## **Editorials**

# / Columnists

JANUARY 19, 1975

Wash Post

 $\mathbf{C}$ 

# The Vietnam Drama:

# Still Looking for an Ending

By Philip A. McCombs

McCombs is the Saigon correspondent of The Washington Post.

SAIGON—What is the American interest in South Vietnam in 1975, nearly two years after the signing of the Paris cease-fire agreement? What is the American policy here, and what should it be?

While the debate on these questions no longer dominates American political life, it remains, here at least, as bitter and sometimes as hysterical as ever. A senior American diplomat at a recent dinner described a reporter for a major American newspaper here as a "traitor." A liberal Democratic congressman, visiting Salgon recently, gazed glumly from a coffee shop at the heavy downtown traffic and said: "Yeah, I listened to all [U.S. Ambassador Graham] Martin's arguments. What a bunch of crap."

All sides seem convinced that the way this drama finally plays itself out will deeply affect our self-image as well as the world's view of us as a people and a nation.

Our policy on how to close the drama here appears to be: Get out of Vietnam by ending massive military and economic aid as quickly as possible without letting the Communists take over. Or, if they do eventually take over, without letting it appear that this was due to a lack of U.S. will.

As part of this goal the State Department, through the U.S. embassy here, appears during the last year to have been waging two fights, one a propaganda battle against the U.S. Congress and the other a secret struggle to keep President Nguyen Van Thieu in line with U.S. objectives. Both battles are going on essentially out of view, although the first has surfaced frequently in the form of the American embassy's strained relations with the press.

Martin exploded publicly a year ago over a lengthy news article documenting the hypothesis that massive U.S. assistance to Saigon set the pace of the war. Now that U.S. military aid has been halved to \$700 million and the pace of the war has dramatically shifted, with Saigon on the defensive inside the South, it seems possible that Martin's anger was stimulated more by the article's impact on Congress than by any errors it might have contained.

This conclusion seems all the more likely given the bitter mood of many American diplomats here. One quickly learns that not only journalists but a surprisingly large number of American congressmen seem to be on the "traitor" list.

During the past month of spectacular Communist battlefield successes, this bitterness has been accompanied by fear. "Jesus, this is the worst it's ever been," said an American diplomat recently. "We may not even be able to get out of here."

## "A Sense of Obligation"

MARTIN IS AN experienced, resourceful and tough diplomat who has formed, a clear idea of what he hopes to accomplish here and who believes that, regardless of the atmosphere on Capitol Hill today, most Americans and members of Congress ultimately will share his point of view.

With adequate U.S. economic aid, Martin told the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in testimony last July, "We can confidently anticipate that in a very few years we will be able to regard our Vietnam involvement as closed. If the secretary's [Kissinger's] recommendations are heeded, our involvement will be closed in the way that the great majority of Americans quite obviously want it closed—leaving the Republic of Vietnam economically viable, militarily capable of defending itself with its own manpower against both ex-

ternal aggression and externally supported internal subversion, and free to choose its own leaders and its own government as its citizens themselves may freely determine."

Kissinger, in a letter last June 1 to the chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, wrote, "I have a very personal sense of obligation to do everything I can to make good on our moral commitment to assist [South Vietnam] in its survival as an independent state." This survival, wrote the secretary, "is indispensable to the creation of an enduring structure of peace in Southeast Asia."

Kissinger also wrote—and this a year and a half after the cease-fire agreement—that America's longer-range objective "is not just a reduction in the level of hostilities but more importantly the creation in Southeast Asia of an environment conducive to enduring peace and reconstruction."

## Confrontation With Hanoi

THESE GOALS have tended to keep the United States in a position of stark confrontation with Handi two years after the cease-fire agreement.

In the U.S. embassy's view, Hanoi is principally to blame for this. According to intelligence reports, Hanoi has not given up its goal of total victory in the South by political, military and economic means. Its troops are now attacking widely in key areas of the country in what intelligence sources say might be termed a limited offensive. Politically, the Communists, encouraged for a time by the rise of a vocal political opposition to Thieu in Saigon, have announced that they will no longer negotiate with Thieu but only with a more reasonable successor.

See VIETNAM, Page C5

VIETNAM, From Page C1

# *Imericans*

Per iden, Newspaper Die, inn

to the property of the

The same of the sa

THE WASHINGTON POST

Sunday, Jan. 19, 1975

CAIGON—There are more americans in South Viet-nam now than there were a year ago, but the number working for the U.S. government has dropped dramatically.

Today lives are 8,882 Americans here, according to a US, exhauty spackeman, and £207 of these work for the American powerment, and £207 of these work for the American powerment. This catesory includes 1,205 working as civilians for the exhauty managers and the first space statefies office, 142 US, militared MS americans for the 200 appropriated for the contrariors of the first party managers and the life, working for US. See finish and pand with monopropriated fords.

Last year, the exhauty powerment and \$,504 of these worked for the US. Secretarian is \$500 hours, and \$,504 of these worked for the US. Secretarian the sent retarded by £11 is described to the official spatistics. More of these 14 decential £288 have been contracted to the contracted where for the US.

In Vietnam

back in militury aid to South Victorian the spoken mar aid. The observe hure problems was deviated by welfaring for the embasy and its decease a tracks.

This year these are 2023 nongerorment, harrierars here in comparison with 1614 hat year, the spokerman said, an increase of 2211.

Most of this increase has been due to an inflay of businessmen connected with exploration for out of the shores of Victorian and with other businessmen such the subcreases the spokerman said file also cited increases in the number of American sudents, professors, missionaries, ductors and tourist in the countries of U.S. evillan and militury offstalls here: the spokerman said, and these are contact as one-government Americans to the left american military personnel here include as the effects attaches after. Statistic guards, and docthus we defense attaches office, 23 tatistic guards, and the business of the control of the state Department, 25 offstals are extensived; 79 in the 25% civilian U.S. offstals are extensived; 79 in the Mercy of the terminional Development, 129 in the State Department.

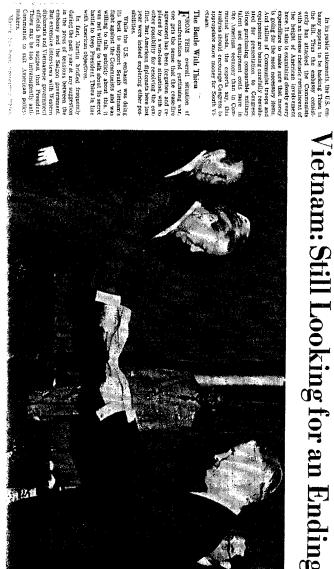
24 in the U.S. Information Service, 3 in the Foreign Broadcast Information Service, 2 in the Treasury De-partment and 3 in the Drug Enforcement Adminis-

The spokesman relised to say how many Central intelligence Agency personnel are in South Vietnam, but he said they were mixed in with the other figures to make the grand total of U.S. personnel correct.

The C(A here is called the Office of the Speedal Assistant to the Ambassador, or OSA. A recent edition of the U.S. embassy phone book here its 22 OSA embassy expenses of the American names. There are CIA employees stationed in all the important areas of the country that are controlled by the government, sources say.

Various sources sestimate that there are 100 to 200 American CIA personnel in the country. The number may fluctuate greatly as agents come in and out, the courters say. The number rose during had fall's anti-government demonstrations here.

# Vietnam: Still Looking for an Ending



The Battle With Thieu

moultorest estationed in all the impart country that are controlled by the stationary that are controlled by the stationary at a stationary and a section of a downward of the following the country that there are too to any other and the stationary and the stat

his opponents.

The situation cooled, however, after the embassy beame convineed that the opposition could put forward no powerful aleders who could command a truly massive following among the people. On Oct. 21, the embassy stated support for Thieu, denying that it may ported any of the dissending political groups and attacking the Communists in page after page of strong rhetoric.

: LOC-HAK-243-1-22-6

"Florkhile" is something that may fit with the major Community spaces that form Securate National Community spaces that form Securate National Community spaces that form Securate notifiers to do that reports would have notifiers to do that reports would have notifiers to do that the reports would have professed from Martin that detecte major also from Martin that detecte major at first space and the form of the cold results for Thiest's space and the cold that cold the space and allotteness for the sea. Even attained that and perhaps lead to be specially a form and the space of Cavidi Hill and perhaps lead to do concine Thiest, and the space and submitted in Wishington as an unabled that in Wishington is an understand the cristy disponat as some special many and ready of an alignal that this would have fired these spatinger that this would have fired the spatinger that this would have the fired spatinger that the spa

WHETHER THEU really has any thing to ten from Martin and Knistigue to an open question. However, the control was to be sufficient to solve the second blood by the the control was a readed blood by in the part tool years are solve to solve the second blood by the solve the four from the LS collagers, known to be solve the sol Whether the political concessions amount to genuine democratic reforms

Militarily. the cuthacks have not only placed the country in a compared to the country in a compared to posterior posture but have generated a psychology of desperation and cretral. If this trend continues, it is not at all clear that it will lead to a ball-hand printle political settlement in the South political settlement in the

For one thing, the Contrantist, sensing vicency, may simply perss on all it
the larretic for another. Their dimension
is said by some who know and watch
him cortchily to be somewhat apocalaptic in list view of developments. He
is said to teel deeply and bitoryly that
his former American siltos now are undercutting him. In his speeches during
the past year, Then has spoken passionately of fighting to the last deep of
blood and the last builtin, and has proclaimed that there can be no collision
government with the Communists.

If the situation deteriorates too much, some observers think, Thieu may be inclined to simply pull out and let the house of cards fall. Political Concessions

DOLITICALLY, the congressional ad cultacks forced Thieu to make a series of concessions to his opponents inside South Vietnam and made possible hast fall's anti-government demonstrations.

As an added wast to this complex equation, some South Victicances government officials say they think Them is privately properly objects to the common state of the common state in the south but only if he is absolutely sure of keeping the usper hand, at Thieking position continues to certain has a sure of the support the common state of the com

Soundings on a Coulition

THEU'S TWO PRONCED strategy

Assents to explain a number of of the velopments during the past year that seemed odd when viewed in isolation.

Last June Then began a series of evolutionally passionate specified of electricity flat the would never bend to the Commandate or allow a couliton as overnment to be imposed on the commandate of the passion of the

Speaking of U.S. aid in a June 8 speech, Thieu declared: "If the U.S. ally also foresizes this half ofcur ration and country, it will end up by adding strength to the Communist empire...!! we are asked: 'Go ahead and sign a coalition agreement in return for sid!' I do not know it someone would do that, but certainly not me." He spoke of a "second agreement" being forced on South Vietum, one that would set up a coalifich that the Communist could riske over. The Com-munists could rever win the elections contemplated in the Paris agreement. Theu contented, which is way they were stalling in political talks.

"Tell me again . . . what did Kissinger get his peace prize for?"

daphonus kere teen to view Thicu as an enormously stilled politician who is determined to hang on to every scrap of power he can He did this, observers any, while at the same time gradiantly yielding to pressures and suggestions from the U.S. embassy to make such concessions, again if only to dress up his image for the U.S. Conservers up his image for the U.S. Conservers.

A year no. "This seemed to all out wad appearances to be recommended by the position and militarily mad population and militarily mad population and in them, planes histories any Tries and in the population and the probability that would not see you feller of the probability that which is all other to be determed on of the Nicola administration by Westernelin of the Nicol

ble destruction of the Nison adminis-tration by Watergate.

At that time, the insiders say, Thieu
and his intimates developed the strategy that they are still following today.
Determination not to make any significant political concessions to the Communists, combined with limited emessions to internal jolitical opponents, septemity prior to
this year's Victuum elections.

Firings in the Palace

MARTIN ALSO presumed Thieu, astires of concessions to the pollitical opposition—in stort, to democratice, or all
next to give the appearance of democration; in some cases, Martin preserted the names of pressue he worlded
Thieu to get rid of in face-foldace conversations with Thieu. In other cases,

cuis emasses officials had been going around to up Senth Vietnames officials, deliberately raise can politicians, deliberately raise ing the question of a coalition in the South and eliciting riese on the subject. This apparently encouraged Thesis conviction that Kistonger would cut Thieu's chroston that Kistonger would cut Thieu's throat the moment he delt a coalition—no matter throat the advantageous to Thieu—coald be achieved, thereby extracting the U.S. from Victnam.

No amount of reassurance of support by Metrin or other U.S. officials could stake this view since the U.S. officials could stake this view since the U.S. officials could stake this view since the other to active the possible stems in a coalition only would want to give error to cut that him loose in order to active the best possible terms in a coalition.

How much of this is real and how ermore paramonal of this is real and how much by simply sounded to make but Thieu erdereity would earn in a speeches while stopping about of publicly eccusions the U.S. of outright bettrynl.

pursuational amendment anowing histories of the an unprecedented hird term of office.

Third also apparently weakened his were possible and soffices, who built the party into the only strong and malouwed party, could no honger officially support it.

Last summer a group of Catholine presists boilty amounted that they would amond an anti-corruption movement aimed at Three himself. Surprisingly, the idea due of the immediately but developed into a bread anti-government movement, including other groups and launching the series of sometimes whents three markets that have disrupted Saigon in the last few mouths of 1874. Sometimes when the description of the series of sometimes whent street markets that have disrupted Saigon in the last few mouths of 1874.

Tried went along with many of these suggestions, foriest longtime sides and appeared; it would be along the suggestion of some powers. The advances to the second cleaver that in the case out to be second cleaver that in the case out to be ing finelise with the Communistic left. Thise some 50 the presidential ceft into most October as the only real candidate, the negative readion in the American Congress is likely to be draw-

Last May be fired Nguyen Van Ngan, the place strongman who had engineered Thier's from control over the legislature and gamed passage of a constitutional amendment allowing Thiest to run for an unprecedented third term of often

ally conservative. Tacy, too, dit Go want to topple Thieu if that did Go britte chaos and an immediate Com 2 in the table of the chaos and an immediate Com 2 in the table of the chaos and an immediate Com 2 in the creek chaos and an immediate Com 2 in the creek chaos and an immediate Com 2 in the creek chaos and an immediate Com 2 in the creek chaos and a three place in an attempting of the profit of the recent cooling of the profit of the creek in Saigon, but the police has a student control of the creek chaos in third and a secret police have also infiltrated it as control of the creek chaos and student groups, etc. In the creek chaos and student groups, etc. In the creek place in the student groups, etc. In the creek place in the student groups, etc. In the creek place in the student groups, etc. In the creek place in the creek place in the student groups, etc. In the creek place in the student groups, etc. In the creek place in the creek place in the student groups, etc. In the creek place in the creek place in the creek place in the plac

"Anyone care to give again to Fretnam . . . ?"