

know about the making of war and shaping of the so-called honorable peace in Vietnam. . . .



It has been over thirty years since the United States and Vietnam began talks intended to end the Vietnam War. The Paris Peace Talks began on May 13, 1968, under the crystal chandeliers in the ballroom of the old Majestic Hotel on Avenue Kleber and did not end until January 27, 1973, with the signing of the Agreement on Ending the War and Restoring Peace in Vietnam at the International Conference Center in Paris. Despite the agreement, not a moment of peace ever came to Vietnam. This book uses a cache of recently declassified documents to offer a new perspective on why the country known as South Vietnam ceased to exist after April 1975.

Since the very first days of his presidency in January 1969, Richard Nixon had sought an "honorable peace" in Vietnam. In January 1973 he characterized the Paris agreement as having achieved those lofty goals: "Now that we have achieved an honorable agreement, let us be proud that America did not settle for a peace that would have betrayed our allies, that would have abandoned our prisoners of war, or that would have ended the war for us, but would have continued the war for the 50 million people of Indochina."

A speakers' kit assembled within the White House on the evening of the president's announcement of the cease-fire described the final document as "a vindication of the wisdom of the President's policy in holding out for an honorable peace—and his refusal to accept a disguised and dishonorable defeat. Had it not been for the President's courage—during four years of unprecedented vilification and attack—the United States would not today be honorably ending her involvement in the war, but would be suffering the consequences of dishonor and defeat. . . . The difference between what the President has achieved and what his opponents wanted, is the difference between peace with honor, and the false peace of an American surrender."

A White Paper drafted for distribution to members of Congress offered more barbed attacks on his critics.

For four agonizing years, Richard Nixon has stood virtually alone in the nation's capital while little, petty men flayed him over American involvement in Indochina. For four years, he has been the victim of the most vicious personal attacks. Day and night, America's predominantly liberal national media hammered at Mr. Nixon, slicing from all sides, attacking, hitting, and cutting. The intellectual establishment—those whose writings entered America into the Vietnam war—pompously postured from their ivy hideaways, using their inordinate power to influence public opinion. . . . No President has been under more constant and unrelenting harassment by men who should drop to their knees each night to thank the Almighty that they do not have to make the same decisions that Richard Nixon did. Standing with the President in all those years were a handful of reporters and number of newspapers—nearly all outside of Washington. There were also the