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...ALTHOUGH A SETTLEMENT WHICH REFLECTED THE POLITICAL AND MILITARY REALITIES IN SOUTH VIETNAM WOULD AMOUNT TO SOMETHING OF AN ADMISSION OF DEFEAT FOR HANOI, THEY MIGHT DECIDE TO SALVAGE WHAT STILL CAN BE SALVAGED OF THEIR ORGANIZATION, PERHAPS WITH THE IDEA OF RENEWING THE STRUGGLE AT A LATER TIME.

THEY MIGHT, THAT IS, EXPECT FOR THE UTTERLY INCREDIBLE POSSIBILITY THAT THE SITUATION MIGHT BE DRAMATICALLY REVERSED IN THE NEAR FUTURE.

SKEPTICAL AS THEY MAY BE ABOUT AMERICAN TROOP WITHDRAWALS, THE LEADERS IN HANOI CANNOT IGNORE THE POSSIBILITY THAT THE GOVERNMENT IN WASHINGTON WILL PROVIDE THEM WITH A MIRACLE. IF THERE IS EVEN A REMOTE CHANCE THAT THE AMERICANS WILL LEAVE FAST ENOUGH AND IN SUCH NUMBERS AS TO REVERSE THE MILITARY BALANCE, THE COMMUNISTS MUST WAIT AND SEE.

THE GOVERNMENT IN WASHINGTON, OF COURSE, IS NOT PROPOSING TO LET THIS HAPPEN. THE AMERICAN WITHDRAWAL, THEY SAY, WILL BE GEARED TO THE CAPACITY OF THE SOUTH VIETNAMESE TO TAKE OVER THE COMBAT BURDEN AND WILL NOT RESULT IN A REVERSAL OF THE MILITARY BALANCE. THEY MAY VERY WELL BE RIGHT.

YET THE COMMUNISTS, APPARENTLY, DO NOT SEE IT THAT WAY. THEY KNOW THAT THE POLITICAL AND MILITARY ODDS IN SOUTH VIETNAM ARE NOW HOPELESSLY STACKED AGAINST THEM. THEY ARE CONVINCED THAT THE EFFECT OF AN AMERICAN WITHDRAWAL WOULD BE TO EVEN THOSE ODDS AND THEY FIND IT HARD TO BELIEVE THAT THIS IS REALLY WHAT WE INTEND TO DO.

HISTORY OF THE VIETNAM WAR ON MICROFILM