

## The End of a Myth

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Only two months ago Washington presented the Saigon Army as one of the best in the world and "Vietnamization" as a great success making gigantic progress. The Government in the South was asserting that only an infinitely small minority of the population was not under its control. In short, some 13 or 14 million tons of bombs and other munitions, chemical spraying of a seventh of South Vietnam's territory, the influx of dollars and military equipment and the repression of legal opposition had at last defeated "Communism" and at last the theory of "two Vietnams" would be vindicated.

A one-month offensive has been sufficient to destroy these myths. On the one hand, one can only admire once more the tenacity of the North Vietnamese soldiers—and that of the N.L.F. in the South—who under the greatest deluge of bombs in history have managed to mount an unprecedented offensive and upset their adversaries. On the other hand, the formidable South Vietnamese Army, in spite of a million men, has finally revealed its weaknesses: apart from meritorious resistance at a few points, at Anloc for instance, the majority of the troops and officers have passively watched the Americans bomb the enemy, ready to flee in disorder at the approach of danger.

Servants of a regime whose foundations remain essentially its military and police force, the Government troops seem to be suffering from a lack of "motivation." The anti-Communist views of their leaders have not incited them to plan counteroffensives and what has been called "Southern nationalism" has not galvanized popular energy against the "invader." The policy of "Vietnamization" has not succeeded in making half a country into a nation.

True, the people have not opted for the North either: the endless streams of refugees fleeing Quangtri testify to this. But the question should be asked, too, how civilians could possibly remain in villages systematically pounded by American aviation as soon as they are taken by "the enemy." Also, if the peasants, that is, the majority of the population, were for the Saigon regime and its protectors, infiltration from the North would have ceased long ago and the N.L.F. would no longer exist, Mr. Nixon, even if he does not say so, knows this full well when he states that President Thieu's troops will "hold their own" if the U.S. Air Force and Navy continue their support.

The era of "Vietnamization" thus seems to be coming to an end. Because he has not succeeded in "Vietnamizing" the war and because he does not want to "Vietnamize" peace, Mr. Nixon for the moment, is "re-Americanizing" the conflict, whatever he may say. In fact, he is trying to gain time. Will he thus spare America its first defeat in history?