietnam vets at all ranks; because so many of them would only speak off record, he decided to make all of his sources anonymous. Beginning with the assertion that every country which finds itself in the aftermath of defeat must absorb the lessons inherent in its failure, "Cincinnatus" looks at the military errors, both tactical and strategic. There is no discussion of errors by the politicians - save for the assertion that the top brass should have spoken up when ordered to do foolish things, and in failing to do so let down their country. Likewise, there is no discussion of the effect of the anti-war movement on the

conflict's outcome. No, "Cincinnatus" asserts that Vietnam was lost ON THE BATTLEFIELD, and rejects the "stabbed in the back" argument with vehemence, arguing that it serves no good purpose, and indeed might well harm the nation in the years to come. So this book speaks in considerable detail of how the military blundered. From "ticket-punching" careerism and the devaluation of medals into "gongs", to ignorance of the culture, language, and history of Vietnam, to an excessive reliance on firepower combined with an inability to fight effectively at night or join battle with the enemy at times and places of OUR choosing, "Cincinnatus" is scathing in his criticism of our military performance. It's a powerful indictment of the U.S. military; but what makes this book even more incredible is how "Cincinnatus" speaks of what must be done to correct the problems. It's clear that he wrote this book, not out of bitterness, but in hopes that it would be read and changes made. His book ends sounding a warning, calling upon the military to repair the damage, in hopes of avoiding another defeat. SOMEONE heard him: the book was published shortly after the invasion of Granada, and within the next 6-7 years sweeping changes were made, with the result that, when war came again in 1990 (in the Gulf), almost NONE of the mistakes cited by "Cincinnatus" were committed, and a stunning victory was won as a consequence. And that, to me, is the REAL value of this book. It not only explains the tragedy of Vietnam, but the heady victory that American arms won just 15 years later on the sands of Southern Iraq and Kuwait. Any serious military historian will want to have this book in her/his collection.

The author's identity was "revealed by Col. Harry Summers (with the help of Washington Post publisher and Vietnam veteran Donald Graham) to be Cecil Currey, a chaplain in the U.S. National Guard who had never served in Vietnam" as per B.G. Burkett in his book "Stolen Valor". Take the book jacket description of the author as a "senior field-grade officer" at the Pentagon and it's damning indictment of the Army's performance in Vietnam with a very large grain of salt!!!

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