

Nixon's Self-Made Trap

By James Reston

WASHINGTON, Jan. 9—Even after all the bitter criticism of President Nixon's decision to bomb Hanoi during the Christmas holidays, there is still a fundamental philosophical difference here over both the bombing and the criticism.

The Administration is defending its right to bomb the North Vietnamese back to the negotiating table, without consulting the Congress or explaining why the heaviest bombing of the war was used, not for military but for diplomatic purposes.

Just as strongly, Mike Mansfield, the majority leader in the Senate, is challenging this right in public, and though he reported to the President privately the strong resentment in Congress against the unexplained bombing, they did not discuss, let alone resolve, the basic problem of consulting on such questions in the future.

Even Mr. Nixon seems confused in his own mind about the obligations of the President and of the Congress and the people at a time of difficult decisions.

For example, in a discussion of his philosophy during the Presidential campaign on Oct. 21 last, he said: "I am not willing to take unpopular stands when they are necessary . . . and when he does find it necessary to take an unpopular stand, he has an obligation to explain it to the people, solicit their support and win their approval."

This, of course, is precisely what the Congress expected on the bombing decision and precisely what the people did not get. And the reason for this may be that, on other occasions, Mr. Nixon has taken a quite different position and suggested that the leaders of the country have an obligation to support him when he makes a hard decision.

Just five days before he accepted the obligation to try to explain, his hard decisions had the support of the P.O.W.'s that the hardest decision

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of his Presidency was the May 8 order to bomb Hanoi and mine the North Vietnamese harbors.

"It is often said," he observed on Oct. 18, "that when I make a hard decision, the so-called opinion leaders of this country can be counted upon to stand beside him regardless of party."

"Who are the opinion leaders? Well they are supposed to be the leaders of the media, the great editors and publishers and television commentators and the rest. They are supposed to be the presidents of our universities, and the professors and the rest, those who have the educational background to understand the importance of great decisions and the necessity to stand by the President of the United States when he makes a terribly difficult, potentially unpopular decision. They are supposed to be some of our top businessmen who also have this kind of background."

"Let me tell you that when that decision was made there was precious little support from any of the so-called opinion leaders of this country whom I have just described. . . ."

This comes nearer to the official attitude now: When the President acts, with or without consultation or explanation, he should be supported, regardless of conflicting judgments or even the dictates of conscience, and those who reject this view of democratic government are somehow regarded as unworthy.

For example, Dean Francis Sayre of the Washington Cathedral recently presided over a memorial service for former President Truman, which was attended by many leaders from around

The Siege of Hanoi: I



Photomontage

The Treatment of U.S. Prisoners

By Telford Taylor

American bombing of Hanoi was resumed on the evening of Dec. 18, and the next day it was announced that captured airmen from B-52 bombers shot down over the city would be seen at a "press conference" at the International Club. The promised occasion proved to be simply an exhibition.

Dworfing their tiny "hosts" with their long, slow stride, they looked like men from Mars. All but one bore some evidence of major injury; the last to appear was heavily bandaged on his head. Tense and bewildered by the crush and confusion of the scene they confronted, the men stood blinking in the glare for a few seconds, gave their names and ranks and turned away. Two of them added that they had been well treated by their captors.

Although there was nothing threatening or degrading in the way they were handled, it must have been a very straining experience for these men, and I expressed my disapproval to the Vietnamese officials who had brought me to the exhibition.

The North Vietnamese attitude toward the captured aviators is curiously ambivalent. They are constantly described in the controlled press as "war criminals" and "air pirates," but there is no effort to rouse the populace to anger against them as individuals. Press descriptions of the circumstances of capture describe the people as taking great pride in hatching these fallen giants, but never suggest that any kind of personal vengeance was or should have been taken. From no source did I hear any accusation that fliers were lynched or assaulted, as sometimes happened in Germany during the last years of the Second World War.

Late in the afternoon of Dec. 21 we were suddenly told that the prisoner-of-war camp had been bombed, and we would be taken there immediately. After what had been said the day before I was expecting a long drive, and was astonished when our destination proved to be only three miles from our hotel, in the southwestern part of Hanoi near the district of Tu Lien. We had been taken there the previous afternoon to see extensive residential bomb destruction.

The camp contained two groups of

prisoners, thirteen in all, whom we met with briefly. For all I know it may have contained others whom we did not see, but one of the prisoners told us that they constituted the "zoo," by which he presumably meant a group separately held and available for showing to foreign observers. The prisoners appeared to be in good physical and psychological condition, and made no complaints during the few minutes allowed for conversation with us.

The bomb damage to the camp was unimpressive, consisting mostly of mud and wall plaster crumbled by blast.

I asked one of the prisoners where they had been when the bombing exploded, and he answered that they had been under their beds. Since the camp was in a high-risk area it was supposed at this point, and asked why they were not in shelters. They responded by denying that any were available to them, and pointed to shelters nearby which, they said, were used by the guards. On leaving, I asked the prison commandant, Captain Phong, why the prisoners had no shelters, but I received an evasive and implausible answer. Remonstrances to our official hosts for the lack of protection of the prisoners, and for misleading us with regard to the location of the camp, elicited no coherent explanation.

Two days later it was announced that several of these prisoners had been slightly injured by bomb blast, and this was confirmed to us by French journalists who visited the camp on Dec. 23. The French also reported that after our visit the prisoners had been given abovealls and told to dig shelters for themselves. We were also told by Lou Quy Ky that protective measures for the prisoners were now being taken.

The total situation remains murky, for we were allowed to visit briefly with only thirteen of several hundred prisoners, and were given absolutely no information on the location or condition of the others, except so far as their circumstances may be revealed in the over six hundred letters which were given to us, for delivery here to friends and families of the prisoners. Some of them may be still in the "Hanoi Hilton" in the center of Hanoi near the railway station, or they may all have been moved elsewhere.

[A Hanoi radio broadcast in English

Dec. 21 asserted that U.S. raids had caused damage and injury to prisoners held at what it called the "Hanoi Hilton." The state broadcast said that General Taylor, Joaz Baz and other Americans had visited the facility that day. However, the facility visited by General Taylor was not the prisoners' facility near the central Hanoi railroad station which is ordinarily referred to as the "Hanoi Hilton" by American prisoners of war. Those familiar with Hanoi broadcasts could recall no other mention in recent times by Hanoi radio of the "Hanoi Hilton" in view of the Vietnamese policy of hedging against bomb risk by avoiding crowds and concentrations. It appears probable that the prisoners are scattered among a number of locations.

Telford Taylor, professor of law at Columbia and former chief U.S. prosecutor at the Nuremberg war crimes trials, was in Hanoi during the recent bombings.

The N

By C. L. Sulzberger

PARIS—It is the year when membership in the U. S. was voted by the British Parliament (Jan. 14, 1971) and the since Britain, together with the end Denmark, officially joined European Community.

On the face of it, British threat not diminished. Sir Christopher Cross just after joining the Community, mission, has been placed in the "Europe's" foreign relations which include crucial trade and economic negotiations with the United States this year.

Stamps, son-in-law of Sir Winston Churchill, is a man of rich political and diplomatic experience with American contacts. That is psychologically important as Britain embarks on an effort to maximize its European qualifications.

De Gaulle's successor, Georges Pompidou, says: "We do not underestimate British economic power or the capacity of the British to adapt themselves to new situations." A cursory glance at statistics nevertheless shows that Britain suffered by its ten-year egress from the club and at what a significant disadvantage its initial membership status.

Of the original six Community members, only Italy (with 2.75 per cent) showed a lower growth rate than Britain in 1970. West Germany was same as Britain with 3.25. Italy's special local reasons for relative depression because of its chaotic political situation. France, responsible for keeping the British out in the cold six decades, had the highest growth at 5.5 per cent.

It is not possible to attribute Britain's relative economic weakness France's economic prosperity entirely to membership in the Common Market. Indeed, a study released here with political fanfare because of parliamentary elections in March, forecasts that France will be Western Europe's most powerful economic nation in 1980 with Britain lagging behind Spain the "European League."

This study, made by an American think tank, seems based on some certain extrapolations and was carried out before London had been admitted to the Community. If the calculation of Prime Minister Heath are even roughly accurate, Britain should get considerable national boost from membership.

Emergence of Soames at the market's diplomatic helm augurs for better coordination of Community policy with its long-term negotiations with the United States. Whether "Europe" will take advantage of this prospect by ex-

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Sovereignty in the Skies