



# Nixon's Peace Offer And the Fall Election

Joseph Alsop

**I**T WAS a major decision for President Nixon to remove the brilliantly successful veil from Dr. Henry A. Kissinger's secret negotiations with the North Vietnamese in Paris. One motive of the decision, virtually admitted later by Kissinger himself, was the menace of the senatorial doves now reassembled in the capital.

But there was another motive of even greater importance. In brief, the American command in Saigon has warned the President of a major North Vietnamese offensive that may well begin within the next few days. And the President believed — and still believes — the warning.

It would have been fruitless for President Nixon to say the vitally important things he had to say, amidst a renewed thunder of gunfire at the front. It would even have risked suggesting to Hanoi that Washington had lost its nerve and feared a defeat. In consequence the facts had to be put before the country without further delay.

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**T**HE MEANING of the facts is plain. On the one hand, 95 per cent of the peace-Democrats' criticism of the Nixon Vietnam policy have been unjustified and misguided. It must have taken some guts, too, for the President to bear the slings and arrows of continuous attack, while knowing all the time about his own great effort to negotiate secretly and very seriously through Kissinger.

On the other hand, the newly revealed facts also make it plain that Hanoi's minimum formula is total American surrender at the end of a long and costly war. If the

Muskies and the Fulbrights, the Mansfields and the Humphreys, the McGoverns and the Hatfields want to go on hammering away, they will be total, proven hypocrites, now, unless they use plain English about it. That means saying:

"An American surrender is exactly what we want. We are eager for the first U.S. defeat in war.

Experience suggests that no U.S. Senator is likely to be quite so forthright. But unless they are forthright, they will in fact be lying to the nation and the world about the results they are aiming for.

Another aspect of the President's speech is undoubtedly more important. In brief, it marks another new stage in the long ugly war in South Vietnam.

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**W**HAT MATTERS now is what happens on the battlefield in the coming North Vietnamese offensive. Although no American combat troops are in position to come to the aid of the South Vietnamese, the able John Paul Vann has confidently predicted "a bloody defeat" for Hanoi.

In that event, still another new phase of the war will open after Hanoi's offensive ebbs away. There can be no other comparable effort by Hanoi, at least during the rest of 1972. Thus the ensuing phase of the war, curiously enough, will therefore center squarely on the American election. For if President Nixon is re-elected, Hanoi cannot possibly hope for a better deal in 1973 than Hanoi has been offered already, with great fairness and patience.