

Viet Bombing Stirs Wide Religious Protest

A flood of protest by religious leaders in this country accompanied the twelve day blitz of North Vietnam by U.S. bombers which ended December 30.

Both President Nixon's decision to resume the massive bombing of the Hanoi-Haiphong area and the continuation of the Vietnam war sparked condemnation from important church figures.

Fourteen Roman Catholic prelates of the Boston province expressed "dismay and horror" at the U.S. military action.

The prelates, headed by Archbishop Humberto Medeiros of Boston, declared in a statement that "the stepped-up air attacks and terrors, in the hideous contradiction of the Christmas

spirit of peace and joy, appall us."

Citing Pope Paul's admonition that peace "is a duty," the bishops said, "We now broken-heartedly learn that once again the voices of the Herald Angels will be drowned in the roar of bombs and shells and the thunder of war, leaving as victims the little, nameless, faceless people of that sad land, who once again cower in terror."

The signatories to the statement were all the bishops — ordinaries and auxiliaries — of dioceses in Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont and Massachusetts.

The White House announced New Year's Eve that "all bombing will be discontinued above

the 20th parallels as long as serious negotiations are under way."

The same announcement said that Dr. Henry A. Kissinger, Nixon's national security advisor, planned to resume his talks last Monday, Jan. 8 with Le Duc Tho, Hanoi's head representative in Paris.

It was after Kissinger's December 13 recall from Paris that President Nixon ordered the heaviest air attacks of the war on North Vietnam.

The Massachusetts Council of Churches said in a statement that President Nixon's decision to resume massive bombing of North Vietnam was "a savage and cynical policy."

Two Midwest Catholic prelates, in separate statements, spoke out against the destruction in Vietnam.

Cardinal John Cody of Chicago, in a Christmas homily, spoke of the "violent force and massive bombing" and called on all Americans to pray and plead for an end to violence.

Bishop Paul F. Anderson of Duluth, Minn., writing in the diocesan news sheet, Outlook, described the bombing as "an immoral means to a just and lasting peace."

"How can we . . . speak of peace and joy and Christ and at the same time justify a continuation of this tragic conflict?" he asked. "It is not the way of Christ."

Another Catholic prelate, Bishop John J. Russell of Richmond, Va., along with clergy and lay leaders of the diocese, issued a call to U.S. leaders to heed the 1971 plea of the American Catholic bishops — repeated by them again last November — for a speedy end to the war.

A group of 41 inter-religious clergy and laymen issued a call for a "religious convocation for peace" in Washington, D.C. The convocation was timed to coincide with the January 3 opening of the 93rd Congress and participants petitioned legislators to stop the war.

Abortion Injunction Rejected

New York (RNS) — The New York State Court of Appeals has rejected a motion to ban all abortions in the state until the U.S. Supreme Court rules on the issue.

The motion was filed by Robert M. Byrn, a Roman Catholic and law professor at Fordham University, whose challenge to the state's liberal abortion law was rejected by the Court of Appeals in July. Byrn had been appointed special guardian of all unborn fetuses whose mothers were awaiting abortions in New York City municipal hospitals.

No explanatory comment was issued by the Court in rejecting the Byrn motion.

Byrn asked the court to issue a blanket stay against further abortions pending the outcome of his appeal to the Supreme Court. The nation's highest court has agreed to hear appeals from other states and is expected to issue its decision before June.

BOB CONSIDINE On the Line



Several years back yonder in the interminable war in Vietnam, I wrote a flaky fantasy about an American general and a North Vietnamese general whose watches stopped during a holiday truce and neither brass hat knew when to restart the fighting.

The truce was supposed to end at 12:01 a.m. — some night or other — but one general's watch had broken down on 20 minutes past eight a couple of days before, and the other guy's watch showed a quarter of four. Neither could be quite sure what time it was or what day it was and they were afraid to ask anybody for fear of losing face.

Well, they finally got their watches fixed and realized, to their horror, that they had wasted two whole days suspended in a state of peace. It took them a couple of weeks to get the casualty lists up to the standard levels.

Pretty stupid idea, of course, but no more so than the short-lived holiday truces themselves. Is it morally wrong to kill during the Christmas-New Year's moratorium, but okay to resume killing January 2? What difference does it make to the dead?

What a man does with his time during truce is pretty much up to the man himself. In view of the trigger-happy violations of the cease-fire agreements, it's best to maintain a low silhouette. Aside from that, one supposes that out airmen based in Thailand and on the aircraft carriers catch up on their sack time, take in a Raquel Welch movie, or find a beer.

North Vietnamese troops inside South Vietnam have no place to go. They are strangers in a strange land, with no great prospect of ever seeing their home towns and villages again. According to our side, they die like flies. According to their side, they aren't even there. If they are wounded badly enough to be shipped North, they don't rejoin their families. Instead, they are re-located in other areas so that their appearance won't cause anti-government feelings among their relatives and friends.

The Viet Cong are something else. Truces, such as Tet, permit them to come out of their holes and tunnels and in some cases they find their families, families which might also have sons in the Saigon government's army. During such reunions it is customary for the VCs to take a bath, shave — if they are old enough — and fill up on Mom's cooking.

Then the clock shows 12:01.

Sen. William Proxmire sniffs a Nixon Administration plot to reinstate the U.S. supersonic transport program during the second term and is threatening to kill it all over again. Which is his constitutional right. But he should first read Ansel E. Talbert's article in the current American Legion Magazine.

The former aviation and military editor of the late lamented N.Y. Herald Tribune writes "The program that was cancelled was not one to put American SSTs in operation. The program was to build two test-model Boeing SSTs with General Electric engines. Among other things they would have tested the validity of many of the objections . . . The fanfare that killed our SST was similar to that which brought on Prohibition — a swelling, unthinking, popular movement led by slogans, symbols, mottoes, pseudo-scientific alarms, speculations and scareheads.

"The immediate results were (a) to throw out the window \$1.2 billion already spent; (b) to spend large sums to dismantle the program (The Department of Commerce has said that it cost \$100 million more to scrap the program than it would have cost to build and test the two planes); and (c) throw some 12,000 skilled aircraft workers out of their jobs, demobilizing and demoralizing a good part of our aerospace industry.

"If the plane had gone into production, after thorough testing," Talbert concludes, "it would have furnished about 50,000 job-making jobs in the U.S., and some labor leaders of all 150,000 American jobs of all kinds have been lost."



Food at Last

A crowd gathers around the first food distribution truck to come to their area of Managua since a series of earthquakes destroyed most of the Nicaraguan capital. Some of the quake victims had not had anything to eat for as long as five days. Relief organizations have rushed food supplies to the city and distribution centers have been set up. (RNS)

300,000 Aided At Nicaragua Relief Centers

New York (RNS) — "A high degree of coordination" was reached by relief agencies working in the Nicaraguan earthquake disaster, according to a spokesman for Bishop Edward E. Swanson, head of the U.S. Catholic bishops' overseas aid agency here.

Gil Cawley of Catholic Relief Services said that on Dec. 29 more than 110,000 refugees of the quake were being served in 19 relief centers outside Managua. Just a few days later, 310,000 persons were being aided in 33 centers.

While distribution of relief supplies — food, clothing, medicine, etc. — are under the jurisdiction of the Nicaraguan National Guard, he said, some church-related relief agencies are "sharing in the operation . . . to the extent that some are actually operating relief centers."

A new committee for voluntary relief agencies, Comités Volontarios (COVO), has been set up by Catholic and Protestant agencies in Nicaragua. Included are CRS, Nicaraguan Caritas and Church World Service, the relief agency of the National Council of Churches.

Anyone wishing to contribute to relief efforts should do so through Catholic Relief Services, 350 Fifth Ave., New York, N.Y. 10001.

Cawley said thus far CRS has delivered more than 9 million pounds of food to Nicaragua, much of it trans-shipped from nearby Latin American countries.

About 360,000 pounds of clothing — 200,000 pounds from the Brooklyn, N.Y., center and 160,000 from El Salvador — have arrived in the Nicaraguan relief centers. In addition, 1,000 cartons of survival biscuits, a million water purification tablets and 200 first-aid kits were delivered.

Cawley said the Nicaraguan Catholic bishops' conference has designated Bishop Marco Garcia y Suarez of Granada, Nicaragua, to head the Catholic relief effort.

He added that Caritas offices in Honduras, Costa Rica, Guatemala, and El Salvador have sent personnel to help coordinate the relief effort. CRS representatives from Haiti and Honduras — Carlos Pereira and Kevin Calahan — have joined CRS' Nicaraguan representative, Steve Otto, near Managua.

Among the cities where relief operations have been set up are Granada, Masaya, Leon, Matagalpa and Rivas. The latter, on the Costa Rican border, has already accumulated 15,000 refugees from Managua.

Cawley, noting that several Catholic dioceses in the U.S. have launched fund campaigns for Nicaraguan relief, said that assistance to earthquake victims is now a matter of coordination rather than material.

"Our next task," he said, "will be to look into the housing situation and think about furnishing tents and utensils needed for day-to-day living."