

*Supply—External Affairs*

have to be taken into account if there is to be any realistic hope that ensuing talks are to have any purpose and meaning.

Speaking before the United Nations General Assembly last September I urged that the bombing be stopped as a matter of first priority in the search for peace. I saw this, and I urged that it be considered, not as a sure-fire formula for instant peace, but as a deliberate and calculated risk. To break out of the impasse prevailing at that time it seemed to me that the United States might make the first significant move, not as a prelude to capitalulation, but as a gesture which might encourage the other side to respond in kind, as indeed the north will have to do. It might then be possible for other countries, in the new circumstances which would then prevail, to mobilize pressure for corresponding concessions by the north.

I believe that that was a sensible position to take and one which seemed to me to correspond to the facts as we knew them. I still believe that the bombing will have to be stopped as a matter of first priority, since I think it will be impossible for North Viet Nam to appear to be responding to military pressure. All the information we have received from Canadian soundings, and from sources other than our own contacts in Hanoi, only serve to convince me of the validity of this view.

Whether future soundings and exploratory discussions will prove that some form of bargain can be struck, I cannot predict. For the moment the available evidence is clear about the significance to be attached, from the point of view of North Viet Nam, to a cessation of the bombing of North Viet Nam. But if the refusal of North Viet Nam to appear to respond more flexibly under continuing military duress is clear, it is no less important to bear in mind the difficulty that would be faced by the United States in modifying its requirements as a direct result of the other side's spectacular military thrusts.

If the United States was not prepared to take the calculated risk we and others urged them to take at the time when the pattern of military activity on the ground was more or less constant, one cannot be too hopeful about fresh initiatives at this particular moment, but the urgent necessity to break through the stalemate on negotiations has not lessened.

There is one potential danger which must be recognized. If talks are entered into with

some hope of reaching agreement and are then broken off under the pressure of one side or the other attempting to score a point by a sudden and suicidal military push, it would be all the more difficult to get them started again. A situation such as this could also be an open invitation to further escalation. This would be regrettable.

Despite the clarification which appears to have taken place in respect of the formally stated positions of the two sides, the immediate prospects for negotiations can scarcely be described as encouraging, though we do not take this as any reason why we should not persist, as other countries are doing, in trying to encourage negotiations which might lead to peace. It is true that both sides are now firmly committed to a willingness to negotiate, but I am afraid that this does not carry us very far forward, as is tragically apparent by the unbroken continuation of the hostilities.

Both sides seem to envisage rather different objectives for the talks that are to follow a cessation of bombing. For the north, the objective is to bring about the total and early withdrawal of the United States from Viet Nam. For the United States, the objective is to secure South Viet Nam from northern military pressure, so that political change can come about peacefully and through the exercise of free choice. Each side is well aware of the other's objectives, which at the moment seem mutually incompatible.

Hanoi seems to see an unreciprocated cessation of the bombing, not only as a necessary precondition to undertaking talks, but as a gesture by the United States symbolizing the beginning of the process of total cessation of all American military action in the south, and indeed total withdrawal from the scene.

We know the conditions which were laid down by the United States at the Manila conference with regard to its intention to withdraw after six months, given the existence of certain conditions.

For their part, the United States and South Viet Nam have insisted on some measure of military restraint being exercised by the north, once again not as a final answer to the problem, but as representing a North Vietnamese realization that its military objectives cannot be met, and that its objectives cannot be met by military means.

We must maintain the commission presence in Viet Nam. This is first of all our international obligation, and we must be alive to any