

THE VIETNAM WAR

APRIL 30th 1975

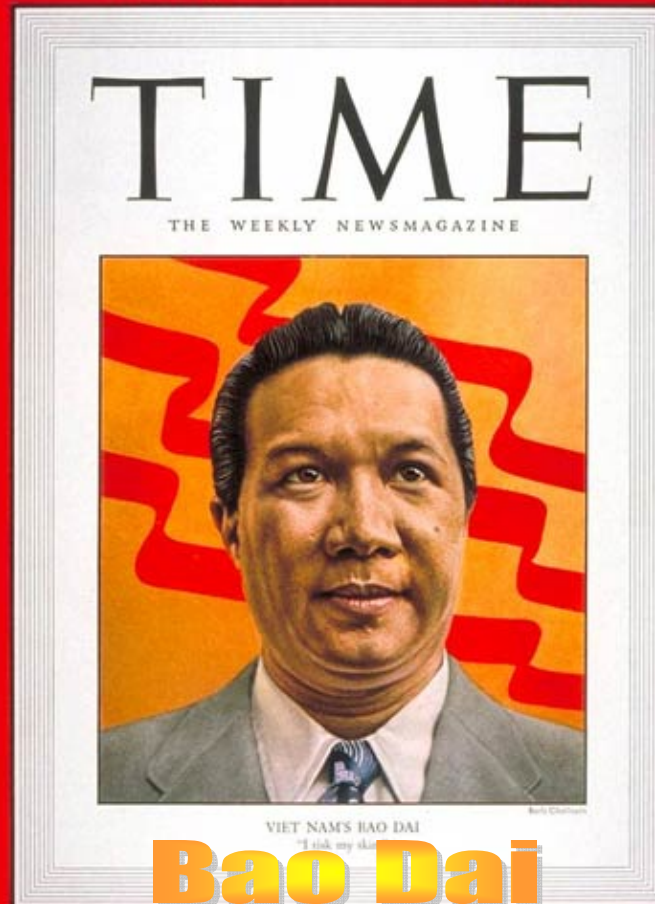
AMERICA'S BITTER END

Please Click on your mouse to advance the slides...

AMERICA'S BITTER END IN VIETNAM

BAO DAI, Vietnam's last emperor, ascended to the throne in 1932 and cooperated with the Japanese occupying Vietnam during World War II.

After the war, he briefly joined ranks with Vietnamese communist leader Ho Chi Minh and the Vietminh, only to flee into exile in Hong Kong and France from 1949-1955.



He returned to Vietnam to rule under French control until he was ousted by South Vietnamese leader Ngo Dinh Diem in an election in 1954.

One day after his 42nd birthday, Bao Dai found himself overwhelmingly repudiated by the people he had sometimes meant to serve.

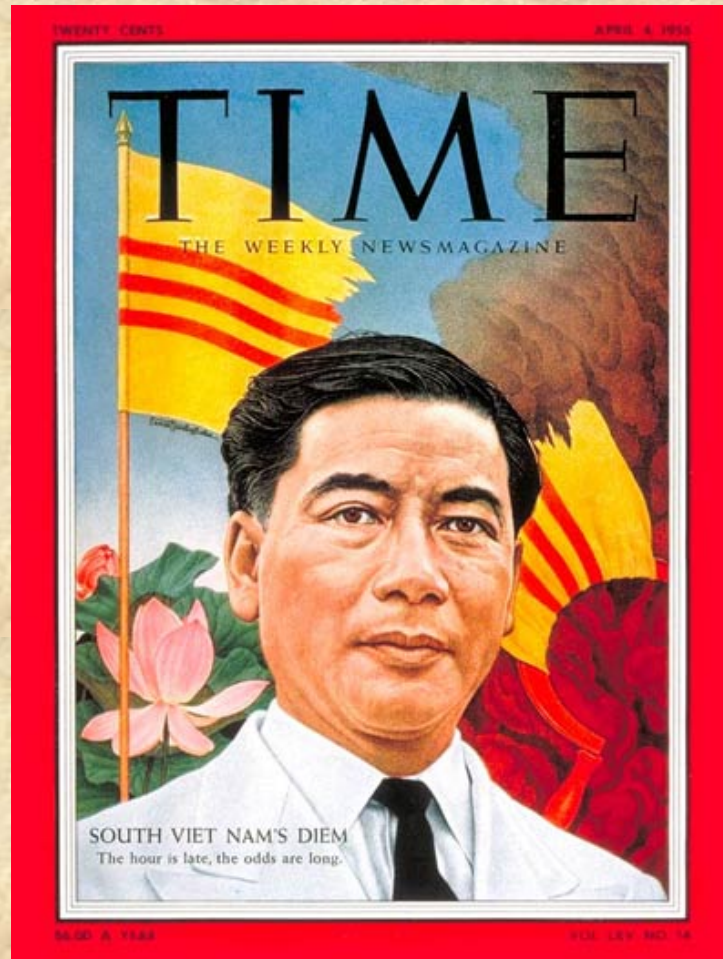
May. 29, 1950

AMERICA'S BITTER END IN VIETNAM

Ngo Dinh Diem

After refusing Ho Chi Minh's invitation to join the Communist movement, Ngo Dinh Diem 54-year-old bachelor, proclaimed South Viet Nam a Republic and himself its first President.

President Diem led the South Vietnam from 1954 to 1963, when he was killed by his generals in a coup.



Apr. 04, 1955

Diem is proud of his Vietnamese heritage:
"We are a country of principles, an old country, a country built village by village."

. . but: "Sometimes I think we Asians are too reserved, talk too much by nuance. We ought to learn to be rude in our talk like the Americans, and get things done."

AMERICA'S BITTER END IN VIETNAM

Nguyen Cao Ky

In his eight months as Premier, South Viet Nam's Nguyen Cao Ky had best been known as an atavistic aviator.



But under the spotlight of Lyndon Johnson's U.S.-Vietnamese summit in Honolulu, the highflying aviator finally came down to earth.

Ky showed himself eloquent and honest, astute and independent, and above all a man who cared passionately about the defense and the welfare of his nation.

Feb. 18, [1966](#)

AMERICA'S BITTER END IN VIETNAM

Nguyen Van Thieu

Nguyen Van Thieu served as the South Vietnamese chief of state under Nguyen Cao Ky from 1965-67.

In 1967, he ran successfully for president of South Vietnam and held that position until the Fall of Saigon.



The people of South Viet Nam chose a President, Nguyen Van Thieu, a Vice President, Nguyen Cao Ky, and 60 Senators in a free election.

As President, Thieu now gives every sign that this time he intends to be No. 1 in fact as well as in title.

Thieu forced Ky to stand aside.

Sep. 15, 1967

AMERICA'S BITTER END IN VIETNAM

Joint statement by Presidents Nguyen Van Thieu and Nixon at
Midway Island. June 8, 1969

**PRESIDENT
NIXON**, April
1973....

*Mr. President,
we have been
allies in a long
and difficult war.
And now you
can be sure that
we stand with
you as we
continue to work
together to build
a lasting peace.*



Nixon also renewed
a secret pledge to
Thieu: he would
"respond with full
force" if the
Communists broke
the cease-fire.

Thieu expected
American air power
to save him. But
Nixon's own power
was under attack in
Washington.

AMERICA'S BITTER END IN VIETNAM

President Richard M. Nixon promised the Saigon government in 1972 and 1973 that the United States would **"take swift and severe retaliatory action" and would "respond with full force"** if North Vietnam violated the Paris cease-fire accord.

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

January 17, 1973

Dear President Thieu:

I have received your letter of January 17, 1973, and I have studied it with the greatest care.

I must repeat what I have said to you in my previous communications: The freedom and independence of the Republic of Vietnam remains a paramount objective of American foreign policy. I have been dedicated to this goal all of my political life . . .

. . .

As General Haig has told you, I am prepared to send Vice President Agnew to Saigon in order to plan with you our postwar relationship. He would leave Washington on January 28, the day after the Agreement is signed, and during his visit he would publicly reaffirm the guarantees. * I have expressed to you. Let me state these assurances once again in this letter:

-- First, we recognize your Government as the sole legitimate Government of South Vietnam.

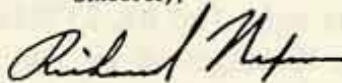
-- Secondly, we do not recognize the right of foreign troops to remain on South Vietnamese soil.

-- Thirdly, the U.S. will react vigorously to violations to the Agreement.

In addition I remain prepared to meet with you personally three to four weeks later in San Clemente, California, at which time we could publicly reaffirm once again our joint cooperation and U.S. guarantees.

. . .

Sincerely,



Source: "Khi Dong Minh Thao Chay" by Nguyen Tien Hung

These agreements, said Admiral Elmo R. Zumwalt Jr. former chief of naval operations, were never communicated to the Congress.

"Kissinger and Nixon did not level with the Congress as to the commitments that were made," said the retired four-star-admiral Zumwalt.

AMERICA'S BITTER END IN VIETNAM

President Ford formally refused to give Congress copies of the Nixon - Thieu correspondence on the ground of diplomatic confidentiality.

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

January 5, 1973

Dear Mr. President:

This will acknowledge your letter of December 20, 1972.

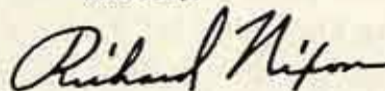
...

We will proceed next week in Paris along the lines that General Haig explained to you. Accordingly, if the North Vietnamese meet our concerns on the two outstanding substantive issues in the agreement, concerning the DMZ and the method of signing, and if we can arrange acceptable supervisory machinery, we will proceed to conclude the settlement. The gravest consequences would then ensue if your government chose to reject the agreement and split off from the United States. As I said in my December 17 letter, "I am convinced that your refusal to join us would be an invitation to disaster -- to the loss of all that we together have fought for over the past decade. It would be inexcusable above all because we will have lost a just and honorable alternative."

...

Should you decide, as I trust you will, to go with us, you have my assurance of continued assistance in the post-settlement period and that we will respond with full force should the settlement be violated by North Vietnam. So once more I conclude with an appeal to you to close ranks with us.

Sincerely,



(Source: "Khi Dong Minh Thao Chay" by Nguyen Tien Hung)

These agreements, said Admiral Elmo R. Zumwalt Jr. former chief of naval operations, were never communicated to the Congress.

"We prevailed upon Vietnamese President Thieu to accept a very bad truce. This truce permitted the enemy to remain in South Vietnam in exchange for something that was good for the United States and that was the total removal of our forces...." said the retired four-star-admiral Zumwalt.

AMERICA'S BITTER END IN VIETNAM

Nguyen Van Thieu

The U.S. was clearly looking harder than ever before for an honorable end to the war, and Saigon finally realized that the American commitment was not open-ended, which hastened South Viet Nam's plans for going on its own.



Mar. 28, [1969](#)

Thieu, still believing that America would not abandon him, again pleaded for help.

On April 2nd 1975, he met with Ambassador Martin and President Ford's special envoy. But by now, the Americans were losing faith in Thieu.

Just prior to the Fall of Saigon, Thieu emigrated to Taiwan before taking up residence in England.

AMERICA'S BITTER END IN VIETNAM

Kissinger - Zhou Enlai meeting in Beijing on June 22, 1972

In Beijing on June 22, 1972, Kissinger told Zhou Enlai that the United States might accept a Communist takeover of South Vietnam if it occurred after a withdrawal of American troops.

"...If we can live with a communist government in China we ought to be able to accept it in Indochina..."



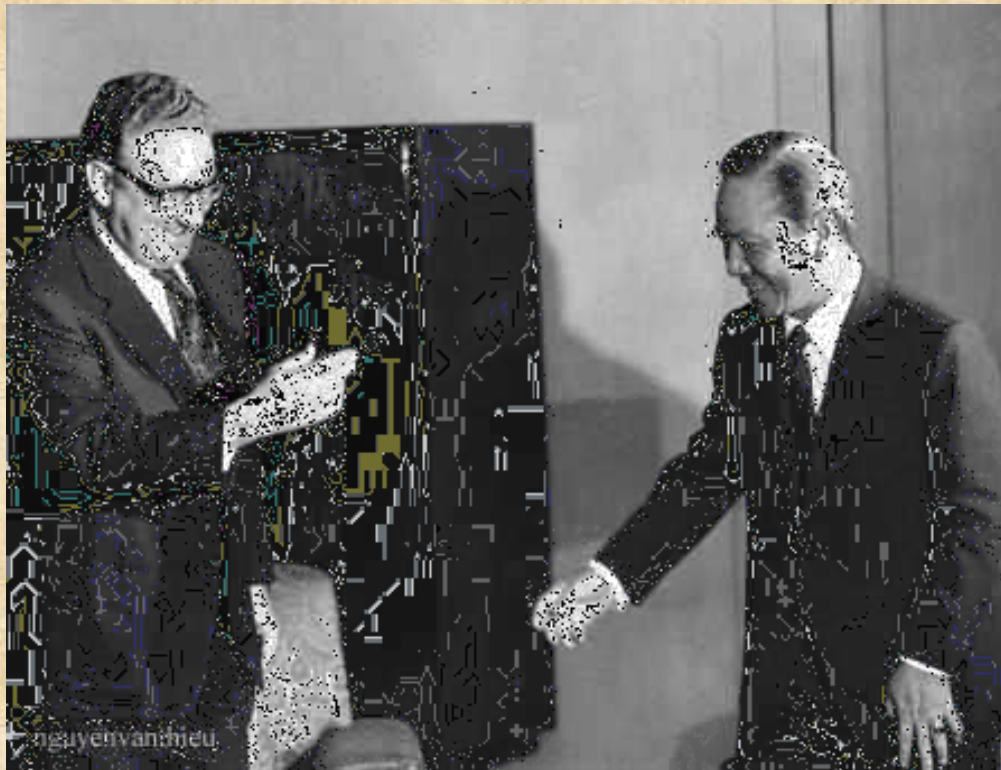
He told Zhou Enlai that, for credibility reasons, the United States could not meet Hanoi's demand for the "overthrow" of South Vietnamese President Nguyen Van Thieu.

But, once US forces had left Indochina, Kissinger declared, the White House would accept the results of historical change.

AMERICA'S BITTER END IN VIETNAM

When Mr. Kissinger showed up at the presidential palace in Saigon, he was famously kept waiting for 15 minutes.

After concluding most of a deal with the North Vietnamese in 1972, Kissinger finally flew to Saigon "to present what he had done," which was, after all, to sketch a pact that would permit communist soldiers to remain on the soil of free Vietnam.



Thieu realized that Mr. Kissinger was coming to Saigon to demand his approval of a done deal.

"Suddenly, I realized that things were being negotiated for us behind my back and without my approval," Mr. Isaacson quotes Mr. Thieu as recalling.

Mr. Walter Isaacson's biography of Mr. Kissinger says, Thieu was actually thinking "I wanted to punch Kissinger in the mouth."

AMERICA'S BITTER END IN VIETNAM

At four o'clock on the afternoon of March 9, 1975. Banmethuot fell, but the government said nothing, and the withdrawal from Pleiku was only learned about from rumors. People stopped believing in the government.



President Thieu made a crucial decision. He ordered his forces to abandon the northern and central provinces and form a new line of defense further south.

AMERICA'S BITTER END IN VIETNAM

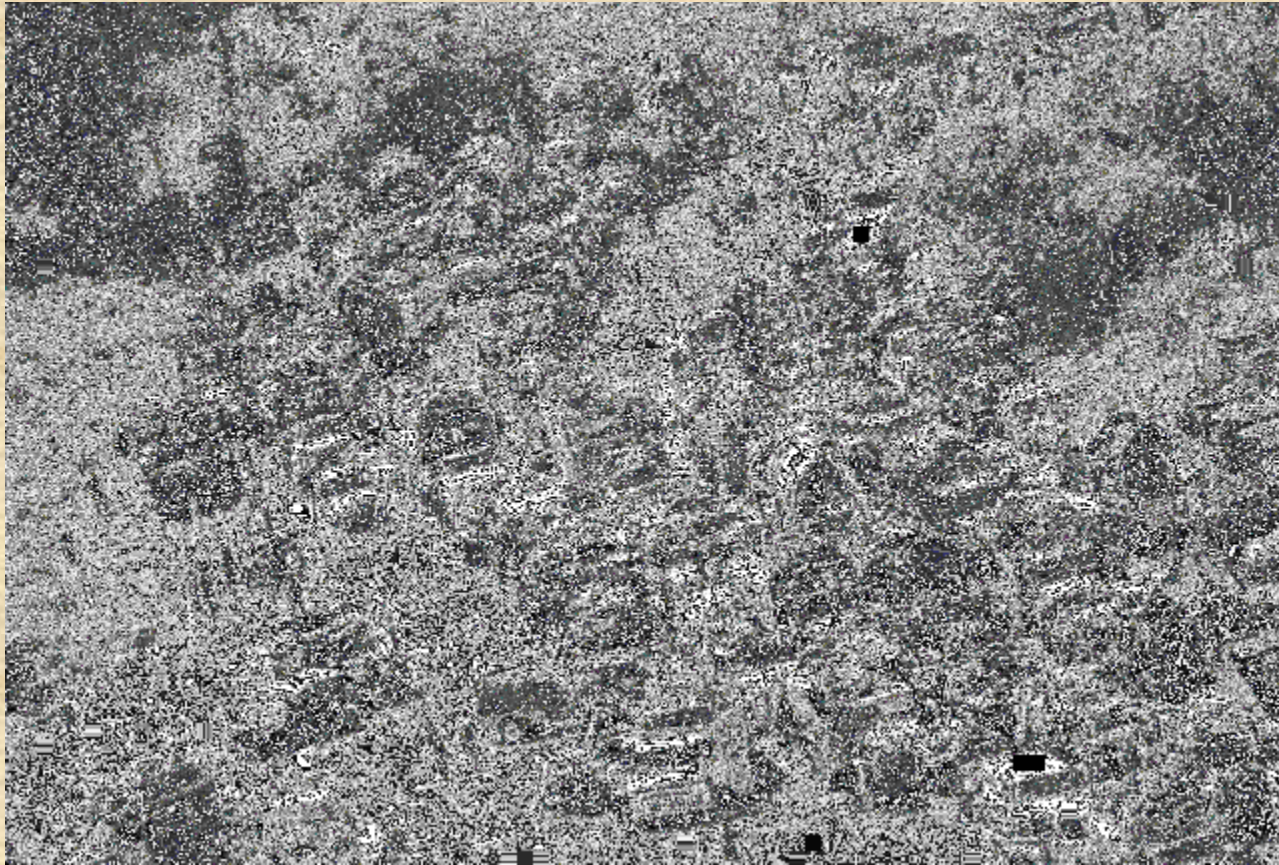
The official silence panicked the population. Within days, thousands of civilians were streaming toward the coastal city of Danang, desperately seeking safety.



On foot and on anything with wheels, refugees evacuated ahead of Communist forces, fleeing in general panic.

AMERICA'S BITTER END IN VIETNAM

Anarchy was beginning to break out everywhere...



CIVILIAN REFUGEES TRAVELLED FROM CENTRAL AND QUANG TRI PROVINCE ALONG THE HORROR HIGHWAY 1.

AMERICA'S BITTER END IN VIETNAM

As the rumors flew,
fear spread.

Nobody knew what
to believe and
nobody wanted to
be left behind.



During the
withdrawal, the air
force, obviously, was
using their airplanes
to get out any way
they could.

Mixed in with all of
this was the panic-
stricken flight of tens
of thousands of
civilians and
dependents.

AMERICA'S BITTER END IN VIETNAM



A World Airways jet with company president Ed Daley aboard made a perilous landing at Danang. He wanted to save women and children first, but desperate soldiers jammed into the airplane. They scrambled into the baggage compartment and clung to the stairway as the plane took off. It was the last American flight out of Danang.

AMERICA'S BITTER END IN VIETNAM



ARVN M-113 passes by the civilian casualties

**BETRAYED & ABANDONED CIVILIAN REFUGEES DIED ALONG THE
DEATH HIGHWAYS UNDER VIET CONG UNDISCRIMINATED
ARTILLERY RAIN.**

AMERICA'S BITTER END IN VIETNAM



To avoid being captured by communists, abandoned ARVN soldiers shredded off their uniforms and scattered them all over on the streets.

AMERICA'S BITTER END IN VIETNAM

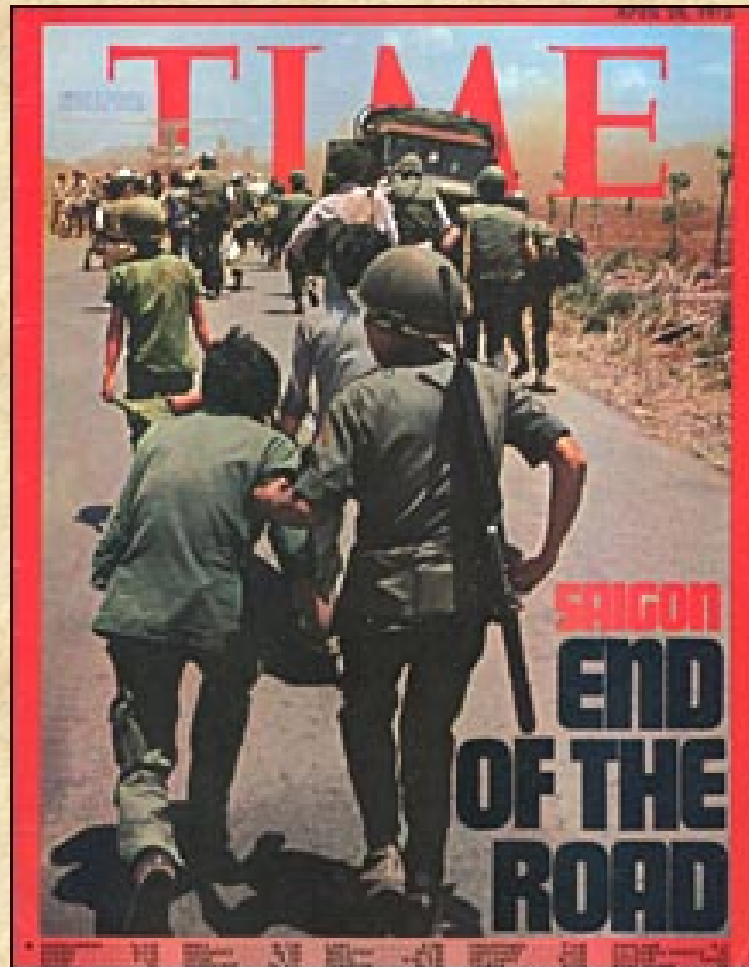


Photo © Dirck Halstead

Among the ribbons of refugees heading away from the fighting were the embittered abandoned ARVN soldiers.

AMERICA'S BITTER END IN VIETNAM



Corbis Bettmann ©

The Abandoned ARVN Soldiers: To avoid being captured by Communists, the ARVN soldiers shedded off their uniforms which were scattered all over on the street.

AMERICA'S BITTER END IN VIETNAM



Corbis Bettmann ©

Two wounded ARVN soldiers while defending Newport bridge in Saigon on April 28, 1975

AMERICA'S BITTER END IN VIETNAM

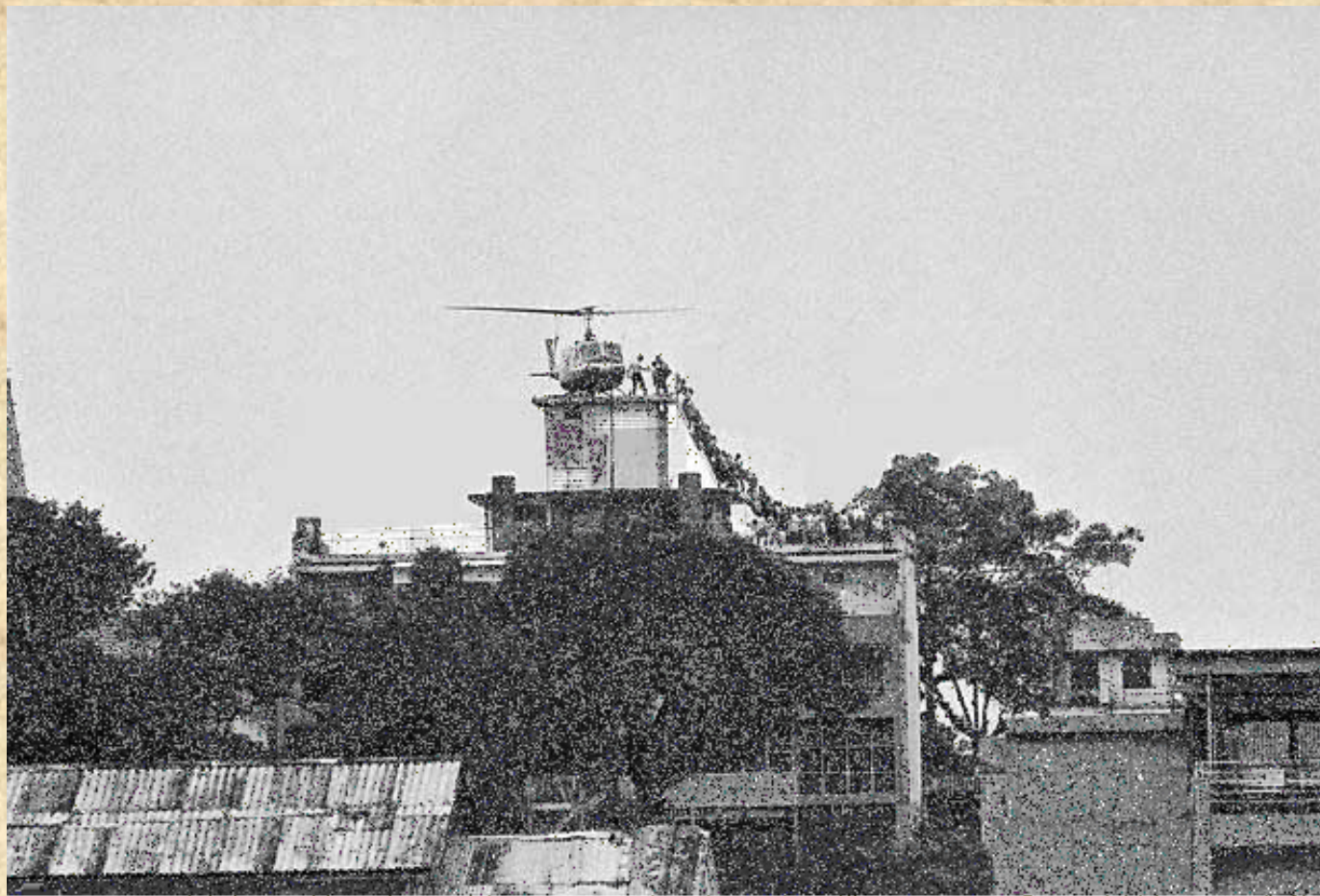


TAN SON NHUT under attack on the morning of April 29, 1975

vnafmamn.com

The morning of April 29, 1975.
Tan Son Nhut airport was under fire,
preventing passenger planes from taking off.

AMERICA'S BITTER END IN VIETNAM



The icon image of US evacuation (April 30, 1975)

AMERICA'S BITTER END IN VIETNAM



On April 30th 1975, a long line of people climbing on helicopters on the rooftop of the U.S. embassy to get out of the doomed country.

AMERICA'S BITTER END IN VIETNAM



More than 600 US military flights airlifted evacuees from Saigon to ships offshore.

AMERICA'S BITTER END IN VIETNAM

WHEN THE ALLY CUTS AND RUNS



At the airport, the U.S. embassy, and elsewhere in the capital ,
all Americans and Vietnamese at risk were taken out
by helicopter to U.S. aircraft carriers.

AMERICA'S BITTER END IN VIETNAM

By March 21, 1975, 100,000 refugees, many of them, troops and their families, had crowded into Danang.



Some soldiers put their wives and children aboard ships headed for safer areas in the South. Offshore, refugees were packed aboard rescue ships. Thousands drowned trying to flee, or were suffocated in the crush.

AMERICA'S BITTER END IN VIETNAM



Nick Wheeler / Sipa Press

At the airport, the U.S. embassy, and elsewhere in the capital , all Americans and Vietnamese at risk were taken out by helicopter to U.S. aircraft carriers.

AMERICA'S BITTER END IN VIETNAM



During the last two days, more than 600 US military flights airlifted evacuees from Saigon to ships offshore. Air America also joined the effort.

Above, civilians head for a helicopter at Tan Son Nhut.

AMERICA'S BITTER END IN VIETNAM



At the airport, the U.S. embassy, and elsewhere in the capital, all Americans and Vietnamese at risk were taken out by helicopter to U.S. aircraft carriers.

AMERICA'S BITTER END IN VIETNAM

Man!!! What the Hell are they doing, don't they know I am here to get my reward as the fastest escapee?



AMERICA'S BITTER END IN VIETNAM

Anyone Home? I mean:
Lyndon, Richard, or
Gerald?



AMERICA'S BITTER END IN VIETNAM



Newsmen Interviewing Graham Martin

Original caption: Aboard USS Blue Ridge, U.S. Ambassador to South Vietnam Graham Martin, answers newsmen's questions during his brief visit of the temporary press center aboard the Blue Ridge in the South China Sea. The 61 year old diplomat in a news conference said that, "If we had done as a nation the things I think we said we should do -- if we had kept our commitments -- we wouldn't have had to evacuate." Martin was the one of the last to evacuate from the embassy in Saigon.

AMERICA'S BITTER END IN VIETNAM



Photo of refugees being assisted by assigned personnel aboard the USS Midway. Taken by official ship's photographer. 29 April 1975.

By late afternoon April 29th 1975, most Americans and thousands of Vietnamese had reached the U.S. carriers offshore.
Thousands more Vietnamese were waiting in Saigon.

AMERICA'S BITTER END IN VIETNAM

Inside the palace, Duong Van Minh, president for 44 hours, was waiting.
Colonel Bui Tin took the surrender.

COL. LEGRO: I felt that the United States had betrayed a trust that the United States had given South Vietnam. I also felt that I was personally betrayed; I had also made, implied promises, that the United States would honor the agreements we had made at the time of the cease-fire and then when things got really tough we really just cut and run.



COL. BUI TIN: When I saw fear on the faces of Minh and the others present, I said: "The war has ended today, and all Vietnamese are victors. Only the American imperialists are the vanquished. If you still have any feelings for the nation and the people, consider today a happy day."

AMERICA'S BITTER END IN VIETNAM

They had planned a two-year campaign to capture the capital. It took 55 days.



COL. BUI TIN (Army of North Vietnam): After reaching the other side of the bridge, we went straight to the Independence Palace.

AMERICA'S BITTER END IN VIETNAM



NGUYEN CONG THANH (Army of North Vietnam): We entered the city from six different directions. None of us knew how to get to the Independence Palace.

AMERICA'S BITTER END IN VIETNAM



BETRAYED & ABANDONED

AMERICA'S BITTER END IN VIETNAM

The fall of Saigon drove many people to commit suicide on and after April 30, 1975, estimated at several hundreds. Some famous cases were fully recorded.



ARVN Colonel HO NGOC CAN (1940-1975)

He fell into the hands of the Communist force after he failed an attempt to kill himself. He told the enemy that he wouldn't surrender, and asked them to let him salute the ARVN colors with his uniform on before the execution. Colonel Can was publicly executed by the Communist firing squad after a quick summary trial at a Communist kangaroo court.



ARVN Brigadier General LE VAN HUNG (1933-1975)

Said farewell to his men, his wife and children before he killed himself by a .45 pistol. It was 8:45 PM, 30 April 1975.



ARVN General PHAM VAN PHU (1927-1975)

His troops suffered heavy losses during the withdraw to the coastal areas in April 1975. General Phu committed suicide on 30 April 1975 in Saigon.



ARVN Major General NGUYEN KHOA NAM (1927-1975)

At 11:30 PM, 30 April 1975, General Nam killed himself after saying farewell to his staff and talking by phone with General Le Van Hung, who later ended his life.



ARVN Brigadier General TRAN VAN HAI (1927-1975)

At midnight, 30 April 1975, he committed suicide at the Division Headquarters, Dong Tam Army Base.



ARVN Brigadier General LE NGUYEN VY (1933-1975),

General Vy commander of the 5th Infantry Division at Lai Khe. Committed suicide by a pistol at 11:00 AM, 30 April 1975 at the division headquarters in Lai Khe.

AMERICA'S BITTER END IN VIETNAM



Lieutenant Colonel Nguyen Van Long, shot himself in front of the Congress Hall and below the Statute of ARVN Soldier on April 30th, 1975.

"Why don't these people die fast"
Henri Kissinger (referring to South Vietnam's struggle against Hanoi military attack after Da Nang retreat)



Trung Tá VNCH Nguyễn Văn Long anh dũng tự sát để đến nợ nước vào ngày 30 tháng 4 năm 1975 trước trụ sở Quốc Hội và tượng đài Chiến Sĩ VNCH, ngay khi Sài Gòn thất thủ vào tay Cộng Sản VN. Photo: © Jacques Pavlovsky/Syigma

VIETNAM WAR: THE REAL STORY

April 30th 1975

IT'S OVER

Most Yanks Got Out

SAIGON—The United States pulled out of Vietnam Tuesday. All but a handful of Americans fled the city by early Wednesday and left it without a U.S. presence.

U.S. troops were ordered to leave the city by Tuesday. The U.S. military command in Saigon said the city was being overrun by the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese forces.

U.S. Marines were ordered to leave the city by Tuesday. The U.S. military command in Saigon said the city was being overrun by the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese forces.

U.S. Marines were ordered to leave the city by Tuesday. The U.S. military command in Saigon said the city was being overrun by the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese forces.



PACIFIC STAR STRIPES
AN AUTHORIZED UNOFFICIAL PUBLICATION FOR THE U.S. ARMY FORCES OF THE PACIFIC COMMAND
Vol. 31, No. 120 Thursday, May 1, 1975 15c



SAIGON (AP) — The Saigon government surrendered unconditionally to the Viet Cong Wednesday, ending 30 years of bloodshed.

The surrender was announced by President Duong Van "Big" Minh in a five-minute radio address.

As he spoke, the city of Saigon fell quiet and shellfire subsided.

Minh said: "The republic of Vietnam policy is the policy of peace and reconciliation, aimed at saving the blood of our people. I ask all Americans to stop firing and stay where you are. I also demand that the soldiers of the Provisional Revolutionary Government (PRG) stop firing and stay in place."

"We are here waiting for the provisional revolutionary government to hand over the authority in order to stop serious bloodshed."

On the same day, Gen. Nguyen Van Thieu, president of the Republic of Vietnam, called on all South Vietnamese to stop fighting and stay where they are.

He said: "I am ready to accept the terms of the Provisional Revolutionary Government and to stop fighting."

He said: "I am ready to accept the terms of the Provisional Revolutionary Government and to stop fighting."

He said: "I am ready to accept the terms of the Provisional Revolutionary Government and to stop fighting."

He said: "I am ready to accept the terms of the Provisional Revolutionary Government and to stop fighting."

He said: "I am ready to accept the terms of the Provisional Revolutionary Government and to stop fighting."

He said: "I am ready to accept the terms of the Provisional Revolutionary Government and to stop fighting."

He said: "I am ready to accept the terms of the Provisional Revolutionary Government and to stop fighting."

He said: "I am ready to accept the terms of the Provisional Revolutionary Government and to stop fighting."

He said: "I am ready to accept the terms of the Provisional Revolutionary Government and to stop fighting."

He said: "I am ready to accept the terms of the Provisional Revolutionary Government and to stop fighting."

He said: "I am ready to accept the terms of the Provisional Revolutionary Government and to stop fighting."

He said: "I am ready to accept the terms of the Provisional Revolutionary Government and to stop fighting."

He said: "I am ready to accept the terms of the Provisional Revolutionary Government and to stop fighting."

He said: "I am ready to accept the terms of the Provisional Revolutionary Government and to stop fighting."

He said: "I am ready to accept the terms of the Provisional Revolutionary Government and to stop fighting."

He said: "I am ready to accept the terms of the Provisional Revolutionary Government and to stop fighting."

He said: "I am ready to accept the terms of the Provisional Revolutionary Government and to stop fighting."



The End