

A Blackout Here, But Questions Were Asked in the House of Commons

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nate the air and the sea, we do not dominate the roads in South Vietnam. "Normally"—to use the word our military apply to the constant bombing of the north—we cannot move supplies on most of the roads in the South without a heavy investment of armor and troops.

How Tet Helped Us, Too

In the truce, supply was not a violation by either side. To fire upon a convoy (or an air strip) was a violation of the truce. It was therefore easier and less costly for us to move on the roads (and far less dangerous to land and drop supplies upcountry).^{*} Tay Ninh has been an air supply area. It is much more costly and difficult to move heavy supplies by air, especially when small air strips ("normally" subject to enemy fire) limit landings to helicopters and the smaller cargo planes. To get from Saigon to Tay Ninh city on the edge of Zone C one goes about 45 miles northwest on Route 1 and then about 35 miles north on Route 22 to Tay Ninh. Few Americans are foolhardy enough to venture very far out of Saigon on Route 1 even by day without a military escort, and fewer still on Route 22, where peasant and commercial traffic—as our military admit—pay road fees to the Viet Cong. Helicopters and tanks protected the trucks which went up those roads during Tet, but they didn't have to fear the kind of traps, ambushes or blocks of "normal" times.

When Saturday's *Le Monde* (Feb. 25) reached me Sunday with its reference to the use of Tet by U.S. forces to prepare the "Junction City" operation, I called this to *The Guardian's* attention. It published this in London Monday morning. As a result there were questions from Laborite backbenchers in the Commons that day, notably by Sidney Silverman, James Davidson and Michael Foot. Foot asked the Foreign Minister whether the new offensive had not been made possible in part by resupply during the truce. But this and similar

^{*} This may explain the sharp increase in air cargo during Tet which we also reported last week.

Iron Triangle Epilogue

"When the Army decided the Iron Triangle had to be obliterated, there were great expectations. The enemy would be bagged and their burrows blown to kingdom come. But it didn't quite work out that way. A relatively few enemy were either snared or killed. The tunnel systems were not destroyed but only damaged. The panorama is now scarred from end to end, not only by bomb craters but by ribbons of turned red soil where fleets of bulldozers did their work. Still it remains true that not one B-52 crater and none of this bustle and bang over the surface hit deep enough to damage even slightly any one of the tunnel systems, according to engineers who explored the tunnels. They found it impossible to destroy them. The best that could be done was to interrupt them here and there by blowing them up or saturating them with chemicals that might last a while longer. It is not simply that the tunnels are too far below the surface. But rather nowhere do they maintain a straight line. It is always zig-zag to thwart any weapon or chemical. Baffle doors and vents are numerous. The effect is to limit the area of destructiveness. Furthermore the evidence shows that before our combat troops had completed withdrawing from the triangle, the Viet Cong were moving back in."

—Gen. S. L. A. Marshall from Bien Hoa, Vietnam, in the *New York World Journal Tribune Sunday, Feb. 26.*

questions drew evasions rather than denials from the Foreign Minister George Brown. All this, too, was blacked out in the U.S. press. No one reported either the questions or the answers and it was only by telephoning London that I was able to learn about it in time for this issue. Here the initiation of naval shellfire, river mines and artillery barrages across the Parallel is accompanied by the usual escalation in mendacity. Mr. Johnson summoned an impromptu press conference to deny that these new moves constituted escalation at all. He said he wouldn't describe them as *any* kind of step-up because, as he said, "I wouldn't want to put my credibility in doubt." Nobody had the temerity to suggest this was a maidenhead he had lost a long time ago.

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NEWSPAPER

I. F. Stone's Weekly. Second Class Postage Paid at Washington, D. C. Published every Monday except in August, the last week in December and the first week in January and Bi-Weekly during July at 5618 Nebraska Ave., N.W., Washington, D. C. An independent weekly published and edited by I. F. Stone; Circulation Manager, Esther M. Stone. Subscription: \$5 in the U.S.; \$6 in Canada; \$10 elsewhere. Air Mail rates: \$15 to Europe; 20 to Israel, Asia and Africa.