

doops

government--1

Feb. 13, 1965

SAIGON--The recent American bombing raids against North Vietnam--like the August ones during the Tonkin Gulf incident--will probably have an a favorable effect of creating the proper internal political climate to form a strong stable government in this southern republic.

The gamble is that attempts to form this government do not fail as they did. In short, the military escalation of the war outside of South

Viet Nam will probably help in solving the internal political crisis within South Viet Nam. While the external escalation is momentarily risky in terms of confronting Peking and Moscow, the internal political situation is far more important in terms of future effective prosecution of the war.

It is in this sense that the February bongi bongi bombing raids against North Viet Nam are a repetition of the August raids during the Tonkin Gulf incident.

There is a sizeable school of thought in South Viet Nam--among educated Vietnamese and some Western diplomats--that the real reason for the bombing raids on North Viet Nam is to produce a strong stable government in Saigon. While this is a matter of conjecture, clearly the effect of the airstrikes will be to create the climate for a government with a high degree of central authority--which is the most important prerequisite for defeating the guerrillas in the South. Clearly, also, the Pleiku incident was a pretext--and not a reason--for bombing North Vietnam; the bombing plans had been decided upon at least a year ago--but the timing of the airstrikes coincided to the needs of internal political developments.

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feb. 13, 1965

The final ~~exit~~ solution to the internal ~~political~~ political crisis is a strong stable government with power tightly centralized in the hands of the anti-Communist Vietnamese ~~armed forces~~ ~~and more~~ ~~specifically~~ specifically in the hands of a one-man dictator.

This solution was attempted following the August Tonking Gulf raids--and the only problem was that it failed disastrously.

Now the solution is not only the re-emergence of the military in the government--but the re-emergence of the military in such a ~~way~~ way a slow, cautious and confused way that it can not be toppled as it was in August.

Clearly, if this attempt to form a strong stable government ~~fails~~ fails as it did in August, ~~any~~ ⁵ hope of defeating the Communist guerrillas militarily and politically within south Vietnam have virtually evaporated.

But since the August bombing raids, the political circumstances within South Viet Nam have changed--and are much more favorable for success.

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The bombing of North Viet Nam is directly linked to the internal political crisis. American Ambassador Maxwell D. Taylor ~~has~~ for months in public statements had made a strong stable government in Saigon a prerequisite for bombing raids on North Viet Nam. The argument in this line of reasoning was that bombing of North Vietnam was only a half-solution to the problem--that the Viet Cong guerrillas in the South would have to be defeated militarily by the Vietnamese armed forces, but also be defeated politically by a strong government capable of countering their propaganda and effectively prosecuting the war.

Obviously, now, ~~Taylor's~~ Taylor's public statements must be interpreted as an appeal and a hope for a stable government--but not a prerequisite for the bombing of North Viet Nam. For the recent bombing raids were ~~launched~~ launched when Saigon was ~~being~~ between governments--the ~~the~~ Saigon was a "provisional" provisional caretaker government" which was following one provisional government and was to ~~be~~ administer governmental duties--but not make key decisions--until a new ~~provisional~~ provisional government had been appointed. Hence Taylor's reversal of his own announced policy ~~must~~ could be interpreted the ~~(More)~~ that the bombing of North Viet Nam is a necessary condition for forming a permanent government rather than vice versa.

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government ~~4~~

feb. 13, 1965

This week, the new provisional government was announced--it also ^{AD}
is an interim government until the National Congress, scheduled March
21, elects a President, ratifies a ~~strong~~ constitution
with power resting in a strong, authoritarian President, who will
name a new ~~government~~ and hopefully permanent government. This government
~~was~~ ^{is} the week's new provisional government, organized with five
super-ministers overseeing the Cabinet, is important for three reasons:

1. The structure and form of this provisional government is vaguely that of the ~~the~~ future permanent government--or in an imprecise sense, it is the "Khanh government without Khanh."
2. Military officers will take a key part in the government.
3. ~~Like~~ ^{creating} Like after the Tonkin Gulf bombing, this government ^T
was formed too slowly, thus allowing a political vacuum, which may
lead to its future fall. Even with the recent bombing of North Viet Nam,
the generals, religious and political leaders too at least a week
to form a ~~new~~ provisional government, which may open the way
for Communist political subversion in the future.

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Despite this faltering beginning, however, there is still more optimism for a strong stable government than there was following the Tonkin Gulf bombing of North Viet Nam. The most important factor is that American policymakers are more decisive than they were after Tonkin when they could not afford a political ~~crisis~~ and bloodshed in the streets of Saigon--before the American election. Second, ~~has more power~~ Khanh and the armed forces ~~is more unified~~ is more unified than it was ~~fool~~ following Tonkin. Third, Khanh will return to power in the government more cautiously, better protected --and significantly legally--than he did ~~it~~ after the Tonkin affair. Fourth, the ~~is~~ alternative to the military regime is that of a civilian government and ~~since~~ in past few months this alternative has been soundly discredited.

~~The big gamble is that Khanh will not be assassinated; the big question mark is whether the Buddhist political leaders will again openly oppose him through street demonstrations.~~

The big gamble is that Khanh will not be assassinated; the big question mark is whether the Buddhist political leaders will again openly oppose him through street demonstrations.

(More)

deeper

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Vietnam

South Viet Nam has been submerged in a lingering, unsolved political crisis since--and a little before--the fall of the Ngo Dinh Diem regime November, 1963. At that time, Viet Nam had a strong centralized government. The problem since has been to create another--but this time the power will rest in the hands of the military. When Diem was ~~over~~ overthrown by the armed forces, a committee-type government of ~~four~~ generals followed for 89 days. ~~These generals~~ ~~Even in late 1963, these~~ American officials in Saigon discussed with these generals of the first military junta ideas and plans for bombing North Vietnam. They were reportedly lukewarm to the idea--and were soon toppled from power by Khanh on Jan. 30, 1964.

Khanh's first months were ~~marked by~~ ~~ambiguity~~ ~~and~~ ~~indecision~~ ~~but~~ he attempted to smother these conditions following the August 5th Tonkin Gulf incident and the first bombing of North Viet Nam by American planes. Two days later he ~~is~~ instituted a virtual state of martial law, with curfew hours, censorship of local press and other necessary control measures in a state of emergency. Eleven days after Tonkin, he attempted to seize power by having himself ~~eloted~~ elected President with a strong-man constitution by ~~a~~ his 50-man military revolutionary council.

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But he hesitated ~~for some time~~ to name his new government, a ~~power~~ political power vacuum ensued, and soon street demonstrations and religious violence demanded first the abolition of the strong-man constitution and second the abolition of the "military dictatorship."

Again, he was indecisive--yet he was without the power to act decisively. His long-time friend and commander-in-chief of the Armed Forces, Maj. Gen. Tran Thien Khien refused to use the armed forces to crush the mobs; Khanh's political support--the Dai Viet political party--was organizing the street demonstrations along with Buddhist leaders calling for Khanh's downfall; Khanh's political rival and pro-Buddhist chief of state Maj. Gen. Duong Van Minh sapped Khanh's political support.

But most most important, American officials in Saigon were also in a state of immobility--for eight days during the crisis there was no contact between Ambassador Taylor and Khanh--and the American policy appeared to Western observers here simply to keep the lid on ~~it~~ until after the American election.

Khanh somewhat miraculously survived by agreeing to abolish the constitution and by forming a triumvirate with Khien and Minh. But the most important concession was to dissolve the military junta council and to give to a civilian High National Council the right of deciding the future constitution and the future members of the government. Two of the 17 members of the High National Council were suspected Communists; it raised the prospects that in time this a civilian ~~council~~ council would legalize a ~~non-~~

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Unlike after the Tonkin Gulf crisis, however, when Khanh seized the Presidency with lightning speed, he has ^{Now} moved slowly and cautiously to gain quietly more power and unity than he had when he entered office. ¹⁹⁶⁴⁻¹⁹⁶⁵ During the past six months, both Khien and Minh have been virtually exiled from the country; the political parties which had opposed him have been ~~completely leaderless~~ leaderless; the civilian alternative to the military solution has been soundly discredited; the working relationship between the Americans and ~~the~~ Khanh is closer than it was in August—but still not close enough. He has shown political ~~tact~~ tactical skill in out-maneuvering the Buddhist political leaders, who will be the troublemakers in the future during the anti-Communist war.

~~But while Khanh was re-gaining his political power, the Armed Forces in a slow~~

For the past months since falling from power, the objective of all ^{and crucial} ~~power~~ perhaps the most confused/political intrigue in history has been to re-establish the political power of the anti-Communist armed forces (instead of the civilians who could swing pro-neutralist) and then to bring them and Khanh into the government in such an inconspicuous fashion that they could not be toppled.

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This has been done by a coup d'etat in installments. The military ~~xxxx~~ council of 20-generals first overthrew on Dec. 20 the legal basis of the government--the 17-man High National Council. Then on Jan. 27 they overthrew the other two components of the government--the Chief of State and the Prime Minister. Then they re-instated the aged ~~Chief~~ Chief of State--but significantly his ~~former~~ legality is now based on that of the military junta and not the civilian council--
the military AIS
and named an acting Prime Minister who would become the caretaker until ~~the~~ a new provisional regime was named. This new provisional regime, named this week, is hence the 2¹/₂ ~~phase~~ installment of a three-phase coup d'etat. This government ~~is~~ has vaguely the structure of "Khanh's government without Khanh."

In the forthcoming ~~installment~~ half-installment of the coup d'etat, ~~there~~ a new ~~constitution~~ constitution along the lines of France's Fifth Republic would be ratified and on ~~March 21st~~ March 21st Khanh is ~~scheduled~~ legally elected by popularly elected National Congress legally elected to become Vietnam's Charles de Gaulle. ~~once~~, legally this laborious process of seizing power is ~~again~~ deemed mandatory to eliminate the reasons for future pro-neutralist, pro-Buddhist street demonstrations to again clamor for his downfall. As an additional protection, Khanh will be surrounded by three political ~~screen~~ screens--his own military junta, a ~~20-man~~ 20-man military-civilian council to solve religious question rather than to allow street demonstrations--and the National Congress of delegates.

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~~SECRET~~ government--10

Feb. 13, 1965

An index of Khanh's strength is that fact that his own
supporters are not deliberately minimizing it by spreading rumors
of a coup d'etat.

If American blunders and Khanh's indecisiveness were contributing factors to the political ~~situation~~ chaos following the Tonkin Gulf ~~bomb~~ bombing of North Viet Nam, the political climate before during and because of the ~~is~~ recent bombing of North Viet Nam is perhaps a mark of their subtle, quiet success. of the American officials in Saigon and of Khanh.

While there is certainly more reason for optimism now than following the Tonkin affair, there is ~~still~~ always the possibility of mistakes--but a mistake now would be more crucial than in August. American policymakers can still make blunders--by failing to coordinate with Vietnamese leaders. Khanh can still be indecisive--as he is this week in failing to name immediately a new provisional government. The Buddhist leadership which partially toppled Khanh in August can attempt to block his rise to the Presidency ~~or to attempt to topple him from power~~ and they undoubtedly will try this. And the Viet Cong Communists can--and will obviously attempt--to use political subversion to sabotage the government as well as military offic offensives in the provinces.

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Clearly, however, if after the Tonkin bombing raids the failure of Khanh and the Americans was a disaster, a failure after these recent raids would be the near-end for ~~at least~~ containing the Communists within South Viet Nam. And, clearly, as the bombing raids show American policymakers have decided that ~~substantial risks~~ ^{the} victory in South Viet Nam is worth substantial risks of escalation outside its borders.