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The turning point for the war in Vietnam centered on the aftermath of the Tet Offensive. This was the beginning of the end of the United States involvement in the war and eventually led to the fall of the South Vietnamese government. In the days leading to the fall of Saigon there was another story from the *Patriots* text that seemed to exemplify the American leadership throughout the war until its end.

In the story told by Barry Zorthian *Then-boom!-Tet comes along* (pg. 290-5) we see the impact of the Tet on the members of Congress and the American public shown through the media. There was a loss of faith in the military when after having been told only about three months before Tet by Westmoreland in a speech that "the beginning of the end was in sight and that in the next two years we should be able to reduce our troops in South Vietnam" and this "was interpreted as claiming enormous progress." The statement about the end being in sight was profound, but not in how it actually happened.

Up until the time of Tet the public was being told such things as "we never lost a battle." Then when the Tet occurred "the sudden shock of these attacks, and the fact they hit so many places at the same time, was a tremendous blow to U.S. public thinking and particularly to government officials and Congress" drastic change in the perception of the war took place. This change in the public sensitivity led to "The administration's inclination to move in new directions" and was "strengthened by mounting evidence of public dissatisfaction with the war" (Herring pg.240). These new directions included peace talks with the Hanoi government, Vietnamization, and the eventual de-escalation of the U.S. involvement.

The effect of the Tet Offensive was felt everywhere in American, it changed the perception of the war for the public and was felt all the way to Congress and the President. All of these factors added up to the "turning point" of the U.S. involvement in South Vietnam.

The story *There was classified confetti all over the trees* by Frank Snepp provided a good look at the ending of the war. His story tells us what was happening at the U.S. embassy during the final days of the war. This account, to me, not only told of the ending of the war but also showed a similarity to how politics affected the actions taken by the U.S. during the war.

Having obtained intelligence there was to be a "major offensive" the North Vietnamese struck the "MR-1 [the five northern most provinces in South Vietnam]." Snepp flew up to MR-1 and saw first hand South Vietnamese retreating into the sea off of Danang. When informing the U.S. Ambassador South Vietnam, Graham Martin of what he saw he replied "I don't believe you, Your intelligence must be mistaken." Then even after the South Vietnamese army had "been routed with virtually no resistance, Martin cabled Washington proposing a five-year economic plan for South Vietnam. He had drifted into a complete dream state." Despite the building evidence of a defeat of the Saigon government there was a refusal to believe what was happening all around him.

With the approaching North Vietnamese army, Snepp wanted to form an evacuation plan for the Vietnamese who had assisted the CIA and the U.S. military. With no formal plan for the evacuation there was panic to try to get out before the fall of Saigon. Martin, still thinking there could be some form of negotiated settlement, still refused to allow a tree to be cut down near the embassy which would allow for

more area for the evacuation helicopters to land. There was no doubt all Americans would have transportation out of Vietnam, but it seems those Vietnamese who had helped the Americans were not given much concern by Martin. An instance showing this occurred when at the hotel the C.I.A. operated out of it was discovered that there were still seventy Vietnamese translators at the hotel and the person in charge of evacuating them had evacuated himself leaving all of them there. Later "after the Communists took over they machine gunned most of the Vietnamese in that hotel." This story told the finality of the Vietnam War signaling an end of the war for the U.S., the fear that driven all of the administrations finally became a reality, the U.S. had lost its first war.

This story seems to parallel the approach the U.S. had to the war. The administrations were so singled minded, they believed they all knew what was the best plan of action and refused to deviate from this plan, even when there was evidence to the contrary that another tact would be better. Also, it seems the Vietnamese people were always thought as being second class, not warranting equal status by the U.S. government.

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