

## Capitol Punishment

There will probably be a lot of finger-pointing about the debacle in Vietnam. It's hard to fix the blame on any one person so, to satisfy everyone's political persuasion, here is a small choice to pick from. A larger choice can be found in a book titled "The Experts" by Clyde Edwin Pettit from which I lifted most of these quotes.

French Gen. Jean Leclerc: "I didn't come back to Indochina to give Indochina back to the Indochinese." (Sept. 31, 1945)

U.S. Gen. Mark Clark: "I am also impressed by the French military plans, by the apparent Vietnamese determination to fight. I could not make any better plans than those already in existence here. ..." (Feb. 24, 1953)

Sherman Adams, assistant to President Eisenhower: "At a Sunday night meeting in the upstairs study at the White House, Eisenhower had agreed with Dulles and Radford on a plan to send American forces to Indochina under strict conditions." (April 4, 1954)

French Brig. Gen. Christian de Castries: "I'm going to kick Gen. Giap's teeth in, one by one." (April 20, 1954)

Sen. Mike Mansfield (D-Mont.): "Ngo Dinh Diem's government stands for decency and honesty while those conspiring to bring him down represent corruption." (April 30, 1955)

U.S. Gen. Earle K. Wheeler: "It is fashionable in some quarters to say that the problems in Southeast Asia are primarily political and economic. I do not agree. The essence of the problem in Vietnam is military." (November, 1962)

Assistant Secretary of Defense Arthur D. Sylvester: "It's the inherent

right of the government to lie to save itself." (Dec. 6, 1962)

Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara: "The South Vietnamese armed forces have now attained the experience, training and necessary equipment required for victory. Victory is in sight." (Feb. 19, 1963)

U.S. Gen. Paul D. Harkins: "By Christmas it will all be over." (April, 1963)

President John F. Kennedy: "I can't do it (withdraw from Vietnam) until 1965—after I'm reelected." (Spring, 1963)

Secretary of State Dean Rusk: "Part of the problem (of creating a broad political base in the south) has been that those who have collaborated in the war days and immediate postwar days with Ho Chi Minh were pretty much ruled out of consideration in Vietnam and properly so." (1963)

Secretary of State Dean Rusk: "The Laotians are very interesting people. They don't like to kill each other." (Sept. 15, 1963)

President Lyndon B. Johnson: "We are not about to send boys nine or ten thousand miles away from home to do what Asian boys ought to be doing for themselves." (Oct. 21, 1964)

Sen. J. William Fulbright (D-Ark.): "Presently the military operations appear to be going better. There have been reports from a military point of view in recent weeks ... We have also insisted on continuing the bombing as we did in the spring. The President made some very impressive speeches in that direction." (Oct. 24, 1965)

U.S. Gen. Maxwell D. Taylor: "The Viet Cong will just peter out." (Oct. 27, 1965)

Undersecretary of State Eugene V. Rostow: "I view Vietnam as a problem of order." (Oct. 4, 1966)

Henry Cabot Lodge, U.S. Ambassador to Saigon: "By the end of 1967, there might be light at the end of the tunnel and everybody will get the feeling that things are much better. ..." (Dec. 16, 1966)

Vice President Hubert H. Humphrey: "Vietnam is our greatest adventure, and a wonderful adventure it is!" (Nov. 1, 1967)

U.S. Gen. William C. Westmoreland: "I have never been more encouraged in my four years in Vietnam." (Nov. 15, 1967)

President Richard M. Nixon: "I will say confidently that looking ahead just three years the war will be over ... It will be over on a lasting basis that will promote lasting peace in the Pacific." (Oct. 12, 1969)

Dr. Henry Kissinger: "Peace is at hand. ..." (Oct. 26, 1972)

Joseph Alsop, columnist: "Hanoi has accepted near-total defeat ... Anyone with practical common sense should be able to see ... Hanoi's acceptance of near-total defeat ... The numerous American politicians and thinkers who endlessly said ... we could never get an honorable settlement ... look pretty silly." (Nov. 1, 1972)

President Gerald Ford: "I am absolutely convinced if Congress made available \$722 million in military assistance by the time I asked—or sometime shortly thereafter—the South Vietnamese could stabilize the military situation in Vietnam today." (April 16, 1975)

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By Art Buchwald

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