

Wrong Enemy at Awkward Time

PRESIDENT FACES DILEMMA IN SOUTH VIET-NAM

From the Allen-Scott Report

The United States faces a major confrontation in South Viêt-Nam with the wrong enemy, at the wrong time, and in the wrong place.

To their sudden shock, President Johnson and his chief policy makers have found themselves maneuvered into the dangerous position of either having to involve the United States in another Korean-type war or agree to a political Dienbienphu.

Neither alternative is very attractive with a presidential election less than two months away.

That's the inside word leaking out of the sharp policy debate now going on at the highest level of government on what action, if any, the United States can take to save the disintegrating situation in South Viêt-Nam.

The consensus of opinion of these policy makers is that the President's choice has been narrowed to these ominous alternatives by a combination of mistakes in Saigon and Washington.

The first involves the apparent political trap that Peking lured President Johnson into in the Gulf of Tonkin when North Vietnamese PT boats launched their unprovoked attacks against patrolling U.S. destroyers.

Second thoughts have convinced these policy makers that the Chinese Communists stayed out of the world headlines battle to pinpoint the confrontation as one between the United States and North Viêt-Nam.

By responding with a "limited" attack on North Vietnamese bases, President Johnson spotlighted the Communist puppet regime in Hanoi as the U.S. enemy in South Vietnam and not the Chinese Communists.

Significantly, the U.S. response to the Peking ploy now leaves the Chinese Communist leaders a free hand to make their big play in South Viêt-Nam.

The Chinese Reds can turn the heat on by having their North Vietnamese puppets step up the war in South Viet-Nam without fear that the United States will strike back at China.

On the U.S. side, President Jonson is left with the choice of either meeting the new threat with Marines and extending the war into North Viet-Nam or trying to negotiate a political settlement with the Hanoi regime from a position of weakness.

If the latter policy is adopted, the President's advisers agree that the price for a settlement will come high-neutralization of South Viet-Nam at best, or a Communist take-over at the worst.

Unlike the 1962 Cuban crisis where there was a direct confrontation between the United States and Russia, the main ennemy in that conflict - President Johnson is heading to the brink with North Viêt-Nam, a second-rate Communist power that is

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not the real enemy in the Far East.

Ambassador Maxwell Taylor's "uncertain trumpet" is adding to the President's growing dilemma in South Viêt-Nam.

With his "rings of steel" military strategy falling apart at the seams, Taylor is sounding a final call for the establishment of a "civilian" government to give the United States a face-saving front behind which to negotiate the neutralization of that strife-torn country after the November election.

But time and events appear to be against Taylor.

With the new Communist Viêt-Công offensive expected at any time, the hour of truth for the President could come before the end of the month.

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Congressional probers looking into the explosive situation in South Viêt-Nam have made a startling discovery.

Rep. Clement Zablocki, (D.- Wis.), chairman of a House Foreign Affairs subcommittee, reports that former U.S. Minister-counselor in Saigon William C. Trueheart is now the director of the Office of Southeast Asian Affairs.

According to intelligence information given Zablocki's committee, Trueheart was the leader behind the ouster of the late President Diệm.

He also had a major role in the sudden recall of John Richardson, the CIA's mission chief in Saigon, who tried to save Diệm from being overthrown.

Trueheart, who has close contacts with French intelligence and leftist groups in Europe, is one of the prime movers in the State Department project to neutralize South Viêt-Nam.

In his new position, he is in charge of formulating all policy papers on Viêt-Nam and in seeing that they are carried out both in Washington and Saigon.

He has been one of the driving forces behind the move to eliminate "military officers" from the new South Vietnamese government.

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