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april 5, 1965

SAIGON--The fate of Asia, if not the world, appears to rest on the decisions of a wispy-bearded man who speaks fluent ~~Engoi~~ English and ~~ex~~ smokes American cigarettes.

He is the most senior, prestigious leader of the international Communist movement--he was a Bolshevik before ^{RUSSIA'S} ~~Joseph stalin~~ Stalin and a card-carrying Party member before China's Mao-Tse-Tung.

His name is Ho Chi Minh, the leader of North Viet Nam.

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Uncle Ho--as even the anti-Communist South Vietnamese nationalists call him--is faced with a double confrontation: the confrontation with the ~~mightiest~~ ^{AMERICA,} mightiest airpower of ~~the world,~~ plus the visible Moscow-Peking conflicts within his own Communist world.

The escalation of the American-South Vietnamese airstrikes against north Vietnam has itself been dramatically ~~an~~ escalated into a "new phase"--as American officials here call it--~~and~~ ² the question is how many phases lie before the world in the future.

The answer to that question will be made by Uncle Ho--to ~~define~~ ² define the limits of the escalation of the American airstrikes against North Viet Nam.

Will ~~Uncle~~ ² Uncle Ho "invite" Chinese Communist armies to sweep across his country and invade South Vietnam ~~and~~ ^{OR ALL} Southeast Asia from the South China Sea to Burma? Will ~~x~~ Uncle Ho accept Soviet military defensive missiles and aircraft--with the strings the Russians will attach?

Uncle Ho's principal dilemma at this point is not whether to accept the Russian defensive military air aid to neutralize American airpower--Ho is reportedly eager to receive this aid, and is ~~in fact~~ ^{IN FACT} expecting it. The most carefully followed developments by intelligence officers in Saigon and by American aerial reconnaissance pilots is whether ~~this~~ ^{these} Russian missiles have arrived yet.

Ho's dilemma is whether he will accept the ~~R~~ Soviet aid on the Russian--and American terms--to negotiate, ² tactic tacitly or openly, a peaceful solution which somewhat preserves, at least on the surface, the independence and integrity of anti-Communist South Viet Nam.

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Officially, the Russian ~~terms~~ pre-conditions for a negotiated settlement are for the withdrawal of American troops and military advisors from South Viet Nam. Unofficially, however, the Russian pre-condition for negotiation ^{OF PEACE} ~~starts~~ was ~~for them to stop bombing~~ that the Americans stop bombing North Vietnam.

Reliable sources here indicate that the short-term American strategy is to continue bombing military installations--and ~~transportation~~ ^{BEGUN} means of transportation and ~~of~~ communication, which they have since ^{BEGUN} in recent days, ^{THEIR} them to stop briefly until the North Vietnamese re-consider ^{THEIR} its own position. ² If the Hanoi regime still is unwilling to negotiate, then the Americans airstrikes would be directed at Uncle Ho's industrial bases, most of which lie in the fertile Red River Delta near Hanoi.

Few reliable political sources expect Hanoi to agree, ² tacitly or openly, to any negotiated settlement or compromise until the Russian defensive ² ~~and~~ military aid has been installed in North Viet Nam.

High-ranking American military ~~and~~ commanders and political experts also believe that the Russians will send in ~~in~~ defensive missiles.

"Hanoi can't negotiate now," one traveler from Hanoi explained. "They are now in a weak position and have no bargaining power at all. They will be in a much better bargaining position when the Russian ~~in~~ defensive ² ~~and~~ missiles and airplanes arrive.

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"Also Hanoi regime isn't clear about what American intentions really are," the traveler from North Viet Nam reported. "What economic advantage would Hanoi get out of this peace? Could they still get the ~~and~~ ² achieve their eventual target, which is ~~reunified~~ reunification of North and South Viet Nam? Besides Hanoi believes its own propaganda and think the through Buddhist demonstrations, political chaos they will ^{Soon} have a government in Saigon that is favorable to ~~both~~ their position."

The sending of Soviet defensive military aid to North Viet Nam-- which is considered "a strategic decision for the Russians"--- would entail not only ground-to-air defensive missiles, but more important super-sonic jet aircraft armed with air-to-air defensive missiles.

The Soviets have reportedly ~~send~~ ^{sent} given to Indonesia and to India the M super-sonic MIG-21 jet, ~~and~~ ² armed with homing missiles, "but ~~are~~ ² are now looking silly if they don't give these jets to a fellow socialist country," a traveler from Hanoi reported.

"Hanoi can't protect North Viet Nam with a million missiles," one reliable source indicated. "It takes a long time to set up missiles--and missiles must have a good radar and communications network to spot the American planes. The Americans can knock out these missiles before they ever become operative--and that's the significance of the American raids on radar installations and communication networks."

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"To have a really ~~meaningful~~ meaningful ~~air~~ air defense system, the Russians must give Hanoi jet-fighter aircraft with homing missiles on it," the source continued. "It's surprising if the Russians are not already trying to do something like this."

In the initial confrontation between American jet-fighters and Communist aircraft Sunday, the MIG-15's and MIG-17's ^{WERE} ~~designed~~ Russian aircraft of Korean War vintage, but which the Chinese Communists are also capable of producing. The planes carried Vietn North Vietnamese aircraft markings, according to American Air Force officials.

The North Vietnamese air force strength, according to recent figures, numbers about 50 planes, none of which are capable of flying to and bombing Saigon. However, Vietnamese intelligence sources indicate that several thousand North Vietnamese pilots have during the past ten years been sent to the Soviet Union for jet-flight training. These pilots could be ~~sent to~~ returned to North Vietnam ~~to~~ to fly either Soviet or Chinese Communist-made jets aircraft.

Some South Vietnamese intelligence sources also indicate these trained pilots may have been taught to operate missiles.

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"Hanoi is balancing between Russia and China," one reliable source indicated. "Hanoi is expecting ~~thix~~ the Soviets to give them this crucial defense equipment--obviously the Russians must give Hanoi more than ideology."

"At this point, China won't come into the conflict," the source continued. "~~Hanoi will break~~ "The point in which Hanoi would break and ask the Chinese to come in is when Hanoi has nothing else to lose--if their industry and their civilians are bombed. Then Ho Chi Minh would be willing to sacrifice the ruination of his country--and the independence of the North Vietnamese leaders. But as long as the American bombing is ~~for~~ against military targets, it's not so important. The North Vietnamese traditionally have a ^{Suspicious} hatred of the Chinese--even ^{CHINESE} of the same political color."

Other reliable sources indicate that Hanoi has ~~little~~ need for ~~ground forces~~ ^{air} defenses against American airpower, but has little need for ground forces at this point. ~~They~~ Some sources indicate that 200,000 Chinese Communists troops are based in the northern provinces of North Viet Nam, bordering China. Other sources deny this. There is, however, agreement that these Chinese troops have not moved southward towards Hanoi region.

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"The Hanoi regime does not need Chinese troops within North Vietnam--
one reliable source indicated. "And ~~is~~ the North Vietnamese
armed forces is 250,000 men--which is the same size as the regular
South Vietnamese army. ~~is~~ These North Vietnamese have been
"semi-invading" South Vietnam for the past year--so they can continue
to use their own army rather than the Chinese for this in the future."