

Hanoi Pledges Search for Missing G.I.'s

HANOI, North Vietnam, March 16 (AP)—The editor of North Vietnam's chief newspaper said today that his Government was not hiding any American prisoners and that a search would be started for all the missing and dead as soon as this was possible.

"We have detained only those who were on the lists already handed over," Hoang Tung, senior editor of Nhan Dan, the Communist party newspaper, said in an interview with The Associated Press. "There are no others."

He added that the North Vietnamese knew of some dead Americans and where they were buried, but that it would be difficult to locate all of them.

"Many went down with their planes," he said. "A systematic search to locate the dead has not started yet, but we will do it."

No Information on Cambodia

Mr. Tung said that North Vietnam had no information on the 19 newsmen missing in Cambodia and he referred all questions about Cambodia to Prince Norodom Sihanouk, the deposed Cambodian chief of state, who is in Peking.

Mr. Tung charged that to hinder Hanoi's foreign trade, the United States was delaying the removal of the mines it had planted along the North Vietnamese coast.

"The United States uses demining as a bargain to maintain blockade and hinder trade and free circulation," he said, predicting that completion of the minesweeping would be delayed "even beyond the last P.O.W. release."

Mr. Tung, who saw two possible courses for future American-North Vietnamese relations, normal or antagonistic, said that Hanoi desired normal relations. He also said that his Government wanted diplomatic, commercial and cultural relations "on an equal footing" with the United States and felt that Washington had a "political and moral duty" to aid in the reconstruction of the North Vietnam.

Following are excerpts from other parts of the interview:

Q. What are today's priorities in reconstructing and developing North Vietnam?

A. The first priority is the economic and cultural reconstruction of the country. After a long war we have many difficulties. Vietnam today is a

backward country. Both industrial and agricultural backwardness can be seen everywhere despite our many efforts.

The largest problem is industrialization. We must try to reorganize and mechanize our backward agricultural production and develop the many agricultural possibilities the country has. Too much work is done by hand and in small enterprises. Industry must be created to improve the mechanization of agriculture. With a population of 22 million and only 2 million hectares [4.4 million acres] of arable land, North Vietnam has the smallest per capita land in the world. We must improve production, especially rice, to feed the nation. We will need much capital and have to take many single steps. The first most important step is reconstruction of factories, irrigation canals and rails damaged by the war.

Q. What is the total damage inflicted on North Vietnam in terms of material and lives, military and civilian, by the American air war?

A. We have no assessment yet of damage done by the two air wars [President Johnson's and President Nixon's], but can state this: Communications systems are almost completely destroyed, such as railroad bridges, railway stations and repair facilities.

All big factories are heavily damaged. Medium-sized industry, as in Haiphong, Vinh, Thai Nguyen and Viet Tri, are completely or heavily destroyed. Irrigation works needed to improve rice production are damaged. Many agricultural areas are heavily damaged by the air war. Civilian loss of life is heavier than military losses. Presently, the Government is making a hamlet-to-hamlet and town-by-town assessment of actual losses but has no firm figures yet.

The military know their exact losses, but this is one of the secrets of Giap's Pentagon. There is extensive damage to residential areas in larger cities like Haiphong. Many medium

towns no longer exist. The evacuated population and dispersed industry, which kept up production, especially of consumer goods, is now returning to the cities.

The Government is now working on an assessment of the actual damage, which in dollars certainly amounts to many billions. This assessment and national resources will determine the direction of national development and aid requirements. Then we will see which country has the best techniques and can give us the best aid.

Q. It is said in Ho Chi Minh's testament that the struggle will only end with total victory. Do you think the Paris agreement means total victory?

A. Ho Chi Minh's testament has only partly been implemented. We have ended armed conflict but continue the struggle. However, not with military means. We are not in a hurry with reunification.

It is now policy not to use force to achieve this goal. The urgent quest now in South Vietnam is to end conflict to make it possible to solve problems by political means.

Q. Do you believe that elections are possible in six months as stipulated by the agreement?

A. To correctly implement the agreement we must have a complete cease-fire and democratic liberties in South Vietnam—no curfew, police operations or arrests. If anybody uses force, the situation will be difficult and leave the United States in an awkward position. The United States should not encourage using force against political opponents of the Thieu regime. The question is not who wins elections but the coexistence of all parties and national concord.

Coexistence will have the way for national reconstruction in the South. This is no time to discuss ideological questions. If after elections one side tries to annex the other it would mean war and deadlock again. Presently, Thieu is still trying to use force.