

Rogers: Shriver's Claim a 'Fantasy'

MIAMI BEACH — (UPI) Secretary of State William Rogers said today that if Vietnam peace was possible late in 1968 as Sargent Shriver now says it was, the Democrats and not the Republicans let it slip past.

Speaking to reporters before testifying on the Republican platform, Rogers said again there was nothing to be found in State Department files to support Shriver's claims.

The Democratic vice presidential nominee and former U.S. ambassador to France contends the Nixon administration "blew" an opportunity to make peace when it took office.

Fantasy

Rogers said a search of official records indicated Shriver's charges were "an Alice in Wonderland fantasy."

But if they were true, the secretary added, the democratic administration failed to do anything about the claimed North Vietnamese peace signals during its last three months in office.

"I'm interested in what they were doing during those three months," Rogers said. "I must say I was not clear on what was being said by Mr. Shriver (earlier). Now that it's been clarified, I think it is totally unintelligible."

Rogers said he spoke in 1968 and 1969 to Shriver and



WILLIAM ROGERS
At meeting on platform

both Averell Harriman and Cyrus Vance, the Johnson peace negotiators, and "none of them said anything to me" about a 90 percent North Vietnamese withdrawal from two northern provinces of South Vietnam late in 1968.

Shriver said that was the "signal" of willingness to reduce the level of fighting in the war that the Nixon administration ignored.

Broadsides

"It's turning out that it was not 'peace in the lap' of President Nixon, but peace in the lap of Sargent Shriver, peace in the lap of Averell Harriman and peace in the lap of Cyrus Vance," Rogers said.

Shriver, who opened his campaign today in West Vir-

ginia, where John Kennedy's presidential drive caught fire in 1960, also took verbal broadsides from other Republicans gathering here for the GOP convention next week.

Republican National Committee chairman Robert Dole called the Democratic candidate's charges "preposterous," and Henry Cabot Lodge, who succeeded Harriman as the chief Paris peace negotiator, said no one told him about any such opportunity as Shriver described.

Vice President Agnew characterized the Shriver charges as the "wild statements" of a "very inexperienced" politician.

Shriver's reply to Rogers' previous statements that the State Department had no record of the episode was, "I am sorry if the State Department was so excluded under President Nixon that they didn't know what the record was, but Ambassador Harriman and Ambassador Vance had confirmed to me and they have said it publicly in the last few days that the situation I described was the real situation."