

NYTimes Some Participants Look Back

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WASHINGTON, April 29— For many Americans it may have been a day of simple emotions — relief, perhaps, that the long war in Vietnam was near an end, or bitterness that the United States and its ally had in the end lost.

But for many Americans who played prominent parts in the long Indochinese struggle — senior officials in Washington, leaders of the antiwar movement, reporters who covered the war, officials who served in the American Embassy in Saigon — reactions were more complex.

Some talked of fear for their friends' well-being; some dwelt on mistakes they felt they and their country had made; some expressed hope that the future would be better.

Here are what some of them had to say on the day the last American officials left Vietnam, ending an involvement of two decades at a cost of vast blood and treasure:

ROBERT W. KOMER, former chief of the pacification program in Vietnam and adviser to President Lyndon B. Johnson:

"I feel terrible frustration and depression about all the things that we should have done and could have done and didn't do. In hindsight, it was a disaster, but that's easy.

"I haven't thought about much in the last month except the people who are still there—waking up in the middle of the night, worrying about people like Colonel Be [a Vietnamese pacification expert]. We'll recover. But will they?"

WILLIAM J. PORTER, former Deputy Ambassador in Saigon and chief negotiator at the Paris peace talks, now Ambassador to Canada:

"All of my worries of all these years about how it was going to end have materialized. We didn't understand the place, we didn't know how to fight there. It was a sad epoch.

"There are lessons to be drawn from it, very clear lessons. We should never have tried to get by with half-measures, because you can't do that and control the outcome. The national moral is that you apply power if you have it."

Mixed Feelings Are Voiced as the War Draws Near End

BARRY ZORTHIAN, former chief information officer for the United States Embassy in Saigon, now an executive of Time Inc.:

"I feel a real sense of horror about the awful way in which we had to get out combined with a sense of relief that it's finally over. But then there are the beginnings of analysts, second thoughts, recriminations, distillations.

"Where did things go wrong? Could there have been a different result? I'm not sure, but I sometimes think we would have been better to have let them solve it their way 10 years ago. To what degree was it our desires, our ambitions, our pressures that kept putting them through this?"

ANTHONY LLAKE, former Foreign Service officer in Vietnam and aide to Secretary of State Kissinger who resigned to protest the American invasion of Cambodia:

"I'm glad the fighting is coming to an end, but I feel

shame that it took so long and that we played the role we did in extending it for so long. It has been inevitable that they would win the war for so many years.

"Now here's a chance to figure out what kind of foreign policy we should have instead of having Vietnam rip us apart. That hasn't been possible before, not when anyone who objected to military aid for Saigon automatically was being called neo-isolationist."

MORTON HALPERIN, former Defense Department official and aide to Secretary Kissinger, whose telephone was tapped:

"I'm relieved that it's over and that we didn't go back again. My fear was that Vietnam was a film that would keep running backwards and forwards and would never end.

"Then dismay that people talk of losing Vietnam or the fall of Vietnam. That country has not fallen and we didn't have it to lose. Vietnam will now be independent."

RICHARD HOLBROOKE, former Foreign Service officer in Vietnam who now edits *Foreign Policy*, a quarterly:

"I'm just sort of weary. We never belonged there even though so many people tried to do so many good things.

"And I'm angry at the glibness of Nixon and Ford and Kissinger for believing that the South Vietnamese could survive this offensive without the vertebra of American fire power, when they couldn't survive any of the earlier ones without us. By this colossal foreign policy failure we provided for our own humiliation, we made the worst of a bad situation.

"Why did we never go to Thieu, after Paris and the Congressional arms cutoff, and tell him that this was a new world and he had better negotiate unless he wanted defeat?"

W. AVERELL HARRMAN, long-time participant in American foreign policy, who turned against the war in the late nineteen-sixties:

"It is tragic that President Roosevelt's determination not to let the French back into Indochina after World War II was not carried out. It would have saved France, the United States and the Vietnamese people this desperate experience."

DEAN RUSK, Secretary of State under President Johnson and President John F. Kennedy:

"Obviously, I'm very saddened by recent developments, but also concerned where the story ends. We haven't seen the final bill yet. The American people around 1968 decided that if we couldn't tell them when the war would end, we might as well chuck it. Part of this decision was to take the consequences, and that's what we are going to have to do now.

"I can't avoid my responsibility for what happened in Southeast Asia, but I don't think others, including the peace movement, should ei-

ther for what will happen now."

CORA WEISS, antiwar activist who helped establish contact withanoi concerning American prisoners of war:

"It's a very exciting and tragic moment at the same time. Exciting because no more lives will be wasted because the people of Vietnam will be able to determine their lives without foreign interference. Tragic because one can't forget the needless death and destruction.

"For 25 years the United States has tried to control 25 million people on a tiny strip of land and we couldn't do it and we should never try to do it again anywhere else."

SAM BROWN, one of the organizers of the Vietnam moratorium demonstrations, now Treasurer of the State of Colorado:

"There were some people here today suggesting a celebration. That's so far from what I feel. We started that era with great hopes and expectations, and Vietnam crushed them and our sense of the future. Now I feel no sense of rebirth; something has ended but nothing has started.

"Unfortunately, we still think we should play with the destinies of other countries; we only think our tactics were bad in Vietnam. We're in for a period not of real soul-searching, which we need, but of blame-assessing."

PROF. RICHARD FALK of Princeton University, a key antiwar theoretician:

"It goes back to the Paris cease-fire accords. We were caught in a trap.

"We couldn't get our prisoners back without Thieu's agreement, and we could only get Thieu's agreement if we promised to support his opposition to bringing about peace. The result was an unnecessary added interlude of suffering."

WARD S. JUST, a former Washington Post correspondent in Vietnam, now a novelist:

"I was asked the other day to write something about all this and it just wouldn't go, it just wouldn't write. I had nothing helpful or enlightening or ameliorative to say.

"You can only look on it with a kind of horrified fascination. I don't believe the cultures mix. It was a kind of failure of our national temperament; we felt that if we kept plugging away even if we were on the wrong course, by the triumph of American innocence everything would come out all right. It didn't."

MORLEY SAFER, a CBS news correspondent in Vietnam:

"I feel a deep unhappiness, a sense that surely there must have been a better way, sorrow for the Vietnamese who saw the momentary advantage of going along with us.

"It's vital to refight this war for a long time to come so that we understand just what we did over there, not only to ourselves but to them, and why we did it. We don't understand it yet, and we have to make the effort."

Some of those who supported the American effort to the end, including both journalists and military officers, said they were either too bitter or too sensitively situated professionally to comment on the day's events.