

the WINDSOR HOTEL

SIXTH & UNION ■ SEATTLE ■ WASHINGTON 98101 ■ MA3-2920

April 2, 1975

Editor,
Seattle Post-Intelligencer
Seattle, Wash.

Dear Sir,

Passing through Seattle en route back, hopefully, to Saigon, I read in your April 2 edition that Senators Bayh and Bentsen "reject absolutely the idea that Congress bears any responsibility for the collapse of the South Vietnamese army", etc.

Having served as a civilian in Vietnam periodically over a 13-year stretch I know, first of all, that all "absolute" statements about Vietnam, even by Senators, are by definition wrong because it's never that simple. The collapse of the South Vietnamese army was obviously caused by a series of factors:

- (1) For years South Vietnam missed many golden opportunities to solve basic problems, including corruption, merit promotions, etc.
- (2) They have sustained appallingly heavy casualties for years, far out of proportion to anything the US has ever had to endure.
- (3) Thieu and his generals made catastrophic blunders in their orders for precipitate withdrawals.
- (4) Last but not least, the action of the US Congress was devastating in its moral effect on the South Vietnamese. In effect, the US Congress served notice on the Vietnamese that whether they fought or not, the US would cut off all future military aid unilaterally, while Hanoi continued to get military hardware from Russia and China. This made it mathematically certain that the South Vietnamese army would have to lose at some point in the future, no matter how bravely it fought with stocks still on hand.

If you tell a man that you are going to fire him in 30 days no matter whether he works or not, you should not be surprised if he stops working sooner.

If the Congress had done what I would view as a far more honorable thing, namely said that we would in future match the aid Hanoi was getting from its Communist allies, no more and no less, the South Vietnamese might not have viewed their situation as hopeless. They had in fact fought bravely for two years since the so-called Paris peace accords, which permitted Hanoi to build up its forces in the South with relative impunity and gave the US a face-saving device for getting out of the war. But as soon as they realized they had to fight Hanoi in front while their long-term ally withdrew support from the rear, they really had nothing left to fight for.

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The fact simply is that we tired of supporting our allies before the Communists tired of supporting theirs. Had Moscow and Peking served similar notice on Hanoi that it had received its last piece of military hardware, we would have seen a different result in Vietnam.

I fully recognize the distinct possibility that South Vietnam might well have fallen anyway, because of its own numerous internal weaknesses. But the US Congress should have waited for that to happen, not forced the failure by notifying Saigon - and the Vietnamese people - that their only means of protection, i.e. military replacement supplies, were being cut off unilaterally by us. After that abrupt pronouncement the South Vietnamese people had no more hope of surviving as a relatively free people. We made that decision for them.

What should we do now? The Congress should rush to express the inherent decency of the American people by providing aid for refugees. Above all it should make provision, by relaxation of immigration procedures and other measures, to provide refuge for Vietnamese who worked for US Government and private firms. Otherwise these people will be murdered. I am told that the 126-odd people who had had any contact with Americans in the Loc Ninh area are already in the ground. There are thousands of little people who were the clerks and stenographers that provided the administrative backbone of US offices. If Saigon falls these people will go before "peoples' courts", and for the crime of putting their hand in the hand of "the leader of the free world", they will be humiliated, degraded and killed.

I hope Messrs Bayh and Bentsen will not "absolutely rule out" the idea that Congress bears any responsibility for this also.

Obviously I, as a private citizen (and a registered Democrat I might add) am only trying to get back to Saigon at a time like this to make sure that justice is done for the Vietnamese who trusted me, when I was an American official there.

Sincerely,

William

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