

WASHINGTON — It rained quietly and steadily in Washington the day the guns stopped in Vietnam. From the Lee Mansion and the Kennedy grave on the Virginia slope across the Potomac to the Congressional building on Capitol Hill, everything was blurred and quiet.

Somehow the physical city of Washington seemed to symbolize the mood of meditation. The huddled monuments of Lincoln and Jefferson seemed to be a vague memory in the mist. The top of the Washington Monument was lost in the fog. Even the bells of the National Cathedral were muffled in the heavy air. The New York-Washington shuttle planes followed the bad weather pattern—south over Mount Vernon, and then the long circle back over Baltimore and Philadelphia to the skyscrapers along the Hudson River.

Most of the day, the streets of the federal city were almost deserted. Even the lovely facade of the White House was shut in from the Treasury Building to the old State, War, and Navy Building at 17th Street by the raw wooden stands left over from President Nixon's inaugural parade, and the President was in Florida.

No rejoicing

After the longest and most devious war in the history of the Republic, there was general and private relief in Washington, but no rejoicing, not even any public ceremony of meditation. Only an official announcement out of the White House that there was to be a moment of thanksgiving at 7 p.m., to be followed by 24 hours of prayer, but nobody here tried to lead the prayers, or gather the nation together in thanksgiving.

The nation wasn't even given a week-end for reflection on the reasons, tragedies, and consequences of the Vietnam war. It wasn't given time to think about the terms of the cease-fire, or even meditate on the deaths of Presidents Truman and Johnson.

James Reston

On the eve of the Vietnam peace agreement in Paris, the administration announced its budget for the coming fiscal year, so that on the day of the Vietnam truce, after 10 or even 20 years of American involvement in the war in Southeast Asia, the news of radio and television, and in the headlines of most newspapers, was not on the philosophy of the Vietnam tragedy, but on the expenditure of money in the next four years.

Truce and budget

Maybe there was something to be said for announcing the budget on the eve of the Vietnam truce, turning away from the past and going on to the future. Vietnam has been too much with us and for too long, but the budget Nixon presented to the Congress on the eve of the truce didn't exactly dramatize the lessons of the Vietnam war.

It didn't suggest that he was proposing at home anything like the "peace of reconciliation" he proposed to the Communists in Vietnam, Moscow or Peking. It didn't reflect the limitations of American military power dramatized by the compromise peace settlement in Vietnam. Or propose a new allocation of the nation's resources from military expenditures abroad to social reconstruction and the problems of the poor and the cities at home.

Increase for defense

Instead, it called for an increase in defense spending from \$75.5 billion in the last defense budget to \$79 billion in the next budget, and also suggested that the Job Corps, Model Cities, economic opportunity, scientific, and health, housing, education and other social programs should be cut back, eliminated, or diverted to local control.

There is probably a good argument for

doing many of these things, and there will be plenty of time to argue it all out later, but for the moment the nation is still trying, in the early days of the Vietnam cease-fire, to figure out what all this means, and before it has had time to sort out the confusing problems of the past, it is now asked to absorb the confusing problems of the future.

At the end of almost all our American wars, there was a sense of celebration. During the War Between the States, at least we had time to sort things out. Ethel Lynn Beers could write the words and John Hill Hewitt write the music for "All Quiet Along The Potomac." Well it is quiet here but nobody is singing about it.

No solemn services

Harry Macarthy Valentine Vousden could write "The Bonnie Blue Flag" and others could try to get the spirit of the Civil War in "Lorena," "Somebody's Darling," and "The Yellow Rose of Texas," but there were no songs, no rejoicings, no celebrations, not even any solemn national services at the truce in Vietnam.

It was quite different here in Washington last weekend, too, from the end of the two world wars in America. An attempt was made to crank it up in Times Square in New York, and on Saturday night in Georgetown in Washington, but somehow it didn't come off.

All the people here in Washington who had argued about Vietnam for years merely wanted to see the war go away quietly. They almost seemed to be relieved that there were no national celebrations or services, no rejoicing, no President in Washington, and no exhortations.

Most of them could have done without the budget message over the weekend, but at least they were glad to be shut in by the fog and relieved about not having to hear more official speeches on the theme of "peace with honor."