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## Wars Without Splendor: The U.S. Military and Low-Level Conflict

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generally favorable light as a strong President who “had no illusions about Hanoi’s intentions” and acted as best he could under the circumstances. Others do less well in this book. There is something profoundly unsettling about a photograph of Ford, Kissinger et al. sitting in the White House under a portrait of Theodore Roosevelt, while acquiescing in defeat and abandoning an ally. One senses that Nixon (to say nothing of Roosevelt!) would have done better.

The book itself is hardly a model of craftsmanship. It reads like a diary with some expanded narrative and documentation. The discussion lacks chronological continuity in places. The authors acknowledge the corruption that permeated the Vietnamese leadership, yet they downplay Thieu’s own authoritarianism and corruption, to say nothing of the venality of his family. The text could also have benefited from the judicious application of a better editorial pen.

These caveats notwithstanding, one must nonetheless acknowledge the essential accuracy of the book’s thesis. The United States pledged its support to South Vietnam before and after the Paris accords were signed, and the U.S. Congress—aided and abetted by Ford, Kissinger, and their cohorts—betrayed that trust. The extent to which U.S. policy was hostage to the vagaries of elections occurring at fixed intervals is driven home with exceptional force. It is hard to escape the conclusion that the U.S.S.R. and the People’s Republic of China served Hanoi better than

the United States served Saigon; after all, whose flag now flies over Ho Chi Minh City? Averting a repetition elsewhere of this modern tragedy remains the first order of business for the United States.

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Evans, Ernest. *Wars Without Splendor: The U.S. Military and Low-Level Conflict*. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1987. 160pp. \$27.95

A small book of even smaller success, *Wars Without Splendor* does, nevertheless, have some virtues. The first four chapters provide a brief but knowledgeable *tour de horizon* of the current state of revolutionary insurgency and terrorism. With somewhat less success, Evans, a professor of international relations at Rhodes College, Memphis, Tennessee, also discusses why he thinks low-intensity conflict is a major American foreign policy problem.

The second part of the book reviews the Nation’s current and proposed capabilities for dealing with low-level conflict. Evans defines “capability” in strictly military terms, which indicates that he has drawn incomplete lessons from all the historical experience he cites in the first section of his book. Becoming more flaccid as it limps to a close, *Wars Without Splendor* offers no new concepts or even a thoughtful synthesis of old ideas in its two skeletal concluding chapters. Only a useful selected bibliography reminds

the reader of the author's earnest intentions. However important its subject, *Wars Without Splendor* may be safely forgotten.

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Larrabee, Eric. *Commander in Chief: Franklin Delano Roosevelt, His Lieutenants and Their War*. New York: Harper & Row, 1987. 723pp. \$25

This superb history, beautifully and tightly written, is a summation of U.S. war experience as directed or influenced by the President as Commander in Chief and by his principal deputies—briefly preceding and including World War II. Not only are the Joint Chiefs (Marshall, Arnold, and King) featured, but the Unified Commanders (MacArthur, Nimitz, and Eisenhower) are included as well. In addition, three central figures (Vandegrift, Stilwell, and LeMay), key to America's involvement, are highlighted to reflect the depth and breadth of the President's awareness and the varied but close relationships he had developed within the military over the years.

Narrative in style, the author's insights provide thorough evaluations of the characters and actions of the President, his lieutenants, and allied officers. Specific battles provide insights into situations and theories of which some examples are: the mid-1943 U.S. raid on the Ploesti (Rumania) refineries as a test of strategic warfare; Vandegrift's and Nimitz' leadership in pivotal

Guadalcanal and Midway battles; and Eisenhower's brilliance in building the coalition which resulted in the successful invasion of Normandy. Special gems such as Roosevelt's put-down of MacArthur, "You must not talk that way to the President!" and the wonderful quotes from a 23-year-old Army Air Force officer, Bert Stiles, killed very shortly after having written them.

Though the book is generally based on secondary sources, extensive research and cross-checking generate fresh insights and understandings. The author is reasonably objective and shows warmth and understanding toward his principals despite their sometimes surprising deviations; exceptions being MacArthur and Stilwell. The myths surrounding MacArthur receive more than pinpricks, and readers must weigh for themselves how deserved these "cuts to size" are. There is a certain lack of focus that makes the chapter on Stilwell the least satisfying. There is no dearth of incident, too much discussion of U.S.-China relationships at every level, but no discussion of Stilwell's relationship with the Communist Chinese. The worth of General Stilwell in the field is not developed sufficiently to justify the proposition that it was wrong to have fired him when the Generalissimo insisted.

On the other hand, President Roosevelt could not have a more sympathetic biographer. Though his strong stands against the Joint Chiefs are noted, and his divergences from Churchill and the British Joint Chiefs