

# Vietnam War

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## No Blame! Why Not?

by John F. McManus

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Belmont, Massachusetts—On April 29, immediately after the last Americans were evacuated from Saigon, presidential Press Secretary Ron Nessen read a statement from President Ford to a packed press conference. Part of that statement urged: “We must now close ranks, avoid recriminations ....” In other words, the President wanted no one blamed for the tragedy that had just befallen South Vietnam. Later, at his televised news conference on May 6, he further requested that no investigation of our defeat be conducted because it “would only be divisive.”

### Is No One To Blame?

Surely, someone is responsible for the total failure of announced U.S. policy. Are we to believe that the United States could not defeat tiny North Vietnam? Are we to simply forget the 55,000 American dead, the 300,000 wounded, the \$130 billion wasted, the destruction of national patriotism and moral fibre, the division of our people, and the blow to our nation’s image? Beginning with President Eisenhower and continuing through the administrations of all the Presidents since, our nation’s policy had been clearly enunciated: The United States will see to it that Communism will not engulf South Vietnam (and Cambodia and Laos). Are we not now even permitted to ask, “What happened?”

### Defeat Is Nothing New

Before World War II had ended, American diplomats had sealed the fate of the Eastern European nations at Yalta. In the years after that war, Communism was permitted to engulf Poland, Czecho-Slovakia, Rumania, Hungary, and other once-free nations whose independence had been the reason for the war in the first place. A few years later, those same diplomats — or men with identical leanings — delivered China to Mao Tse-tung while insisting that he was an “agrarian reformer.”

In the early 1950s, angry Americans and a few angry Congressional leaders attempted to find out who was making all these “mistakes.” But the investigators were stopped and the entrenched policy-setters continued to ensure additional reversals for America. They engineered a shameful end to the Korean War, they “erred” in backing Castro, they “bungled” the Bay of Pigs invasion, and they said that they were “powerless” to stop the pro-Communist advances in Africa and elsewhere.

### Then Came Vietnam

Then the established policy-makers told us that South Vietnam was the line that the Communists would not be permitted to cross. But the phoniness of their commitment quickly became obvious when these same government officials would not allow our men to shoot until shot at; would not allow them to penetrate enemy sanctuaries; would not let them destroy the strategic targets of the Communists; and not only would not stop supplying the Communists through aid and trade to their European allies, but actually increased such aid continuously throughout the duration of the war.

### The Pattern Is Obvious

For thirty years the United States has suffered nothing but reversals and defeats, both in war and in periods of so-called peace. Since such obvious consistency is not characteristic of stupidity, we have concluded that the pattern is the result of deliberate planning. If all that has happened had been really the result of “mistakes,” some of the “mistakes” would, simply by the laws of chance, have worked to our advantage.

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President Ford has said that an investigation of the loss of Vietnam would be “divisive.” As we see it, the choice is between allowing the pattern of defeat to continue and demanding a change.

Mr. Ford became President when his predecessor was accused of covering up a petty crime. Yet Mr. Ford’s response to the fall of South Vietnam exposes him to an identical charge, except that this time the crime being covered up is by no means petty.