

Ford Stuck With Saigon Rhetoric

By Jack Anderson
and Les Whitten

President Ford has been trying delicately to extricate his foot from his mouth ever since the Saigon surrender.

The sudden collapse of South Vietnam caught him with some bygone rhetoric stuck in his throat. He has been obliged to make some quick revisions, to wit:

•The President had persistently sounded the warning that the United States would lose credibility with its other allies if more military aid wasn't rushed to Saigon. The new line, according to our White House sources, is that U.S. credibility remains high and that our allies can depend upon U.S. commitments.

•The President had preached that a Communist victory in Vietnam would cause its Asian neighbors to fall like dominoes. Now he is spreading the word that he doesn't believe the domino theory after all.

•Mr. Ford had implied that Congress was to blame for South Vietnam's military reverses because of its refusal to vote more aid. This line was eagerly adopted by Saigon leaders looking for a scapegoat for their own mishandling of the war. Now the

President is trying to correct the impression that the United States was responsible for the fall of South Vietnam.

•Mr. Ford had called for an emergency appropriation of \$700 million in military aid to save Saigon. Simultaneously, the Joint Chiefs of Staff urged that billions of dollars' worth of military equipment should be hauled out of South Vietnam before it fell into Communist hands. It would have made the President look silly, however, to remove weapons while he was pushing for more military aid.

Therefore, American Ambassador Graham Martin blocked U.S. forces from salvaging an enormous arsenal, which the Communists have inherited. The irony is that the North Vietnamese now possess far more U.S. equipment than they ever received from their Russian and Chinese allies. This contradicts the administration line that Hanoi got more military assistance than did Saigon.

Red Faces—Duane Freer, a Federal Aviation Administration bigwig, recently presented a flight safety award to the DuBois, Pa., flight station. Then, ceremoniously, he led an FAA delegation to a waiting government plane, took the controls and taxied the plane into a ra-

vine.

The FAA bigshots boarded their official DC-3, and as the crowd waved goodbye, the plane wobbled down the runway like a drunken duck and plunged into a ravine.

The crowd rushed to the ruined plane and began to dig out the distinguished visitors with crowbars. Some of the dignitaries were seriously injured, including Freer.

The National Transportation Safety Board is investigating the accident. Their confidential, preliminary findings have left the FAA gasping with incredulity.

The board has found that Freer, although rated to fly light aircraft, had no rating to fly a DC-3. Thus he violated FAA regulations and the law.

It also appears that Freer was only partially belted into his seat. Worse, some of the FAA regulators, who require all commercial passengers to fasten seat belts, didn't obey their own rules. This apparently caused many of the injuries.

Footnote: A board spokesman declined to comment except to say a final report is not expected until summer. James E. Dow, acting FAA administrator, promised "an even-handed approach" in the case. He told

us the FAA would treat "infractions by FAA employees in the same manner as we treat infractions by others."

Colson's Manuscript—Charles W. Colson, former White House tough guy who turned to Christianity, has completed 100,000 words of his book about Watergate.

He wrote much of the first draft by hand in prison. But now that he has been released, he dictates long passages to his wife, Patty.

Those who have seen his closely guarded manuscript say its message is that "a spiritual revival could well grow from Watergate." Colson would tell us only that the book is about "what happens to a man when he accepts Christ in his life." His conversion, he said, helped him through the bleak prison months.

Footnote: On two occasions, Colson has interrupted his writing to testify in secret before the Rockefeller Commission, which is investigating the Central Intelligence Agency. Sources close to the commission say Colson reiterated views he raised 18 months ago that the CIA was deeply implicated in domestic dirty tricks.

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