

....We now have this report from Andy Troscear of the Asia News Service on the difference between the agreement and the nine points [of the Oct. 8, 1972, tentative settlement]:

Troscear: In his press conference this morning, Henry Kissinger tried to give the impression that the finalized peace agreement contains important concessions made by the North Vietnamese in the negotiations since last October, and especially since the latest round of negotiations was resumed in January. However, the text of the finalized peace agreement indicates that it is basically the nine-point peace agreement of last October, and that the North Vietnamese did not make any major concessions as Kissinger tried to suggest. Moreover, the major changes which Kissinger was reported to have demanded in the December negotiations were not incorporated into the final agreement.

On Dec. 16, the New York Times reported that Kissinger had raised two new and basic demands in the November and early December peace talks. The first was that Hanoi agree in writing to withdraw its forces from South Vietnam, or to acknowledge that they are there illegally. Today, however, Kissinger acknowledged that North Vietnamese forces will remain in the PRG zones of South Vietnam. There is nothing in the peace agreement suggesting that their presence is illegal. Kissinger's second basic demand last November was that the North Vietnamese concede that the present Saigon government has complete sovereignty over all of South Vietnam. But the final peace agreement released yesterday leaves not one, but two governments in South Vietnam -- the Thieu regime, and the Provisional Revolutionary Government.

Nixon last night stated that the U.S. would recognize only the Thieu regime as the legitimate government in South Vietnam. Presumably it is the prerogative of the United States to extend diplomatic recognition to the Thieu government only, just as the United States today recognizes the Chiang Kai-shek regime as the only legitimate government of China. This would not affect, however, the authority and legitimacy of the PRG as defined in the nine-point peace agreement.

The other points which Kissinger tried to portray as being major North Vietnamese concessions, in reality appear to be relatively minor. One of the key issues, Kissinger said, was the question of the demilitarized zone, which was not mentioned in the original nine-point agreement of October. In the negotiations that followed, Kissinger was widely reported to have demanded that the demilitarized zone be defined as a dividing line between North and South, establishing the sovereignty of South Vietnam as an independent country. The final peace agreement does specify the existence of a demilitarized zone. However, it defines it only as a provisional military demarcation line between two zones, pending reunification, and states that it is not a political or territorial boundary. The question of civilian movement across the DMZ is to be negotiated between the Vietnamese parties involved. Thus, the DMZ is defined in terms consistent with the long-standing insistence of North Vietnam and the PRG, that Vietnam is one country, temporarily divided into two zones.

Another point which Kissinger presented as an important concession was that the present agreement does not call for the setting up of a coalition government in South Vietnam, and that the phrase, "administrative structure," used to describe the national Council of National Reconciliation and Concord, has been removed from the text. However, back on Nov. 10, the North Vietnamese representative in Paris, Xuan Thuy, said that North Vietnam was not trying to impose a coalition government in South Vietnam, and said that Kissinger's interpretation of the disputed language was "perfectly correct."

In short, the changes from the October agreement do not appear to be major changes, but it is not surprising that Kissinger is trying to pass them off as such, since they are his justification for continuing the war since