

# Saigon Backs Nixon Plan and Reoffers Elections

By ALVIN SHUSTER  
Special to The New York Times

SAIGON, South Vietnam, Oct. 3—The South Vietnamese Government backed President Nixon's new peace proposals today and repeated its offer of free elections supervised by a commission that would include the Vietnamese Communists.

In a statement issued five hours after Mr. Nixon announced his cease-fire package, the Saigon Government called on North Vietnam to end "its absurd and arrogant demands for preconditions to be fulfilled by our side which are tantamount to our surrender." It expressed hope that the Communists would now begin "serious discussions."

The statement came before North Vietnam's delegation to the peace talks in Paris denounced President Nixon's proposals, and there was no immediate reaction in Saigon tonight to the developments in Paris.

If President Nguyen Van Thieu and his aides were unhappy over some aspects of Mr. Nixon's plan, they did not show it today. But neither did they show any notable enthusiasm.

## Bunker Again a Visitor

After meeting with the United States Ambassador, Ellsworth Bunker, for the third successive day, President Thieu conferred all morning with his aides. The statement later issued was not in President Thieu's name but rather in that of the Government of the Republic of Vietnam.

President Thieu has previously indicated his skepticism over various cease-fire proposals and has stressed the need for a series of conditions before a truce. When he last outlined his views for a standstill cease-fire on July 31, he said, for example, that his speech was not "intended to accept a cease-fire under whatever form."

United States officials stressed this morning, however, that the Nixon proposals had been worked out in close consultation with President Thieu and that his Government "was completely on board and made no exceptions."

Some observers said that among the points that might have given Mr. Thieu pause—apart from the cease-fire mechanism—were the proposals for a negotiated timetable for the complete withdrawal of United States troops as well as the call

for an Indochina peace conference.

Mr. Thieu has often expressed misgivings about an early withdrawal of all American troops, saying that South Vietnam would need American support and logistics forces for several years. He undoubtedly has received assurances from American officials that any withdrawal would not leave him militarily jeopardized because it would be accompanied by a comprehensive peace settlement.

On the subject of an expanded peace conference, Mr. Thieu has previously indicated that he saw no purpose in bringing in such powers as the Soviet Union and China, as apparently is envisaged now in Washington. The Saigon Government statement today made no reference to non-Vietnamese pow-

ers other than Cambodia and Laos.

In general, the Nixon proposals were welcomed by political figures in Saigon as representing important strides toward peace. Government supporters, however, also expressed concern that the United States might be prepared to compromise the Thieu Government out of office.

During the negotiations with President Thieu, however, United States officials restated Washington's opposition to an imposed coalition and to the removal of President Thieu as a precondition for meaningful talks. American officials said again today that the United States would not agree to the ouster of the top leaders of the Thieu Government, except by elections.

In its statement, the South Vietnamese Government reiterated its offer of free elections "under adequate guarantees" and its proposal for a "mixed electoral commission, in which representatives of the other side can participate to assure equal opportunities to all candidates in the campaigning and to see that people vote absolutely freely."

## Cambodia Quiet on Plan

Special to The New York Times

PNOMPENH, Cambodia, Oct. 8—

Twelve hours after President Nixon's speech on peace in Indochina, the Cambodian press and Government-controlled radio had not yet presented the proposal to the public.

Knowledgeable diplomatic sources said that the Cambodian leaders had been consulted in advance and had given their assent to the President's plan.

However, Cambodian sources emphasized that they did not interpret the President's suggestion for an expanded peace conference as a proposal that the Government of Premier Lon Nol should negotiate with representatives of the Peking-based government of Prince Norodom Sihanouk, deposed Chief of State.

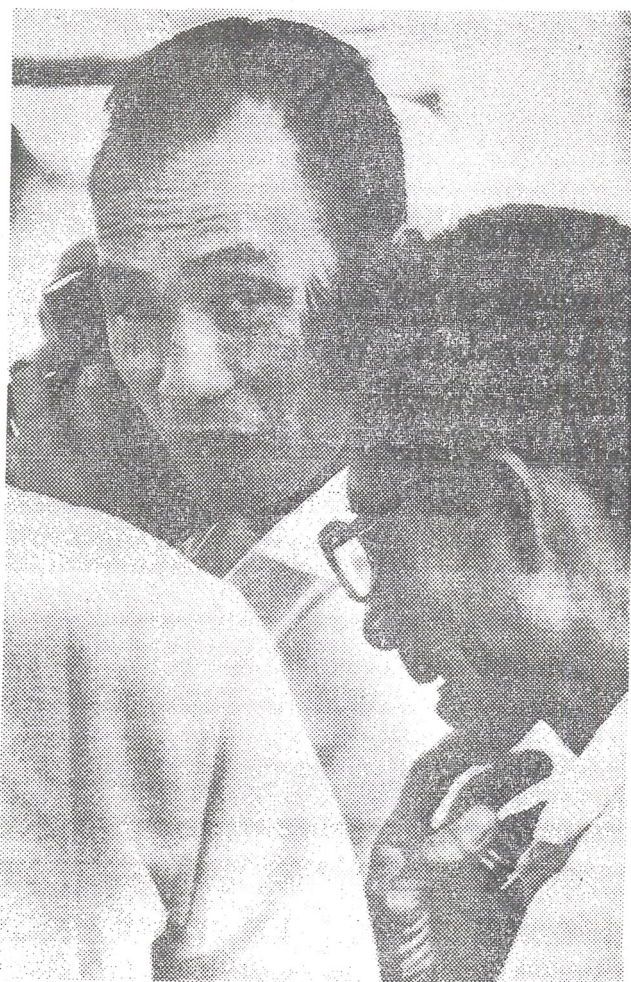
Diplomatic sources said that Cambodia's leaders favored the cease-fire plan, which would leave enemy troops in their present position. Cambodians, however, indicated dissatisfaction with anything less than the withdrawal of all foreign troops—North and South Vietnamese—from this country.

## Laos Hails Proposal

VIENTIANE, Laos, Oct. 8 (Agence France-Presse)—The Laotian Government today hailed President Nixon's peace proposals as "very reasonable" and said it believed they would facilitate the settlement of the Laotian crisis.

Minister of Interior Phagna Phens Phongsavan said here that his Government favored the idea of an international conference on Indochina but that first "We must arrive at an understanding with the Pathet Lao," the Communist-led rebels in the Laotian civil war.

He said that if there was a cease-fire in Indochina, "Prospects for peace in this part of the world are good."



United Press International

LEARN OF NIXON'S PROPOSALS: South Vietnamese in Saigon listen to radio report of the President's speech.

NYT 10-9-70