

The Thin Line: Settlement or Surrender

By HENRY PAOLUCCI

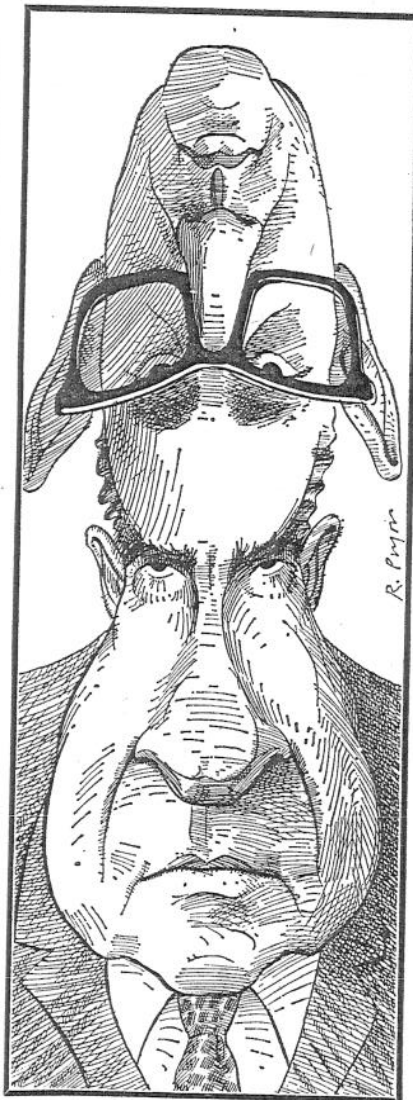
How far to the left has President Nixon moved in his quest for "peace" in Vietnam? He has himself said that if he took a single step further to the left, he would be in the camp of the enemy whose combat-fire has already killed over 45,000 American soldiers.

President Nixon is deluded if he thinks history will not charge him with having lost a war and humiliating this nation in the eyes of the world. His latest peace plan closely parallels the peace plan offered to the Allied powers by Italy's little King in 1943, after he broke with Mussolini. The Italian King offered to give the Allies all they wanted compatible with "Italian honor." But the Allies insisted on unconditional surrender; they insisted that, in addition to giving up, the King would have to declare war on his German allies. To her disgrace, petty-monarchic Italy did just that.

How close to being America's little leftist monarch has Nixon become? Characterizing his latest "peace" offer, the President has said: "The only thing this plan does not do is join the enemy to overthrow our ally, which the United States of America will never do. If the enemy wants peace, it will have to recognize the important difference between settlement and surrender."

The fine professional hand of Henry Kissinger is discernible in that distinction between settlement and surrender. Surrender, here, obviously means "unconditional surrender," while settlement is used as a euphemism for "conditional surrender."

In his first "on the record" news conference, Secret Agent Henry Kissinger explained why the Nixon Administration refused to submit to the nine-point North Vietnamese peace plan of June 26, 1971. "One of the nine points," he said, "is a demand for



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reparations. We told them that while we would not include reparations as part of a settlement, we would give a voluntary massive reconstruction pro-

gram for all of Indochina in which North Vietnam could share to the extent of several billion dollars." In other words, the Nixon Administration is prepared to pay reparations, like a defeated country, provided they are not called reparations and included as such in the "settlement."

Kissinger defined the limits of America's willingness to surrender (just short of unconditionally) in the following terms: "They are asking us to align ourselves with them, to overthrow the people that have been counting on us in South Vietnam. They are asking us to accomplish [their ends] for them. If we will not do it for them, then the longer the war continues the worse that situation gets which they are trying to avoid, and they may settle for a political process which gives them less than 100 per cent guarantee but a fair crack at the political issue."

In other words, short of unconditional American surrender, the North Vietnamese Communists cannot hope to get more for themselves than the Nixon peace plan offers. We repeat: a single step to the left of where Nixon stands today would take him, like the little King of Italy in 1943, into the camp of the enemy as a cobelligerent.

How low have the mighty fallen! Nixon has had a Metternichian adviser constantly at his ear. He has therefore been reduced to thinking and acting like the head of a third-rate power—like a 19th-century Austrian "emperor"—trying to eke out an existence in the crevices of *realpolitik*. Or, as the tough-minded French critic André Malraux recently summed it up: "President Nixon maneuvers as if he were the President of Luxembourg."

Henry Paolucci is professor of political science at St. John's University and vice chairman of the New York Conservative party.