

## The Vietnam War And the Campaign

A NEW LOW in fact-twisting has been achieved by the McGovern Democrats in their current all-out attempt to make the Vietnam war a major issue in the presidential campaign.

The drive has been two-pronged. One thrust is to convince the gullible that President Nixon muffed a golden opportunity for a peace settlement in 1969. The other is to sell the notion that the Republican Administration is acting barbarously in its resumed bombing of North Vietnam.

It turns out that the alleged peace opportunity was hardly an enemy offer, as inferred originally by Sargent Shriver, the Democratic vice presidential nominee. It was, instead, a general withdrawal of regular North Vietnamese forces from the south in October and early November of 1968 — a withdrawal the McGovern camp claims was a "signal" of enemy willingness to negotiate seriously.

If the withdrawal actually was a "signal," as the Democrats claim, it was a signal muffed not by Mr. Nixon but by the administration of their own President Johnson. He had some three months to act on it before the Nixon inauguration. The fact is, so far as State Department records show, there was nothing in the withdrawal to suggest anything except a desire by the enemy to reorganize and mount a new offensive.

WHAT IS MOST indefensible in the unfounded Democratic charge that President Nixon "blew" a chance for peace is Sen. McGovern's declaration in support of the Shriver charges. He said that instead of responding to the "signal," the "bombing was accelerated and the military attack was increased."

This is pure hogwash. The record shows there was no U.S. bombing of the north from October of 1968 to April of this year. It was resumed only because North Vietnam launched a ruthless mass invasion of the south with all the force it had been able to muster in over three years of no-bombing respite.

Former Attorney General Ramsey Clark, lead-off man in the Democrats' anti-bombing crusade, deserves only a footnote here. The fairness of his just-completed trip to North Vietnam is negated right off by the fact that it was made as a member of a Stockholm-based group called the "International Commission of Inquiry into U.S. War Crimes in Indochina."

He returned for mass TV interviews and his appearance this week before Sen. Kennedy's refugee committee. He will continue to sound off about how horrible U.S. bombing is so long as there is a microphone in front of him. And he will not say one word about why the bombing was resumed, or the devastation created in the south by the North Vietnamese invaders.

FACT TWISTING and one-sided, enemy-serving criticism of our retaliatory war effort may or may not muster votes. They do not change the record — which is that President Nixon has withdrawn all our ground combat troops from Vietnam. And that record is still being written.