Editorials

The Bombing and Its Consequences

THE STEPPING UP of the bombing in North Vietnam to a furious intensity, with no target barred and both Hanoi and Haiphong under fire, was a predictable response of the American military to the North Vietnamese offensive.

"It is difficult," said the London Daily Telegraph in a comment that offers some comfort for the White House, "to know what else Mr. Nixon could have done than to bomb North Vietnam where it really hurts."

THAT IS A STRAIGHT-AHEAD WAY of looking at the problem. Evidently the President has been convinced it is the right way by those who had the responsibility of giving maximum support to the Vietnamized forces of President Thieu. If, as Secretary of State Rogers told the Senate yesterday, the Nixon Administration "has no intention to permit South Vietnam to be taken over by force," the order for maximum bombing indeed should surprise no one.

And yet it has. Disbelief and revulsion have swept around the world and through our own country. It is clear there are widening consequences of these raids, and they are enough to cause the President concern as a political decision-maker.

The most obvious source of serious concern is yesterday's protest by the Soviets over four Russian ships having (they say) been hit by our bombers. This is the kind of unintended bombing that the United States has been fearful of for years. The misdirected bombs at Haiphong may even have landed on Mr. Nixon's plans for going to Moscow.

BUT ANOTHER CONSEQUENCE, potentially even more worrisome, is the despair and anguish that fill the hearts of millions of Americans, not just the young revolutionaries, the pacifists and conscientious objectors, the inveterate peace marchers, but the silent millions who know the war is wrong and that therefore any escalation and intensification of it must be wrong.