

Capitol Punishment . . . By Art Buchwald

Peace Is Around the Corner

IT APPEARS FROM what has been happening recently that the chances for a Vietnam settlement are getting dimmer all the time.

While the United States and Hanoi both insist they're ready to sit down for unconditional talks, more conditions are being raised every day.



Buchwald

I wouldn't be surprised in the next few months if the public should be reading the following news dispatches:

"Washington — Secretary of State Dean Rusk confirmed today that the United States was willing to discuss unconditional peace talks with North Vietnam at any time. But the Secretary added Hanoi would have to make some gesture to show it was serious in seeking peace.

"When asked what kind of gesture would be required, Rusk replied, 'We're willing to accept any gesture. For example, if Ho Chi Minh would surrender his army to Martha Raye on the Bob Hope TV Theater, we might be willing to sit down and talk.'"

"HANOI—The North Vietnamese news agency announced today that Hanoi was willing to meet with American officials to discuss a cease-fire in Vietnam. The only condition Hanoi laid down for the parley was that while talks were going on Lady Bird Johnson would be required to personally replace every tree the Americans defoliated in the demilitarized zone while the talks were going on."

"Washington — A White

House spokesman said that its decision to sink all ships in the Haiphong harbor last night was the latest attempt on the part of President Johnson to get peace talks under way. The spokesman reiterated President Johnson's pledge to meet with the aggressors anywhere, as an act of good faith, the North Vietnamese would have to eat Texas chili and drink six-shooter coffee."

"Hanoi — Premier Pham Van Dong of North Vietnam told a Yemen newspaperman

that he felt peace talks could start at any time. He said his reason for optimism was that there was only one item standing in the way of talks, and that was Hanoi's demand that the U.S. scuttle the Seventh Fleet in the Gulf of Tonkin. He felt that once this condition was met, there would be no problem in reaching a settlement on the major issues of the day."

"SAIGON—Premier Ky of South Vietnam denied today that his government was standing in the way of a cessation of hostilities in Vietnam. He told reporters, 'We are willing to meet the National Liberation Front halfway. If they agree to stand trial as war criminals and face a firing squad. I am ready to sit down and deal with them.'"

"Hanoi—President Ho Chi Minh held out an olive branch today to the United States. He said that he could see no reason why some solution of the war could not be worked out which could save face for both countries."

"Ho's suggestion was that if the Americans agreed to pull all their forces out of South Vietnam, he would name a high school after Lyndon Baines Johnson in Hanoi."

"Washington — President Johnson said today the criticism of yesterday's invasion of North Vietnam by 'nervous Nellies' in Congress was hurting his efforts to find a peaceful solution to the Vietnam Problem.

He denied the invasion had anything to do with his election in 1968. He said, 'I know there's peace out there somewhere, and I'm not leaving any stone unturned to find it.'"

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