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The Prospects for Vietnam Talks: Nixon Telling Hanoi Time Is Now

which it would be met. Indeed, most military men here believe Hanoi incapable of effective action again so soon, but they have been wrong before and Mr. Nixon is not relying on their judgment alone.

Another Round of Talks

So it is taken for granted here that another round of serious negotiations will occur, and soon. Getting the parties to the table under those circumstances—at least to feel each other out before they abandon diplomacy altogether—will not be difficult. Mr. Kissinger has long predicted an intense round of bargaining for this summer, and the Soviet President, Nikolai V. Podgorny, was not taking sides when he promised to help arrange a favorable climate for the talks.

The central issue of trust remains — especially trust in the terms of future competition for political power in South Vietnam. Mr. Nixon has said the United States will end all acts of force for a supervised cease-fire and the return of prisoners. Hanoi has offered a deal only if it obtains a share of power—the lion's share, Mr. Nixon fears—in Saigon.

Hanoi wants the United States to abandon President Nguyen Van Thieu and his closest associates. Washington sees that as tantamount to the destruction of the South Vietnamese Army, the only effective non-Communist force in the country. Technically, there is some middle ground between the positions, but how far each side moves into that middle ground depends less on diplomacy than on psychology, more on emotion than on jet-plane commotion.