

# Ramsey Clark on the Impact of the Bombing . . .

By Ramsey Clark

WE MIGHT better understand the meaning of our actions in Vietnam had the United States been bombed in 1847 by the B52s of some distant land 10 times its size, centuries ahead technologically, peopled by men half again as big as we were.

Imagine Gen. Zachary Taylor poised to strike at Matamoros, Monterrey and Saltillo, Col. Robert E. Lee marching from Vera Cruz to Mexico City with Gen. Winfield Scott, and Capt. Ulysses S. Grant struggling with mule teams up the mountains from the

*The writer, former attorney general, recently returned from a visit to North Vietnam. He wrote this piece for United Press International.*

Gulf of Mexico to Chapultepec: All in show-ers of bombs and Phantom jets and B52s destroying most habitation and much of the countryside.

By 1848, our population exceeded the present population of North Vietnam. Our industrial development then was a century ahead of the present capacity of the contry we are bombing.

Imagine New York harbor in 1848 mined so ships could not enter or leave. Baltimore, Boston and Charleston experiencing a dozen air alerts a day. St. Louis severely bombed, and the little villages as one approached the Nueces and Rio Grande Rivers, the DMZ of the Mexican-American War, Memphis, Natchez, Galveston, San Antonio and Santa Fe destroyed.

Visualize hundreds of the big steel birds with their deadly bombs and rockets raining a variety of death—napalm, fragmentation, chemical, fletcherette, percussion, demolition—exhausting the ingenuity of man. Once or twice a week a rocket or jet supplied by a foreign nation, or a Kentucky Long Rifle might bring down a plane, but in the main the bombers destroy with impunity.

Seems unreal? It is what we are doing in Southeast Asia. The United States of America, the richest and most powerful nation in history, is unleashing the cruelest means of destruction it can conceive on an undeveloped agrarian Asian people.

President Nixon, already responsible for ordering more bombing than any man in history, daily causes U.S. planes to play God for hundreds of people in Vietnam. Today, this village shall perish, this hospital be demolished, this dike ruptured to spill its rain-swollen waters onto the rice paddies that feed the people and the huts that house them.

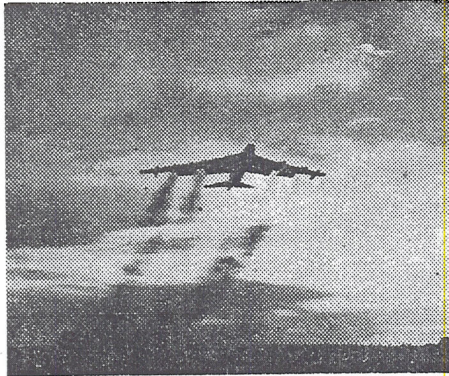
Officials in Haiphong told me that between April 16, 1972—when President Nixon resumed the bombing after 3½ years—and Aug. 4, the city was subjected to 101 bombing attacks. They claimed that 2,208 demolition or blast bombs were dropped and 250 "mother" bombs, each containing hundreds of

deadly penetrating or anti-personnel bombs. An anti-personnel bomb does not badly damage buildings. It has one purpose. It kills people. As I climbed over the ruins of the Haly area of Haiphong Aug. 3, the head of civil defense said that 25 people were killed in the July 31 raid and 47 wounded. It was bombed again the next day.

For an urban people, and for my generation which experienced World War II, the destruction of cities is most easily understood. By 1946 I had seen the effect of bombing on Warsaw, Berlin, Frankfurt, Hamburg, Paris and London. The damage in Haiphong and Hanoi was reminiscent.

The villages are more difficult for Americans to comprehend, but most life in Vietnam is village life as most life in the U.S. in 1848 was rural. In South Vietnam, American bombing has driven the people from the villages to the cities and in North Vietnam it drives the people from the cities to the vil-lages . . .

The villages, though, are a major reason bombing cannot subdue the country. There



are too many villages, too scattered and too small to carpet bomb.

To see the survivors of bombed villages was almost unbearable. I have seen stunned people in war and peace but the incompre-hension of the simple villager, generations in that place never visited by a foreigner, is of another dimension in human suffering.

There are no significant military targets in the North. They have no submarine stalls, no ballbearing factories, no forts or military bases. There are just the cities and villages, the few dirt roads, the several small railroad lines, the dikes built over the centuries that support their civilization, rockets, guns and the people. If we bomb we will necessarily hit homes, schools, churches, hospitals and kill old men, women and children. We do. So it goes.

The effect of all this bombing is very much as it would have been on us. Thomas Jefferson is quoted as saying in 1776 that

"human nature is the same on both sides of the Atlantic," not a very popular observa-tion then. Well, human nature is much the same on both sides of the Pacific, too, or the DMZ for that matter. Until we recognize our common humanity we will continue to de-stroy—our souls, their bodies.

Each bomb increases their resolve. In a nation given to aphorisms, the most popular today is: "We shall drown the thunder of the bombs with our singing." So they sing. The militia women, their husbands and brothers gone to war, their children separated and evacuated to scattered villages so all cannot fall to one bomb, speak of their "battles" with the airplanes on which they fire with rifles. They need this. It breaks the loneli-ness. It involves them directly in the strug-gle.

It is, as Hoang Tung, the editor of Nhan Dan said, the "most suffering war in his-tory." . . .

The North is constantly aware of the greater suffering of the South. Much of the leadership in the North is Southern-born and raised. But they will not be bombed into submission, or deterred in their purpose which they call "freedom and independ-ence."

They are bewildered by the present bomb-ing. When the U.S. fought to win the war, when it had half a million men committed on the ground, they said they expected to be bombed. Even then the B52s did not strike north of the 18th parallel, and by October 1968 bombing of the North ceased. But now, with constant talk of imminent peace from Washington, with the withdrawal of U.S. ground forces, with firm assurance that America is winding down the war, they do not understand why we bomb their people.

Foreign Minister Tranh concludes, "The Nixon Administration has greatly increased the ferocity of the war and the bombing of our country." Hoang Tung says, "The sav-ageness of Nixon is several times greater than Johnson." Nguyen Phu Soai, the chief Provisional Revolutionary Government (Viet Cong) representative in the North said: "The biggest obstacle to peace is the Nixon Ad-ministration which has not given up a policy of aggression." The provincial president of Thanh Hoa Province said: "Nixon is commit-ting war crimes by bombing throughout my province while speaking of peace." Pham Van Dong, the Prime Minister says "Of course, it's a war of genocide."

I do not know. I only know the bombing is utterly purposeless. It necessarily slaughters essentially defenseless civilians. It is uncon-scionably inhumane.

America will have to live with itself and in this world community. We cannot be forced by our leaders to choose between jus-tice and our country. We must make our country just. We must stop this immoral bombing.