

A Stiffer Nixon Stand on Vietnam

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WASHINGTON, July 31—In their effort to counter speculation that the allies are preparing to make new concessions in the Vietnam talks, both President Nixon and President Nguyen Van Thieu of South Vietnam have indicated in the last 24 hours how little they expect from the next phase of negotiations in Paris. When Mr. Nixon announced on July 1 that he was sending a senior diplomat, David K. E. Bruce, to head the American delegation, he emphasized American "flexibility" and referred to the "new instructions" that Mr. Bruce would be carrying.

Analysis News

But, with Mr. Bruce set to undertake his first actual negotiating sessions next week, Mr. Nixon has toughened his language and many in this capital think the Administration's negotiating position is harder than it was last year.

Limits Negotiations

At his news conference in Los Angeles last night, Mr. Nixon came publicly into line with President Thieu more clearly than ever before on the question of a political settlement. "We are opposed to a coalition government, negotiated or imposed," he said.

For months this has been Saigon's position. But Mr. Nixon had been careful until last night to say merely that he opposed an "imposed coalition," as demanded by the North Vietnamese and the National Liberation Front of the Vietcong guerrillars.

That had left the possibility that the United States, with the acquiescence of Saigon, might some time privately strike a bargain with Hanoi in Paris over the distribution of seats

in a postwar coalition government, just as the Kennedy Administration privately arranged the composition of the coalition government in Laos in 1962.

In his remarks last night, Mr. Nixon did not shut the door irrevocably to that approach, but he came closer to doing so than ever before and the general tenor of his remarks showed no disposition to relent on that or any other point.

Thus, Saigon and Washington have left Hanoi and the National Liberation Front only one real avenue for negotiating the way to some share of political power — elections open to the front, a proposal continually rejected by the other side. Both Mr. Nixon and Mr. Thieu are on record as saying they will accept the results of such elections even if the elections procedure some coalition. But privately, American and South Vietnamese officials seem confident that the Communists can not win their way to power at the polls.

To some observers, Mr. Nixon's remarks on the military situation hardly seemed calculated to set an atmosphere for give-and-take in Paris.

"As a result of our Cambodian operation, the enemy position is weaker than it was before," Mr. Nixon bluntly remarked. That comment, predictably, stung Hanoi's spokesmen into an angry response today.

Cease-fire Discussed

There was marked contrast between Mr. Nixon's stern tone on Vietnam and his conciliatory, even sympathetic, comments on the Soviet Union's position in the strategic arms talks in Vienna. Whether intentional or not, the impression left was that Mr. Nixon was eager to woo the Russians into an agreement on limiting nuclear arsenals but that he was prepared to stand firm on tough terms in Vietnam.

The one visible opening left for negotiators in Paris by President Thieu in his speech today was the possibility of a negotiated cease-fire.

Until now, allied negotiators have talked of a cease-fire only

as part of an over-all agreement on withdrawal of outside military forces, but not as a separate proposal. Today, Mr. Thieu said he was willing to see a general cease-fire come into effect before an over-all peace settlement.

But in spite of the assurances from Washington that his position in Saigon would not be undercut in the Paris talks, Mr. Thieu felt it necessary to hedge this offer with careful conditions—effective supervision and no military advantage for the enemy.

More important, he said, he could not accept a standstill cease-fire if that left the Vietcong in control of scattered areas of South Vietnam, because this would be the first step toward a coalition government. With that condition, Mr. Thieu seemed to remove the most important incentive for Communist negotiators to consider the idea.