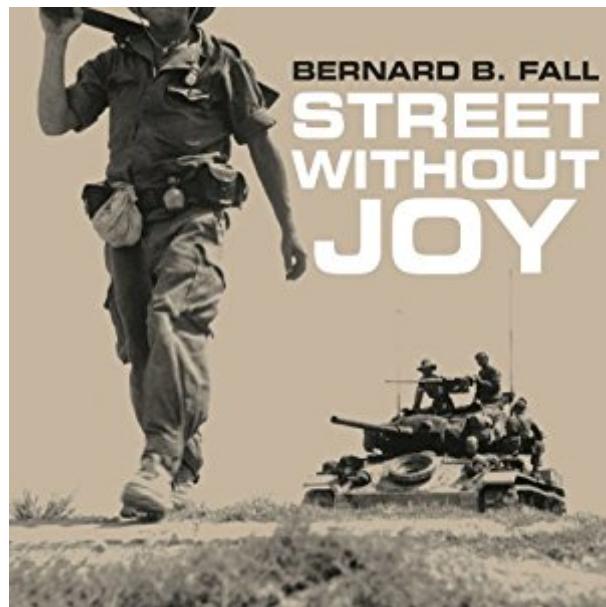


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Street Without Joy: The French Debacle In Indochina



Synopsis

In this classic account of the French war in Indochina, Bernard B. Fall vividly captures the sights, sounds, and smells of the savage eight-year conflict in the jungles and mountains of Southeast Asia from 1946 to 1954. The French fought well to the last, but even with the lethal advantages of airpower, they could not stave off the Communist-led Vietnamese nationalists, who countered with a hit-and-run campaign of ambushes, booby traps, and nighttime raids. Defeat came at Dien Bien Phu, in 1954, setting the stage for American involvement and opening another tragic chapter in Vietnam's history.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This is the masterpiece that introduced Bernard B. Fall to the elite of the US political, diplomatic and military decision makers who made the fatal and tragic error to involve the United States in the internal deliberations of Viet Nam and her people after the end of the French colonial period in Indo-China. While many in Washington in the early 1960s claimed to have read this book, obviously, very few heeded its message. Had they done so, it would seem that the United States, despite all its arrogance, might have avoided the quagmire that Viet Nam became and the multitude of deaths that occurred as the result of our hubris. Published in 1961 (more than 4 years before the beginning of the US build-up in SE Asia), Fall provided his readers with an exceptionally strong historical and political analysis of the region, its people and their leaders. Again, the Washington elite seemed to have disregarded the quality of the material and the skill of the messenger as they barged head-long into our longest and most divisive war. It was one that would ultimately cause America to

question itself and to cause the American people to question the honesty and integrity of their leaders. That could have been avoided had more people heeded the message contained within the covers of Fall's outstanding treatise. To be sure, Fall's loyalties were divided and often conflicted. Born and raised in France, he came to the USA after WW II to study. He first saw Viet Nam as a Fulbright scholar. He returned many times and became a recognized expert in the cultural, political and economic realities of the region.

In this first hand account of the French war in Vietnam, Dr. Bernard Fall provides a critical analysis of French combat operations in a war that lasted from 1946 to 1954. Over 94,500 gallant, French soldiers died in this vain, yet valiant attempt to contain communism in Southeast Asia. What could and should we have learned from this tragedy? Lessons learned included the folly of employing heavy, road-bound, mechanized/armored forces that were highly vulnerable to Viet-Cong (VC) ambushes, effective use of the jungle as a sanctuary by the VC, underestimating the stamina of the VC, and the ultimate war-weariness that caused the French public to rebel at fighting a seemingly endless conflict for no tangible gain. Add to this, the close coordination of political and military objectives that caused the Viet-Cong to sacrifice people, places and things to achieve a single objective: A Vietnam united under Communism. Does this sound familiar? This book, published in 1961, was readily available in the U.S. If it was read, it was ignored. Fall gives detailed accounts of communist tactics and the results that accrued to French commanders who refused to recognize the fact that, "the (tactics) book," they had been schooled under simply did not apply in Vietnam. Amazingly, the U.S. then deployed our troops to Vietnam, with our own officers schooled by the same, "book!" Gallantry, esprit-de-corp, machismo, and/or faith in a righteous cause were no more effective against well-laid ambushes in the '60s and '70s than they were in the '40s and '50s. The lessons of history were there for the reading. Why we refused to heed them is a mystery that still calls for an answer. Street Without Joy is not a left-wing condemnation of western "imperialism," or, the evils of "intervention."

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