

North Vietnam Braces For Heavy U.S. Bombing

By Anthony Lewis
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Hanoi

North Vietnamese officials are telling diplomats and journalists that they expect heavier American bombing and other attacks and are prepared to meet them.

"The escalation has just begun," one official said. "Nixon can go on up other rungs of the ladder. Maybe this building (the Foreign Ministry) will cease to exist."

So far as foreigners can tell, the government is acting on the assumption that worse is ahead. For example, families whose children have been evacuated from Hanoi have been told to register them for school next September in country areas where they have gone. Most children and old people and many women have left Hanoi — about half the city's normal million population.

EVACUATION

Informed sources say that the second phase of the evacuation — the removal of all nonessential industry and services — has begun. If necessary, two more phases will be carried out — the closing of all industry and finally the removal of a civilians.

In Hanoi proper no bombs have fallen in the last three days, although there have been frequent alerts.

The small group of non-Communist diplomats here believe that the pause in the bombing of Hanoi is related to President Nixon's visit to Moscow next week. Several diplomats expressed frank concern that the bombing might be intensified if the Soviet Union canceled the summit meeting.

One possible form of intensification would be the use of B-52s against Hanoi. They were used against Haiphong when Mr. Nixon resumed heavy bombing on April 16 but have not yet been here.

DEMAND

The North Vietnamese say that they will continue fighting and stick to their demand for the ouster of South Vietnam's President Nguyen Van Thieu, no matter what the United States does. Experienced Westerners here uniformly say they believe in North Vietnam's determination.

An incident yesterday may indicate the state of mind of the North Vietnamese.

I was talking with Colonel Ha Van Lau, the former deputy chief of mission to the Paris peace talks who now heads the war crimes commission, a government agency that reports on the effects of the bombing.

Suddenly sirens sounded. We went to a public shelter nearby, a concrete tunnel 11 steps below ground — perhaps eight feet. It was a claustrophobic place. The tunnel was less than six feet high at the center. In a stretch perhaps 20 feet long 60 people crowded onto narrow benches at each side or stood in the middle. The alert lasted half an hour.

Everyone in the shelter except me was Vietnamese and all laughed and chatted throughout. There was clearly no imposed order; people just poured in from the street and spoke up when they felt like it.

"You can see how we are," Lau remarked after awhile. "Nixon cannot understand us.

"This is the seventh year of the war of destruction," he went on. "It could last ten years and we are still sure we would be victorious."

Lau was asked whether attitudes would be the same if the coastal blockade of North Vietnam lasted indefinitely, causing shortages of food and raw materials, or if the bombing became heavier. When the question was translated, a plump man in

a pith helmet commented, "You must not understand the Vietnamese." Lau said:

"We have anticipated the worst and have all the means to face it. Ho Chi Minh said that Hanoi, Haiphong and other cities would be destroyed but that we could not be defeated — he predicted it."

Among Western diplomats here the big subject of speculation remains what Soviet leaders will do about the mining of the ports.

Some observers suggest that the mining of the ports could make North Vietnam more dependent on China. The Chinese previously supplied a large labor force to repair damaged roads and rail lines and may do so again if land transport becomes Hanoi's only link with the outside world.