

By Robert Thompson

LONDON—There are two fashionable myths about the current North Vietnamese offensive in South Vietnam—that the South has more men and more guns than the North, and that the North is more highly motivated than the South.

Not only are the Russian guns far better than the American guns, but because the South is defending known fixed positions, towns and installations, the North Vietnamese Army's artillery cannot miss. The South Vietnamese Army in reply can fire thousands of rounds without being certain of hitting anything.

Moreover, it is estimated that the North has twenty months' supply of ammunition at an intensive combat rate whereas, because of Congress, the South has enough for only a few weeks.

In addition to superior firepower, the North Vietnamese Army, by rapidly deploying six reserve divisions to the two northern regions, also achieved overwhelming numerical superiority at the point of attack.

The superior morale of the North Vietnamese Army stems not from motivation but from the fact that it holds the strategic initiative. Like all Soviet clients, Hanoi is in a can-win, can't-lose position and, since the Paris Agreement, has not had to spend either manpower or resources on defense, whereas the South has had to string out its forces and its limited ammunition stocks down the whole length of the country and adopt a solely defensive posture.

Insofar as motivation is a factor, it is not the case that the other side got the Prussians while we got the Bavarians but rather that the South Vietnamese were unlucky enough to get the Americans while the North got the Russians!

Blessed also are the excuse-makers for they have destroyed the credibility of the United States. It is, so they say, only a corrupt, repressive regime in Saigon. But in that case why are the poor people of Vietnam fleeing yet again from the Communists? Millions are voting with their feet. What has happened to all those lovely newspaper stories that the refugees fled only from American bombing? Who, as this great tragedy unfolds, will be outraged by the slaughter?

They also say that it would be wrong to pour good money after bad. That line has already cost us the 1973 Arab-Israeli war and the energy crisis. Now, for the sake of \$1 billion or \$2-billion it will cost the United States \$50 billion to \$100 billion more annually in defense costs if credibility is to be restored.

Incidentally, will many remember all those fascinating newspaper articles on what the \$25 billion a year to be saved from the Vietnam war could be spent on? Where has it gone?

Israel, having been compelled, on the Soviet Union's demand, to accept a cease-fire, has been asked to make further concessions vital to her security in return for an American guarantee. But a guarantee has only one meaning—the willingness to spill blood. It is hardly surprising that Secretary of State Kissinger's attempts at a settlement have failed. Israel realizes that an American President's guarantee is worthless. After all, five of them, from Dwight D. Eisenhower to Gerald R. Ford, pledged support for Vietnam.

With the southern flank of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization crumbling from the Bosphorus to the Azores, both Europe and the moderate rulers of the Middle East are threatened. The madmen and extremists have been let loose and King Faisal has already gone.

Meanwhile, through an illusory détente, the Soviet Union has neutralized the United States for two certain future events: the death of Mao Tse-tung and the death of Marshal Tito. If either China or Yugoslavia can be coerced back into the Moscow fold, the Soviet

Union will further strengthen the security of its base and the can-win, can't-lose strategic initiative both for itself and its allies.

The American retreat before Moscow, like that of Napoleon, is beginning to litter the route of corpses. Henry A. Kissinger has been vainly fighting a rear-guard action with no army, no air force, no navy and no money.

The Administration can no longer conduct a credible American foreign policy. But, do not worry, a new foreign policy line has already been laid down by Congress: If you surrender, the killing will stop. It is a clean message, to the world, of the abject surrender of the United States.

Sir Robert Thompson, the British expert on guerrilla warfare, was an adviser to President Nixon on the war in Vietnam.