Voices Remembered—The Story of Richard Brokaw

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**Sergeant Brokaw's Story**

Vietnam Veteran Sergeant Richard Brokaw served in the United States Army during a turbulent period of the latter 20th century. Like many born in the post-WWII years, he entered the service desiring to do his patriotic duty, but the complexities of the Vietnam Era forever changed him and his nation. Framed by the larger Cold War between the United States and its North Atlantic Treaty Organization allies, and the Soviet Union and its allies, Vietnam exemplified the struggle for ideological and strategic global dominance. The nebulous aims of policy leaders compounded by increasing numbers of dead and wounded, and a divisive military draft, moved young people, especially college students, to directly resist. For the men and women who joined the military as volunteers or as draftees, the social changes in the United States added to the burdens of their military service. Most performed their duties to the best of their abilities to uphold and defend the United States Constitution. Regardless of their political beliefs or feelings about Vietnam, they did their duty with honor and integrity. Sergeant Richard Brokaw was one of those persons. While not serving directly in Vietnam, he performed valuable intelligence work as it pertained to data collection against America’s other Cold War rival: China. As a significant ally of North Vietnam, China’s actions had significant consequences for U.S. personnel in Vietnam. This project, based on personal interviews, recounts the experiences, and contributions, of Vietnam Era Veteran Sergeant Richard Brokaw.

**Abstract**

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**Introduction**

Through this time of the Cold War, the United States was involved in spreading communism. The United States waged military campaigns against the Russians and other communist nations on continents other than Europe. The building of the Berlin Wall (1961), a confrontation in Afghanistan (1979), are but a few examples of United States military and Russia military confrontations. The Vietnam war, however, is probably the most infamous war in recent history. The draft that ensued throughout this conflict caused opposition and violent riots within the United States. Americans were not happy with the conflict and the unity of American citizens in WWI and WWII was not the case for Vietnam. The widespread opposition to the war led to the treatment of returning veterans who fought in the jungles of Vietnam.

**Life After the War**

Throughout the Cold War China was a communist nation, an ally of Russia, and an enemy of the United States. Just as the rise of the Soviet Union drew the iron curtain across Europe, the rise of China onto the world stage drew the Bamboo Curtain across Asia. Mao Zedong gained power in 1949 and modernized China enough that it was on the Western World’s radar of potential threats. North Vietnamese troops were aided by the China’s allies, Russia, and, like the Chinese, the Vietnamese also were interested in helping the spread of Communism in other Asian countries. The United States was concerned that the Chinese could mobilize the army into the Vietnamese conflict. In the book China and the World Since 1945 Chi-Kwan Mark explains the state of China during the American escalation of the Vietnam War: “In the course of the ‘long 1944’ the Lyndon Johnson administration gradually escalated the war in Vietnam, which culminated in the July 1944 mission to commit American ground troops to the war. In response to the US escalation, China increased its military and economic assistance to North Vietnam and the National Liberation Front (NLF) in the South.” Johnson’s decision to deploy a greater number of troops to Vietnam was seen as a potential threat to the Chinese communists. The NLF would need supplies and a source of troops to Vietnam was a potential threat to the Chinese communists. The NLF would need supplies and a potential threat to the Chinese communists. The 1945 American Draft, a draft that had a very high and in some cases increasing measure of control from Moscow, Winston Churchill went on to call all Democratic nations to unify against the tyranny and war that communism threatened to bring to the rest of the world.

**China and Vietnam**

Although the Cold War China was a communist nation, an ally of Russia, and an enemy of the United States. Just as the rise of the Soviet Union drew the iron curtain across Europe, the rise of China onto the world stage drew the Bamboo Curtain across Asia. Mao Zedong gained power in 1949 and modernized China enough that it was on the Western World’s radar of potential threats. North Vietnamese troops were aided by the China’s allies, Russia, and, like the Chinese, the Vietnamese also were interested in helping the spread of Communism in other Asian countries. The United States was concerned that the Chinese could mobilize the army into the Vietnamese conflict. In the book China and the World Since 1945 Chi-Kwan Mark explains the state of China during the American escalation of the Vietnam War: “In the course of the ‘long 1944’ the Lyndon Johnson administration gradually escalated the war in Vietnam, which culminated in the July 1944 mission to commit American ground troops to the war. In response to the US escalation, China increased its military and economic assistance to North Vietnam and the National Liberation Front (NLF) in the South.” Johnson’s decision to deploy a greater number of troops to Vietnam was seen as a potential threat to the Chinese communists. The NLF would need supplies and a potential threat to the Chinese communists. The 1945 American Draft, a draft that had a very high and in some cases increasing measure of control from Moscow, Winston Churchill went on to call all Democratic nations to unify against the tyranny and war that communism threatens to bring to the rest of the world.

**Gulf of Tonkin Incident**

The Gulf of Tonkin incident and resolution began on August 4, 1965. The conflict took place in the Gulf of Tonkin, Vietnam’s eastern body of water border. A few days before the incident, American destroyers had been attacked by North Vietnamese while providing electronic intelligence support to the South Vietnamese. On August 4, two American destroyer vessels, C Turner Joy and Maddox, were attacked by the North Vietnamese—ultimately causing American President Johnson was a reason to deploy American ground troops to Vietnam. President Johnson used this incident to gain congressional support for the “Gulf of Tonkin Resolution,” which allowed troops to deploy against aggression, Americans in Southeast Asia. The incident captured the attention of the press and the American public.

**Sources**


