
the responsibility to do what the U.S.A. did is, I suggest, quite another matter, and it seems to me quite obviously wrong. I wonder whether much of the criticism we have seen and heard recently does not come from the failure of some to draw a clear distinction between the American and Canadian positions.

Decision to leave

As it was, when the decision was made to withdraw Canadian Embassy personnel from Saigon on April 24, the Canadian Government faced a choice. We could have simply stayed. The experience of those who did so suggests that we should have served no practical or useful purpose by doing so. Alternatively, we could have, as some did, stayed until the American evacuation a few days later. We should then have risked being caught up in a hazardous and unsatisfactory evacuation, from a Canadian standpoint, under the direct protection of the armed forces of the U.S.A. with all that would imply, or we could have been left behind by default rather than by choice (as some foreign missions were) in circumstances that could have left our mission hostage to the unknown policies of the new authorities. What I mean by that is that we considered that the continued presence of our Embassy could have serious consequences, since our decision to accept refugees in Canada corresponded to the humanitarian instincts of Canadians but appeared to conflict with the desires of the new authorities in South Viet-Nam. Our final choice was to withdraw our mission in an orderly way, using Canadian means, taking with us those Canadians and their Vietnamese dependents who wished to leave, and those Vietnamese citizens who could be got out under the constraints of the situation, of our resources and of our responsibilities. That is what we did. Other countries, including Australia, Britain, Malaysia, New Zealand, the Netherlands and West Germany, took the same decision earlier or on the same day. Even with the benefit of hindsight, we should not have done otherwise, and I suggest that events have proved that we did the right thing.

It was a particularly difficult and trying time for the members of the Canadian mission in Saigon. I think it must be said that they did their job remarkably well in remarkably difficult circumstances. The officers of the Department of Manpower and Immigration carried out their work with a great sense of responsibility in increasingly unproductive circumstances, until it became clear that their presence no longer served a useful purpose. After their departure from Saigon, the members of the Department of External Affairs continued to do their best to discharge their responsibilities in a situation which continued to deteriorate. They did so under the devoted and competent leadership of our chargé d'affaires, Mr. Ernest Hébert,
