

Adds to Barrage on Gavin

# Gen. Taylor Raps 'Holding Strategy'

Gen. Maxwell D. Taylor added his firepower last night to the critical Administration barrage against the strategy of defensive enclaves for South Vietnam advocated by his one-time deputy, Lt. Gen. James M. Gavin.

In a speech in New York, the former U.S. envoy to Saigon said a withdrawal to coastal enclaves would mean the acceptance of a crushing defeat of international proportions when there is no reason for such capitulation."

Although he did not mention Gavin, who was his deputy when Taylor was Army chief of staff in the 1950s, Taylor pointedly said he knew of no officer with "current" responsibility who shared the enclave theory. This was expressed by Gavin in the February issue of Harper's Magazine.

Gavin's article has already been publicly attacked by the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Gen. Earle G. Wheeler, and by the Marine Corps commandant, Gen. Wallace M. Greene Jr., as being militarily unsound.

Here is an extract from Taylor's speech.

Several critics of our present strategy in South Vietnam have come out in support of a "holding strategy" calling for a permanent cessation of the bombing of targets in North Vietnam, a halt to further United States reinforcements, a withdrawal of United States ground forces to enclaves along the coast and a renewal of efforts to find a peaceful solution in the United Nations or at Geneva.

The advantages claimed for a "holding strategy" are that it would permit us to limit our troop commitments while retaining a military presence in comparative safety along the coast of South Vietnam and would avoid the danger of escalation into a war with China fought in the wrong part of Asia—Manchuria being regarded as a better theater of operations for the application of military force. Once established in these en-

claves, we would then hope to negotiate a settlement with our communist adversaries.

The disadvantages of such a course of action seem so serious as to make a "holding strategy" equivalent to the acceptance of a crushing defeat of international proportions when there is no reason for such a capitulation. It suggests fleeing like wicket "when no man pursueth." Among other things, it would result in the abandonment of many of the Vietnamese people whom we have promised to defend, except those lucky enough to live within the range of the guns of our coastal enclaves. The effect of such a retreat on the morale of our proud United States forces (who have no doubt at all of their ability to cope with the Vietcong) and on the attitude of our South Vietnamese allies with whom we are now linked in the comradeship of the common battlefield would be disastrous. Whether any Vietnamese government could survive such conduct by its American ally or, if it survived, whether it would resist the urge to seek an accommodation with the Vietcong while time remained is hard to predict. It seems quite certain, however, that no other Asian country on the Chinese periphery—Malaya, Thailand or the Philippines for example—would ever feel inclined to accept United States forces

on their soil—indeed, throughout the world, reliance on us as an all-weather friend and protector would rapidly disappear with disturbing effects on every alliance to which we belong.

What would constitute a great defeat for us would be an equally great victory for Hanoi-Peking and a vast accession to the Communist

prestige. In fleeing a confrontation with China in Southeast Asia, we would soon find that the line of contact advanced as we withdrew. The "war of liberation" would have been vindicated as the sure-fire formula for successful Communist expansion and we could expect to meet it again and again in Asia, Africa and Latin America just as the Communist leaders have been predicting. This country can not escape its destiny as the champion of the free world—there is no running away from it. The impulse to withdraw our troops into safe enclaves in South Vietnam has much in common with the yearning for safety behind defenses at our coastlines and is equally illusory.

As to the possibility of acceptable negotiations following the adoption of a "holding strategy," it is difficult to find a glimmer of hope. It is hard enough to negotiate with Communists from a position of strength. To accept defeat prior to negotiations and then expect to leave the table with something more than dishonor seems beyond the hope that reasonable men may entertain. If our negotiators refused to accept dishonorable terms, we would have no recourse under the "holding strategy" but to ask our troops to sweat indefinitely in their tropical enclaves, unable to use either their vaunted mobility or their modern fire power—all out of concern for the consequences of resisting the aggression of one small Communist Asian country.

I would not like to be the commander of American troops with such a mission. While in such a situation the principal danger of our forces would be dry rot, it is not impossible that they might be overrun on occasion, particularly if the South Vietnamese forces defeated in numbers to the Vietcong as would be entirely possible under the circumstances. It is interesting to reflect that the French once tried out this defensive enclave concept at a place called Dienbienphu and the result should not encourage us to imitation.

Although we should always have concern over a possible escalation of the war, we should bear in mind that there are many

reasons why Hanoi and Peking should wish to avoid any widening of the conflict. Apart from the obvious dangers arising from the military consequences of a head-on collision with us, both governments have important considerations which must tend to dampen any eagerness for escalation. To Hanoi, China is the traditional, distrusted enemy and the Vietnamese leaders will go far to avoid creating any situation which might result in their having to accept such massive aid from Peking as to mortgage the independence of their country. In the meantime, they recognize and can appraise Peking's obvious readiness to fight to the last North Vietnamese and will hardly want matters to escalate that far.

Peking likewise has good reasons to want to limit the war. After proclaiming widely that a "war of liberation" is the safe way to expand communism without danger, a serious military confrontation with the United States in Vietnam would, at a minimum, invalidate this dogma, demonstrate the superior virtue of the Russian formula of "peaceful coexistence" and convict the Chinese leaders of a serious blunder which their Soviet rivals could enjoy. The Chinese are also aware of the losses which they would suffer in such a confrontation and must give serious thought to the effect such losses would have on their power position in relation to their Moscow competitors.

Thus, we see that both of our adversaries have their problems—it is important not to lose sight of them in concentrating solely on our own.