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superescalation--1

june 24, 1965

SAIGON--If the Hanoi regime refuses to negotiate a political settlement for peace within South Vietnam, a crushing long-term dilemma facing free world policymakers would be whether or not to bomb the Chinese Communist atomic bomb plants.

For, unless the Hanoi regime, plus the Communist-led National Liberation Front within South Vietnam, prepare to negotiate by the end of ~~monsoon~~ monsoon rainy season in September, a ~~probably alternative~~ probable policy alternative is "super-escalation"--a bigger regional war--which would ultimately ~~lead to a~~ dramatic, violent confrontation between America and her allies and Communist China.

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An additional ~~factor~~² behind-the-scenes factor in the "super-escalation" is the apparently mounting pressure from the "hawks" within the Pentagon, plus hardening attitude of Chinese Nationalist and South Vietnamese generals that the end of ~~the~~ the monsoon rainy season, or ~~soon shortly~~^{the months} thereafter, offers the "now or never--all or nothing" time to bomb ~~the~~² Communist China, its atomic bomb plants and its economic means of production which gives ~~them~~ it the capability of producing the nuclear devices.

The difference between this "bigger regional war," which would involve a number of Asian countries, and a world war depends on whether or not the Soviet Union and America's European allies become involved.

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According to high-placed sources, if the Hanoi regime does not negotiate this fall, high-ranking Chinese Nationalist military officers have urged, and offered, to use Chinese Nationalist ground troops either for an invasion of ~~the~~ ² Hainan Island, which lies in the Gulf of Tonkin off the coast of North Viet Nam, or a direct frontal attack on the mainland. ~~They have also been told that the~~ While the Chinese Nationalist armed forces totals 600,000 men--the second largest number in Asia--such invasions would require logistical and other support from the United States, which ~~they have~~ ^{HAS} ^{BEEN} already requested. So far, they have been told "that's not the way America does things," according to one reliable source. ~~Higher~~ Chinese Nationalist officials have also reportedly, on good authority, asked that either America bombs the Chinese Communist atomic bomb plants, or else that the United States gives ^{CHINESE NATIONALISTS the} ~~the means to do so~~ military means to do so.

Other reliable sources in Saigon indicate that if Hanoi refuses to negotiate by fall, the most immediate form of escalation will be not only more American airstrikes nearer to Hanoi and the Chinese Communist border frontiers, but may also include a two-pronged ^{NORTH VIETNAM BY} ~~ground~~ ^{Joint} invasion of ~~American~~ troops, perhaps with other Asian troops, with one wave invading from the sea and the second invading from the Mekong ^{river} ~~Delta~~ regions of Thailand, forming one giant pincher movement

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Following this phase of escalation, the next stage would be China itself. The leaking of these possible plans to Western newsmen by official sources were considered intended to ~~establish~~ create a political threat for the Hanoi and Peking regimes to consider-- much like ~~but~~ the official discussions about bombing North Vietnam were publicly aired one year before the actual bombings took place.

These sources imply that without negotiations the choice facing America and American-backed South Viet Nam is clearly either a ~~political defeat~~ political-military defeat or a bigger war, and that clearly a bigger war is the lesser ~~evil~~ and more acceptable of the two evils.

A third alternative--a last-chance attempt for total victory within ~~the~~ South Vietnam ~~is~~ by implementing a dramatic political, economic, social ^{MILITARY} program after securing selected areas--is still talked of by Western diplomats in Saigon, but seems to have little support ~~within~~ ^{HERE.} within the American mission ~~in Saigon.~~ Vice President Hubert Humphrey briefly mentioned this alternative in a recent speech, which may indicate new thinking along these lines at the highest levels of the Administration. Part of this program, as seen from Saigon diplomats, would entail using President Johnson's \$2 billion economic development program as a means to victory rather than as a reward ~~for negotiations~~ for Hanoi to negotiate.

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To analyze future alternatives in Vietnam,

One of the most difficult and most critical basic judgments to be made is the extent of the Sino-Soviet split. According to reliable sources, ~~Washington~~ some officials in Washington regard the split as irreparable and ~~bound to increase~~ ^{LIKELY} in its intensity and depth. Hence, an extension of this line of reasoning is that ~~an~~ increase in the Moscow presence in Hanoi would be a leveling counter-balance to the militant pro-Peking line, that Moscow would be a favorable, though perhaps marginal, pro-negotiating influence on the Hanoi regime. Hence, the Russian missile sites outside of Hanoi should not be bombed--before the missiles are placed in them. According to reliable sources, the Russians "are not rushing" to install the missiles, ~~which indicates that it is~~ that leads some officials to believe they are training North Vietnamese technicians to man the missiles, rather than to bring in Soviet experts.

"Officials in Washington breathed a sigh of relief when they learned ^{ABOUT} the Russian missile ~~sight~~ sites and bombers" one reliable source indicated.

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Anti-Communist Vietnamese sources, however, virtually laugh at this viewpoint, stating that there is no difference in strategy between Moscow and Peking regarding Vietnam specifically and subversive warfare in general, but only a difference in tactics. These sources believe the Soviet missile sites should be bombed ~~immedi~~ immediately, fearing that the Russians will install--not the ~~a~~ defensive surface-to-air missiles as Washington has suggested--but instead will clandestinely slip in offensive intercontinten inter-continental ballistic missiles, which could be used for political blackmail against Hong Kong, Singapore, Manila or Saigon.

"There's not difference between Moscow and Peking about Vietnam--except in tactics," one anti-Communist Vietnamese general~~x~~ explained. The Moscow line is to win Vietnam at the conference table, the Peking line is to win it on the battlefield, thus giving America a massive defeat. It's simply a question of dying fast or dying slow--but it's still the end of Viet Nam."