

U.S. INSISTS ON "RIGHT KIND" OF AGREEMENT BEFORE SIGNING (540)

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WASHINGTON, OCT. 31/72 - PRESIDENT NIXON IS INSISTING THAT A
"THE FEW REMAINING ISSUES" OF A VIETNAM SETTLEMENT BE RESOLVED
SO THAT "THE SEED FOR FUTURE CONFLICT" WILL NOT BE PLANTED.

WHITE HOUSE PRESS SECRETARY RONALD ZIEGLER GAVE THIS WORD
TO NEWSMEN OCTOBER 31, THE DATE SET BY NORTH VIETNAM AS THE TARGET
FOR SIGNING A DRAFT AGREEMENT.

MR. NIXON'S NATIONAL SECURITY AFFAIRS ADVISER, DR. HENRY
KISSINGER, HAS SAID THAT THE REMAINING ISSUES COULD BE IRONED OUT
IN ANOTHER NEGOTIATING SESSION LASTING NOT MORE THAN THREE OR FOUR
DAYS.

"THE ONLY DEADLINE WE ARE OPERATING UNDER," MR. ZIEGLER SAID,
"IS ONE THAT WILL BRING THE RIGHT KIND OF AGREEMENT." HE DEFINED
THAT AS ONE THAT WOULD BRING "A LASTING PEACE AND ASSURE THE
SOUTH VIETNAMESE PEOPLE THE MEANS OF PROVIDING FOR THEIR OWN FUTURE."

DR. KISSINGER AND LE DUC THO, HANOI'S SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE
IN THE PARIS PEACE NEGOTIATIONS, WORKED OUT THE MAJOR PROVISIONS
OF A DRAFT AGREEMENT AFTER HANOI, ON OCTOBER 8, FINALLY AGREED
TO SEPARATING MILITARY AND POLITICAL QUESTIONS, AS THE UNITED
STATES HAS CONSISTENTLY ADVOCATED.

THE DRAFT PLAN WOULD PROVIDE FOR AN INTERNATIONALLY-
SUPERVISED CEASEFIRE, RETURN OF ALL AMERICAN MILITARY AND CIVILIAN
PRISONERS, AND WITHDRAWAL OF ALL U.S. FORCES WITHIN 60 DAYS OF
THE CEASE-FIRE. ALSO PROVIDED FOR WOULD BE A NATIONAL COUNCIL OF
RECONCILIATION AND CONCORD, AN ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE WHICH
WOULD CONDUCT INTERNATIONALLY-SUPERVISE
FREE ELECTIONS.

DR. KISSINGER SAID OCTOBER 26 THAT THE NUANCES OF IMPLEMENTING THE DRAFT AND AMBIGUITIES IN ITS LANGUAGE REQUIRE ONE ADDITIONAL NEGOTIATING SESSION OF THREE OR FOUR DAYS WITH NORTH VIETNAMESE DIPLOMATS. HE SAID HE WAS CONFIDENT THAT U.S. CONSULTATIONS WITH SAIGON COULD PRODUCE AGREEMENT WITHIN THE SAME TIME FRAME.

DR. KISSINGER ALSO MADE IT CLEAR THAT WHILE WASHINGTON HAD AGREED TO MAKE "A MAJOR EFFORT" TO CONCLUDE THE NEGOTIATIONS BY OCTOBER 31, AT HANOI'S INSISTENCE, IT HAD NEVER ACCEPTED AN ABSOLUTE DEADLINE.

MR. ZIEGLER, QUESTIONED ABOUT NEWS REPORTS FROM PARIS THAT PREPARATIONS WERE BEING MADE FOR A SIGNING CEREMONY ON NOVEMBER 4, SAID HE DID NOT WISH "TO CONTRIBUTE TO THOSE EXPECTATIONS BY ANYTHING I MIGHT SAY FROM HERE."

NOTING THE SIGNIFICANT BREAKTHROUGH ALREADY MADE IN THE VIETNAM NEGOTIATIONS, MR. ZIEGLER SAID WASHINGTON IS "CONFIDENT WE WILL REACH AN AGREEMENT."

BUT HE SAID MR. NIXON IS "INSISTING THAT HE BE METICULOUS IN NAILING DOWN THE FEW REMAINING ISSUES OUTSTANDING. THE OVERRIDING OBJECTIVE," HE SAID, "IS TO REACH THE RIGHT KIND OF AGREEMENT, ONE WHICH WILL LAST AND WILL ASSURE SOUTH VIETNAM WITH THE MEANS OF PROVIDING FOR ITS OWN FUTURE."

HE SAID IT IS MR. NIXON'S "FIRM INTENTION TO HAVE A SETTLEMENT WHICH OFFERS THE BEST CHANCE FOR LASTING PEACE, AND DOES NOT LEAVE THE SEED FOR FUTURE CONFLICT OR POST-SETTLEMENT MISUNDERSTANDINGS."

MR. ZIEGLER SAID WASHINGTON "WOULD NOT BE STAMPEDED" BY A NOVEMBER 4 DEADLINE OR THE APPROACH OF THE U.S. PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION NOVEMBER 7 TO CONCLUDE AN AGREEMENT "LESS SATISFACTORY THAN ONE WHICH MIGHT OTHERWISE BE ACHIEVED." ITEM

JOSEPH KRAFT:

IN JUDGING THE VIETNAM SETTLEMENT NOW AT HAND, IT IS USEFUL TO EXAMINE TWO SETS OF RIVAL CLAIMS. ONE HAS BEEN PUT FORWARD BY THE ADMINISTRATION; THE OTHER BY THOSE CLOSE TO SEN. MOGOVERN, AND BY A CIRCUMSTANCE THAT WOULD BE CURIOUS ON ANY ISSUE EXCEPT VIETNAM, BOTH ARE PROBABLY RIGHT.

THE ADMINISTRATION CLAIM, BROACHED ON 7/28/68 BY JOURNALISTS PLEASED TO PLAY DICTAPHONE TO HENRY KISSINGER, IS THAT THROUGH A NICE MIXTURE OF DIPLOMATIC AND MILITARY PRESSURE THE PRESIDENT AND HIS CHIEF AIDE FORCED HANOI TO ACCEPT AMERICAN TERMS FOR POLITICAL SETTLEMENT. IN FACT, OVERWHELMING EVIDENCE CAN BE MARSHALED TO SUSTAIN THAT CLAIM....

PRESIDENT NIKOLAI PODGORNY CAME FROM RUSSIA AT THAT TIME, AN AID AGREEMENT WITH CHINA HUNG FIRE FOR WEEKS DURING THE SAME PERIOD, MY GUESS IS THAT THE COMMUNIST DECISION TO COME TO TERMS WAS MADE SOMETIME IN JUNE.

WHEN THE AGREEMENT WAS FINALLY CUT IN OCTOBER, HANOI DID YIELD ON THE MAJOR POLITICAL ISSUE. THE NORTH VIETNAMESE HAD FOUGHT THE WAR TO ACHIEVE A FRIENDLY REGIME IN SAIGON, AND THEIR PREFERRED BRIDGE TO THAT END WAS A COALITION GOVERNMENT COMPOSED OF SOUTH VIETNAMESE NATIONALISTS, COMMUNISTS AND NEUTRAL PARTIES....

BY CONTRAST, PRESIDENT NIXON AND DR. KISSINGER HAVE ACHIEVED WHAT HARDLY ANYBODY BELIEVED WAS POSSIBLE--A LEASE ON LIFE FOR PRESIDENT THIEU OF SOUTH VIETNAM. THEY DID IT FIRST BY PLAYING RUSSIA OFF AGAINST CHINA, AND THEN PLAYING CHINA AND RUSSIA OFF AGAINST NORTH VIETNAM. THAT THEY ARE NOW PLAYING HANOI AGAINST SAIGON TO WIN OVER PRESIDENT THIEU SHOWS HOW MUCH THEY HAVE PROVED MASTERS OF THE DIPLOMATIC GAME.

CONSIDERED OUTSIDE THE NARROW CALCULUS OF THE BARGAINING HISTORY,
THE OVERALL GAIN FOR AMERICAN INTERESTS IS SLIGHT INDEED.
PRESIDENT THIEU, TO BE SURE, HAS A CHANCE TO SURVIVE. BUT HOW
MUCH IS PRESIDENT THIEU'S SURVIVAL WORTH IN PEORIA?...

BILLIONS OF DOLLARS WORTH OF DAMAGE HAS BEEN DONE--FOR
WHICH THIS COUNTRY WILL PAY IN A RECONSTRUCTION PROGRAM. AND
THERE IS THE FATHOMLESS HARM DONE BY THE CONTINUING WAR TO
THE FABRIC OF UNITY IN THIS COUNTRY AND THE NATIONAL SELF-CONFIDENCE.

SO IT IS NOT CLEAR THAT THE GAME PLAYED SO BRILLIANTLY BY
THE PRESIDENT AND DR. KISSINGER WAS REALLY WORTH THE CANDLE.
ON THE CONTRARY, MANY AMERICANS CAN PLAUSIBLY FEEL THAT THE
NATIONAL INTEREST WOULD HAVE BEEN FAR BETTER SERVED BY SETTLING
THE WAR--EVEN ON LESS FAVORABLE POLITICAL TERMS--BACK IN 1969.

WHAT ALL THIS MEANS IS THAT DRAWING A BALANCE BETWEEN THE
TWO CLAIMS IS LIKE SQUARING THE CIRCLE. NO FINAL RESOLUTION IS
POSSIBLE. THOSE WHO ARE TRULY INTERESTED IN BINDING UP THE NATION'S
WOUNDS WILL DROP THEIR CLAIMS AND DRAW OVER THE PAST A DECENT
VEIL OF OBLIVION.

THE PROPOSED VIETNAM PEACE SETTLEMENT NOW APPEARS TO BE A FORMULA FOR A PARTITION OF SOUTH VIETNAM RATHER THAN PLAN DESIGNED TO PRODUCE A NEW COALITION GOVERNMENT TO RULE THE ENTIRE COUNTRY.

IN EFFECT, THE SETTLEMENT RECOGNIZES THE REALITIES OF THE MILITARY STALEMATE THAT HAVE EMERGED FROM THE ENEMY OFFENSIVE AND THE ALLIED RESPONSE.

THE COMMUNIST FORCES OPERATE IN LARGE AREAS OF SOUTH VIETNAM AND CANNOT BE EXPELLED OR SUBDUED BUT NEITHER HAVE THEY BEEN ABLE TO EXTEND THEIR CONTROL OVER ANY MAJOR CITIES OR OVER VERY MUCH OF THE POPULATION.

DETAILS OF THE SETTLEMENT REVEALED BY HANOI AND THE WHITE HOUSE PROVIDE THAT THERE WILL BE TWO GOVERNMENTS FUNCTIONING IN SOUTH VIETNAM WHEN A CEASE-FIRE HAS GONE INTO EFFECT. EACH WILL FUNCTION IN THE AREA CONTROLLED BY ITS MILITARY FORCES.

TOGETHER, THEY WILL FORM AN "ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE" CALLED THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF NATIONAL RECONCILIATION AND CONCORD.

THIS IS THE BODY THAT MIGHT GROW INTO OR LEAD TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF A NEW GOVERNMENT FOR THE ENTIRE COUNTRY. BUT HENRY KISSINGER, THE WHITE HOUSE ADVISER ON NATIONAL SECURITY AFFAIRS, SAID LAST WEEK THAT THE COUNCIL WILL OPERATE ON THE PRINCIPLE OF "UNANIMITY." IN OTHER WORDS, EACH SIDE WILL HAVE A VETO OVER DECISION OF THE COUNCIL.

ALTHOUGH THE PROPOSED SETTLEMENT PROVIDES FOR AN INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE, TO BE CONVENED WITH 60 DAYS, IT DOES NOT SEEM TO PROVIDE ANY MACHINERY TO CHANGE THE FACT THAT THE SAIGON GOVERNMENT HAS MILITARY CONTROL OF PART OF THE COUNTRY AND THE PROVISIONAL REVOLUTIONARY GOVERNMENT HAS CONTROL OF THE OTHER PART OR TO FORCE THEM TO AGREE ON A GOVERNMENT FOR THE ENTIRE COUNTRY....

IF, AS NOW SEEMS LIKELY THE INDOCHINA PEACE SETTLEMENT RESULTS IN A FURTHER PARTITION OF VIETNAM, IT WILL BE A CONTINUA-

PARIS--AFTER A FEW FRANTIC DAYS, IT IS NOW CLEAR THAT THERE WILL BE NO VIETNAM PEACE CEREMONY HERE TOMORROW--AND PERHAPS NONE BEFORE THE UNITED STATES ELECTION A WEEK FROM TOMORROW....

THE UNITED STATES HAS EXPLAINED ITS UNWILLINGNESS TO CONFIRM THE AGREEMENT AND IMPLEMENT A CEASE-FIRE ON THE GROUND THAT "SIX OR SEVEN" MINOR POINTS REMAIN TO BE CLARIFIED.

APART FROM FURTHER CONCESSIONS THAT MIGHT CONCEIVABLY BE BRUNG FROM THE COMMUNIST SIDE, THERE ARE SOME VISIBLE AMERICAN INTERESTS TO BE SERVED BY NOT PROCLAIMING A CEASEFIRE IMMEDIATELY. ARMAMENTS--WHETHER BECAUSE OF INTENSE SECRECY OR LACK OF CONFIDENCE IN THE CHANCES OF AGREEMENT, THE PENTAGON APPARENTLY HAD NOT MADE SPECIAL EFFORTS TO SPEED WEAPONS DELIVERIES TO SOUTH VIETNAM UNTIL A SHORT TIME AGO, THE CEASEFIRE AGREEMENT WOULD PROHIBIT FURTHER DELIVERIES TO EITHER SIDE IN SOUTH VIETNAM--THOUGH APPARENTLY NOT TO NORTH VIETNAM--EXCEPT ON A ONE-FOR-ONE REPLACEMENT BASIS.

A RUSH DELIVERY PROGRAM IS UNDER WAY NOW, AND A FEW WEEKS, EVEN A FEW DAYS, CAN MAKE AN IMPORTANT DIFFERENCE IN THE SUPPLIES AVAILABLE TO THE SOUTH VIETNAMESE ARMY, PARTICULARLY IN VIEW OF ITS HEAVY LOSSES IN THE LAST SIX MONTHS.

SAIGON--PRESIDENT NGUYEN VAN THIEU IS NOT GOING TO MAKE IT EASY FOR THE UNITED STATES TO GO HOME AMID A HAPPY FANFARE, AS WASHINGTON WOULD WISH, SO MAY FACE SOME STERN ARM-THWISTING TO GET HIS ENDORSEMENT OF THE AGREEMENT.

MR. THIEU KNOWS HOW TO MAKE SURE THAT THE PROCESS IS CLEARLY VISIBLE TO THE AMERICAN ELECTORATE. IF IT CAME TO THAT, IT WOULD BE MORE COMFORTABLE FOR THE ADMINISTRATION TO HOLD OFF THE CONFRONTATION AT LEAST A WEEK MORE.

IN ANY EVENT, EACH PASSING DAY SINCE THE EXISTENCE OF A CEASE-FIRE AGREEMENT WAS DISCLOSED BY HANOI HAS HAD AN IMPACT ON SAIGON. UNCERTAINTY IS A MOST FEARFUL DEMORALIZER.

HANOI'S DELEGATES HAVE SAID THAT THEIR PUBLISHED NINE-POINT DOCUMENT IS ONLY AN OUTLINE OF THE AGREEMENT REACHED WITH MR. KISSINGER AND THAT MANY OTHER VITAL ISSUES HAVE BEEN FULLY SETTLED. THEY HAVE HINTED THAT AMONG THEM IS THE FIGURE-- BELIEVED HIGH--FOR THE UNITED STATES PLEDGED FOR RECONSTRUCTION OF THE NORTH. DOUBTLESS THERE ARE OTHER POINTS THAT WILL SURPRISE MANY AMERICANS AND PERHAPS DISMAY SOME OF THEM.

AMERICANS ARE UNLIKELY TO CRITICIZE A PRESIDENT RUNNING FOR RE-ELECTION ON THE BASIS OF HANOI'S STILL-UNDISCLOSED CONCESSIONS, BUT THERE IS LIKELY TO BE SOME OUTCRY ABOUT DETAILS OF THE AMERICAN CONCESSIONS. THE TEXT OF THE AGREEMENT IS TO BE PUBLISHED AFTER SIGNATURE, SO THE DATE OF THE CEASEFIRE WILL DETERMINE THE DATE OF DISCLOSURE.

ON THE NORTH VIETNAMESE SIDE, SO LONG AS THERE IS NO DOUBT THAT AN AGREEMENT WILL BE SIGNED FAIRLY SOON, THERE ARE SOME BENEFITS TO BE ACHIEVED IN DELAY:

ARMAMENTS--LATEST REPORTS INDICATE THAT HO CHI MINH TRAIL IS LADEN WITH SUPPLIES EN ROUTE SOUTH. THE EFFORT TO STOCKPILE WEAPONS FOR THE POST-CEASEFIRE PERIOD WOULD MATCH THAT OF SPEEDED DELIVERIES TO SAIGON.

TERRITORY--THE AGREEMENT PROVIDES THAT SAIGON AND THE VIETCONG WILL CONTROL THE TERRITORY THEY HOLD. IN RECENT WEEKS THE VIETCONG HAVE BEEN MAKING INTENSIVE, AND FAIRLY SUCCESSFUL, EFFORTS TO INSTALL THEMSELVES IN VILLAGES AROUND THE MAJOR CITIES AND ALONG IMPORTANT HIGHWAYS AND THERE IS AT LEAST A GOOD CHANCE THAT THEY WILL WIN MORE RATHER THAN LESS GROUND WITH A LITTLE MORE TIME.

THIRD FORCE--THE FRAGMENTED BUT NO DOUBT LARGE NUMBER OF SOUTH VIETNAMESE WHO OPPOSE BOTH THE COMMUNISTS AND MR. THIEU ARE BEGINNING TO RAISE THEIR VOICES. IT WAS HANOI AND THE VIETCONG THAT INSISTED ON A ROLE FOR THEM IN THE POSTWAR ARRANGEMENTS: