

Patrick Buchanan

Hanoi Didn't Defeat the South --The Liberals Did

Washington

ALL THE good liberals in Washington are joining the chorus: We must put the divisions of Vietnam behind us and go forward together.

It will not be easy to do.

Fifty thousand dead. Three hundred thousand wounded. Some \$150 billion in arms and resources gone. Two allies in their death agony. We cannot simply join hands and look ahead.



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There is going to be an accounting in the United States. As Sir Ian Hamilton wrote in his Gallipoli diary in 1920, it is the winner who "is asked no questions. The losers have to answer for everything."

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LYNDON JOHNSON'S failure was not that he committed American military power against the Communists, but that he did so gradually, half-way and piece-meal.

He refused to mine the harbors of the North, to destroy the dams and dikes, to bomb the relevant military targets. He failed to use the full conventional military power of the United States against the cockpit of aggression in Hanoi.

It is incongruous to suggest that the United States, which reduced the mighty Japanese empire to rubble in three-and-a-half years, could not have quickly broken the back of a Communist regime, ruling a country not half so industrialized or one-fifth so populous.

Lyndon Johnson failed in Vietnam, not because he ignored the voices of appeasement, pullback and surrender within his party, the press and the academic community, but because he paid them too much mind. He placed too much faith in the efficacy of negotiations with an enemy whose objective was — as ours should have been — military victory.

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PRESIDENT NIXON and Henry Kissinger repeated the error. Not until May of 1972 were the harbors of the North mined. Not until December of 1972, and only for a period of days, was the air power of the United States used against the Communist regime as it should have been years earlier.

The war was lost because politicians and diplomats allowed military strategy to be influenced by, and sometimes dictated by, people who did not want to win the war, some of whom are delighted to see Washington and Saigon defeated. We allowed military policy to be warped to appease and quiet what George Wallace calls "the noisemakers in the streets."

Never again should the United States send into combat millions of soldiers without imposing strict military censorship to prevent a leftist antiwar community from undermining the home front.

The antiwar activists, media and politicians who said that the South Vietnamese "preferred" the Viet Cong to the "repressive and corrupt" Saigon government — where are they now when refugees by the millions are running away from their Communist liberators toward the zone of future battle?

The sanctimonious West Europeans, the Swedes in particular, who trollop "world opinion," all those demonstrators weeping over the bombings of Hanoi, where are they now that Hanoi's armies, half a million strong, are rampaging through South Vietnam?

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YEAR IN, and year out, the antiwar movement in this country worked tirelessly to bring about the Communist victory that they endlessly predicted. They demonstrated in the streets. They raved on the editorial pages. They voted in Congress again and again to restrict the theatre of U.S. operations, to cut off funds for American forces, to stop the bombing and shelling of the North, to deny to the President the air and sea deterrent against Hanoi and, finally, to strip South Vietnam of the means to defend itself. At the height of the war we were spending \$30 billion a year in South Vietnam; this magnanimous 94th Congress refused to provide Saigon one per cent of that sum to continue the war effort. And, so, South Vietnam collapsed.

President Thieu panicked; divisions that had fought with great courage and taken enormous casualties in 1973 fell apart into mobs in 1975.

The liberals succeeded; they ought to be out celebrating. This is their victory.