

Tet Offensive In The Vietnam War

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Introduction

Tet is considered to be one of the most important holidays in the entire year in Vietnam, as on this day, the new lunar year starts. Tet is considered to be equal to the combination of Christmas, Thanksgiving, New Year's Eve and Easter. The Tet Offensive is one of the major turning points in the Vietnam War. On January 31st, more than 80,000 troops of the North Vietnamese attacked South Vietnam and the Americans who were in the alley of South Vietnam. North Vietnamese troops and the communists brutally attacked the urban areas of South Vietnam. Before this, they had never come to the urban areas of the South.

Oral histories are either interviews, stories or biographies of the individuals who tell their past by writing or telling these stories either by recording them or by giving interviews. Saving the oral history was no doubt a difficult thing at that time due to the lack of technology because of two reasons. Firstly, most of the people who gave perspective about this war were the soldiers who were either fighting at the front end in the war or were off the field but in the war zone where most of the time they don't had computerized technologies. Secondly, most of the oral history is preserved by the letters written by the old veterans or is preserved by the stories told by them which were hard to remember.

Discussion

For many events that happened in this world, oral history has been used as a major alternative to traditional history. It has filled the gaps in the traditional written history which was used in the past. If we talk about the Vietnam War, we will come to know many facts and reasons for the war through the interviews of the old veterans who served in Vietnam during the war. Many veterans have written their life stories about the war, which also became a part of the oral history.

Tran Van Tan was a secret American agent working undercover in Vietnam during the period of war. (Karnow, 1997) At the time of the Tet Offensive, he was in Vietnam when the northerners attacked the American embassy in Saigon. He was a secret agent and provided information to the American soldiers who were deployed in South Vietnam at the time of the offensive. Although it was a very difficult task to make contact while staying in the capital when your embassy was under attack, he still managed to do so.

At the time of the Vietnam War, more than 200,000 American troops were deployed in South Vietnam for their help, and that many troops made hundreds of thousands of stories out of which we don't

know which one is true and which one is not because everyone has its perspective and we can't judge the perspective of one person until unless we know the history. According to military personnel who were sitting in Washington DC, America was working on how to de-escalate from this war when the event of Tet Offensive happened. Because the government was facing so much pressure from the public that this was not our war, it should not become a part of this. The government was seriously considering calling out its troops from Vietnam, but the Tet Offensive made the American government rethink its decision.

There is a perspective about the Vietnam War that, in most situations, American forces overreacted and caused more damage to South Vietnam than the Northerners. A Welsh photojournalist who was serving in Vietnam during the Tet Offensive event says that communists knew that Americans were going to overreact in every situation and would cause more damage to the South. So whenever they wanted to capture any city, they always sent only a few of their people to the city, which created a panic situation in the city, and, as predicted, Americans overreacted and bombed the whole city.

There are hundreds of thousands of stories about the Tet Offensive. Each story tells a different perspective about the war. Some people say that this war was started by the Americans as after the end of World War II, Russia was emerging as a superpower, which America didn't like. Russia was increasing its influence in Eastern Asia, and America thought that if it raced to Vietnam, it would be very difficult for America to get rid of this communist situation. (Willbanks, 2007) So, they probed the South to start a war.

With each story comes a new perspective, and people start thinking that the new perspective is the truth. However, the truth is that no one knows the truth about these events, as oral history does not give us any proof of the events. These interviews can become beneficial as a historical evidence if people giving these interviews provide some evidence while telling the actual story. Because without the evidence, a person cannot recognize which perspective is true and which is not.

Pitfall of Oral History

Accurate oral history depends upon how good a memory you have and how firm a grip you have on your memories. Oral history does not remain the same with the passage of time but it changes with the change of time, from generation to generation.

Conclusion

The Tet Offensive is considered to be a turning point in the Vietnam War. According to one perspective, before this event, America was seriously thinking of pulling back all of its soldiers. However, this event forced the American government to stay in the war. Yet again, this is oral information, and nobody has any proof of this statement. Although oral history is different from traditional written history, it still has many drawbacks, due to which no one ever knows which

perspective is true and which one is not.

References

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