

Turning on the Heat in Vietnam

By MARK W. CLARK

LELAND, Mich.—In two previous Vietnam articles on this page, I discussed the options open to President Nixon. Briefly they were: (1) get out of Vietnam, (2) continue stalemate, (3) escalate the war, (4) Vietnamization. After a visit to Vietnam, I discussed Mr. Nixon's adoption of the Vietnamization program. It has succeeded exceptionally well, to the extent that its objective is about to be reached with withdrawal of practically all U.S. ground forces from Vietnam and the assumption of their responsibilities by the South Vietnamese.

In this connection it must be remembered that we have kept in Korea, since I signed the armistice in 1953, approximately 50,000 U.S. troops. The maintenance of this force has been a wise investment and given moral support to South Korea, which in turn has become a staunch ally. We have maintained air and naval units at nearby bases, outside of Korea, in order to support South Korea should North Korea again become the aggressor.

We will find it prudent to do the same with respect to Vietnam, once an armistice has been established. I find important similarities between

the Korean War and the one we are now fighting in Vietnam: first, we are fighting the same ruthless enemy; second, the enemy is the aggressor in both cases; third, he conforms to none of the recognized international rules of warfare, both as to the killing of innocent civilians and the treatment of prisoners of war; fourth, we learned from fighting him in Korea that he respects strength and forceful action and despises and exploits weakness and appeasement; fifth, when he is punished and finds he cannot obtain the battle objectives he has set for himself, he is quick to run to the conference, where he has found from experience he can usually get more concessions through diplomatic channels.

From an examination of these enemy characteristics, perhaps a direction sign is pointing the course of action the United States should now take in this twilight period following the disengagement of our ground combat forces in Vietnam and the eventual signing of an armistice.

The message I got in Korea in 1953 when confronted with a similar situation was unmistakable to me. It said: "Turn on the heat, let the despicable enemy have it." And we did. I broke off negotiations at Panmunjom where

we had been insulted daily and listened to lies and Communist propaganda for months on end.

We stepped up the air and naval bombardment, hitting, as a first step, the great Suho hydroelectric complex on the Yalu River which provided much of the power to the Communist war machine in Manchuria. We attacked military targets carefully concealed by the enemy in the capital of Pyongyang and elsewhere that were contributing to the capacity of the enemy to maintain his soldiers in battle.

It didn't take Kim Il Sung, the North Korean boss, long to get the message too. After almost six months since we walked out at Panmunjom I received a message from him in the middle of the night, proposing a resumption of full-dress truce talks to negotiate the exchange of sick and wounded prisoners of war. This was the beginning of the end. We soon got the armistice, and I recorded this view: "I believe we could have obtained better truce terms quicker, shortened the war, and saved lives if we had got tough faster."

Well we didn't get tough fast enough in Vietnam. Before President Nixon took office, the bombing was on one day and off the next, some politicians and diplomats believed

there was political mileage in running the war with a "no-win policy." President Nixon showed great courage in ordering the bombing of North Vietnam and in closing the port of Haiphong and stopping the flow of war supplies to the enemy.

The North Vietnamese are hurting; now is the time to "turn on the heat" and destroy the targets contributing to their war effort just as we did to bring the Germans to unconditional surrender in World War II. Let the North Vietnam leaders understand the price tag on an armistice will not be cheaper after Election Day, in spite of how self-appointed, unrepresentative emissaries from America to Hanoi may misinform them.

The enemy leaders must further be made to understand that the decision on a truce is theirs and if they hold out for softer terms from a new Administration, they can expect for the next three months to take unprecedented punishment from our air and naval power; and that after Nov. 8 they probably will have the same courageous President to deal with.

Gen. Mark W. Clark, Ret., was U.S. High Commissioner for Austria and the commander who signed the Korean armistice.