

Australians Disturbed by Haste In Closing Embassy in Saigon

NYTimes

Special to The New York Times

APR 29 1975

SYDNEY, Australia, April 28 —The Australian Government has been strongly criticized here for closing its embassy in Saigon before all the Vietnamese eligible to enter Australia were evacuated.

Earlier this month the government announced that it would permit the entry of Vietnamese who were spouses or children of Vietnamese studying in Australia or who had long and close association with Australia and considered themselves in danger.

According to newspaper reports published here, at least 50 Vietnamese who would have qualified for entry were left behind when Ambassador Geoffrey Price and his Australian staff flew out of Saigon Friday.

The reports said those left in Saigon included embassy employees who had asked to be taken to Australia. One of them was reported to have told a correspondent of the Sydney Morning Herald:

"It is shameful and Australia's name will never be forgotten because of it."

In an article in the Herald

today, the correspondent, Michael Richardson, said: "I have never felt ashamed of my Government before. But I felt profoundly ashamed of it in Saigon on Friday."

Malcolm Fraser, leader of the opposition Liberal and Country parties, said Prime Minister Gough Whitam stood indicted for procrastination and heartlessness.

William Morrison, acting Minister for Foreign Affairs, who last week said the United States was "acting illegally" in taking plane loads of Vietnamese out of South Vietnam, asserted that there was "no question" of the lives of embassy employees being in danger. He said only two of the 64 Vietnamese connected with the embassy had asked to be taken to Australia, but even they had not left with the Australians.

Mr. Morrison also said the Saigon authorities had been "making it very difficult for Vietnamese to leave the country." He added that Australia had sought without success to influence the Saigon Government to liberalize its formalities.