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THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

May 6, 1975

ADMINISTRATIVELY CONFIDENTIAL

MEMORANDUM FOR:

RON NESSEN

FROM:

JERRY H. JONES 

The attached was returned in the President's outbox with the following notation:

-- Thank.

Please follow-up with the appropriate action.

Thank you.

cc: Don Rumsfeld

THE PRESIDENT HAS SEEN *def*

ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH

RICHARD DUDMAN, CHIEF WASHINGTON CORRESPONDENT 1701 PENNSYLVANIA AVENUE, N.W. SUITE 550 WASHINGTON, D. C. 20006 202-298-6880

May 1, 1975

We know you will be interested in seeing this special section, "Vietnam: Defeat and Disillusion," which the Post-Dispatch published yesterday.

Richard Dudman

Dear Mr. President:

Here are two copies of the special Vietnam section that I mentioned Saturday night.

It was an honor and a pleasure to have you and Mrs. Ford with us at the dinner.

With best regards,

Jim Deakin
Jim Deakin.

VIETNAM: Defeat and Disillusion

ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH WEDNESDAY, APRIL 30, 1975

Collapse Of An Army, A Country, A Dream

By RICHARD DUDMAN
Chief Washington Correspondent

THE collapse came all in a rush — collapse of an American-trained army, collapse of an American-financed government, collapse of an American policy of six Presidents.

Suddenly the dream was shattered — the contrived vision of saving little friendly Asians from Communism, of winning their hearts and minds, of teaching them to live like Americans, with representative democracy and Coca Cola and hair spray.

The horror was over, too — the napalm, the search and destroy missions, the "free-fire zones," the assassination and kidnaping teams.

Two more countries — South Vietnam and Cambodia — had "gone Communist," but the United States had learned to live with a Communist China after a wait of two decades. At least, the war was over.

In the beginning, hardly anyone questioned the policy. Hardly any of those who thought about it at all doubted that it would work.

Then, in one of those sudden edicts that government leaders like to issue, Americans were told that the Vietnam adventure had already passed the point of no return. It is too late for any more debate, they were told; now that we are in it, we must stay the course.

Americans are success-oriented, and there was a general assumption that American money, Ameri-

can weapons and American goodwill would bring it off. Doubters were considered defeatist and unpatriotic.

The civilian officials and military officers who did the job were mostly a special breed. They were operators. They saw their job as not to question the policy but to do their assigned tasks and earn good marks for doing those tasks well.

SAIGON BECAME a great way-station for career men and women on their way up the ladder. Civilians managed the economy, supervised the police, advised the government, helped run the schools and hospitals, and trumpeted the success of an American triumph in "nation building."

Career military officers went to Saigon as the only war going on and the place to make their records for promotion.

Strategists used Vietnam as a laboratory in which to experiment with the techniques of the new craft of "counterinsurgency," and how to regulate bombing to wreck the economy and break the will of an adversary.

Scientists used the country as a testing place for new techniques of crop destruction, creating forest fires, and such "antipersonnel" weapons as the jellied gasoline, the tiny arrows that hooked into flesh, and the "bomblets" that would fire out pellets horizontally to kill or maim anyone in range.

Terror by the Communist insurgents was an

excuse that was used to cover all excesses by the United States and the Saigon government it supported.

Senator Thomas J. McIntyre (Dem.), New Hampshire, noted in a furious post-mortem, the American people gave 34 times as much military aid to South Vietnam as the Russians and the Chinese gave to North Vietnam. He said the American establishment, not the American people, was to blame.

SELF-DELUSION was the blindfold that kept most Americans persuaded until near the end that the effort was a good one, winnable and worth winning. Disasters like the Tet offensive were seen as aberrations; in between, reports from the field emphasized progress and minimized failures. Representative democracy was the catch phrase, but rigged elections and repression were the practice.

Looking back at it all, the long American engagement can be seen as an effort to stop a nationalist, anticolonialist revolution. The leaders were Communists, but their first allegiance was to their own nationalism. None of the puppet governments set up to stem the tide could ever compete lastingly or successfully. Failure was probably inevitable.

What follows is an effort to tell the Vietnam story as well as possible so soon after the finish and make a preliminary estimate of its effects.

The war has caused Americans and other peoples to question the position of the United States as the most powerful nation in the world. In this instance, the United States has found a limit to its power.

It has caused a realignment of power within the United States government, reminding Congress of its constitutional prerogatives and restoring old restrictions on the authority of the President.

It has touched directly 3,300,000 American soldiers, sailors, airmen and marines who served in Southeast Asia. Some died there, more were wounded, some are still missing, and most of the survivors have been sickened either by the war itself or by the American people's sour attitude toward the war.

It has shocked the American people, in ways that can only be surmised, leaving emotional wounds that will take long to heal.

Finally, there is the war's effect on Vietnam and its people, as well as Cambodia and the Cambodian people in an absurd and tragic offshoot of the main war.

Early in the war, after the destruction of Ben Tre with heavy loss of civilian life, a U.S. Army major said: "It was necessary to destroy the town to save it."

That almost became the story of Vietnam and Cambodia, except that they were not "saved."

Crusade Ended In Disillusion

By RICHARD DUDMAN
Chief Washington Correspondent

AMERICA'S adventure in Indochina began 25 years ago as an anti-Communist crusade. It now has ended in disillusion and disappointment.

The story of that quarter century of intervention is a mixture of high hopes and individual sacrifice and heroism, on the one hand, and official deception, self-delusion, concealment and cruelty on the other.



*'Come home
with that coonskin
on the wall.'*

President Johnson,
October 1966

that he would always be proud of his part in blocking what he called a "hare-brained tactical scheme."

Dien Bien Phu fell on May 7, 1954. The Geneva Conference on Indochina opened the next day, with Great Britain and the Soviet Union as co-chairmen. Agreements signed July 20 and 21 granted independence to Vietnam, prohibited it from forming military alliances or receiving