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# Architects of U.S. Viet

By Austin Scott

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As the stunning news of a civilian exodus and a military rout streamed out of South Vietnam in the past few weeks, some of the Americans most closely tied to U.S. involvement in the war found that "sad" was the most appropriate word to describe their felings.

That was the term most used by people interviewed, a sample ranging from some architects of our political and military policy in Vietnam to some of the returned prisoners of war who gave five years of their lives trying to implement that policy.

Dean Rusk, Secretary of State under Presidents Kennedy and Johnson: "I'm very sad, profoundly saddened, by the turn of events, but I don't want to act as the pallbearer until there's a funeral . . . I was with Presidents Kennedy and Johnson for eight years, and our biggest disappointment was we were not able to bring this to an end while we were in office."

Barry Zorthian, who spent the four years from 1964 to 1968 briefing reporters in Saigon every afternoon, as the Army's official spokesman at what came to be known as the "five o'clock follies," said he felt "awful, very sad I guess is the real word."

"In a sense we went in to prevent what is happening now . . . I would have liked to see us offering some continued assistance. I'm not absolutely sure the assistance would have made the

difference (but) . . . I would like to make awfully sure that it wasn't our lack of support, that our conscience is clear, at least, and I'm not sure it is at this point."

Among those who said they did not wish to make their thoughts public were former President Nixon, Robert S. McNamara, Secretary of Defense under Kennedy and Johnson; Mrs. Lyndon B. Johnson, and William Calley, whose conviction of murdering at least 22 South Vietnamese civilians

at Mylai has been overturned.

Gen. Maxwell Taylor, who was military adviser to President Kennedy, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and ambassador to South Vietnam, said:

"I am tremendously distressed . . . It's not clear as to just what the military situation is or how this rather surprisingly rapid debacle took place . . . I just don't know how deep the demoralization of South Vietnam is, and (how deep the demorali-

zation is) within the armed forces."

Lt. Gen. James Gavin, a vocal opponent in the mid-'60s of the "search and destroy" military strategy being used in Vietnam and an advocate of building heavily defended coastal enclaves as a way to allow U.S. forces to leave the country, said:

"I think what is happening was inevitable. Either it had to come out this way or we had to continue to the occupation of Hanoi and certain war with China . . .

THE

## Policy Sad at Turn

WASHINGTON POST Sunday, April 13, 1975

K 1

## of Events

"At this moment I'd like to get it all behind us. There is no one to be blamed. The people I'm sorry for now are the poor civilians, thousands of women, children and non-combatants that suffered so in the dying hours of this thing. . . Somehow my mind today was going back to the closing days of World War II when we found thousands and thousands of people dying in concentration camps . . . It's so sad, this is what troubles me about it now."

Walt W. Rostow, adviser to President Johnson and one of the leading proponents of sending in more U.S. troops during his administration, said:

"The overriding problem we face is to put the debates and the positions of the past behind us and . . . for Congress and the President to come quickly together on a program that will re-establish the credibility of our strength and our commitment. There has been no moment in my experience in

which we more needed unity as a national family."

Specialist 4 Michael J. Fitzmorris, a 1971 Medal of Honor winner from Cavour, S.D., said, "I don't think we should be giving them much help. It sounds to me like they're just running away from it themselves over there."

Don Render, a prisoner of war who was captured in Hue in 1968, went on a hunger strike in prison to protest bad treatment of prisoners, and who was returned

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to the United States in 1973, said:

"I feel sick that this is happening. Right now we are hearing the death throes of a nation, the death throes of a people, because we as a nation and a people have failed to continue with a commitment that we have led them to believe we would give them.

"For various reasons we had to pull out our troops, yes, but those same reasons don't hold valid when it comes to arms and money because we have committed them to fight, leading them to believe we would continue to back them."

Larry Stark, a returned POW, who was captured in 1968 while a civilian adviser to the Navy working primarily with Vietnamese as a labor relations specialist, said:

"The shame of it all is that I think a lot of it could have been avoided. I feel that the Vietnamese, contrary, to what most people think, with a strong commitment from us would have been able to hold out. And I still don't feel that there is no chance. . . Now thousands of civilians are refugees. . . the question remains in my mind, what are we going to do about them? Are we going to let them stay there under Communist rule? Are we going to try to evacuate them?"

Dr. Patricia M. Smith, who recently left the hospital she had run in the Central Highlands of South Vietnam for 16 years, because

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# Vietnam Backers Sad About Losses

## COMMENTS, From K1

she could no longer find refugees to treat, said.

"The refugees are not available for care. Few get down to an area halfway secure. . . Vietnam was like a patient on a respirator. It was a matter of just waiting for the heartbeat to stop."

Rep. Tom Harkin (D-Iowa), who first reported the existence of the prison torture cells called "tiger cages" on Con Son Island in 1970, said:

"I think what has happened just sort of gives lie to the whole Vietnamization program. And I think it points up once again the truth of what President John Kennedy said 12 years ago, that in the end it was their war, they were going to have to win it or lose it . . .

"If they won't fight for themselves, then I sure don't think we ought to do their fighting for them, or even give them more aid that they're just going to turn over to the Communists."

Gen. Edward Lansdale, the Pentagon's leading expert on guerrilla warfare who was first sent to Vietnam under the Eisenhower administration and who devised the "winning their hearts and minds" strategy for President Kennedy, said:

"I'm very sad about much of the news. I still have very warm and affectionate feeling toward the people in South Vietnam, and feel that we Americans as a people and as a country with a government should do everything we can to help those people even yet. One

of the things that is very definitely needed right now is to help those who want to get away from what they see as their enemy coming down from the North."

Daniel Ellsberg, antiwar activist who leaked the Pentagon Papers, said, "The refugee flow reflects the fact that three times in the last decade, 1965, 1968, and 1972, people in Vietnam have seen a collapse of the U.S.-paid forces as imminent as it is today. And each time that collapse was staved off by massive U.S. bombing of the town and countryside. So I think the people who are leaving the areas in which the Communist-led independent forces are advancing are not willing to bet their lives that Ford will not follow in that pattern."

Arthur Krause, whose daughter Allison was one of four students killed by the National Guard at Kent State University during an antiwar protest, said:

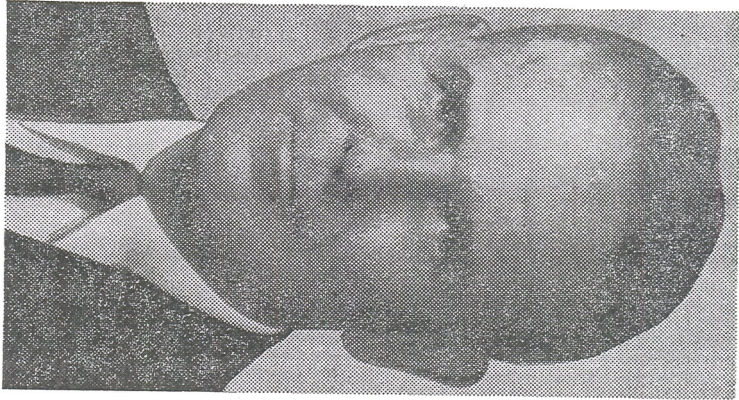
"I guess when my daughter and others like her protested our widening the war into Cambodia in May of 1970, they knew more than our leadership knew and seems to know right now, because an awful lot of our young lives were wasted. . .

"It's a pathetic thing, its almost five years now, and what was it Nixon said, peace with honor? What was it President Ford said . . .? Some newsman said do you think the 55,000 lives were wasted. He didn't answer the question. Is he afraid of answering it? My God, do we have to speak doubletalk all the time? We're all at fault for this. . ."





**DEAN RUSK**



**MAXWELL TAYLOR**



**JAMES GAVIN**



**DANIEL ELLSBERG**



**WALT W. ROSTOW**

Rusk "profoundly saddened"; Taylor "tremendously distressed"; Gavin sorry for civilians; Ellsberg cites refugee flow; Rostow pleads for national unity.