

Hanoi's Price For Freeing POWs



Jack Anderson

THOSE familiar with the details of Henry Kissinger's secret negotiations to end the Vietnam War have reached one dismaying conclusion.

They are convinced that the 460 American prisoners, known to be in Communist custody in Vietnam, are being held for ransom and won't be released until the full political price is paid. The price: Total, unconditional withdrawal of American forces from Vietnam.

Here's what President Nixon is doing, meanwhile, about the prisoners:

- He has made overtures to Hanoi through every possible channel to find out who is being held and to negotiate for their release. Approaches have been made through diplomats, Red Cross officials, Swiss bankers, trade representatives, newsmen and anti-war groups.

- Every American, who is known to be going to Hanoi, is asked to inquire about the prisoners. He is furnished with Hanoi's November 1970 POW list, is encouraged to seek interviews with the prisoners and is asked to bring out POW mail.

- A special, secret effort has been made to find out what has happened to U.S. pilots and CIA soldiers who have been lost in Laos. Visitors to Hanoi are urged to drop by the Lao Popular Front's information office in Hanoi and try to pump some prisoner information out of

Phau Phimpachanh, the Pathet Lao spokesman.

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MEANWHILE, the President's report to the nation on the secret Vietnam negotiations has left the families at home as splintered as a broken windshield. Most belong to the moderate, 2500-member National League of Families, which has put its trust in the President's negotiations.

But a militant minority has opened a Washington office to campaign against Mr. Nixon in 1972. Some are talking about civil disobedience at the White House to force the President to get out of Indochina in a flat exchange for the prisoners.

The league, incidentally, is operating hand-to-mouth after nearly going broke this month. For a time, the wives and mothers at the Washington office were paying out of their own meager allowances for stamps for mailings.

The financial crisis was caused by an ill-conceived, \$80,481 fund drive. Trips for wives to plead in far places with Communist envoys completed the treasury drain.

There is still wishful talk inside the league of a \$120,000 advertising campaign, a \$35,000 educational drive and another \$12,000 to promote a day of world prayer. But the league is hard-pressed to raise the petty cash to keep the Washington office open.