

# Hanoi Is Alive and Noisy Again

By Jean Thoraval  
Agence France-Presse

## Hanoi

Hanoi is leading a normal life again. This normality had been interrupted 11 months ago with the resumption of American bombings, but it has now returned with giant steps in the wake of peace and new-found tranquility.

If it were not for the bomb craters, which are rapidly being filled up, and the walls being rebuilt brick by brick, the arriving foreign visitors would find it hard to imagine that only a month and a half ago the population had almost totally evacuated this city to escape the nocturnal raids of the B-52s.

The ruins are still here, but out of habit or the faculty for forgetting, one no longer sees them. What you notice is the animation in the streets, the 'traffic jams' created by cyclists and window-shoppers.

The markets, which had been closed to prevent the gathering of crowds, have reopened, as lively and colorful as ever. Thousands of sidewalk salesgirls will sell you anything from loose tobacco to buttons or old parts of alarm clocks.

The silence which weighed on the city has gone. From

dawn, you hear the hum of machines mingled with the noise of the people and the sounds produced by metal being heated, twisted, pounded or welded.

## HORNS

From 6 a.m., you have to be sick, very tired or deaf not to wake up: Tens of thousands of people, most on bicycles, cross paths, hail each other and, above all, sound their horns. A fellow journalist commented recently: "In Hanoi, the most important part of an automobile is not the motor, it is the horn."

During the bombings Hanoi's streets were deserted and dimly lighted from nightfall, and the laughter of children was absent. Today, despite a season halfway between winter and spring, this capital is living at the rhythm of a Mediterranean country.

People stroll in the evening. The circus, the theaters the cinemas and music halls are playing to packed houses. Within two weeks, some establishments have changed their shows three times, with "sold out" signs on the billboards every night.

The shows are very professional because, for the past 11 months, the troupes have been rehearsing them

before audiences in the country areas least threatened by bombing.

## RHYTHM

At the music hall you can hear ten young women dressed in the traditional "ao dai" — split tunic and silk trousers — and a tenor in a dark suit and necktie singing a popular South American song, "Guantanamera." It is a strange spectacle, in this country reputed for its attachment to the past and its suspicion of any "modernistic excess." To see the formation moving to a Latin rhythm, greeted by the applause of the audience.

Kept from their theaters and cinemas for months on end, the residents of Hanoi are now making up for lost time.

But the population is not thinking only of entertainment. The bulldozers are

razing the ruins that remain and are filling up the bomb craters. Officials cite the example of the agricultural machines factory, where the workers reinstalled 100 tons of equipment in three days and nights of work.

Day after day announcements are made of the resumption at factories and industrial complexes.

The electric power plants apparently have followed this movement, because today, in the humblest restaurants, where one ate last year in the light of candles or oil lamps, electric bulbs are reappearing and electric fans are working again.

Long lines of military and civilian trucks are bringing evacuated material back to the city, while 200,000 children have returned to Hanoi's schools.