

CHARLIE CAN'T READ ENGLISH

A VIETNAM WAR HISTORICAL FICTION BY TOM BESOLD

Why historical fiction?

- Allows for greater creative freedom
- Requires meticulous research
- Must capture key themes
- Need to justify medium



The inescapable truth of the Vietnam War is that the United States should not have been there. Justifications were incoherent and detached from reality. Why were we fighting?

The domino theory — flawed idea that if Vietnam were to fall to Communism, then so would Southeast Asia, then Europe, and then America.

- Communism was not a monolith
- Fervent anti-Communism became increasingly ridiculous
- Displayed ignorance of Vietnam's history

To promote democratic ideals

- Respective governments of South Vietnam were total failures
- Despotism tendencies
- Rampant corruption, nepotism, persecution
- Aligned with none of the principles U.S. purported to be upholding

Despite confused policy, the United States still had incredible technological might— how did the world's most advanced nation manage to lose the war?

Complete and total ignorance of Vietnam

- History of Vietnam is one long struggle for independence
- Wary of foreign influences

Fought the wrong type of war

- Didn't leverage technological advantage in useful fashion
- "Search and destroy" was deeply flawed
- Fighting style wasn't tailored to the setting
- Gave dissenters free propaganda

Weren't persuasive

- Why should anyone support South Vietnam government?
- Didn't provide appealing alternative to Communism
- Optics of US aggression were horrible
- Couldn't match the zeal of North Vietnam
- Never captured hearts and minds

Hubris

- America can, should, and will win
- "tiny, backward nation" of Vietnam is no threat
- Assumption that only U.S. is just

The grand tragedy of it all is that those who architected the war bore none of its weight. Instead, it was those who knew nothing of the larger machinations surrounding the war. This deeply upsetting reality sits at the core of the Vietnam War. Everyone was a victim. Most go through every single day trying their best to be a good person. The people of Vietnam just wanted security and independence. They didn't ask to endure year after year of strife. They didn't ask for a foreign power to meddle in their affairs. U.S. soldiers, not even adults yet, were thrust deep into hell, dying for a murky, increasingly dubious cause. The Vietnam war churned through lives in a remarkably grand, uncaring way — and yet, there is no legitimate rationale for its happening. Washington's obsession with maintaining U.S. prestige proved disastrous. The futility of war certainly isn't unique to Vietnam, but its distinct inanity adds levels to its horror.



This is all well and good, but what about the historical fiction?

Still a work in progress. Here's a teaser: Early 1966. In a twisted effort to garner support both domestically and abroad, Washington unleashes a beast of mythical proportions into South Vietnam. This hellion, known not by a name but rather as "The Terror," has been directed to wreak as much havoc as possible onto unknowing refugee camps. Following The Terror to Vietnam is young journalist Dan Zanty, who is nothing more than a willing American propaganda machine. Dan has been given explicit instruction to report a fabricated story — that The Terror is the result of a Soviet science experiment, who has been gifted to North Vietnam to advance the war effort. An undeniably crazy gambit, but one deemed worthy by Washington. It's with this conceit that the historical fiction begins.