

Chou Says Raids Hurt U.S. Relations

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By Marilyn Berger
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PEKING, Dec. 28—Chinese Premier Chou En-lai tonight asked that the American people be told that the U.S. bombing of North Vietnam would have an adverse effect on Sino-American relations.

The premier, making his first public appearance in several weeks at a banquet for Vietcong Foreign Minister Mrs. Nguyen Thi Binh, asked me to send that message back to the United States.

While the Chinese have been critical of the U.S. bombing of North Vietnam in the past, this is the first time a Chinese official has said it would affect the recent detente in relations between the two countries.

Chou was asked whether the bombing, the second resumption since he received President Nixon in Peking in February would affect China's relations with the United States.

His reply, in Chinese, was translated as: "Certainly."

Chou, heaving his shoulders and pointing his fingers, for emphasis, stopped and said in English: "Surely."

Asked how the breach could be healed, he said, again in English: "Stop."

Then, in Chinese, he continued: "The United States government should stop the bombing. I hope you will convey my answer to the American people."

The premier spoke as he passed through the receiving line in the Great Hall of the People where some 400 Chinese officials, foreign diplomats and journalists were invited to an unusually grand banquet for Mrs. Binh.

By attending the banquet, Chou added the final accolade to the already glittering recep-

See PEKING, A6, Col. 7

Thieu directs Vietnam political parties to merge or disband. Page A6.

PEKING, From A1

tion for Mrs. Binh, who was here on her first official visit to China. Under normal protocol rules, the foreign minister, not the premier, would be the host.

There was a huge welcoming parade, then tonight's din-

ner in the Great Hall of the People, and Friday a rare mass rally has been scheduled with 10,000 persons "invited" to participate. The last time such a rally was held was for North Vietnamese Premier Pham Van Dong in November 1971.

In contrast to his warm reception of Mrs. Binh, Chou refused last week to meet a group of American professors who were in Peking, apparently because of the current state of the Vietnam war.

The professors, members of the National Committee on U.S.-China Relations, were the first such high level American group to fail to see the premier. They were told Chou was too busy, but comments from Chinese officials here lent weight to the impression that the premier could not appear to be too friendly to a group of Americans while the bombing of Hanoi and Hai-phong was under way.

At the dinner tonight Chinese Foreign Minister Chi Peng-fei delivered one of the strongest denunciations of American policy in Indochina to be heard here since the Nixon visit.

"The U.S. government," he said, "committed a breach of faith, fabricated pretexts, set up various obstacles and deliberately delayed and sabotaged the signing of the peace agreement."

Chi also accused the United States of carrying out "barbarous bombing raids" and "committing unforgivable new crimes against the Vietnamese people." He said the United States had committed "shameless military blackmail."

"The Chinese government and people," said Chi, "strongly denounce U.S. imperialism for its crime of savagely bombing the Democratic Republic of Vietnam [North Vietnam] and strongly condemn the U.S. government for its obdurate stand of sabotaging the signing of the peace agreement and prolonging the war of aggression."

However, the attack fell short of putting the blame directly on Mr. Nixon himself.

While attacking the United States, he also said that China understood that further talks

would be necessary.

"The United States must stop forthwith the bombing of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam," he said, "and through negotiations, speedily sign the agreement on ending the war and restoring peace in Vietnam."

Soviet Menace

The Chinese attitude toward the war in Vietnam and toward relations with the United

States is inevitably formed by what Chinese view as their major problem—the Soviet "menace." While China clearly stands staunchly behind the Vietnamese Communists, it also is clearly troubled that the continuing war in Southeast Asia may prevent the improvement of relations with the United States.

There is no doubt that Peking desires an improvement in Sino-American relations as a bulwark against what the Chinese conceive as Soviet imperialism and expansionism, not only against China but other countries in the world as well.

No visitor here for more than two days can escape a demonstration by the Chinese about Soviet ambitions.

Throughout the country the Chinese are building air raid shelters as protection against Soviet attack. The Chinese admit that such an attack is not imminent, but they insist that it could happen.

The enormous reception for Mrs. Binh can be seen in this context as an effort to bolster the stature of the Vietcong's Provisional Revolutionary Government for future negotiations.

In her reply tonight, Mrs. Binh spoke of how her government and North Vietnam government had shown "flexibility" and called on the United States to sign the draft cease-fire agreement reached in October.

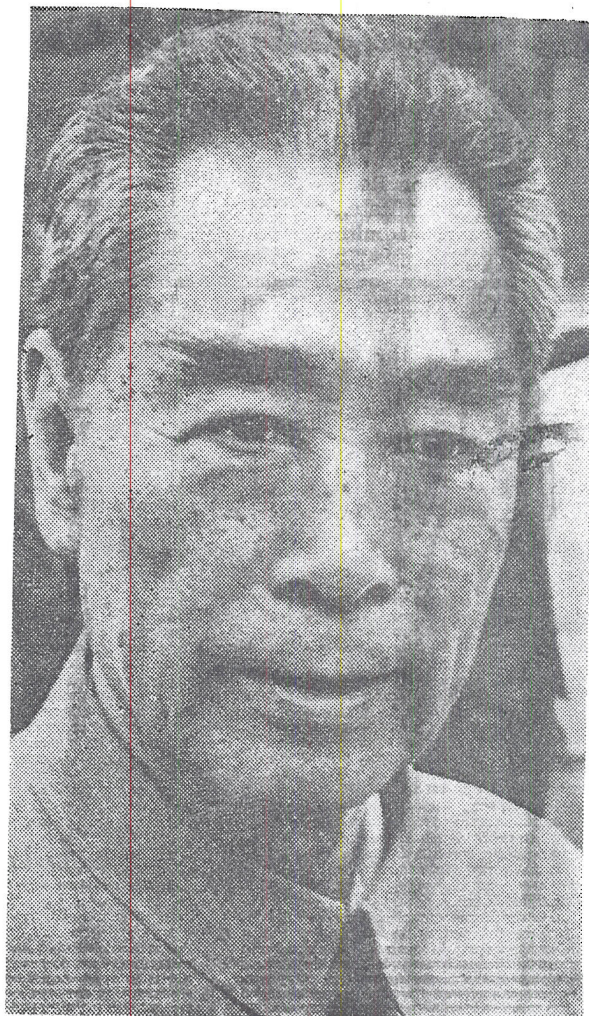
Stressing the status of her own organization, Mrs. Binh said the struggle would continue to "bring about an independent, peaceful, neutral and prosperous South Vietnam, and proceed to the reunification of the fatherland."

The U.S. effort to achieve, within the agreement, a clear separation of the two Vietnams, has reportedly been one of the sticking points of the Paris talks.

Although the atmosphere tonight was officially anti-American, there was no sign of any personal animosity. Mrs. Binh, circling the huge hall to offer a toast at each table, approached me, the only American correspondent in the room, and said in French, as she lifted her glass: "To health." After a brief pause, she added, "And to what else?"

"To peace," I replied.

"To peace for the Vietnamese people and for the American people," she said.



Toronto Globe and Mail Photo

Chou En-lai: "Stop the Bombing."