

NYTimes

Reactions to Peace Plan

Time to Pull Together

To the Editor:

Following the President's startling announcement on nationwide TV of the extensive and energetic efforts which he and Dr. Kissinger have made to find a workable solution to the Vietnam impasse, I settled back to watch the commentary on the several networks.

In retrospect, I was not so startled at the President's admission of engaging in secret diplomacy, for I am sure that most of us expect this. What was really startling, and at the same time sorely distressing, was the self-serving lack of candor among the commentators.

Three common points were persistently put forth: that the President acted from a position of personal weakness—for political gain; that the proposals didn't go far enough toward meeting Hanoi's totalist demands, and that the proposals provide an opportunity for the Democratic aspirants for the Presidency to capitalize on the American people's war-weariness once again to make Vietnam a hot political issue.

And to cap it all off, there was Senator McGovern boldly repeating the same Hanoi-inspired propaganda he had been fed on his trips to Paris and Vietnam to the effect that Hanoi does not "really" demand that the Saigon Government be toppled, only that American support be withdrawn. If Senator McGovern can add two and two, he must know that an abrupt end to U.S. aid would, in effect, topple the Saigon Government.

Surely, the last thing South Vietnam needs is a repeat of the chaos that followed the American-supported coup in 1963, which contributed so much to enmeshing the United States in Vietnam in the first place. And the last thing this country needs is those who fail to realize or admit the honesty or grant the sincerity of the President's motives and maneuvers for peace in Indochina.

If there was ever a time during the past sad decade of a horrible war when all Americans should finally pull together and give the President the credit and support he needs to create viable conditions for fruitful negotiations, that time is now.

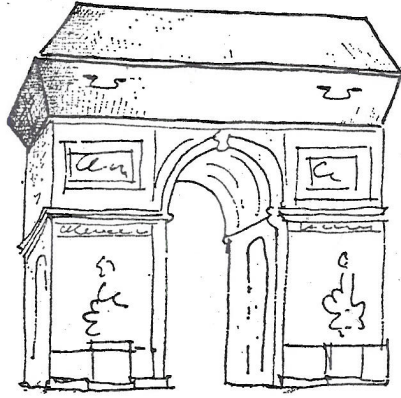
BRUCE N. KESLER
Philadelphia, Jan. 26, 1972

Blueprint for Surrender

To the Editor:

President Nixon's new Vietnam peace proposal comes very close to an abject surrender to Communist aggression in Southeast Asia.

The President has all but offered to help overthrow the legitimate Government of South Vietnam, with his suggestion that President Thieu resign one month prior to the election. Why should he resign? Is General Giap, the



Zebu

leader of the North Vietnamese Army, willing to resign? Will the other leaders of North Vietnam resign and agree to a free, internationally supervised election in North Vietnam as well?

Must we withdraw all of our troops while the Communists continue to send men into South Vietnam to commit further acts of aggression?

Negotiations mean that there is give and take on both sides. Everything the President revealed indicates that the United States and South Vietnam are doing all the giving while the enemy will do all the taking, mostly taking over all of South Vietnam.

If this is not surrender to aggression, then neither was Munich.

JOEL C. MANDELMAN
Forest Hills, N.Y., Jan. 25, 1972

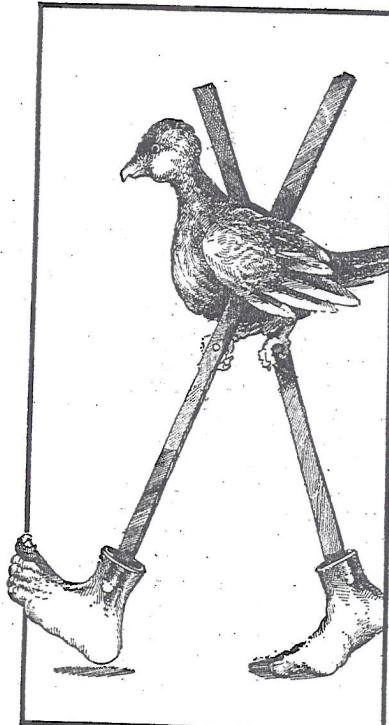
A Logical Next Step

To the Editor:

In his address to the nation on the Vietnam peace negotiations, President Nixon said the following: "Honest and patriotic Americans have disagreed as to whether we should have become involved at all nine years ago."

Would it not be a logical next step, in view of the President's statement, to declare an amnesty for all the "honest and patriotic Americans" who felt they could not serve in this war?

MORRIS PEARLMUTTER, M.D.
New York, Jan. 26, 1972



Dover Books/Jan Faust

The Forgotten Nations

To the Editor:

There is much in the Indochina proposals of President Nixon for peace lovers to rejoice over, but there remains one discrepancy which leaves their acceptance much in doubt.

This is the fact that, although the President proposes a substantially just political solution in Vietnam, he offers no comparable settlement in the other countries of Indochina where he is calling for a cessation of hostilities. By linking a cease-fire in these countries to a political settlement in Vietnam, he adds a note of unreality to his plan.

Those who are fighting for what they consider their rights in Cambodia and Laos are not going to be persuaded to lay down their arms because justice obtains in Vietnam.

JEAN G. BRAUN
Cleveland Heights, Ohio, Jan. 26, 1972

Who's Above Politics?

To the Editor:

Politicians base decisions on the politics of situations. All politicians, not just the President of the United States.

President Nixon's critics have charged him with doing nothing to end the war, a charge designed to further their own political desires, which include replacing him.

So Mr. Nixon announced publicly that secret meetings had been held with the Communists since 1969. He said the United States offered to set a withdrawal date as early as last May. The President was damned by Senator Hartke for "dealing in darkness to save his own face" and by Senator McGovern for "running the war to suit his election timetable."

Mr. Hartke implies he would not have conducted private negotiations if he had been President, and Senator McGovern implies no decision of his would ever be based on the effect it might have on his re-election. Would these critics and others from both parties have us believe their actions would not be based on the politics of situations?

There can be little doubt that President Nixon's actions have political overtones. He is running for office. But Senators and other candidates only exercise their hypocrisy when they indicate they are somehow above politics.

MICHAEL A. MAUS
Ridgewood, N. J., Jan. 26, 1972

Silence and Honor

To the Editor:

"Nothing is served by silence," said the President in his televised address, "when the other side exploits our good faith to divide America and to avoid the conference table." Our nation's honor would have been served by silence.

I do not defend "the other side"; Hanoi has exploited negotiation for propaganda. But the fact remains that the Administration agreed to private negotiations. Hanoi's nine-point plan, revealed by Mr. Nixon, was offered in confidence. Aside from the question of simple honesty, the violation of privacy could raise practical problems. What nation will trust American discretion now? Ironically, Mr. Nixon broke the terms of negotiation to support his claim of good faith.

Open talks deadlocked over the shape of the conference table, then crumbled into propaganda forums. Private talks deadlocked; now privacy is broken. Is there a proper American role in the negotiations—or, for that matter, the war?

I am not Vietnamese. I do not pretend to know whether Vietnam would be better united or divided North and South. It is not an American question.

FREDERICK G. KUHN, JR.

Spring Valley, N.Y., Jan. 27, 1972

A Question of Trust

To the Editor:

President Nixon has pinpointed the predicament in which the U. S. Government finds itself in Indochina. The President's proposals are indeed generous and far-reaching. They provide for a political as well as a military end to the war. In fact, they are quite similar to the McCarthy platform rejected by the Democratic National Convention in 1968. The only element lacking is trust.

Undoubtedly, if President Nixon had made such proposals in the spring of 1968, Hanoi would not have hesitated to accept them. But the President had a "secret plan" to end the war. It consisted of a dramatic increase in the use of tactical bombing throughout Indochina, spreading the war to Laos and Cambodia so as to take the pressure off withdrawing American troops and increased military aid to the puppet governments of Southeast Asia. It included the use of peace negotiations as a tactical weapon in the military involvement.

Prior to the invasion of Cambodia, the U. S. rejected forthrightly a proposal for a cease-fire. The following autumn, with the Communist supply lines disrupted, the President proposed a bilateral cease-fire. It was rejected by the Vietnamese as well as the American people in the Congressional elections. The element of trust was lacking.

Now, in 1972, an election year, the President asks for trust from "the enemy." At a time when the popular forces are at a supreme military advantage, the President asks for trust. The North Vietnamese are in virtual control in Laos, the Cambodian Lon Nol Government is on the brink of collapse, the South Vietnamese Army is clearly inferior to its opposition and the U. S. tactical bombers are insufficient to stem the rising tide. At this time the President demands trust.

In 1954 Ho Chi Minh took the road of peace and chose an executory agreement that provided for free elections and neutrality in his country. The elections were never held and the neutrality was never honored by the U.S. Government.

What guarantees does the 1972 Hanoi Government have that history will not repeat itself, that Mr. Nixon is genuine in his desire for peace and neutrality in Southeast Asia, that the U. S. can be trusted? IRA SCHNEIDER
Far Rockaway, N. Y., Jan. 26, 1972

Prelude to Devastation?

To the Editor:

I find it disturbing that some of the Democratic Presidential candidates were taken in by President Nixon's "new" peace plan. Although Mr. Nixon did not mention it in his speech, point five of the eight-point proposal would require North Vietnam to withdraw all its forces from South Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia. This is in essence the same six-month mutual withdrawal plan offered by President Johnson. He also offered "free" elections.

I fear that there is another secret purpose to Dr. Kissinger's Paris visits, which was not revealed by the President but was alluded to in the last lines of his speech. Namely, to convey what the President's response will be to a new all-out offensive by North Vietnam. Clearly, our threatened response could only involve a dramatic enlargement of the air war, which, according to the Cornell Air War Study, is still continuing at a rate greater than the average bombing rate in World War II. I have heard rumors that the Kissinger-threatened retaliation is an all-out bombing of Hanoi and Haiphong.

If a new Tet offensive is successful, I fear that Dr. Kissinger's desire to insure the credibility of our deterrents will lead to the destruction of Hanoi and Haiphong along with the lives of many more innocent civilians. Perhaps Congress, if it acts fast, could prevent such a devastating climax to the Greek tragedy in which we are unwillingly trapped.

(Prof.) JAY OREAR

Physics Department, Cornell U.
Ithaca, N. Y., Jan. 26, 1972

Revelations for Peking

To the Editor:

I would like to add two questions to the commentary on the President's speech concerning Indochina. Were the revelations partly an attempt to convince China of American willingness to leave Indochina so that a deal could be arranged whereby China withdraws material support for Indochinese Communists in return for American trade?

Secondly, if the thousands of unregistered members of the National Liberation Front accept President Nixon's suggestion that they sign up to vote, won't President Thieu's forces imprison them?

RICK FOGG
Cambridge, Mass., Jan. 28, 1972

Editorials on the President's peace plan appeared Jan. 26, 27 and 30.