

BRUCE CRITICIZES HANOI ON P.O.W.'S

Negotiator in Paris Terms
Foe's Attitude Shameful

By HENRY GINGER

Special to The New York Times

PARIS, Dec. 1—David K. E. Bruce, the chief of the United States delegation at the Vietnam peace talks, held his first news conference here today and denounced what he called the Vietnamese Communists' "shameful attitude" toward American war prisoners and their refusal to negotiate at the peace table.

Mr. Bruce stressed the effort to rescue war prisoners at a camp near Sontay and said it reflected grave concern for the fate of the missing and captured men.

"There is no issue on which the American people are more united and more determined," he declared. Later, in response to a question, he said: "We intend to get those prisoners out by one means or another."

Blackmail Effort Charged

Mr. Bruce denounced as "a crude and unacceptable attempt at blackmail" the Communists' refusal to discuss the prisoner problem until the United States had agreed first "to their basic preconditions to negotiation."

He was referring to the demand that the United States agree to withdraw its forces rapidly and abandon support for the Saigon Government. The Communists said they would then be willing to discuss liberation of all prisoners among other problems.

The 72-year-old diplomat said the talks were nothing more than "a propaganda field day" for the Communists.

When asked about his personal intentions, he exclaimed: "I would not think of resigning." He added that "it was not the most enjoyable prospect in the world," but if perseverance could bring the other side to negotiate then "it was well worth the effort."

The news conference appeared to be an effort to counter three that have been held by the North Vietnamese in the last 10 days to the American bombings of their country and their accompanying toll in civilian lives and damage to civilian installations.

Estimates on P.O.W.'s

Mr. Bruce estimated that there were slightly fewer than 5,000 allied prisoners in enemy hands including about 1,500 Americans. In the past, the United States has said it believed 378 Americans were prisoners in North Vietnam and that of 958 Americans listed as missing, some may be in prison camps. The Allied side holds 36,000 prisoners of which 8,000 are North Vietnamese.

Noting that the North Vietnamese continued to insist that their treatment of American prisoners was lenient and humane, Mr. Bruce listed 13 articles of the 1949 Geneva Convention on war prisoners that he asserted had been violated by the other side. These articles include information on the persons held, repatriation of sick and wounded or those held for a long time, adequate medical attention and feeding, information on camp locations and neutral inspection of all camps.

He asserted that South Vietnam, which had primary responsibility for prisoners taken in the South by either American or South Vietnamese forces, had lived up to all these positions.

Asked whether, in view of the recent raid in North Vietnam, the enemy was likely to make known the location of its prisoner camps, Mr. Bruce said he did not think the raid would have any effect one way or the other. He said he didn't think the raids would affect the negotiations either.

"There never has been any negotiation," he said.

Last week's session was called by Hanoi as a protest against the American "acts of war." Another is scheduled for Thursday and Mr. Bruce said that as far as he knew it would be held.

Future Raids Held Possible

WASHINGTON, Dec. 1 (AP)—Secretary of Defense Melvin R. Laird said today: "I would not rule out any action "in efforts to free American prisoners of war in North Vietnam. Holding a news conference at Andrews Air Force Base shortly before leaving for the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's ministers meeting in Brussels, Mr. Laird said the United States would make every effort to free the prisoners, including military action such as last week's raid near Sontay.