

# THE SOCIAL CREDITER

FOR POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC REALISM

Vol. 55, No. 3

JUNE, 1975

15p Monthly

## Vietnam

BY REPRINTING THE FOLLOWING INTERVIEWS FROM THE APRIL 12, 1975 ISSUE OF *HUMAN EVENTS*, OF 422 FIRST ST. S.E., WASHINGTON D.C., WE GIVE WIDER PUBLICITY AND FURTHER MUTUAL AIMS.

While South Vietnam was collapsing last week, *Human Events* conducted a trans-Atlantic telephone interview with England's Sir Robert Thompson, the counter-insurgency expert who headed the British Advisory Mission to Vietnam and engineered the victory over Communist guerrillas in Malaya. Sir Robert frequently advised President Nixon on Vietnam and in February of this year reported on Hanoi's buildup in the South.

The words of Sir Robert, who takes Congress to task for the turn of events in Vietnam and warns of the disintegration of American power around the globe, should carry special weight. Not only is he an expert on Communist strategy, but Sir Robert warned of the possibility of the catastrophic events now unfolding in Indochina in a book published in May of last year, months before President Nixon's resignation.

In his volume, *Peace Is Not At Hand*, he echoed what he had said at the time of the Paris peace accords in January 1973: that the agreements furnished Hanoi the strategic advantage, which it would never voluntarily relinquish. Moreover, he stressed that the restrictions we placed on South Vietnam had put them in a terribly dangerous position.

While Hanoi could still be deterred at that time by potential U.S. air strikes and continued American economic and military aid, Sir Robert was extremely concerned about America's will to keep South-east Asia free of Communist control.

President Nixon worried Hanoi because he had stung them several times through the bombings and the invasions of Cambodia and Laos. But the Congress, he noted, had finally cut off the bombing authority and was reducing aid in such a way as to make South Vietnam increasingly vulnerable and susceptible to a Communist offensive. And the fall of South Vietnam through a lack of will on the part of the U.S., he maintained, would undermine U.S. credibility around the world.

"The obligation and continuing commitment of the United States is inherent to the cease-fire agreement itself," said Sir Robert. "The terms of that agreement were made by the United States with North Vietnam over the South's misgivings and its understanding of Hanoi's intentions. President Thieu had no alternative but to accept those terms, but on the understanding that they would be enforced and

that the one-for-one replacement of military equipment and American economic aid, as allowed under the agreement, would continue."

*But while North Vietnam systematically violated this agreement, said Sir Robert, the United States, primarily because of Congress, was not implementing its solemn pledges.*

"When on May 6, 1974," he said, "Sen. Edward Kennedy's amendment to a military supplementary aid bill—to cut \$266 million for South Vietnam—was passed by the Senate by 43 votes to 38, it signified that perhaps the major lesson of the Vietnam War is: do not rely on the United States as an ally. This vote may prove to be one of the initial steps leading to the strategic surrender of the United States. May 6, 1974, may therefore become an important historical date."

Sir Robert's interview follows:

*Q. Sir Robert, what went wrong in Vietnam?*

A. Two things went wrong. As a result of the Paris peace agreements, the other side had a completely free hand; it didn't have to spend one man on defense, and that left South Vietnam with a terribly long border to defend which it shouldn't have had to defend at all, and it enabled the North to put their divisions where and when they liked.

*Q. But the South Vietnamese in Da Nang performed poorly and some people would say that they really were incapable of fighting.*

A. Well, I've got a pretty good idea of what went wrong there. You see, the argument was that the whole of the two northern regions, militarily, were untenable in the circumstances that you had presented South Vietnam as a result of the Paris agreement, and as a result of not giving them the military aid required. So that made Military Region I and MR 2 untenable. The question was, should you evacuate it? That would have meant giving up half the territory and about one-third of the people, and pulling the troops out before the offensive took place. And this was an argument that was going on, that militarily it should have been done. But in my view, politically and psychologically, it would have been a very impossible thing to do.

The trouble was that when the offensive started they tried to do just that, because they realized that with the North committing five reserve divisions from North Vietnam against MR1, MR1 was in any case lost. And they tried to get the troops out. Well, you cannot do that in the face of an offensive. It's too late then; you've got to stand and fight. Well, they got caught between the "let's evacuate"

and "stand and fight" schools of thought. If they had stood and fought they'd all have been slaughtered anyway.

*Q. In other words, they were totally outnumbered.*

A. Oh, absolutely.

*Q. And outgunned?*

A. At the time when I spoke to congressional staffers [March], I had already put in my report to the President that if the North Vietnamese committed these five reserve divisions to the north we would lose the lot.

*Q. And they did commit the reserves?*

A. They did exactly that.

*Q. Now, do you feel there is anything that we could do now to prevent a complete disaster?*

A. No. Except bomb Hanoi. That's what it came back to and that was what was promised in 1973.

*Q. We actually promised that we would bomb . . .*

A. It wasn't made public . . .

*Q. It was implied, though?*

A. What we were saying was if we find that the other side had not negotiated in good faith, the response would be massive and brutal.

*Q. Now you say that this was what we had promised Thieu?*

A. Those sort of words were being used, at the end of 1972, and the South accepted the agreement, because everyone thought so at that time, and actually the North thought you would, too.

*Q. The Nixon Administration made certain, when the agreement was actually signed, that it still had the authority to bomb if there were massive violations. We would have had the power, the executive would have the power to bomb through planes in Thailand and to shell through the ships off the coast, but the Congress cut the authority off in the summer of '73. They cut it off so we were unable to even threaten the North, and I read in the paper today where many people speculated that Hanoi would have never launched the offensive at all if it thought we were going to use those B-52's.*

A. No, they wouldn't have. This is the whole point.

*Q. So the only thing we could do now, you feel is the bombing of Hanoi or the bombing of their forces in the south?*

A. It's more or less too late. You couldn't mount it in actual fact. I don't think you could mount it.

*Q. You couldn't mount what—bombing?*

A. Yes.

*Q. Why is that?*

A. Well, I don't think you've got the stuff ready available and lined up to go.

*Q. I didn't realize it was that bad. You said you sent a report to the President—did you send it recently?*

A. Yes.

*Q. Within the last couple of weeks?*

A. At the end of February.

*Q. Don't you feel Congress facilitated the current situation in cutting off the bombing authority?*

A. Look, we are getting now exactly what Congress asked for.

*Q. So then they cut off the aid?*

A. Yes, that's it. First of all they stopped the bombing and made it impossible. Then they cut off the aid—so what did you expect to happen?

*Q. We've written that, but I guess I'm looking for your words because they carry weight. Do you think there is anything that we could do now at all to save the situation? You think it's very late, though?*

A. I think it is probably now too late, because you've got nothing to start back from. And the whole point is that you wouldn't have had to use the B-52's.

*Q. Just threaten to use them.*

A. Yes. As long as the threat was there. That would have been enough. As long as the threat was a credible one.

*Q. Some people say, I know you yourself have said this, that the Vietnamese, the ARVN, fought very creditably, at least up until this recent move of Thieu's where he felt he was running out of ammunition and had to withdraw from areas he was holding.*

A. Well, I certainly thought they fought very creditably through last year. They fought very creditably in 1972.

*Q. And so you really feel it was the cut-off of the bombing and the failure to give aid which were the critical factors there.*

A. Yes. Don't say "cut-off of the bombing"—the cut off of the possible threat of bombing and the cut off of aid. In MR 1, the South Vietnamese weren't flying any air sorties when I was out there in February, because they couldn't afford to lose an aircraft.

*Q. Why, because they didn't have any?*

A. No, because if they lost one they wouldn't get a replacement. And the morale affected everyone; you know, the fact that you mustn't fire a bullet because you won't get another one. That's the sort of effect it was having.

*Q. I'm thinking of some possible things our government might be able to do. Assuming that we could get bombing authority back—even though you think that we don't have enough bombs—isn't it possible the South Vietnamese might be willing to defend themselves if they knew we were bombing again?*

A. The South Vietnamese, you've got to remember, have lost their—certainly their four best divisions. I don't see the rest standing in the present circumstances.

*Q. Were they lost in MR 1?*

A. Yes, the marines, the airborne, the 1st Division, the 2nd Division.

*Q. And they were their four best?*

A. Well, I would think they were about the four best.

*Q. And you feel that they had—you said in '72 and in '74—they had fought very creditably.*

A. Well, in '72, the marines, the airborne and the 1st Division took back Quang Tri against six NVA divisions.

*Q. I'd like to get some documentation on this because the feeling here now is that they can't fight and we told you so all along.*

A. That's absolute rot. You see, it has nothing to do with motivation. Let me give you a good example on that one. Would the Japanese be any less motivated in 1944 than

they were in 1941—they were just as highly motivated, just as patriotic—kamikaze and everything else. Well, why were the Japanese losing in 1944 then? They were losing because the U.S., through its control of the sea, had regained the strategic initiative. And the reason South Vietnam was doomed to lose this time was that the Paris agreements gave the North a complete strategic initiative.

*Q. But even though it did that, if somehow the President could use those B-52's. All of a sudden we say, well, you're massively violating the Paris accords and then we start to whir up those B-52's—just threaten to whir them up—it still might have been able to work?*

A. Oh, yes. I mean, if every credible threat had been there. But there was no credible threat. In fact, you haven't got a credible threat anywhere in the world today. You know all that business. Henry Kissinger was talking about three divisions in the Middle East—well, you couldn't do it. You haven't got it.

*Q. Do you feel that we should think seriously about revising this whole idea of detente?*

A. Detente has been a complete illusion all the way through. We've all been fooled by it.

*Q. So what do you feel the West should do in this situation?*

A. Well, the area that's worrying me most at the present moment is Yugoslavia.

*Q. Why is that worrying you the most?*

A. Because if Tito dies and the Russians come into Yugoslavia, the pressure will really be coming onto Europe. And the whole of the southern flank of NATO will go; the Russians will be dominant in the Mediterranean.

*Q. And how about Portugal?*

A. Yes, that's part of it. I mean from the Bosphorus to the Azores we're already in pretty bad shape.

*Q. Is there anything the West can do except exhort Congress and the rest to understand the situation?*

A. My own view at the present time is that the United States would have to start spending \$200 billion on defense before you could even start doing anything.

*Q. In other words, being credible throughout the Mediterranean and Asia, and even Europe?*

A. Yes.

*Q. Is there any particular type of weapon that we need, or any particular sort of thing that we need? Is it nuclear weapons, conventional weaponry?*

A. I think your nuclear has got to keep pace with the Russians—you're starting to run behind. The Russian submarine missiles and the SS-19 are now ahead of you. Certainly you've got to keep that balance. But I think we've got to do much more to keep the conventional balance. The conventional balance is absolutely horrible. The Russians have 150 divisions and you have 16.

*Q. Sixteen? You're talking about world-wide?*

A. That's all the United States has world-wide. It's got two more regiments—one in Berlin and I think there's one in Panama.

*Q. How about Western Europe?*

A. Well, Western Europe matches Eastern Europe—it doesn't match the Russians.

*Q. Do you think that if we somehow, in some way, said that these new relationships or these new events in . . .*

A. Well, I'll tell you one political thing that would wake your country up again—the reintroduction of the draft. It says—look, things are rough, we've got to do something about it. And it's only something like that that really starts people waking up.

*Q. You paint a very grim picture. I was hoping there might be something to do for Vietnam, if it possibly could be saved. I don't know whether the President has the power, through the War Powers Act, to bomb again.*

A. No, he doesn't. Not in Indochina. Outside of Indochina he's only got 60 days. There is one other thing that comes through very clearly—that no Congress can possibly run a foreign policy. After all, Henry Kissinger went to the Middle East absolutely stark naked. No Army—no Air Force—no Navy—and no money.

*Q. So the key to this is to some extent, at least as far as you are concerned, is to rebuild the American military, in terms of giving us more diplomatic strength and military strength?*

A. Well, it's a change of attitude, of mind, which these sorts of things would demonstrate.

*Q. If we said that detente had failed, if the President announced, well, we've tried, we've had detente, but these events in South-east Asia show that the Soviets don't care about detente, and we are now going to have to break off, think in terms of rebuilding our military.*

A. I wouldn't make it quite so dramatic as that. Don't forget that you've still got one fundamental weapon.

*Q. What's that?*

A. You still have to feed the Socialists and the Communists.

*Q. Regarding South Vietnam—you mentioned at one point about how they performed ably—can you think of other examples how they performed ably before this recent crisis, in the last two years?*

A. I would say the best time was 1972 and you can cite the case that they re-took Quang Tri with three divisions against six NVA divisions.

*Q. You said they also fought well in '74. Can you give any examples?*

A. Yes, but those were all sort of small battles.

Sir Robert Thompson isn't the only military figure who believes the actions of the U.S. Congress have led to South Vietnam's awful current predicament. Maj. Gen. John Murray (USA Ret.), the senior officer representing the Defense Department in Vietnam from the time of the ceasefire until mid-August 1974 and previously director of logistics for Vietnam and the entire Pacific Command, told *Human Events* last week that he had repeatedly warned of the seriousness of congressionally imposed ammunition and fuel shortages.

"Their fuel," he maintained, "was cut about 85 per cent. Their ammunition was cut at least in half, and so were their other supplies—everything it takes to move, shoot and communicate. It was just a drastic cut.

"They were put on a starvation diet, and while the enemy all the time was getting more and more, the South Vietnamese were getting less and less. And it

*just was very clear that this thing was going to happen."*

Gen. Murray said he put all this "in my report back to Washington, when I would come back on temporary duty, and in my final trip report [still classified] I made it very clear that this was the situation and they were going down the drain without further support and this was just bound to happen. And it did."

Was there any question in his mind that there was a "direct relation between what the Congress' actions were in the failure to get ammunition and equipment and the collapse?" he was asked.

"There is no question whatever," Gen. Murray replied. "It's an absolute relationship."

Up until this latest offensive, said Gen. Murray, the North Vietnamese and the South Vietnamese were about equal in combat strength, but the North could commit—and did commit—their reserve divisions. The terrain, moreover, was favourable to the enemy and the North Vietnamese "were just getting more and more tanks, more and more artillery, more and more ammunition and more and more of everything."

"People criticize the Vietnamese Air Force for not fighting. Well, one thing I know, they were very short of fuel. The other thing is that they were using up their resources in supplying their forces."

While Gen. Murray concedes that the South Vietnamese military blundered badly in the execution of the withdrawals, he insisted this was sound strategy. President Thieu's decision to withdraw from the Highlands and the north was "absolutely" correct, he maintained. "Before I left there, I told the South Vietnamese they were going to have to give up real estate and lives for the lack of ammunition, fuel and support. That was the only way."

## HISTORY

"In melody we perceive a musical *meaning*, given in the relation of one tone to others. And just so in history we perceive a meaning when the events in a series have a significant relationship. What in music is melody, in history is *policy*. The late C. H. Douglas described history as crystallised policy; and policy, like melody, has its expression in time."

—B. W. Monahan in his Introduction to *The Moving Storm*.

## THE SOCIAL CREDITER

FOR POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC REALISM

PUBLISHED MONTHLY

This journal expresses and supports the policy of the Social Credit Secretariat, which was founded in 1933 by Clifford Hugh Douglas.

The Social Credit Secretariat is a non-party, non-class organisation neither connected with nor supporting any political party, Social Credit or otherwise.

SUBSCRIPTION RATES: Home and abroad, post free: One year £2.60. Six months £1.30, Airmail one year £3.50.

Offices—  
Business: 245 Cann Hall Road, Leytonstone, London, E.11 3NL.  
Tel. 01-534 7295

Editorial: Penrhyn Lodge, 2 Park Village East, London, NW1 7PX.  
Tel. 01-387 3893

IN AUSTRALIA—

Business: Box 2318V, G.P.O., Melbourne, Victoria 3001  
Editorial: Box 3266, G.P.O., Sydney, N.S.W. 2001 (Editorial Head Office)

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### Erratum

In the May, 1975, T.S.C., page 2, col. 2, lines 23 and 24 should read:—

There is no slightest sign that, were Douglas alive today, he would alter that priority.