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Tougher U.S. Line in Peace Talks

Porter Hits Back at Foe in Paris Parley

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PARIS, Nov. 11 — A new American policy has been evident at the Vietnam peace talks since the arrival of William J. Porter two months ago as chief United States negotiator.

Mr. Porter, a mild-looking 57-year-old diplomat with long experience in the Arab and Asian worlds, has decided that the Communists have been appealing to public opinion with too much impunity and that it is time to start

hitting back. The new tactics began after the first session he attended, on Sept. 9, and not a session has passed since without the tough new approach being evident in Mr. Porter's remarks.

Mr. Porter has begun to engage in some propaganda work of his own, in the strict dictionary sense of the term—the spread of ideas and information to further a cause or to hurt someone else's cause.

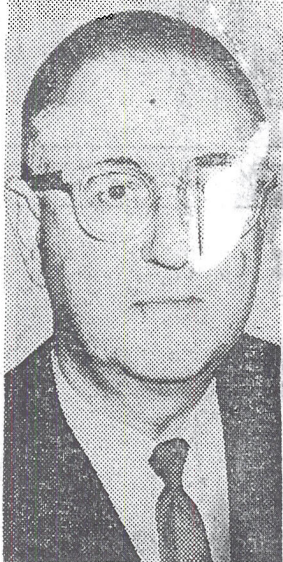
In his previous post as Ambassador to South Korea, he had to deal on occasion with the North Koreans at Panmunjom. Here in Paris Mr. Porter is understood to have analyzed the peace talks up to now as a vain effort by the United States to engage in negotiation with a side bent on using the conference as a propaganda forum by which to impose a one-sided solution.

U.S. Pullout Demanded

That solution was, and still is, to have the United States withdraw totally and unilaterally from South Vietnam, cease the Vietnamization program by which it reinforces the Saigon administration and get rid of that regime altogether.

In the American view, Mr. Porter's predecessors, Henry Cabot Lodge and David K. E. Bruce, stuck strictly to the negotiating issues, asked for reasonableness on the other side and tried to avoid polemics as much as possible.

Mr. Porter on the other hand has been deliberately provocative. He came here with the thesis that the Communists did not have the political or military strength with which to



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William J. Porter

back up their position and that this point ought to be gotten across both to them and public opinion.

The effort to deflate Communist claims involved on Mr. Porter's part an awareness of the importance of face to the Oriental mind. He has been heard to say, "I am never unkind casually," meaning that his arrows have been aimed with their possible effect on Communist face in mind.

He was said to feel that the effort to be reasonable left a lot of things unsaid that ought to be said so far as the official American position was concerned.

Washington officials are reported to be delighted with the new approach, feeling that it has given a dynamic quality to the American performance that was missing under Mr. Bruce. Both here and in Washington there is a feeling that toughness is justified by what the Americans view as the relatively improved political and military situation in South Vietnam.

At his first negotiating session on Sept. 9, Mr. Porter said his arrival provided an opportunity to make progress and asked the other side to agree to restricted sessions to get away from "a weekly press polemic." When the Communist refused, he adopted a new tone in subsequent sessions.

On Sept. 16, in the face of the Communist refusal to answer questions about their proposals, he said: "If you attempt as usual to evade answering

Dynamic Steps Said to Be Reaping Gains

by handing out more nonsense about how your seven points speak for themselves, let me assure you that you will get nowhere unless you alter your tactics."

On Sept. 30 he said: "When you declare that the United States 'must' do this or 'must' do that, you apparently overlook the fact that your military position is unimpressive." He said that the Communist forces did not hold a single district or provincial capital and "in such circumstances your use of peremptory language seems rather pretentious."

On Oct. 14 he told the other side: "Your military tactics hindered your political progress until today your political influence in South Vietnam is, like your military position, at an all-time low. You know this to be true."

On Oct. 28 he said: "It is interesting to have indications from you that the Vietnamization program is developing well. Every time you declaim heatedly against that program, we realize that you find it bothersome."

Last week Mr. Porter called the first Communist proposals in May, 1969, "a remarkable example of agitprop doublethink." He said the various points "now add up to 37 but their importance to date is zero because you are not permitted to explain or defend them and it is and will remain beyond your power to impose them."

This Week's Session Put Off

Today's session of the weekly talks, regularly held on Thursday was put off for a week because of observance here of Armistice Day, commemorating the end of World War I.

On the receiving end of Mr. Porter's barbs, for most of the time, have been second-string Vietcong and North Vietnamese negotiators. But Mr. Porter is understood to be unbothered by the absence of high-ranking people across the table just so long as what he has been saying has been reported back to Hanoi and to the Vietcong. That appears to be the case.

There has been evidence not only that Mr. Porter's remarks have been getting back but that he has been getting under the Communist leaders' skin. The

other side has called him an arrogant and impudent man with "the mentality of a colonialist." The Vietcong radio, broadcasting from Cambodia, devoted a long broadcast to him under the title, "The Policy of a Dizzy Man."

Last week, after Mr. Porter called on the Communist delegates to get new instructions to negotiate, they urged him to get instructions to deal seriously with their proposals. Responding "seriously" has appeared to mean simple acceptance of the Communist demands.

The Americans are understood to be hoping that the reported disarray in Communist ranks and the improved position of the Saigon Government will lead North Vietnam to decide to keep its manpower at home on urgent domestic problems, such as dike repair, and not commit it any longer in large numbers to a doubtful cause in the South. Hanoi, it is believed, might then allow the Vietcong to engage in give-and-take negotiation, something that has not happened in more than three years of talking here.