

What the Bombing

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Haiphong

Recent American air raids virtually razed Haiphong's western industrial zone — one of North Vietnam's biggest concentrations of factories.

The bombers also hit many residential areas within the city itself.

Authorities of the port city, 60 miles east of Hanoi, told journalists who visited Haiphong Saturday, that between December 18 and 30 U.S. planes made 366 sorties against the port area.

They said 15,000 tons of bombs struck 240 different parts of the Haiphong area, killing 305 persons, including 76 children. There were 882 wounded.

DESTRUCTION

The raids destroyed 5800 homes and other buildings.

The relatively low casualty toll is explained partly by the use of air raid shelters and partly by the fact that almost two-thirds of the population had left the city.

Yet the scene made it appear almost miraculous. Observers saw square miles that had become a desert of mud, rubble, twisted metal, fragments of walls and heaps of debris.

Six miles from the city there are craters in the rice paddies, hundreds of yards from any building.

Then there appears a vast expanse of destruction, sometimes stretching farther than the eye can see, where nothing remains intact.

CONCENTRATION

The municipal authorities said the B-52 bombers concentrated on the outlying industrial areas and suburbs. They made about 30 sorties against these areas in successive waves during the night of December 23-24, and again during the night of December 26-27, while fighter-bombers hit at the city proper and the port.

The results of the attacks can be seen in oval-shaped scars of destruction, one to two miles long and almost a mile across at the widest point.

There are five such ovals on the edge of the Haiphong area to the west-southwest. Three of them stretch one after the other to form an almost uninterrupted path six and a half miles long, where life continues only in a few small "islands" of a few hundred square yards.

To the west, the village of Hung Vong and the district of Thyong Ly were notable targets. The district in Haiphong's main industrial area and had already been raided, but less severely damaged, by B-52s last April 16.

One major plant that produced cement is now a

blackened ruin. There were also oil storage tanks, now split open, a food factory and a shipyard that present a picture of torn metal and mud.

The mud also covers the straw-roofed houses where about 30,000 persons lived.

In another bombed district, An Duong, hundreds of houses, which could better be described as huts with mud walls, have been flattened. Next to a crater, several yards wide, a pregnant woman wearing the white turban of mourning in her hair was still crying.

Children scratched in the debris with their hands, against a grey background of uprooted banana and papaw trees.

Women in green army uniforms were helping to search the ruins.

Leaving the areas bombed by the B-52s, one arrives in the city and the districts hit by smaller aircraft. They cut out islands of destruction within residential districts.

For instance, there is Quang Trung street, an area with a large population of Chinese. It is a street of small shops. For some distance, there are buildings still erect and habitable, although damaged. Then you arrive suddenly on an empty area, where what had been five buildings is now only a pile of bricks.

SALVAGE

Women and children were salvaging pieces of wood and other debris.

The city's main thoroughfare, Cua Dat street, is smashed in this manner at two points.

Further on, there is a little market that has been flattened.

Municipal Theater Square, in the center of the city, was hit by several bombs that smashed into the central lawn and flower garden. One of them crushed a shelter. Rescue workers recovered 11 bodies and 15 wounded.

The port itself appears deserted, its warehouses empty. At least three of

them have been destroyed.

About ten freighters of about ten tons are berthed. They include the Polish Jozef Conrad, which received a bomb amidships. The ship's first officer, another officer

and a member of the crew were killed outright, a fourth man died later of injuries.

Other ships were damaged and so were a Chinese secondary school, a movie thea-

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ter and the hospital of Vietnam - Czechoslovakia Friendship.

The hospital was evacuated December 22. The next day, two bombs hit the building. One landed in the

courtyard and the other flattened half of the contagious diseases ward. Several other parts of the hospital were damaged by blast but none of the staff remaining on the site was injured.

A boy about 4 years old was in one bed in the arms of a peasant woman who had taken charge of him. The little boy was the only survivor rescued from a bomb shelter.