

Excerpts From Kissinger's News Conference

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Jan. 26—Following are excerpts from the news conference held today by Henry A. Kissinger, assistant to the President for national security affairs, on Mr. Nixon's eight-point proposal for peace in Indochina:

OPENING STATEMENT

I wanted to say something first of all about the spirit in which we approached these secret negotiations, then I want to tell you where we stand, in our judgment, and then I will take your questions.

As you remember from the many briefings that we have had on Vietnam, there has been no issue of greater concern to this Administration than to end the war in Vietnam on a negotiated basis. We have done so because of what we felt the war was doing to us as a people and because we felt that it was essential that whatever differences that may have existed about how we ended the war and how we conducted the war, that we ended it in a way that showed that we had been fair, that we had been reasonable and that all concerned people could support.

We have not approached these negotiations in order to score debating points. We have not conducted these negotiations in order to gain any domestic benefits. In the very first meeting that we conducted with the other side, we mentioned these principles: We said, one, we want a just settlement. Secondly, we recognize you will be there after we have left and, therefore, it is in our interest that we make a settlement that you will want to keep.

The note which we transmitted with our Oct. 11 proposal read as follows:

"At the Sept. 13 meeting, Minister Xuan Thuy stated that the U.S. side should review the various suggestions made by the North Vietnamese. The North Vietnamese side has also said that it would be forthcoming if a generous proposal is made by the U.S. side. The U.S. believe that this new proposal — "which is the one we made yesterday, more or less"—goes to the limits of possible generosity and fully takes into account North Vietnamese propositions. The United States hopes that the North Vietnamese response will reflect the same attitude. Dr. Kissinger is prepared to meet on Nov. 1 with Mr. Le Duc Tho or some other appropriate official from Hanoi together with Minister Xuan Thuy. He will be prepared at that meeting also to take into account other points that have been discussed in previous meetings in this channel."

In other words, we were not offering it on a take-it-or-leave-it basis.

"In the interim, it is expected that both sides will refrain from bringing pressure from public statements which can only serve to complicate the situation."

This was to avoid having a public and secret proposal simultaneously.

"The U. S. side is putting forth these proposals as one last attempt to negotiate a just settlement before the end of 1971."

In other words, this was not a bellicose take-it-or-leave-it statement.

"The North Vietnamese, in an Oct. 26, 1971, message, said that special adviser Le Duc Tho and Minister Xuan Thuy agree to meet with Dr. Kissinger on Nov. 20, 1971. The U. S. side accepted this date.

JANUARY 27, 1972

on the President's Peace

Plan Proposal

The Tone and the Spirit

"On Nov. 17, 1971, the North Vietnamese side informed the U. S. side that special adviser Le Duc Tho was now ill and unable to attend the Nov. 20 meeting. The U. S. side regrets his illness. Under these circumstances, no point would be served by a meeting.

"The U. S. side stands ready to meet with special adviser Le Duc Tho or any other representative of the North Vietnamese political leadership, together with Minister Xuan Thuy, in order to bring a rapid end to the war on a basis just to all parties. It will wait to hear recommendations from the North Vietnamese side as to a suitable date."

I mention these to indicate the tone and the spirit in which we have attempted to approach this issue, and the tone and the spirit in which we would like to conduct the domestic debate in this country, because we think the issue is much too important for anyone to win or lose simply a tactical argument.

Now then, ladies and gentlemen, let me tell you where I believe we stand today, how we got there and what the remaining issues are.

You are all familiar with the proposal that the President advanced in his address yesterday.

I will not discuss the six private meetings that took place in 1969 and 1970 because they are not relevant to our immediate concern, even though they too invariably broke down on the same issue that has characterized these. But let me talk about the six private meetings that took place in 1971, on May 31, June 26, July 12, July 26, Aug. 16 and Sept. 13.

On May 31 we proposed a withdrawal of American forces. We were prepared to set a deadline for the withdrawal of American forces in return for a cease-fire and the exchange of prisoners. This was the first time that the United States had indicated a willingness to set a date, the first time that the United States had indicated that it was prepared to do so unilaterally — that is to say, without an equivalent assurance of withdrawal from the other side.

Political Elements Required

Things moved so fast that the breakthroughs of one year tend to be overlooked the following year. The North Vietnamese response was not that there was this or that element of the proposal that was unacceptable. They did not say, "Cease-fire is difficult for us." The North Vietnamese said that any proposal that did not include political elements could not even be negotiated. So our attempt to negotiate the military issue separately was simply rejected.

The North Vietnamese, I repeat, insisted that any settlement had to include political aspects. Ladies and gentlemen, I have noticed in some commentaries a reference to the fact that our proposal yesterday is complex; why didn't we put forward a simplified proposal?

We put forward a simplified proposal. It was not negotiated. It is the other side which has insisted that the only possible proposal is one that in-

cludes the political elements. I may say that this is the one position, or one of the positions, which they have never altered, on which they have never shown the slightest give, and it is, therefore, our attempt to accommodate to their position, not our attempt to complicate the situation, that accounts for the nature of our proposal yesterday.

Now then, as we told you yesterday, at the next private meeting, on June 26, they put forward their nine-point proposal which, indeed, linked together the political and military issues.

Now, consistent with our attempt to protect the confidentiality of these negotiations to the maximum, we are not releasing their nine-point proposal.

In any event, I will say that if the other side wishes to release its nine-point proposal, we have no objection. As the President pointed out to you yesterday, four days later the other side published a seven-point proposal which presented us with a slight difficulty: that we had a secret proposal in the private channel and a public proposal in the public channel; that we were accused of not responding to the public proposal while we were negotiating the private proposal.

I was asked yesterday what the difference is between the nine- and seven-point proposals. I will sum it up as follows:

First, the grammar of the nine points is somewhat easier to grasp for the American mind. It is less ambiguous because it was not intended for publication, and, therefore, from a negotiating point of view, as one was negotiating it, the formulations were simply quite different, even when the substance was the same. On a number of issues the substance was the same although the formulation was different.

On the political solution, that is, on the political content of the future of South Vietnam, the seven points are more more detailed than the nine points.

On the cease-fire the nine points are more detailed than the seven points; indeed, the seven points, in effect, are a truce made with American forces while we withdraw. The nine points are a cease-fire, in our sense, to be concluded together with the over-all settlement. So, therefore, the cease-fire is not in itself an issue in the negotiations, the principle of the cease-fire.

In One but Not the Other

Then there are some points covered in the nine points that are not covered in the seven points, such as international supervision, respect for the Geneva accords of 1954 and 1962 and a general statement about the problems of Indochina.

I have gone into this detail because at the June 26 meeting we agreed, contrary to our May 31 proposal, that we would lump the political and military issues together; that is to say, we accepted the nine points as a basis for negotiation, and from then on every American proposal has followed the sequence and the subject matter of the nine points.

Now, you can ask me, "Why do we have eight and they have nine if we have followed the sequence and the subject matter of their points?" The answer is, One of their nine points is a demand for reparations as part of a settlement, as it is, indeed, in the seven points. We took the position that we could not, in honor, make a peace settlement in which we would be obligated under the terms of the peace settlement to pay reparations.

We did, however, tell the other side that while we would not include the reparations as part of the peace settlement, we could give and undertake a voluntary undertaking by the President that there would be a massive reconstruction program for all of Indochina in which North Vietnam could share to the extent of several billion dollars.

So this is the only difference in the sequence and in the contents of the points. Therefore, if you want to know why do we have eight points, why are they complex, why did we follow them in this sequence, it is our attempt not to be complicated but our attempt to be conciliatory. It is our attempt to go the extra mile.

Date for Pullout Prescribed

We then tabled an eight-point proposal, and now you understand why it was eight points, on Aug. 16.

That proposal set a date for withdrawal which was nine months after signing an agreement, or to put it another way, we said, "We are prepared to withdraw by Aug. 1, 1972, provided an agreement is reached by Nov. 1, 1971." It included specific proposals for American neutrality in the forthcoming South Vietnamese elections, and for the first time introduced a number of political principles, such as a declaration of the American willingness to limit our aid to South Vietnam if North Vietnam would agree to a limitation; and secondly, it agreed to the principle of nonalignment for South Vietnam as long as all the other countries of Indochina agreed to the principle of nonalignment.

We pointed out that the publication of such principles was, in itself, a political fact and would in itself affect the political evolution, and we formally stated that we were prepared to have an economic reconstruction program along the lines of what had been orally discussed before.

This was turned down on Sept. 13, essentially on two grounds—that the withdrawal date was too long and that we had been unclear about how we defined total withdrawal, that is to say, whether any forces would remain in an individual capacity, and secondly, on the ground that a simple declaration of American political neutrality while the existing Government stayed in office would not overcome the advantage of the existing Government in running and being in office.

We therefore reflected about these two objections and we submitted, in early October, Oct. 11, the proposal which you have, essentially, before you, indicating that we were prepared to implement it in stages.

Yesterday's proposal is essentially the proposal we made Oct. 11, to which we have never had a response. It added, as a new element, the public commitment of the United States and of the Government of South Vietnam, which is a crucial new element, because it

is of profound significance to the political evolution of South Vietnam.

So this is where we are today.

Now, let me sum up what the two contentious issues are so that we can narrow the debate. There is no debate—I have watched some commentaries and read some newspapers—about the cease-fire as part of the settlement. We may well differ about how we define the issue.

In fact, of the nine points of the cease-fire, but that is not a contentious other side, seven have been more or less—I don't want to say agreed to, but the differences have been narrowed to manageable proportions. There are two issues: One is the withdrawal, the other is the political evolution.

Ambiguity on 'Date Certain'

With respect to the withdrawal, there is an ambiguity about the word "date certain." The North Vietnamese position is that we should set a date, that we will implement it, regardless of what else happens, regardless of how they negotiate their own proposal. In other words, that we should get out unilaterally.

Moreover, they define withdrawal not just as the withdrawal of American forces but the withdrawal of all American equipment, all economic aid, all military aid, which is, in considering the fact that they receive from \$800-million to \$1-billion worth of aid from their allies, a prescription for a unilateral term.

On the political evolution, our basic principle has been a principle we have been prepared to sign together with them, that we are not committed to any one political structure or government in South Vietnam. Our principle has been that we want a political evolution that gives the people of South Vietnam a genuine opportunity to express their preferences.

The North Vietnamese position has been that they want us to agree with them, first, on replacing the existing Government and, secondly, on a structure in which the probability of their taking over is close to certainty.

They want us, in other words, to do in the political field the same thing that they are asking us to do in the military field—to negotiate the terms of the turnover to them, regardless of what the people may think.

Now, the North Vietnamese had proved to be masters in ambiguity.

Throughout these months while we were negotiating the nine points and they were lacerating us for not responding to the seven points, successions of Americans came back from Paris saying that they knew that if we would just make a proposal in the military field this would unlock the door. At the precise moment they had told us, with even greater repetitiveness than I am capable of, that there was no solution that did not include a political element; that there was no military proposal, as indeed, they have now said publicly to The New York Times and yesterday in anticipation of what they thought might be the President's proposal last night.

The Heart of the Question

The issue is to us: We are prepared, in all conscience and in all seriousness, to negotiate with them immediately any scheme that any reasonable person can say leaves open the political future of South Vietnam to the people of South Vietnam, just as we are not prepared to withdraw without knowing anything at all of what is going to happen next. So we are not prepared to end this war by turning over the Government of South Vietnam as part of a political deal.

We are prepared to have a political process in which they can have a chance of winning which is not loaded in any direction.

Now, there has been some question of, "Did they ask us to replace or overthrow"—or whatever the word is—"the existing Government in South Vietnam?"

One, an indirect overthrow of the Government; that is to say, that we have to withdraw. The way they phrase it, we would have to withdraw all American equipment, even that which the South Vietnamese Army has. They have asked us to withdraw all equipment, all future military aid, all future economic aid, and the practical consequence of that proposal, while they are receiving close to \$1-billion worth of foreign aid, would be the indirect overthrow of the Government of South Vietnam, something about which there can be no question.

But they have further asked us, and we do not want to be forced to prove it, to change the Government directly, generously leaving the method to us, and, therefore, the President's statement was true and is supportable.

So this is where we stand today. I am sorry that I have taken so much time in explaining it, but I think it is important that we understand what the issues are and that we debate them in the spirit in which we have tried to advance them, which is to find a just settlement that can bring real peace to Indochina and that can unite our own people.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Q. Knowing the attitude now of the North Vietnamese as you do, could you give us a prognosis of what you expect the full exposure of the secret negotiations really to accomplish, beyond what I think you have implied here, of composing some of the domestic disharmony that has been caused by the Vietnam war?

A. Of course, we would have to say that composing the domestic disharmony is a very major objective of our entire policy. If we can end the war that has divided us so much as a united people and with some dignity, then that is of very profound significance for America.

So we admit, this is one motive. The other is, we had reached a point at which our public and our private positions were diverging so much that rather than accelerating a settlement, the secret negotiations had the practical consequences of making it more difficult.

We are in a situation in which we were being pressed by sincere Americans at least to answer a proposal which we were already dealing with and in which a whole liturgy was developing on the negotiations with perfect good faith, and in which the resulting division made the other side believe that the negotiations really were a form more of psychological warfare than of negotiations.

Thirdly, it is conceivable to us, since the Vietnamese did not survive 2,000 years under foreign pressure by developing qualities of excessive trust in foreigners, it is conceivable to us that they may have considered our proposals of Oct. 11 a negotiating ploy and, therefore, by making them public and by President Thieu publicly committing himself to this evolution, we added a crucial new ingredient to the situation which we hope may unlock some of the problems.

So, by making the proposal public, and by making clear that we will negotiate it in the spirit with which we transmitted it, that we might force a consideration on Hanoi on a somewhat more urgent basis than when they felt, well, if we don't answer it this month, we will answer it next month.

Why Did the Process Stop?

Q. You described a process of negotiation that was taking place secretly over a period of several months and then it suddenly stopped. You have received no answer from the other side from November on. Why do you think the process stopped?

A. The easy explanation is that they objected to our proposal, but that could not be true, because we submitted our proposal on Oct. 11. We received a rather conciliatory reply, not as to substance but as to the willingness to meet, on Oct. 25, as I recall, in which they pointed out to us that our proposed date of Nov. 1 was not possible and for the first time in our experience with them, even gave us the reasons why it was not possible.

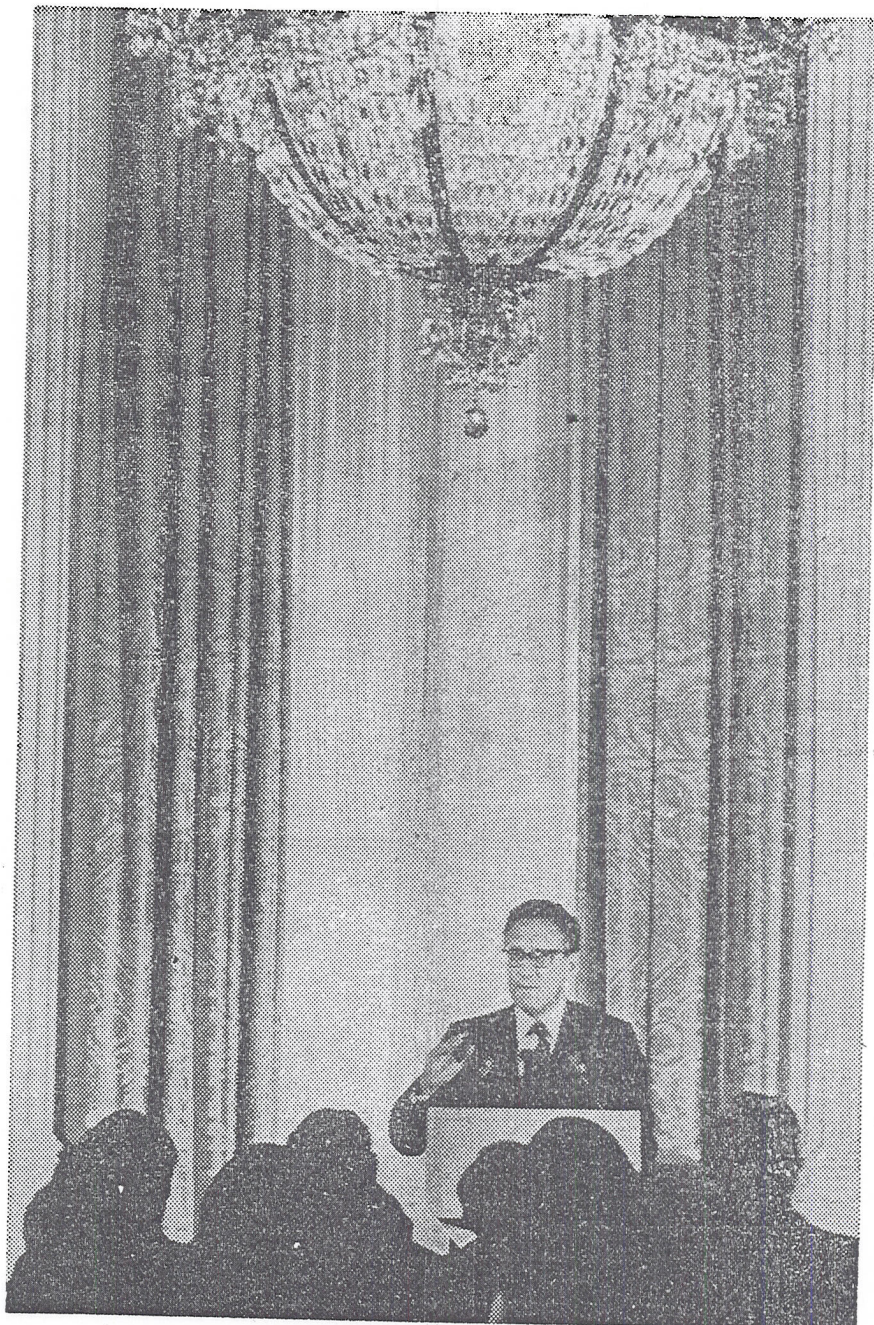
Our experience has been that they would never accept the date we proposed. That has never happened, so they gave us another date and explained why that other date was preferable for them. We accepted that other date, which was Nov. 20.

On Oct. 17, or three days before that meeting, they notified us that Le Duc Tho was ill. Now everyone who has been engaged in these negotiations knows that in his absence no major change can occur. We tested it ourselves in our experience by meeting five times alone with Minister Xuan Thuy, whom we respect. It is no reflection on Minister Xuan Thuy, it is simply a fact of the power relationship in Hanoi, that Le Duc Tho, being a member of the Politburo, has authority that no official of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has.

So, therefore, it is a very interesting question what happened between Oct. 25 and Nov. 17. I don't want to speculate on that, because it is a question that also occupies us.

Q. What have you done to try to contact them to try to get it started again?

A. We have indirectly pointed out to them that the channel was still open through a number of devices that I cannot explain to you but which were



TELLS OF SECRET MEETING: Henry A. Kissinger at news session yesterday

The New York Times

not formal communications. But there can be no question that they can be under no misapprehension that we have been prepared to meet, and I can reiterate that today.

We are still ready to resume talks in either the public or private channels, or by other methods with which they are familiar. So there is no question about our readiness to negotiate.

Q. One, is there any specific significance to the particular timing of this revelation; and, two, given the deterioration of the military situation in Laos and Cambodia and the apparent impending military build-up on the other side for Tet, what prospect, if any, is there for getting them to terms?

Military Setbacks Noted

A. We had always thought that if our negotiations with the other side, our secret negotiations, would not make some significant progress by the time Congress returned, we would owe it to the public and to the Congress to put before them the framework within which negotiations had been conducted. It was not fair to our public debate to engage in a series of battles with the Senate in which we were trying to protect a channel that was not active.

Now, the fact there there may be an offensive impending may add another element to it this sense: This war has to end sometime, and sometime it must end through negotiations. It is not we who are looking for a military victory. We have tried to end it on the basis of the principles which we put before the North Vietnamese months ago. I don't mean the formal principles, but the principles of justice, of recognition that they would be there, of recognition that while they may have reason to be suspicious, we know that if they don't have an interest in maintaining the settlement, we will have a continuation of what happened in 1954.

We believe that we can contain the offensive, and it is even possible, maybe even probable, that the reason they make the offensive is as a prelude to a subsequent negotiation. This at least has been their pattern in 1954 and was their pattern in 1968.

So this is an attempt to say to them once again: "It is not necessary. Let's get the war over with now." But our basic decision was made at a time prior to the event.

Hanoi's Thinking Is Queried

Q. Can you give us, sir, in your judgment, the reason why the North Vietnamese, in dealing with the United States, would insist on the United States reaching comprehensive solutions, including a political solution? Why are they unwilling to negotiate with us, in your judgment, on the military issue and take their chances in settling the political issues with the South Vietnamese?

A. The only explanation which I have, and there may be better ones, is that they apparently are not confident that if military and economic aid continues to South Vietnam that they can win their war with the South Vietnamese, because if they were, there is no reason why they should not accept our proposal, as you indicated. What they are, in effect, asking from us is precisely what the President said yesterday:

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 for them what they seem not confident of being able to achieve for themselves.

Q. Doesn't your interpretation make the prospects rather bleak that they will accept the proposal?

A. No. It makes it bleak that they will accept this proposal as long as they believe we may do it 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.

Q. In view of the criticism you said you endured last year, and in view of your great concern today about undermining the belief of the American people, why did the Administration so vigorously fight things such as the Mansfield amendment and other resolutions of that nature?

A. Because there were many variations of the Mansfield amendment. The difficulty has been that we did not want to give the other side the impression that we were in a position where we were forced to accept the withdrawal demand and not be able to discuss the other aspects, and because the precision of their knowledge of the relative constitutional provisions of balance between the Congress and executive was not so clear.

We did this to maintain the balance. We did inform the Congressional leaders that secret negotiations were going on, but they did not know all the details.

Q. About the time you were opposing the Mansfield resolution, the bombing was also resumed in North Vietnam at the end of December. Could these two things have had any influence on the North Vietnamese to stop the secret talks?

A. The bombings took place five weeks after the reported talk, and when there was an enormous stepup in their infiltration, so that one could say the response to the most sweeping offer we had made was a massive stepup in their infiltration and a move toward a military solution. I think you have cause and effect in the reverse order.

Q. I believe it was said that the new proposals were being accompanied by some alternatives. Are these continuing to be discussed?

A. The new proposal was accompanied, in the speech, first by a renewed offer to discuss the military issues alone, just in case the North Vietnamese have changed their minds on this, which we think is unlikely, but we just want to make sure that this was true; and, secondly, we have offered, on Oct. 11, and we will repeat that offer tomorrow in Paris, a staged approach to the implementation of this agreement by which the withdrawal and exchanges could begin while the other details were still in the process of negotiation, as long as they were completed within the six-month period.