

Le Duc Tho's Missing House



Arthur Hoppe

DR. KISSINGER and Mr. Le Duc Tho held the first of their new round of peace talks in Paris. The atmosphere was described as "icy." And that's odd, because we certainly didn't do everything we could to make the North Vietnamese warm and friendly.

Among the many things we didn't do is we didn't tell them what we blew up in their country during our massive bombing raids. That's because we didn't want to make them mad.

"You can imagine how it would look to Le Duc Tho if we were to release a great long laundry list of damage these days," said a military spokesman in explaining why we were keeping secret the customary report on our bombing results.

The wisdom of not telling Mr. Le Duc Tho what we blew up in Hanoi can only be appreciated if you know what we blew up in Hanoi. In addition to a hospital, an airport and stuff, we also blew up, on December 21, Mr. Le Duc Tho's own house.

Fortunately, according to Agence France - Presse, Mr. Le Duc Tho's family was out at the time and he was at his office across town. So, because we kept it top secret, he had no way of knowing we'd blown up his house.

Why, then, was he so angry when Dr. Kissinger showed up in Paris for the first negotiating session Monday? He wouldn't even answer the door. Dr. Kissinger had to push his way in.

Obviously, fellow Americans, there has been a grievous breach of our top security, classified information!

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IT IS a grave charge to make, but personally, I suspect Ms. Joan Baez. She was in Hanoi at the time. And there's no question she was going around telling everybody who'd listen — including even the North Vietnamese themselves — what we'd blown up in Hanoi.

As I see it, Mr. Le Duc Tho probably

finished a hard day's work at the office and went out to get in his car. But he couldn't find it because our B-52s have secretly blown it up.

So he figures it's been towed away and he irritably begins looking for a cab. (You know how it is in the rush hour.) At last he gets a cab and says, "Take me across The Peach Blossom Bridge." Only that isn't there, either.

He makes a note to have the Chief Engineer on the carpet for building shoddy bridges. Finally, they get to his block. All he's looking forward to now is a couple of martinis and a quiet evening watching "I Ruv Rucy" re-runs in the privacy of his house.

No house.

So he has to go down and file a report at the Hanoi Bureau of Missing Houses. Which is very busy these days. That's probably when he ran into Ms. Baez. You know what a troublemaker she is.

"Psst," she whispers. "I've got some red-hot, top - secret information for you. Our American planes blew up your house — and the Peach Blossom Bridge, too."

"Aiyee!" he cries. For there is nothing that makes a man madder — absolutely nothing — than discovering somebody blew up his house. It's a wonder he talked to Dr. Kissinger at all.

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WELL, the whole thing shows how very difficult it is to bomb somebody without making them mad. The secret's bound to leak out — even to the American public. And sooner or later, North Vietnam's going to learn from some blabbermouth that we're still bombing them south of Hanoi. They'll blow their tops again.

My friend, Rachelle Marshall, figures the best way to keep our secret bomb damage secret is to secretly stop bombing them. It's doubtful, however, the Pentagon will ever think of that.