

## Barrage of Questions Goes Unanswered

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# Administration Is Silent on Surrender

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When the curtain finally came down on Vietnam there was silence. Neither the White House nor the State Department yesterday had more than a passing comment on the end of Asia's 30-year war.

The surrender of Saigon, which everyone for weeks had known was inevitable, nevertheless came more abruptly than top officials had predicted, and they seemed to be speechless.

When White House press secretary Ron Nessen was asked for President Ford's reaction to the surrender of South Vietnam's capital, he replied that "it was obvious from the escalating demands" of the Communist forces that "their ultimate goal was unconditional surrender."

"This seemed to be the inevitable result," Nessen said.

Having proclaimed the end of the American involvement in Vietnam a week ago in New Orleans

and having directed the final evacuation of Americans Tuesday, the President and other top officials apparently saw no reason for further elaboration yesterday.

At the State Department, spokesman Robert Anderson said, "We have no statement." He faced a barrage of questions on how the United States could stand silent after all the years of involvement in Indochina and the millions of words about commitments to the defeated South Vietnamese.

Anderson said that the President's statement Tuesday asking Americans to "close ranks" and to "avoid recrimination about the past" covered developments.

"I think it was deemed that a further statement was not necessary," Anderson said.

In a news conference late Tuesday, after the evacuation from Saigon, Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger said that North Vietnam kept escalating its demands for a political settlement

and finally "changed signals" to indicate it was driving for a military settlement.

Following a meeting yesterday with King Hussein of Jordan, Kissinger declined to comment on the unconditional surrender. Asked if he was surprised, he replied:

"I thought that by yesterday (Tuesday) it would end up in a military solution—the only question was how disguised it would be."

Asked why on Tuesday he was still holding out the hope of "a sort of negotiation" in which the United States might be involved, Kissinger said he did not believe the surrender would come so quickly as it did.

"There was a slim chance that they would negotiate," the secretary commented. "I tried to keep that open. . . I thought that maybe they (the South Vietnamese) would negotiate the surrender—not just declare it."

Questioned about the evacuation of South Viet-

namese, Nessen quoted the President as having said: "I took the refugees out because otherwise they would have been killed, and I am proud of it."

Obviously nettled by questions as to the President's legal authority to evacuate Vietnamese, Nessen replied sharply that "it was a question of saving lives" and he did not intend to discuss the issue further.

Asked if he could cite a legal rationale, without final action by Congress on the matter, Nessen said: "I am citing a moral rationale."

The President still wants Congress to vote \$327 million in humanitarian aid for Vietnam, Nessen said. The money is required to repay funds borrowed from other appropriations and used for evacuation purposes; to pay for the needs of refugees in America; and to have money available if the President decides it might be used through private organizations or the United Nations for aid to those left in Vietnam.