

How Americans Felt Before 'Peace'

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With the reaching of a peace settlement with North Vietnam, four in ten Americans favor having the U.S. agree to help rebuild the cities of North Vietnam, while 51 per cent indicate opposition to such a proposal.

Although the weight of opinion is against helping to rebuild bomb-damaged cities in North Vietnam, such as Hanoi and Haiphong, the 40 per cent found to favor the proposal could be considered a high percentage in view of the fact that North Vietnam has been an enemy since the early 1960s.

Persons interviewed who have a college background favor, by a vote of 50 to 42 per cent, rebuilding North Vietnam's cities. Backing for the proposal was also recorded among young adults under 30 years of age, 49 to 44 per cent.

The latest Gallup survey was conducted after the massive bombing of North Vietnam cities in December and was completed just prior to President Nixon's announcement on January 15 that the U.S. was suspending American bombing and the mining and shelling of North Vietnam, an announcement which raised expectations of a peace settlement.

At the time of the survey, discouragement over the Vietnam situation was running deep. In addition, the President's popularity had declined to its lowest point in ten months.

Here are the specific findings from the survey:

- The proportion of Americans who thought it was a mistake to get involved in Vietnam was 61 per cent, matching the previous high, recorded in May 1971.

- Only three in ten (28 per cent) at the time of the survey rated as "good" the chances of reaching a peace settlement with North Vietnam during the next two months.

- Two persons in three (67 per cent) believed the administration was not telling the public all they should know about the Vietnam war, matching the figure recorded the last time the question was asked, in the spring of 1971.

- Americans at the time of the survey were evenly divided regarding the massive bombing of the cities of North Vietnam in December. Forty-six per cent expressed approval, with

many adding the qualifier that it is "unfortunate but necessary." Forty-five per cent expressed disapproval of the bombing.

- A slightly greater proportion said that this bombing would hurt rather than help the chances of reaching a peace settlement with North Vietnam. The ratio was 44 to 38 per cent.

- At the time of the survey, 44 per cent said they would oppose resuming the bombing of Hanoi and Haiphong if North Vietnam refused to agree to what the U.S. regards as reasonable peace terms, while about the same proportion, 42 per cent, indicated support for such a move.

- The proposal that Congress cut off all funds to carry on the war in Vietnam if a peace settlement has not been reached during the next two months was opposed by a slight margin of

the public, 48 to 42 per cent.

- At the time of the survey, 54 per cent of persons interviewed said they approved of the way Nixon was handling his job as President, down five percentage points from a survey conducted in early December (before the bombing of North Vietnam cities) and down a full ten points from a survey conducted immediately after Nixon's landslide victory in the November election.

- On the President's handling of the Vietnam situation, disapproval slightly outweighed approval, 47 to 43 per cent. This represented a serious decline in approval from the November post-election survey, when 59 per cent expressed approval, compared to 33 per cent who disapproved and 8 per cent who did not express an opinion.

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