

President's Adviser Asks Public to Back Initiatives

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WASHINGTON, Jan. 26—Henry A. Kissinger appealed today for public understanding and support of the Administration's peace initiatives in Vietnam.

In the course of a lengthy briefing with newsmen, the adviser on national security

Excerpts from the Kissinger news conference, Page 14.

also undertook to respond to some criticisms of Mr. Nixon's proposals, and to call on Hanoi to begin serious talks rather than another round of heavy fighting.

Mr. Kissinger, who made 12 trips to Paris over two years for unannounced talks with his North Vietnamese counterparts, spoke for more than an hour this morning in the second stage of the Administration's diplomatic and political offensive of the war issue.

Mr. Kissinger briefly reviewed his own private efforts to break the diplomatic deadlock in Paris. He also reviewed the

President's televised address to the nation last night, in which Mr. Nixon disclosed a peace plan calling for the eventual withdrawal of American troops in exchange for the release of prisoners of war, and a political settlement to be determined by the Vietnamese people themselves in new presidential elections.

Mr. Kissinger offered some new details and thoughts about the President's proposals, among them these:

¶Despite the new overtures, both sides remained far apart, largely because of what Mr. Kissinger described as North Vietnam's refusal to make concessions in return for an American withdrawal and Hanoi's insistence that the United States terminate all support for the Saigon Government.

¶The North Vietnamese have not only asked the United States to undermine the Saigon Government "indirectly" by withdrawing support but have

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asked, presumably in private, that it "change the Government directly, generously leaving the method to us."

¶Although Mr. Nixon's new plan contains complex provisions for both a political and military settlement, the President is prepared to revert at any time to a simpler proposal, offered in private talks on May 31, for a withdrawal of American troops "unilaterally" in return for a cease-fire and an exchange of prisoners.

¶Mr. Nixon's announced desire "to be involved in the building of a permanent peace throughout Indochina," Mr. Kissinger said, would require "a voluntary undertaking" in a "massive" reconstruction program in all of Indochina in which North Vietnam would share to the extent of several billion dollars.

The President's proposals will come up for further discussion tomorrow when William C. Porter, chief United States representative at the peace talks, presents them in Paris.

Mr. Kissinger spoke extemporaneously for 45 minutes, before answering questions, in an effort to call attention to what he called the spirit of magnanimity and generosity in which the new overtures had been presented to the enemy. His words reflected other moods as well: resentment suggestions that Mr. Nixon had acted from political motives, frustration with Hanoi's continued silence, hope that the enemy might respond in the future.

Mr. Kissinger resisted two judgments on the President's speech put forward by some of Mr. Nixon's critics: that he had sought political profit from his disclosures last night, and that he had chosen to divulge his plan now in anticipation of a major Communist offensive to which he might be compelled to respond.

Political Motive Denied

"There has been no issue of greater concern to this Administration than to end the war in Vietnam on a negotiated basis," Mr. Kissinger said. "We have not approached these negotiations in order to score debating points. We have not conducted these negotiations in order to gain domestic benefits."

In response to a question, however, Mr. Kissinger agreed that among Mr. Nixon's motives for exposing the contents of the secret talks was a desire to end "domestic disharmony" by demonstrating the Administration's good faith.

As added considerations, he listed Mr. Nixon's wish to end criticism at home that he had failed to respond to Hanoi's public proposals, which in fact he had done in private through Mr. Kissinger; his sense that the private contacts had reached a point of diminishing returns, and his hope that public disclosure might force the enemy to consider his plan "on a more urgent basis."

As for the relationship between the timing of the President's speech and his judgment of enemy intentions, Mr. Kissinger said the decision to make a full public disclosure of the plan was arrived at toward the end of December, "at a time when we actually did not think that there would be a major offensive, but a series of high points."

At the same time, however, he offered the hope that the President's disclosures might give the enemy incentive to talk rather than fight.

"Is there to be another round of warfare?" he asked, responding to his own question as follows: "We believe we can contain the offensive, and it is possible, maybe even probable, that the reason they make the offensive is as a prelude to a subsequent negotiation. This at least has been their pattern in 1954 and was their pattern in 1968."

"So this is an attempt to say to them once again, 'It is not necessary. Let's get the war over with now.'"

Mr. Kissinger also expressed

impatience with what he called "commentaries" to the effect that the President's proposals were excessively complex. He said Mr. Nixon's decision to include provisions for both political and military settlements reflected his desire to "accommodate" the North Vietnamese, who had told Mr. Kissinger repeatedly that a proposal addressed only to troops and prisoners "could not even be negotiated."

Mr. Kissinger said further that on May 31—at the first of six private sessions in Paris in 1971—he offered to set a deadline for the withdrawal of American forces in return for a cease-fire throughout Indochina and the exchange of prisoners. He said the offer had been spurned, adding:

"This was the first time that the United States had indicated a willingness to set a date, the first time that the United States had indicated that it was prepared to do so unilaterally; that is to say, without an equivalent assurance of withdrawal of the other side."

Asked why Hanoi continued to insist on linking military and political settlements, Mr. Kissinger replied that apparently Hanoi had little confidence in its ability to win a political struggle in the South if the United States continued its economic support after withdrawing its forces.

"They are asking us to align ourselves with them," he said. "To overthrow the people that have been counting on us in South Vietnam. They are asking us to accomplish for them what they seem not confident of being able to achieve for themselves."