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IMPACT

~~title~~ 1 (normass/deepe)

(This is the first of a three-part series appraising the many-~~spec~~ spectrumed developments following the Communists' three-day blitzkrieg criss-crossing South Vietnam. This article assesses the impact on the American position within the South).

SAIGON, february 2--The Communists' ~~threeed~~ three-day blitz war--actually a war within a war--has opened up the possibility of America losing her first major war in history.

An American defeat in South Vietnam is not necessarily inevitable, as the Communists have long maintained, nor is it likely to be imminent. But it is no longer an impossibility as the American officialdom has once predicted.

--more reuter

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impact 2 (normass/deepe)

In a nutshell, the Communist blitz war has sommersaulted ~~rapidly~~ rapidly, though perhaps impermanently, the ^{favorable} ~~politic~~-military balance of forces within the South ~~from the Allied~~ Allied side towards the Communist camp.

The United States, the most powerful nation militarily in ~~her~~ history, has become the underdog ~~in~~ at this time in this multi-faceted war of politics, psychology, military battles and xenophobia.

Hence, the ~~new~~ internal options open to the United States has shifted dramatically in the past week. The original policy choice of fighting for a ~~a~~ battlefield victory or negotiating at the conference table has ^{flip flopped} ~~switched~~ into ~~either~~ the choice of either negotiating or being defeated. Also, within the negotiations option, the choice has shifted from negotiating on terms favorable to the Allies to negotiating on ^{favorable} ~~Communist~~ terms.

Whether this balance of force can be reversed across the board

~~is~~ by the American officialdom and government of South Vietnam is highly debatable, ^{it} ~~is~~ is the center of the most significant question in the next few weeks.

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impact 4 (normass/deepe)

In more specific casual terms, the Communist blitz has at least temporarily snuffed out the last hope for an American military victory. ^{Held by} ~~to~~ hard-shelled hawks here

Yesterday's ~~pre-blitz pessimistic view~~ pre-blitz pessimistic view is today's optimistic view. The pessimists who once termed Vietnam America's "~~can't~~" "can't win" war, are now terming it a "might-lose" war. The ~~skeptics~~ skeptics who once said the tide had not yet turned in Vietnam are now questioning if there is even a tide to turn. The cynics, officially ~~contra~~ contradicted by the Johnson Administration, who once said the Americans were heading for a stalemate in Vietnam are now wondering if ~~they're~~ they're not heading for a dead end. Those who said they could not see a light at the end of the tunnel now ponder if there's even a hole or exit at the end of the tunnel.

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impact 5 (normass/deepe)

The blitz war in Vietnam is not considered decisive ~~or~~ nor final here anymore than the Israeli blitz war ended the Middle East crisis last year. But, the three-day beginning of the Communist "general"-
or countrywide offensive is considered to be the ~~prelude to~~ pivotal
~~prelude to~~ prelude to the last act of the ~~high~~ high drama.

The worst is yet to come. Americans and Vietnamese, ~~offici~~ officials and common citizens, agree on this point. But they look ~~at~~ at the gravity of the upcoming situation in different terms.

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impact 6 (normass/deepe)

General William C. Westmoreland, head of the American military command, ~~has~~ has predicted ~~a~~ full Phase Three ~~positional~~ positional warfare along the Demilitarized Zone and the northernmost provinces. Vietnamese and Americans both look for another swooping attack coordinated between cities in the future. Vietnamese sources, but not Americans, are predicting soon the ~~begin~~ beginning of the "general" (country-wide) uprising of political demonstrations, economic strikes, and violent anti-Americanism. ~~and~~ Others predict the Communists will launch an international and internal peace offensive to dovetail with their battlefield campaigns. And a few sophisticated Vietnamese familiar with Communist strategy foresee all of these ~~probabilities~~ probabilities climaxing simultaneously, perhaps during the American election period.

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impact 7 (normass/deepe)

In short, the blitz war has positioned the Communists at a crucial crossroads, all of which are somewhat disadvantageous to the American posture here, although in varying degrees. They are:

1. A massive military push in positional warfare pattern along the Demilitarized Zone or a number of other places. This push, by itself, would probably not be decisive against the preponderance of American firepower and manpower, as long as ~~the international and~~ Washington ^{Remained} ~~position remains~~ determined.

2. The state of general uprising in which political agitation among the Vietnamese population becomes both ugly and ^{Pivotal} ~~decisive~~. By itself, it is doubtful the Communists could seize power solely with a people's uprising, ~~but~~ ^{But} this depends--not on the American ~~size~~ ~~strength--as much as~~ on the future performance of President Nguyen Van Thieu, his government and armed forces.

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impact 8 (normass/deepe)

3. A "peace" offensive in which ~~the~~ international and internal developments would inter-act for both psychological and political advantages of the Communists.

4. More military attacks into the urban centers designed to erode the Vietnamese government's support in the cities and among the middle and upper classes--their last shreds of internal support among the population--and to wear down the will of the governmental apparatus to resist the Communists.

5. All four of these, or some combination thereof, in which the American military preponderance would be outflanked on the battleground, ~~xxxx~~ --which the blitz war temporarily accomplished-- outmaneuvered on the negotiations issue or neutralized by political chaos in the Vietnamese cities.

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impact ^{9/4} (normass/deepe)

The blitz war dramatically illustrated--at least to Vietnamese spectators--^{the} this neutralization of American military power (well-timed) by a ~~hand~~, across-the-board orchestration of political factors and military actions, operating a various levels. With regimental or battalion attacks, some of the Allied ~~air~~ airbases were assaulted and partially destroyed. At a lower level, some of the dirt-strip airbases in provincial capitals were not assaulted, but simply held under siege by a hand-ful of snipers. Other airbases, ~~the~~ major ones, such as Danang, were not assaulted with close-in combat troops, but were simply rocketed and mortared from long-range. Saigon's sprawling Tan Son Nhut airbase, for example, was subject to pitched battles, mortar fire, sniper siege and guerrilla raids.

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impact ~~10~~ (normass/deepe)

More significant, however, American servicemen in Saigon were bottled up in their billets for days; they were politically isolated and militarily neutralized. A few billets came under sniper siege and tedious harassment. The American officialdom ~~ore~~ ordered the servicemen to remain in their billets for fear of the grave political consequences of an anti-American incident in the highly emotional ~~at~~ atmosphere as well as the "~~is~~" "hazardous" conditions throughout the city.

After 48 hours of ~~siege~~ American-ordered siege, some servicemen were transported to work under armed ~~at~~ escort; ~~but~~ but for days, American troopers and airmen, ~~many~~ ordinarily frontline fighters, watched the war ~~in~~ from their rooftops and balcon^{ies} as they listened to rock 'n roll music and wrote letters home.

Militarily, the Communist forces could never have defeated so many American servicement at one time--but at a critical moment, the servicement were simply neutralized and negated. ~~and in unable to fight the Communist.~~

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