

'I Support the President'

By JOHN G. TOWER

WASHINGTON—A substantial furor has been generated over the increase in American bombing in Indochina. But the bombing is simply the appropriate response to the blatant invasion of South Vietnam by the North Vietnamese on March 30. This latest escalation by the North Vietnamese is a major gamble in their strategy to dominate Indochina, for they stand to lose much more than they could possibly gain.

A look at what they might gain reveals their desperation. At the most they might take a provincial capital or two. But they could not hold them for long, certainly not permanently. Perhaps they had thought to overwhelm the South Vietnamese Army, but Saigon's performance has dashed that hope. "Hamlet Evaluation System" scores may go down, but in a very real sense pacification will increase because of the hatred stirred by the invasion in the hearts of the refugees. Clearly, then, the North Vietnamese have very little to gain by continuing their invasion.

While their profit from the invasion will not be great, the Communists will very likely lose a great deal. For the first time since Tet, 1968, they are massing for large operations. For the first time in the war, they are using conventional tactics including tanks and heavy artillery. This makes them vulnerable to close air support and artillery fire. This means also that more than ever they require a dependable line of supply. Interdiction bombing can interrupt that line and prevent those supplies from being used against the South Vietnamese that are protecting our withdrawing troops.

There has been some speculation about the effectiveness of the bombing. In the early part of the war the effectiveness of the bombing may not have been very high. This may have been so because (1) before 1969, the Communists had control of the countryside and could stockpile what ammunition and weapons eventually reached them, (2) the Communists had not yet alienated the rural population and so could depend upon them for food, and (3) the Communists used very little ammunition in their guerrilla hit-and-run tactics and therefore did not need a large amount of supplies to filter through United States bombing strikes. Under these conditions it would be understandable if the bombing did not substantially affect the guerrilla war.

I strongly support that bombing, both interdiction and close air support, as an essential ingredient to saving friendly lives while maximizing the losses of the North Vietnamese invaders.

I likewise support the President's recent initiative to resume the meetings in Paris. If it is determined that the North Vietnamese intend to use them simply as a propaganda forum, we should once again abstain from the meetings. But we should take this opportunity to discover why it is in recent weeks the North Vietnamese have been particularly insistent upon resuming the talks.

However, I must reject, out of hand, attempts by some members of the other side to tell Congress what to do in regard to the war. The war will not be negotiated directly between the Communists and the American Congress. And I would hope to see statements in the coming days from all the other members of Congress rejecting this attempt to make them puppets of the Hanoi regime.

The war has been a long and difficult experience for Americans. I can understand how the recent upsurge in

fighting could revive old schisms. But we should not deprive President Nixon of our support. He has led us out of the war, not into it, and he has reduced drastically American casualties while maintaining a firm position on North Vietnamese aggression. That kind of foresight and courage deserves the admiration of all Americans.

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