

OUR “PRE-SPONSE”

—

A SUPPLEMENT TO THE KROC INSTITUTE CONFERENCE ON THE VIETNAM WAR THEN AND NOW: ASSESSING THE CRITICAL LESSONS



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***Dedicated to all those who served
in the noble and valiant effort to turn back
the forces of aggression and tyranny
in Vietnam and Southeast Asia,
all the men and women of our armed forces –
and the many civilians too
who played important roles,
and of course our South Vietnamese allies
and those of other nations who joined in that effort,
and – perhaps especially – all their families.
Thank you, my brothers and sisters.***

And just one thing more: It didn't have to end that way.

Lewis Sorley, October 28, 2014

Adapted from an address at the Army Navy Club

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"The Wall reminds us to be honest in our telling of history. There is nothing to be gained by glossing over the darker portions of a war ... that bitterly divided America. We must openly acknowledge past mistakes, and we must learn from past mistakes, because that is how we avoid repeating past mistakes."

– Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel, in his 2014 Veterans Day remarks at the Vietnam Memorial.

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on the Vietnam War: Then and Now:
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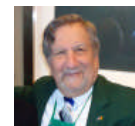
¹ **Elizabeth Holtzman** was an active member of the Congress which post-Watergate cut aid to Indochina. Her group, “Members of Congress For Peace Through Law” (MCPL), devoted taxpayer funded staff time and other funds to the “anti-war” effort. She was a speaker at the Communist victory celebration in New York City's Central Park on May 9, 1975.

INTRODUCTION

The “leadership” of this week’s activities is calling for “full disclosure” as the theme of this year’s commemorative events. Good, let’s have some “full disclosure.” The first lesson to be taught is that you cannot have any valid Lessons Learned if you don’t understand the underlying facts. Lesson number two is that most of the “facts” you are hearing from Academia, Media, Entertainment and even the Federal bureaucracy today have been filtered by partisans or their acolytes who regard any dissent from the “party line” as “revisionism,” which must be stamped out. They have little or no interest in hearing “the other side” of the arguments or for evidence contrary to their positions.¹ Third, the primary argument heard from that side of the aisle is that the United States either acted foolishly or, going further, out of imperialist motivations, or, at the extreme, is the focus of evil in this world and must be punished to atone for its sins. If you accept any of these premises, you create a cascade of dangerous mis-truths to show that our intentions and actions in Vietnam were wrong and doomed. For many opponents of the US in Vietnam, it was insufficient for us to merely withdraw, we had to hand over the people of Indochina to the communists, notwithstanding that the North Vietnamese communists demonstrated that they are far more totalitarian, corrupt, imperialist, and vindictive than the Diem or Thieu administrations they overthrew. Yes, we made mistakes in Vietnam, especially the coup against Diem, but our underlying principles contained the dominoes to Indochina, gave ASEAN breathing space and led to the end of the Soviet Union. Our failure to stop the North Vietnamese is a cause for regret by Vietnamese of both the South and the North and was specifically occasioned by the so-called “American Peace Movement,” whose many innocents or avoiders of the draft were a tool of communist propaganda from their earliest beginnings. By our failure to maintain our deserved “invincible” status, we have allowed tyranny and terror to thrive without fear of the paper tiger we have been forced to become, indeed have encouraged anti-Western forces around the globe from then to now.



Series Editor: Stephen Sherman



¹ Whether or not this document is allowed to be distributed at this conference, may reflect on how open the organizers are to Free Speech.