

North Vietnamese Begin to Demobilize From War Footing

By Jean Thoraval

Agence France-Presse

HANOI, Dec. 31—The inhabitants of the North Vietnamese capital have started to dismantle their large brick-and-earth air-raid shelters to use the building materials for reconstruction.

North Vietnam is greeting the new year with this and many other indications that it does not anticipate any return to a war footing.

The country is turning from war to peace with such confidence that it is even building a huge mausoleum for Ho Chi Minh, the legendary founder of North Vietnam. His body was carefully hidden for five years to keep it safe from American bombing raids.

For the first time in years, the national budget was published. During the Vietnamese war, the next year's budget was considered a state secret.

Reconstruction projects include the rebuilding of electric-power stations and the creation of new dams, construction of hotels and factories (several of which are being Western-financed) and a broad program for new schools with the aid of the United Nations Children's Emergency Fund.

Light anti-aircraft guns that used to be perched on rooftops in the capital have disappeared. In the suburbs, the heavy artillery has disappeared. Only the surface-to-air missile batteries remain visible, although in much fewer numbers than during the war.

Although there are still sporadic calls for "vigilance," the population appears to have been demobilized. The enthusiasm with which people are tearing apart the air-raid shelters suggests that they willingly accept different kind of mobilization for reconstruction.

Observers here point to such signs in answer to accu-

sations from Saigon that North Vietnam is mobilizing for war. The regular annual callup of conscripts for national service was apparently transformed into something else in reports from the south.

The dean of North Vietnamese political leaders, President Tong Duc Thang, 83, summed up what other leaders have been telling the people when he told the National Assembly last Saturday that 1975 "will be a year of great efforts."

Vice Premier Le Thanh Nghi, the member of the Political Bureau in charge of economic affairs, announced while presenting the 1975 economic plan that the gross national product must be increased next year by 19.6 per cent — a rate that is possible for a relatively small, dominantly agricultural economy to achieve starting from a low industrial base.

A few days before Christmas, Hanoi authorities, who have not been sparing in criticism over the past 12 months, seemed to be expressing their satisfaction in a public statement that the second half of the year was better than the first, "showing progress and worthwhile changes."

Even the official mood toward hostile propaganda from outside the country seems more relaxed. North Vietnamese authorities no longer take the trouble to deny reports of internal dissension here or in the Provisional Revolutionary Government in South Vietnam.

A North Vietnamese official recently handed me the text of a broadcast from Saigon's Radio Vietnam Fatherland which had twisted the meaning of one of my dispatches from Hanoi.

He merely commented off-handedly, "Here you are, another load of tripe."