

After nine years of fighting, the Vietnam War continues its frightening drain on American economy and morale. Many claim the billions of dollars for the war effort have been spent in vain. Here is an eye-opening report on the staggering costs of the "endless" war.

THE "ENDLESS" WAR

by William F. Dankenbring

THE WAR in Vietnam is becoming, in many respects, the costliest war in American history!

Never has the United States spent so much of its manpower and economic resources for so seemingly little results. Never has the United States been engaged in a single war for so long a period — an undeclared war.

And never since the Civil War has a war so divided the American people at home, resulting in mass protest marches, demonstrations, and loud cries of dissent.

Why?

Mood of Pessimism

After more than five years following the American buildup in Vietnam in 1965, the American people are increasingly frustrated with the way the war is going. Four out of five Americans, today, are becoming tired of the war, according to a recent Harris poll. More than one out of five desire a complete,



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immediate and unconditional withdrawal of American forces from Vietnam!

There is a growing mood of pessimism in the United States regarding the war — similar to the pessimism that gripped France shortly after the debacle at Dien Bien Phu in 1954.

Many Americans today believe the war was a mistake from the beginning. A few years ago, over 80% of the American population thought the war was needed to stop Communism, but today about half believe this, and only about 40% believe the war is needed to protect national security.

What has led to this change in public attitude? Are people becoming impatient with the way the war is going? Are Americans losing faith in the concept of a "holding" war, of a seemingly endless "no-win," "no-victory" war? Some seem to be.

The Human Cost

Take a brief look at the statistics.

By the end of 1970, American dead in Vietnam totalled approximately 45,000, and an additional 295,000 were wounded. Total U. S. casualties have gone above a third of a *million* Americans. Meanwhile, South Vietnamese dead have surpassed 100,000, and officials estimate the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese deaths have exceeded 600,000.

More than half — 53% — of American deaths were young men who were not yet old enough to vote. Also, more than half of all the battle deaths have occurred *since* the "peace-talks" began in May, 1968!

In mid-1970, U. S. casualties in Vietnam surpassed total American casualties during World War I!

Americans as a whole heartily concur that the phenomenal cost of men and materiel spent to achieve victories in World War I and World War II was a necessary price we had to pay. But, millions question paying so great a price in Vietnam. Is the war really worth the expense? That's what many wonder.

Perhaps, if this price were spent in the achievement of victory, most people would not be too upset about it. But for all these young men to die in a

war where final conclusive "victory" has been ruled out — that is something more difficult for millions to understand!

The Economic Cost

The war in Vietnam, unbelievable as it may sound, has already become the **SECOND** costliest war in American history in terms of dollars spent!

The Vietnam war has cost the American taxpayer well over \$100 *billion* (£41.6 thousand million). However, if you add to this figure the future costs to the nation in veterans' benefits (another \$50 billion), and interest payments on Federal debts attributable to the war, the final cost may approach \$350 billion — just about the same figure as the cost of World War II!

Professor James Clayton of the University of Utah, an authority on the costs of wars to the American people, in his book *The Economic Impact of the Cold War*, says: "I estimated \$330 billion as the final total of the Vietnamese war, providing we de-escalate in a hurry. But the figure is an absolute minimum. A more realistic figure would be \$400 billion."

By June 1969, more money had been spent on Vietnam than on all wars in United States history combined, with the exception of World War II. Vietnam war expense is already more than double the cost of World War II!

When you look at the figures, it seems the United States is spending money in Vietnam as if there were a never-ending supply. In fiscal 1969 the U. S. spent \$28,800,000,000 on the war in Vietnam! That is one of every six dollars spent by the U. S. Government! If you divide the cost by the kill statistics, you quickly find that each enemy soldier killed costs the U. S. approximately \$170,000.

Let's break the financial cost of the war down — see what it means. In 1969, the United States poured \$2.4 billion a month into the Vietnam dilemma, or \$550 million per week, \$78 million per day. Uncle Sam spent \$3.3 million every single hour, or \$55,000 every single minute!

And yet — today, we are apparently no closer to a solution than when the war started.

\$Billions of Bombs

When the cost of the American war investment in Vietnam is tabulated, who can deny that never before have the American people spent so much so freely to achieve so little tangible results?

This fact is all the more striking when you compare the bombing statistics in Vietnam. From February 1965 until October 1968 (when bombing of the North was halted), the United States dropped 2,955,000 *tons* of bombs on North Vietnam and surrounding areas of enemy occupation, costing about \$6 billion.

This is more than **DOUBLE** the total bomb tonnage dropped on Europe during World War II!

North Vietnam was hit hard by this massive bombing. That small nation of 62,000 square miles received, on the average, about 10 tons of bombs per square mile! It is undoubtedly the most heavily bombed area of comparable size in the history of the world!

Also consider the alarming toll of U. S. aircraft lost in the war. Over 7,000 American planes and helicopters have been lost, at an estimated cost of \$7,000,000,000.

What are the results?

Certainly U. S. presence in South Vietnam *has* prevented a Communist take-over from the North. It has, at least for the present, stopped further Communist aggression in Southeast Asia.

Profiteering and Corruption

Another factor to consider is the widespread, rampant corruption in Vietnam. Profiteers are making huge fortunes because of the U. S. presence in Vietnam. The Vietnam black market siphons off millions (if not hundreds of millions or billions) of American dollars. Graft is omnipresent. Some estimates say at least 1,000 American-made black-market millionaires are currently living in splendor in Saigon!

Just how much of the \$8 billion the United States has spent to bolster the South Vietnamese economy has gone into private pockets — or bank accounts? How much American aid has ended up in numbered Swiss bank

accounts? How much of the scores of billions spent on the military effort in Vietnam has ended up in the "big grab"?

Estimates are very obscure and inexact. They range from 5 to 50 percent! In other words, anywhere from \$400 million to \$4 billion of the economic aid alone may have ended up as private loot!

Corruption flourishes. Billions of dollars worth of U. S. military goods have been stolen by black marketeers, much of it while standing on the waterfront, while being unloaded from ships, or from warehouses. Corruption has been called an institution. It is a "way of life" in Southeast Asia.

The difference between corruption in the days of Ngo Din Diem, former president of South Vietnam who was assassinated, and today, according to one Vietnamese, is that it was controlled and disciplined then; today it is rampant and uncontrolled, with everybody taking his cut — from generals, colonels, politicians and businessmen to policemen.

Because of such bribery, graft, and colossal profiteering, the South Vietnamese are disenchanted with their own government. The peasants in the countryside know no special loyalty to the present regime. And, more important, millions of Americans wonder what we are doing trying to salvage and sustain such a graft-ridden system of exploitation.

But the alternative to supporting the present regime seems clear; without U. S. support, South Vietnam would meet with sudden disaster at the hands of the Communists.

Money for Domestic Problems?

Outraged citizens complain that Government spending for the war effort is completely out of proportion compared to what is being spent to solve U. S. domestic problems.

In fiscal 1969 the U. S. Government spent \$28.8 billion in Vietnam. By comparison, in fiscal 1968, we spent only a total of \$330 million on air pollution, the Peace Corps, and the Head Start program combined — less than *one eightieth* the money spent on Vietnam!

The U. S. Government allocated \$1.3 billion for Food for Freedom in fiscal 1968, and \$1.8 billion for the Office for Economic Opportunity (the "poverty program") — less than *one ninth* the money spent in Vietnam.

The Federal Government spent \$4.4 billion on highway construction in the United States — less than one sixth the money poured into Vietnam in one year. In Vietnam, government contracts have resulted in the construction of six deep-water ports, eight shallow-draft ports, eight big jet air bases with twelve new 10,000-foot runways and more than 80 auxiliary airfields. Hundreds of miles of new roads, hundreds of bridges, oil pipelines, tanks, storage and maintenance areas, docks, barracks, buildings, hospitals, etc., have been built.

According to one calculation, at the peak of the buildup in Vietnam the U. S. was laying asphalt in Vietnam at a rate which would have built a New Jersey turnpike every 30 days, pouring enough concrete to build a Washington, D.C., beltway every two months, and digging enough earth to excavate a Suez Canal every 18 months!

What will happen to those expensive installations in the future? Undoubtedly, South Vietnam will end up one of the earth's wealthiest nations in terms of permanent military and shipping installations and facilities.

Let's make a few more comparisons. In fiscal 1968 the Federal government spent \$4.1 billion on education and \$4.4 billion on agriculture — combined, this is less than *one third* the money spent on the war!

It is easy to see what a financial burden the war has become. All those billions, which could have been used for urgent domestic needs, have been poured into a war in a remote, far-off Asian country, with a doubtful hope of any tangible return.

If you add the cost of space research (\$4.8 billion) and Medicare and medical assistance (\$7.0 billion) to the figures we have already mentioned, you come up with a grand total of \$28.1 billion being spent on these national programs — just slightly less than the amount drained out of the American economy in just one year by the expensive war in Vietnam!

The LONGEST War

The United States has been involved in fighting in Vietnam since 1961, when President John F. Kennedy committed the first American combat support units.

But after a decade of fighting, all the money, all the bombing, and all the manpower have NOT yet succeeded in finishing the war or in forcing Hanoi to get serious at the conference table!

Already, the war in Vietnam is the longest war in United States history — yet it is an undeclared war. Already, it has lasted longer than all the combined 20th-century wars involving the United States! And yet today, the finish is still not in sight.

What effect does fighting this kind of war have on servicemen? During the first few years of the Vietnam war, American troops felt they were fighting for a purpose. They had a goal and a "gung ho" attitude about winning the war.

However, because of the "ground rules" for the war, and the restrictions on fighting and winning, the mood of many servicemen has deeply changed. A form of lassitude about the war has set in among some. An underlying lethargy has crept in. Many feel, if you're not going to fight to win, then why fight?

The result is a cheerless apathy. Instead of thinking, "On to Hanoi," and "Let's win it all," the general attitude is, "How many more days till my hitch is up?" "How long till I can return to the 'world'? [the GPs term for the United States]."

Disillusionment has replaced confidence. Military men, whose advice concerning the war has been continually rejected, are bitter. For the people of South Vietnam, the war has been a heartbreaking catastrophe. They live from day to day, wondering what tomorrow will bring in the way of new suffering. Millions in the countryside don't really care who wins the war — they just want peace.

Hanoi Won't Quit

The Communist leaders in Hanoi are firmly settled on continuing the war until they achieve "victory." They won't

quit. They believe time and history are on their side. Eventually, they believe, American public opinion back home will compel the United States Government to withdraw all troops from Vietnam. That is their strategy — to wear out the Americans, to get them tired and frustrated with the war, and to cause them to pull out of South Vietnam completely.

No compromise is their policy. The Communists believe victory, for them, is historically inevitable!

Said North Vietnam defense minister, Vo Nguyen Giap: "The myth of the invincibility of the U. S. A., this colossus that leans, powerless, on the H-bomb, is crumbling forever."

Giap declared: "The Americans began to see that they could not win militarily, but they still believed that in any case they could not be defeated. Their opinion began to swing, therefore. The problem became: How to lose the war? They called this 'how to avoid losing their honor.'"

Giap was the North Vietnamese general who led the 56-day siege at Dien Bien Phu that broke the will of the French to resist. Expressing the sacrifice and determination of North Vietnam, Giap stated: "We firmly intend to carry on the struggle until victory, for the independence and unity of our country and for future generations."

Battling such an intransigent foe, and rocked with protest and demonstrations at home, is it any wonder the United States has embarked on a policy of gradual withdrawal of forces from Vietnam and "Vietnamizing the war"?

The problem with "Vietnamizing the war," however, is twofold. First, it was already tried once, before 1960. Result — the Communists were on the verge of routing the poorly equipped South Vietnamese army. The United States found it had to send American troops and firepower to curtail Communist advances.

Second, candid South Vietnamese privately admit deep misgivings about the quality of the ARVN (Army of Republic of Vietnam) forces. Once the Americans pull out, they fear, the ARVN could fold up like an accordion.

If U. S. Quits Vietnam

Vietnam, with good reason, has been called "an unmanageable mess." It is like quicksand — a voracious quagmire that sucks everything into it.

But worse, it is the focal point of dissent, strife, protest, and division in the United States. On October 15, 1969, thousands across the country staged a "Vietnam Moratorium Day" protest, with 100,000 gathered at the Boston Common rally. Over 200,000 more marched on Washington in a "March Against Death" on November 15.

A growing schism divides the American people. Tempers are heating up. Anger is being aroused. Although the broad "silent majority" appears to support the peace moves taken by President Nixon, a growing body of vocal militants and demonstrators say the Administration is not moving fast enough. They demand immediate and unconditional withdrawal.

Many have abandoned the quest of "peace with honor" for the simpler, easier "peace at any price." But is this a proper solution?

If the United States does withdraw, what will happen? Military strategists believe that such a move would signal the beginning of the end of American influence in Southeast Asia.

Said Field Marshal Sir Gerald Templer, commander of the British troops who defeated the Communist guerrillas in Malaya after World War II: "If the Americans pull out of Vietnam, the Communists will take over the whole of Southeast Asia — and Burma, India, right up to the Caspian Sea would go."

He said a Communist triumph in Vietnam would inspire Communist movements below the surface in other Asian nations. It would lead to the fall of the Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia, Laos, Cambodia and Thailand. Other nations could also eventually fall, including Burma, India, Pakistan, Afghanistan and Iran.

There is no reason to believe he is wrong.

Increasingly, the future of Southeast Asia looks bleak. The United States committed itself to making a stand against Communism in Vietnam. Total and immediate withdrawal, military tac-

ticians know, would lead to catastrophic consequences. For the non-Communist nations of Southeast Asia, it would be sheer disaster.

Effect of the War

Clearly, the Vietnam war is a moral and financial burden *no* country, even the United States, can afford to maintain forever. It has caused tremendous division, dissent, protest and massive unrest at home. Economically, it has proved to be a much greater burden than expected, creating a powerful inflationary pressure on the dollar. And militarily, it has been a discouraging effort.

If the United States withdraws its forces prematurely, the humiliation will be even greater, as many nations will lose confidence in America's promises of protection.

Is a "holding" war the answer? Will an honorable peace result?

This yet remains to be seen. Some contend that nothing short of an all-out military victory for the U. S. in Vietnam will really achieve what we have set out to accomplish, and that a nation at war must act like a nation at war! That no country can continue to be strong if it is engaged in war where victory is not an objective! Where the enemy is not punished! The cost becomes too great.

The Vietnam war is becoming an "endless" war. It is becoming a crucible. It has broken the American *pride* in her military power. It could become the final cause that weakens American power and influence in Asia and weakens American *will* at home!

Why was it allowed to happen? Where will the United States and the Western world go from here?

What does the future hold? The answers will amaze you. They are found in our booklets, *The United States and British Commonwealth in Prophecy* and *The Wonderful World Tomorrow — What It Will Be Like*. This literature is sent free as an educational service in the public interest. □

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