

Beverly A. Deepe, '30, has served as a war correspondent in Vietnam for five years—longer than any other American journalist. Arriving on Valentine's Day, 1962, she found Saigon a slow-paced little town with Paris-styled sidewalk cafes; today, it is a big city with New York-type traffic jams; the sidewalk cafes have ~~been~~ faded into rock 'n roll bars with anti-grenade grilling on the windows.

In 1962, she covered the 3000 American advisors, some of whom lived in dusty, remote provincial capitals; today, American brigade and division headquarters for the 380,000 American troops dot the same towns. Vietnamese troops were then ferried into battle in the forty antiquated "banana boat" helicopters in Vietnam; today more than 1500 of the world's most modern, electronically-equipped 'copters ~~are~~ shuttle in American GI's. ~~In one month~~ Vietnamese troop casualties in one month in 1962 were less than one day's ^{ALLIED} American ^{WAR} casualties ~~in 1967~~.

A native of Carleton, Nebraska, Miss Deepe attended the University of Nebraska, graduating as a Phi Beta Kappa in 1957. She then attended the Graduate School of Journalism at Columbia University, graduating with ~~the~~ honors the following year. She was previously associated in Vietnam with ~~New~~ York and the now-extinct New York Herald Tribune.

Deepe

With Series—Photos

Photos of Beverly Deepe in camouflage helmet and Vietnamese airborne beret. Please return the negatives to Beverly Deepe; % JUSPAO; APO 96243; San Francisco, California.

Severly Ann Deepe

64A Hong Thap Tu

Saigon, Vietnam

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SAIGON--Two years ago today, American fighter-bombers plunged through the overcast, mid-afternoon skies of Vietnam and raided ^{"military installations"} ~~"military installations;"~~ The bombing raids, which continued relentlessly since were followed five weeks later by the arrival of the first American ground units into South Vietnam.

Today, two years later, the pivotal question is: can American and her allies win the war and thus save South Vietnam from future Communist control?

The crucial answer is to be found in the fluid events of 1967--the year of decision in this which-way war.

Some senior Western diplomatic sources have already proclaimed to their home capitals that Vietnam is a ^{"Can't"} ~~"can't win"~~ war. Other informed sources call it "the un-winnable, un-loseable" stalemate war. High placed American sources, usually with some conditions and uncertainty, maintain the war can still be won, other American say Vietnam is already lost. From the best information available to this correspondent, one may safely deduct that the key question is still unanswered and that the key assessment is to be made by ranking American and South Vietnamese leaders during 1967; this assessment will determine with untold ramifications the future not only of Vietnam, but also of non-Communist Asia as well as the outcome of subversive-guerrilla wars or "Revolutionary wars" yet to be fought on other continents.

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To the outside world, the controversial American action—the bombing of the North and the introduction of American combat troops in the South—initiated the United States escalation of the Vietnam conflict. Within South Vietnam, the action was viewed as America's counter-escalation to the long years of Communist subversive guerrilla warfare and by late 1964, the "invisible invasion" of well-armed companies and battalions from North Vietnam.

The effects of this counter-escalation can be summed up as: a negative success one which staved off the Communist inevitable, but not necessarily immediate seizure of power within the Southern republic.

Yet, the bombing of the north initiated in 1965, while it made more difficult the infiltration of troops and supplies from North Vietnam, failed to slow down the rate infiltration. In fact, Communist strength imported from North Vietnam, is still mushrooming, from the average of 3,600 men a month in 1965 to ~~5,000~~^{10,000} men a month in 1966 and may be higher in 1967.

The introduction of American combat troops within the South Vietnam, while it averted the eventual Communist take-over, achieve^d neither their military objective of crushing—even denting^{U.S.} the Communist organized main force units, nor of regaining and expanding the anti-Communist political control in the countryside. The American combat troops, softened, but did not solve the military problems within South Vietnam; and more significant they created additional political, social and economic problems which may be beyond solution. In short, while they prevented South Vietnam from going Communist, they have far from secured its victory. Two years later, the Vietnamese countryside is still largely under Communist rule; the urban centers in a state of latent anti-Americanⁱⁿ surrectional.

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If the key assessment made during 1967 by Washington and Saigon is that the war can be won, high-ranking leaders here openly admit the ordeal will be a prolonged, bloody, costly struggle lasting for years; a struggle in which the decisive successes will not come simply in military victories and pinpoint bombing raids, but also in quietly, undramatically re-establishing political-economic social-stability ^{and} progress in the South Vietnamese villages. ² And order in the cities.

If the key assessment of 1967 is that the war can not be won, these are the crushing alternatives open to America and her allies:

I. Defeat. In hushed tones at the highest circles, American officials, speaking in private, concede that the war and South Vietnam can be lost, thus touching off a disastrous chain-reaction of adverse ^{Events} ~~advents~~ throughout Asia as well as other under-developed lands. "America can not be pushed out militarily," one senior official here explained. (Communist sources privately agree with this judgment). "But the danger is being sucked out politically." A neat blend of political-economic-military attacks--especially before the American Presidential election in 1968, when the country is most divided and undecided--could conceivably net the Communist a strategic victory in South Vietnam--and a crushing American defeat. Intelligence sources estimate, for example, that in the midst of political upheavals in South Vietnam--such as the Buddhist crisis ^{which} happened last spring--the Communist could seize Saigon during a ~~critical~~ ^{critical} period with a strength equivalent to three divisions of combat troops ^{or} which already ring the capital city.

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2. Negotiations. The most discussed and most probably alternative of negotiations opens up the possibility of a compromise military-political settlement something like this: the American troops withdrawal or de-escalation would give the free world the appearance of a ~~fit~~ military victory, while admission of Communist or pro-Communist leaders into the Saigon regime at the central government level would give ^{them} the future political power for a slow-motion take-over. The However, officials who study carefully captured Communist documents already warn that the Vietnamese Communists have no intention of making the same mistakes the Communists made in Indonesia: which was sending known Communist or pro-Communist members into a coalition arrangement, but ~~feeling~~ ^{Feeling} to maintain their secret subversive underground organizations with which they will be capable of seizing eventual and total political power. Hence, ~~to project time~~ ^{the Viet Cong}, the objective of the Liberation Front of South Vietnam ~~want~~ would be achieved politically in slow-motion what could not be achieved militarily on the battlefield: the eventual, sole representation of the South Vietnamese people, and the re-unification of North and South Vietnam—the avowed objective of the Hanoi regime—would be postponed five to ten years. Contrary to popular opinion, sources here believe that the beginning of west-Communist discussions do not necessarily ~~mean~~ ^{mean} negotiations; ~~at~~ the end of negotiations do not necessarily ~~mean~~ ^{mean} peace—but could also ~~mean~~ ^{mean} the introduction of a new type of political and ~~militar~~ war. ^T These sources also note that the closer Vietnam comes to the Conference table ^{the} bloodier the battles will be on the battlefield.

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3. A bigger war--probably regional, possibly global and nuclear. This alternative presupposes that ^{the} Communists believe they are winning, that they can achieve a total American-allied political-military defeat, and hence reject negotiations. The American and her allies unable to secure negotiations and unwilling to accept defeat, would then escalate from a limited to a regional, if not global war, with the objective of hitting Chinese Communist nuclear production plants with either conventional or nuclear air power.

The reverse argument within the alternative is that the Communist bloc, should it be on the brink of defeat might choose, a large scale land war with the American-allied troops in several countries instead of negotiations. In this case, the United States would have no choice but to react with nuclear power to a Communist initiated push by ^{OVERWHELMING} more numerous conventional ground forces.

Since the American bombing of North Vietnam two years ago, this alternative has grown in credence. Within South Vietnam ~~has~~ ^{is} alone there is more talk of a possible nuclear war and of a world-wide Communist-free world confrontation. Small factors give ^{Substance} ~~substance~~ to these fears: the escalation on the Communist side in which Chinese Communist labor ^{and} potential fighting forces have been sent to North Vietnam, the small number of Chinese Communist military cadre now in South Vietnam, the frequent acknowledgement on radio Peking that "North Vietnam is a rear base for South Vietnam and China is a rear base for North Vietnam."

By the same token the construction of three U.S. air bases in Thailand and one in South Vietnam capable of handling giant B.52 jets, which can deliver American nuclear punch to China and ^{the} known projected construction of a nuclear submarine base on South Vietnamese territory and ^{SPARKED CONCERN} also ~~sparked concern~~.

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Somewhere within the vast range of these three alternative, the events of 1967 will probably begin to mold the outcome of this ~~which Temple~~ ^{Complex} fluid which way war.