

(Nuclear weapons.)

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# Kriegspiel in Vietnam

"... the United States detonates a one-megaton weapon at 500,000 feet above Peking as a demonstration, together with limited attacks on selected military targets. Simultaneously the United States begins round-the-clock broadcasts and drops leaflets proclaiming that Chinese nuclear facilities and air defenses have been destroyed. 'Your leaders have led you to disaster. Nothing stands between the Chinese people and annihilation but the self-restraint of the United States.'"

—From "A Scenario" by Edmund O. Stillman in *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*.

See NYTimes aa Jan 71,  
"Saigon Plans Vast Peasant  
Shift," filed Indochina.

Reply by Edmund Stillman,  
this file 1 Mar 71.

By C. L. SULZBERGER

## FOREIGN AFFAIRS

PARIS—During recent weeks both the North Vietnamese and Chinese have hinted by discreet questioning some nervousness about the chances that the United States might introduce tactical nuclear weapons in Indochina. This is obviously part of the psychological warfare preceding possible offensives by both sides.

What set off these inquiries apparently was a report that massive evacuation of the civilian population in northern South Vietnam, a region implicitly menaced by current Communist military preparations, was either being planned by Saigon or was under way.

The theory is obviously that Washington would never dare face angry U.S. and world opinion by risking the death of large numbers of civilians in any area but that blast damage and collateral effects from tactical A-weapons could obviously be limited if a massive evacuation occurred ahead of time.

This kind of kriegspiel thinking is one of the more unpleasant features of contemporary intellectual life but exists in both Peking and Hanoi as well as Western capitals.

I cannot personally imagine any scenario bringing nuclear weapons into Indochina. Nevertheless, the dreadful logic adduced by worried Communist strategists, who perhaps plan another major offensive and speculate about the consequences, is exaggerated by misanalysis of U.S. studies.

An example of this sort is a paper called "Civilian Sanctuary and Target Avoidance Policy in Thermonuclear War" written by Edmund O. Stillman and published in "The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science." Stillman, European director of the Hudson Institute, is a consultant to the Defense Department and Atomic Energy Commission.

The purely theoretical circumstance Stillman adduces as an excuse for nuclearizing the Vietnam war runs as follows, "Unable to solve its dilemmas in South Vietnam and Cambodia, the United States invades North Vietnam with an amphibious force of four to five divisions.

"The intention is to seize the Hanoi-Haiphong area, driving the North Vietnamese Government from its capital and thereby destroying its prestige as a legitimate government in the North and as the sponsor of a 'winning' insurrection in the South.

"The invasion succeeds beyond expectations and the authority of the North Vietnamese Government begins to disintegrate. The Communist Chinese, led by a militant faction, intervene. As in Korea, the Chinese score important successes in the initial phase, and U.S.-South Vietnamese forces suffer major reverses."

Stillman's conjecture has Washington ponder alternative courses and ultimately detonate a one-megaton A-bomb nine miles above Peking for demonstration purposes while small nuclear attacks hit selected military targets. He theorizes about growing popular pressure against the Chinese regime, sapping the Communist part's authority.

At this point Stillman's apocalyptic vision goes: "The United States then announces the forthcoming destruction (within, say, 48 hours) of one of ten (named) cities simultaneously announcing sanctuary areas. The announcement of ten likely cities is intended to augment the quality of terror and to drive large segments of the population into motion, disrupting or contributing to the disruption of the governmental structure and authority.

"The announcement of sanctuary areas is intended both as a humanitarian measure and as an important contribution to U.S. peace of mind in the aftermath. In 48 hours the United States delivers a delayed-action warhead or bomb (set for 24 hours) in Mukden and simultaneously calls upon the Chinese people to overthrow the regime and save themselves. This attack is followed by similar attacks on three additional cities—Harbin, Changchow and Canton."

All this is improbable in the highest degree but, nevertheless, the mere existence of such theoretical papers clearly alarms Peking and Hanoi. Things being what they are, the U.S. Government would almost certainly be even more threatened by public rage than the Chinese or North Vietnamese Governments should the kind of fanciful strategy imagined by Stillman be used. Nevertheless, two factors — one known and one unknown might lie behind Communist inquiries on American intentions.

The belief that some kind of civilian evacuation might be underway in the northern province could look to Hanoi like premature withdrawal of civilians from an area where nuclear weapons may be employed. The unknown factor is the Communists' own intention. Are they planning another offensive now to check the mustering allied thrust or, ultimately, a massive Dienbienphu effort when American withdrawals pass a certain point?