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Xiaobing Li. *Voices from the Vietnam War: Stories from American, Asian, and Russian Veterans.* Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2010. 296 pp. $35.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-8131-2592-3.

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Building on Christian Appy's capacious work *Patriots: The Vietnam War Remembered from All Sides* (2004), Xiaobing Li's *Voices from the Vietnam War* includes twenty-two oral histories that broaden our understanding of the complex and multifaceted nature of the war in Vietnam by focusing on the diverse experiences of individuals who lived it. Remembrances include a South Vietnamese naval lieutenant who conducted electronic surveillance and reconnaissance along the rivers and tributaries around Saigon; a young Soviet soldier from the Ukraine who worked as an instructor at a SAM-missile training center in North Vietnam; a People's Liberation Army (China) officer in charge of a railroad engineering battalion stationed near Hanoi; and an American flight nurse who left the Air National Guard for the army after she was told that the US Air Force would not send female flight nurses to "in-country" billets in Vietnam. This eclectic mix of actors and circumstances is what gives this book its strength by underscoring both the diversity of individual experiences and the international dimension of the Second Indochina War. Additional recollections from a Russian KGB agent who worked in the embassy in Hanoi, a South Korean doctor who served in the Army of the Republic of Korea's Ninth Mobile Army Surgical Hospital (M.A.S.H), and a noncommissioned US Air Force officer whose squadron was stationed in Thailand also emphasize the multiplicity of experiences and situate the conflict within a wider context–one that illustrates the truly global reach of the war in Southeast Asia.

The one glaring omission in this area is the lack of testimony from Australian veterans. Much like the experiences of soldiers from South Korea, China, and the Soviet Union, the wartime contribution of troops sent from the commonwealth is grossly lacking within the scholarship. Given this fact, an entry from the Australian point of view would have been a welcomed addition. This sin of omission aside, Li provides a nice balance to the nations that sent their young men and women to take part in the conflict in Southeast Asia.

Voices from the Vietnam War is broken down into five thematic sections. Part 1 examines the war from a Vietnamese perspective with recollections provided by veterans from the Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) and the People's Army of Vietnam (PAVN) more commonly known as the North Vietnamese Army (NVA); part 2 includes oral histories from Chinese and Soviet military personnel who served in support units in North Vietnam; part 3 examines the experiences of American soldiers and US Marines both in and out of combat; part 4 includes recollections from doctors and nurses who served in the South Vietnamese, American, and South Korean militaries; and part 5 looks at logistic support from both sides of the conflict. These occupational perspectives provide a number of familiar and unfamiliar historical tropes. Some, such as cross-cultural estrangement between Americans and the Vietnamese, the suddenness and profound sense of loss from combat death, or feelings of powerlessness and awe in the face of aerial bombardment and the overwhelming application of American airpower, may seem familiar to students of the war. Others, including discord and strained relations between northern NVA soldiers and their southern brethren serving in local guerrilla forces in South Vietnam, or the immense struggle of those who fled Southeast Asia after the fall of Saigon, may not. Also, Li's inclusion of stories that show the more mundane aspects of the war in Vietnam, including administration, logistics, supply, and training, underscores the fact that most individuals sent to Vietnam did not serve in combat arms or see action. In that sense, this book complements Meredith Lair's recent work on American GI consumer culture in Vietnam, *Armed with Abundance: Consumerism and Soldiering in the Vietnam War* (2011). Like Lair, Li shows an often unseen side of the war, one that serves as a useful corrective to false assumptions concerning the nature of the war in Vietnam, particularly the belief that combat was the dominant experience of Vietnam War veterans.

Like other oral histories, *Voices f rom the Vietnam War* helps "humanize" the conflict in Vietnam by bringing to life the men and women who fought and supplied this immense international conflict. Personal anecdotes, such as the comfort given to one homesick Chinese soldier by the familiar landscape and geography of North Vietnam, or the pain and rejection felt by in-country American marines who received "Dear John" letters from estranged wives, girlfriends, and lovers back home, helps illustrate that the men and women who fought and served in Vietnam were flesh-and-blood human beings–a fact that is often lost within the scholarship despite its obviousness.

The single weakness of this work is one that plagues most oral histories regardless of subject matter: a loss of overall perspective and meaning due to an intense focus on the singular "lived" experience. Micro-histories that examine the minutia of historical experience from the perspective of the individual often lose sight of the bigger picture or the overall context that frames and gives meaning to human thought, feeling, and action. This was evident in the fact that a number of these oral histories were adequately descriptive of events but lacking in personal analysis and reflection on larger issues pertaining to the war. Although Li's brief introduction at the beginning of each entry helps frame each experience within a situational context that provides greater understanding of a particular circumstance, readers come away wanting more discussion on exactly how some of these individuals viewed themselves and their actions within the political, military, social, and cultural mosaic of the Second Indochina War. That being said, *Voices f rom the Vietnam War* is an excellent addition to the historiography and an important work that helps internationalize and personalize the war in Vietnam.

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