

NY-TIMES

5 OCT 71

A Refusal to Talk?

"I received the impression that most people were unaware . . . of . . . an offer of secret talks by the N.L.F."

By JOHN MENDELSON

LONDON—Frank Allaun, M.P., and I went to Washington last week to present a petition to members of Congress and to the Speaker of the House of Representatives concerning the war in Vietnam. The petition has been signed by 635 parliamentarians in nine countries, including 94 Members of both Houses in the United Kingdom.

In preparation for my visit to Washington, I went to Paris for discussions about the war. I received definite information from sources within the Provisional Government of the South Vietnamese (the N.L.F.) that they had offered secret talks to the American delegation on the subject of bringing the fighting to an end and on the setting up of a "Government of National Well-Being" in Saigon. The United States delegation turned down this offer of secret negotiations.

In Washington, in a discussion with

officials in the State Department, they confirmed that this offer of secret talks had been made by the N.L.F. and had been turned down.

At various receptions and meetings with members of Congress, I received the strong impression that most people were completely unaware of this position. I also found that a considerable number of Congressmen are convinced that President Nixon is determined to end the war in order to win the election. This belief must be shaken if the true position is to be brought home to members of Congress and the American people. The evidence concerning the refusal of the United States Government to engage in real negotiations about a political solution in Saigon may provide a useful instrument in this endeavor.

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