

HANOI IS SIGNALING U.S. ON TAKE-OVER

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Asserts It Is Not Trying to
Humiliate Washington in
Assumption of Control
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WASHINGTON, April 23—

The North Vietnamese and Vietcong have told Washington through intermediaries that they do not wish to humiliate the United States in the coming days, but have refused to say anything else, even whether they are prepared to negotiate or on what terms, according to authoritative Administration officials.

Hanoi has frequently said over the years that it does not want to humiliate Washington, without explaining further. It is assumed to mean that if Washington accepts a Communist take-over of South Vietnam, Hanoi would do what it could to "save American face."

The Administration officials maintained that the United States was essentially asking North Vietnam and the Provisional Revolutionary Government for safety and evacuation guarantees for American citizens, their dependents and an unspecified number of South Vietnamese.

One official said: "They won't even tell us whether they

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want any sort of American diplomatic presence in Saigon after they take over."

The officials said that the United States had not sought and was not in direct contact with Hanoi or the Vietcong because Secretary of State Kissinger feels that "no purpose" would be served by such contacts other than to legitimize the Communist take-over of South Vietnam.

Mr. Kissinger is said to believe that the Saigon Government of President Tram Van Huong will last only a few days. He is known to expect that the regime will undergo several changes before one is established that will be acceptable to the Communist side.

The speculation is that Lieut. Gen. Duong Van Minh, known to Americans as Big Minh, will be the choice. General Minh headed the group that overthrew President Ngo Dinh Diem in November, 1963.

In Paris today, the Vietcong rejected appeals from the new Saigon Government for a cease-fire and new peace talks. A spokesman for the Provisional Revolutionary Government repeated demands for "total cessation of United States military interference in South Vietnam" and a Saigon Government sincerely desiring "peace and independence and national reconciliation."

French Being Encouraged

The new Saigon proposal went beyond the position of former President Nguyen Van Thieu by stating willingness to talk about establishing a National Council of National Reconciliation and Concord as called for in the 1973 Paris accords. The council would include Vietcong and neutralist representatives.

There was an ominous warning from the Hanoi radio today. Referring to the American force now off South Vietnam "to save its henchmen, prolong the war and interfere in the internal affairs of South Vietnam," the broadcast said, "This adventurous course of action may lead to disastrous consequences."

Discussing indirect contacts with Hanoi, Administration officials would not say which nations were serving as intermediaries for Washington. They did say, however, that the intermediaries were not the Soviet Union, China, France or the United Nations.

"The French are basically acting on their own," one official explained, "but we are encouraging their efforts. And still nothing from Moscow and Peking."

The officials said that while the intelligence community was telling Mr. Kissinger that the Communists would take Saigon by force, he was going on the assumption that some kind of diplomacy might be possible.

Mr. Kissinger is said to discount the latest intelligence judgment because it almost completely reverses the position of a week ago. At that time, the estimate was that the odds were sharply against a Communist storming of Saigon. He is said to feel that the intelligence services, and particularly the Central Intelligence Agency, may be trying to protect their record in the event that the worst happens.

Use of Vietcong

He thinks that Hanoi may want to support its assertion that it has no troops in South Vietnam and therefore may wait until an acceptable coalition government assumes power in Saigon, then send just Vietcong troops into the city.

One official said that based on this reasoning and on the possibility that Hanoi might prefer an orderly take-over of Saigon, Mr. Kissinger has been trying to signal the Communists that it is in their interest to wait.

He said at a House committee meeting Friday, "The negotiating process has its own logic that will become apparent." The official said that in effect, Mr. Kissinger was telling Hanoi that if its attack on Saigon was delayed, a Saigon government might soon be formed that would negotiate an orderly transfer of power.

Mr. Kissinger is also said to think that Hanoi might prefer to have the United States evacuate a significant number of South Vietnamese rather than for Hanoi to have to kill them or have to live with security risks.

There is also the possibility that Hanoi might want to avoid the appearance of a bloodbath in Saigon with the world community as witness.

Saigon Plea Rejected in Paris

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PARIS, April 23—A Saigon appeal for an immediate cease-fire and negotiation with the Vietcong to set up a coalition authority was rejected here today by the Provisional Revolutionary Government delegation.

The South Vietnam Embassy said the plea was made in notes to all the signers of the Paris truce accords.

The rejection came in a written declaration sharply attacking both President Tran Van Huong and the United States Government.