

Editor—Great prominence has lately been given by the Nixon Administration to the industrial destruction caused by the recent bombing raids on North Vietnam. Thus on June 12 we were told that U.S. jets "have destroyed a hydro-electric plant capable of producing 75 per cent of North Vietnam's power requirements;" and on June 25 the U. S. Command in Saigon reported that "fighter bombers have wrecked North Vietnam's only modern steel plant." Statements such as these are clearly intended to persuade American and world opinion that the present massive bombardment with its dreadful human consequences is justified by its effectiveness.

But what is the reality behind these apparently impressive figures? Anyone who refers to the Senate Armed Services hearing of August 25, 1967 will see that already five years ago the Pentagon was claiming that "85 per cent of the country's central electric generating capacity" had been destroyed. It was left to Robert McNamara to place this in perspective when he admitted that a single company's generating plant, that of the Pepco company in Alexandria, Virginia, "generates five times the power produced by all of North Vietnam's power plants before the bombing." McNamara went on to say that the country's military needs and essential services were being provided by 2000 diesel-driven generating sets. Even before America started bombing North Vietnam, McNamara added, "the significant industrial facilities can be counted on your fingers . . . It has no real war-making industrial base and hence none which could be destroyed by bombing."

The Nixon Administration, by issuing grossly misleading figures, is hoping that we will forget that the vast air armada of the United States is being deployed against a very small, non-industrial country, 90 per cent of whose people are

peasants. What is going on is not the destruction of non-existent industrial installations but a cold-blooded attempt to terrorize and devastate the people of North Vietnam into submission before the Thieu regime in Saigon meets its inevitable political and military defeat. Anyone who has been to North Vietnam and seen the total determination of the people knows that this gamble will fail.

Watching the unfolding of this ghastly tragedy, and the stubborn refusal of successive American administrations to face realities, one is reminded of the ancient Greek saying: "There is nothing more terrible than ignorance combined with power."

FELIX GREENE.

London.