

zczc sag

yy ljp

strategy 1 (normass/deepe)

(This is the fourth of a series on the mood, preparedness, ~~and~~ strategy and significance of Khe Sanh, often termed an American Dien Bien Phu, reminiscent of ~~the~~ the pivotal French defeat which began fourteen years ago last week on March 13).

KHE SANH ~~SANH~~, VIETNAM, March 20—The war in South Vietnam, like a~~g~~ giant yo-yo, is momentarily dangling ^{motionless} between two strategic military-political poles.

^{one}
~~The one~~ polar capsule is Khe Sanh.

The second is Saigon.

==more reuter

zozg sag

yy ljp

strategy 2 (normass/deepe)

Khe Sanh is the north pole of the war. It is an all-foreign pole, Americans versus North Vietnamese, with their respective Southern allies playing ~~insignificant~~ secondary, if not insignificant roles. It is the all-military pole of the war, a clean-cut black-and-white war, with a mini-magnet line of barbed wire along the Marine perimeter etching out the demarcation line between the two hues. It is the People's war without the people; the local population, always scant in numbers, have having since voyaged to their graves or to refugee camps.

--more reuter

2020 sag

yy ljp

strateg~~y~~ (normass/deepe)

SAIGON ~~is~~ the south pole of the war. It is an all-Vietnamese pole, predominantly Southern in character, with the ~~respective~~ American and North Vietnamese allies of the respective sides ~~and~~ playing secondary, ~~though~~ supporting roles. It is the grey war, with the full coloration of political, economic, social and cultural factors mixing with ~~the~~ battlefield blood. It is ^{HN} ~~the~~ All-People's War, a total war, in which no ^{VIETNAMESE} one is spared some measure of the ~~war's~~ fury.

--more reuter

zczo sag

yy ljp

strategy 4 (normass/deepe)

Which way will the yo-yo swing? Clearly, the Communists hold the strategic initiation determining the yo-yo's direction. When will it be set in motion? The strategic timetable of the war lies in Communist hands, a fact sensed in the slang of lol lowly Marine privates here when they say, "We've got to stop Charlie's clock."

This present moment, with time and motion temporarily frozen, appears to be simply a critical interlude before the yo-yo swings and an historic flood assails this tiny country.

--more reuter

zczc sag

yg LJP

strategy 5 (normass/deepe)

For the Communists, Khe Sanh is primarily, if not singularly significant in political terms--American political terms. It is important to him the Communists only as a means to influence to their advantage American public opinion--soon to be expressed at the ballot box--to mold manipulate in some manner a more soft-line stance by the two American political parties in their platforms or selection of candidates. The whole political significance of Khe Sanh for the Communists is somehow to attempt to weaken, if not to shatter, the American will to continue prosecuting the war against them. Hence, the time Communist timetable, if their yo-yo swings north, could not have been in January, which General William Westmoreland predicted, ~~for~~ for the critical political ferment had not begun in the United States. Not is the battle of Khe Sanh likely to be imminent, ~~as~~ as has been subsequently predicted. The most opportune time for the Communist to attempt an American defeat at Khe Sanh, with its resounding political backlash, would be sometime between the summer conf party nominating conventions and then election in November. If ~~he~~ the Communists wait to swing their yo-yo at that time, they, monsoon rains will be swinging also be swinging in their v favor over Khe Sanh, bringing them rain clouds and more military advantages.

- more reuter

zozc & sag

yy ljp

strategy 6 (normass/deepe)

But, Khe Sanh would have little political value for the Communists in the all-Vietnamese war in Saigon; it will would at best have only a fractional impact of their Tet offensive into the city itself. Certainly, ~~the~~ ~~Communist~~ ~~invasion~~ ~~of~~ ~~Khe~~ ~~Sanh~~ ~~if~~ ~~Khe~~ ~~Sanh~~ ~~fell~~ ~~to~~ ~~the~~ ~~Communists~~, the Vietnamese government in Saigon would not fall, and would be barely be rocked by it. The direct explosive repercussions of an American defeat would almost certainly be cushioned in the all-Vietnamese political arena by censorship of newspapers and of television newsreels. The coverage of the news coverage of the battle of Khe Sanh will have far greater distribution, vividness and impact in America than in South Vietnam itself.

Khe Sanh is a military irrelevancy to the Communists. The little Marine base has not impeded the Communist invasion into South Vietnam. ~~In~~ In fact, Communist tanks and trucks are seen streaming into the outer Khe Sanh perimeter--with their lights on at night. In strictly military terms, for the Communists to inflict a total defeat on the 6,000 Marines of Khe Sanh, even at very low cost to themselves, would be largely meaningless--as long as the American government and public continued to support the war and would send in 6,000 replacements. ~~To win a tactical battle in Khe Sanh does not mean the Communists will have won the war; but it may mean for them they could significantly erode the American America's anti-Communist~~

zczc sag

yy ljp

strategy 7 7 (normess/deepe)

In short, the ~~politic~~ political purpose of Khe Sanh rests on the assumption the Communist war aim is to negotiate ~~with the maximum of their demands~~ basically, but not entirely, on their terms, ^{that} that they would prefer to negotiate with the most dovish ^{future} American President who would yield to the maximum of their demands.

But, ~~at the south pole~~ at the south pole, things are different.

If the Communists w swing the direction of the war into the urban centers, of which Saigon is decisive, their war aim is victory--a decisive victory, but not a total one. It would b mean they would ~~make their military thrust at~~ make their military thrust at all-Vietnamese targets, designed to procure military victories which would create a political tornado among the Vietnamese population, the Vietnamese government and army. ~~by~~ Rather inconspicuously, the Communists have ^{HP} ~~one~~ a chip-by-chip basis been overrunning Vietnamese government outposts, seeking accommodation of neutralization of isolated units, creating divisions among the members of the Vietnamese government and army. The most sensitive military targets in this area are the heavily populated ~~Vie~~ provinces in the Mekong Delta south of Saigon, in which transport, communication, trade in foodstuffs ~~war~~ and eventually even provincial capitals would be controle controlled by them. The objective is to would be to suffocate Saigon,

zczo sag

yy ljp

strategy 8 (normass/deepe)

As an attempt to counter this ~~moment~~ Communist option,
the Allied have ^{launched} the biggest tactical offensive of the war--
totalling 52 battalions--in the Saigon area. ^{BUT} ~~From the Allied~~
~~viewpoint~~ this military show of strength ^{has thus far} ~~is already producing~~
~~thus far~~ a inconclusive minimal damage to the Communists--and it has failed to
galvanize the anti-Communist ^{morale} ~~spirit~~ of the ~~Sag~~ Saigonese.

--more reuter

zcze sag

yy ljp

strategy 9 (normass/deepe)

Before the pivotal battle of Khe Sanh, or of Saigo
Saigon--whichever they choose the Communists choose--there may be miniatures
of these contests in other places. There may be miniature Khe Sanh-type
confrontations between North Vietnamese and American units in the
jungled hills around Dak To or D-Zone; there maybe Communist battles
offensives into other urban centers, such as Hue, Quang Tri, Kontum
or Ban Me Thuot. But, these would ~~significa~~ significant only ~~in the~~
as a part of the ~~process~~ of political attrition. At this time, the
ultimate decisive battlegrounds now appear to be Khe Sanh, because
the American command has propagandized its significance, and ~~Saigon~~
the capital of Saigon.

--more reuter

2020 88g

yy ljp

strategy 10 (normass/deepe)

Against this setting, General Westmoreland's strategic miscalculation ~~is~~ acquires an added meaning. In January, his prediction and conviction that the Communists would attack Khe Sanh only served as a diversion for the Communists to move into the cities. At that time, the strategic importance of Khe Sanh rested on two arguments that have since lost their significance and substance: that Khe Sanh, sitting astride five invasion routes from North Vietnam and Laos, could somehow curtail Communist infiltration; but currently the Communists appear to be invading faster with more supplies around Khe Sanh than ever before. The second argument was that Khe Sanh ~~was the end~~ of the mountainous end of the American line of defense running along the demilitarized zone. "If we don't fight them in Khe Sanh, we'll be fighting the Communists in Hue and ¹⁰Quang Tri," American officials argued. But the Communists have already fought in Hue and Quang Tri once-- and are in a position to do so again. In short, the American DMZ line is suspect suspended in a vacuum--with an open end on the Laotian flank.

--more reuter

2020 sag

yy ljp

strategy 11 (normass/deepe)

Now, in a second strategic gamble, General Westmoreland has already rushed two more ~~innumerable~~ U. S. Army divisions ^{towards} to prepare for predicted Communist offensives around the north pole. Clearly, General ~~E~~^W Westmoreland wants at a minimum, to prevent an disastrous American defeat in the north, which could propel adverse political ~~repercussions~~ ^{repercussions} into the American political ~~area~~; at best, he'd like to prev acquire an American victory which would reinforce the election scene. But, the result of this gamble has been to siphon off ~~America t~~ American troops' strength from the provinces further south.

But, what if, in this tropical country, the Communists swing their ~~yo-yo~~ ^{yo-yo} towards the south pole.

~~end reuter~~
~~XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX~~

(Hank: have jst just received your cable on preparedness. I'm really sorry I over-wrote it so much and I'll ~~downwind~~ promise to cut ~~down~~ words in the future. Regards Bev).

== End Report ==