

# Peace Porridge <sup>shows</sup> Trepid

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## FOREIGN AFFAIRS

PARIS—As the intensity of Vietnam fighting shows some signs of diminishing, there are indications that a serious negotiation may soon resume.

For the first time Hanoi seems to have abandoned hope of forcing the United States to retreat ignominiously in the wake of disaster while Saigon has subtly hinted at concessions it has never previously prepared to consider.

Xuan Thuy, chief of the North Vietnamese delegation to the talks, which have been on ice here since May 4, has been in Hanoi where he received "new directives" Saturday at a meeting of his Government.

Le Duc Tho, his usual contact with secret American negotiators like Kissinger, has implied that both overt and covert parleys could resume. Pham Van Dong, Hanoi's Premier, has publicly stated he is ready to allow the United States an "honorable outcome" if it insures the "national rights" for which North Vietnam is fighting.

On the other side, Ambassador William Porter, chief United States negotiator, returned this week after an extended absence. At the same time Tran Van Lam, Saigon's Foreign Minister, was quoted by an English newspaper as prepared to cede the provincial capital of Quangtri, captured this spring by the Communists, in exchange for a guaranteed cease-fire. Saigon subsequently took pains to deny this statement.

What is obviously in the air is another attempt to find the basis for compromise. For at least two years the French have been suggesting a formula that would produce a tripartite regime in Saigon: one-third right, one-third center, one-third Communist. This is what Le Duc Tho had in mind May 10 when he said in Paris: "What we want is the establishment of a three-segment government of national concord."

This is tricky business and both less simple and more vital than it sounds. To begin with, the Communist side detests the kind of Presidential regime with a strong executive that now rules in Saigon.

Hanoi hopes to supplant this with what Europeans call a parliamentary regime, allowing the well-organized Communist party to disintegrate the Southern Government, place its men in key positions and ultimately take over.

Secondly, there is the matter of how

President Thieu would be ousted from power. He has offered to step down after an armistice and before free elections. Certainly the United States, which had one disastrous experience with imperialist politics—when it gave the nod to overthrow Ngo Dinh Diem (ending in his murder)—is not going to try and ditch Thieu. Apart from the immorality implied, he is the single man who can hold South Vietnam together during its present travail.

The French advocate a "hands-off" U.S. position which is easier to recommend than to apply in the midst of war. Nevertheless, there is a certain amount of political rethinking in Hanoi, in Saigon and among Vietnamese émigré circles here.

One idea intermittently discussed is acceptance—after a cease-fire—of all South Vietnamese Communists except known militants in an officially tolerated left-wing party similar to the E.D.A. fellow-traveler party in Greece prior to that country's 1967 military coup.

The United States has even pondered whether there are ways of developing a peace formula bringing in some international supervisory body for elections. But there can be no cynical paper accord like that signed in 1962 between the Netherlands and Indonesia to end their quarrel over West Irian. That became but a device for a staged handover.

All one can say right now is that sufficient new pressures have been generated to inspire a new search for solution. General Giap's offensive in the South has not only been blunted but has cost enormous casualties while the combination of an American naval blockade plus massive bombing has seriously shaken North Vietnam's economy and long-term warmaking ability.

Moreover there is no doubt of a continued widespread popular yearning for peace in the area of Saigon's writ. There are whispers that Moscow, in the wake of the blockade and Nixon's visit, is at last diplomatically active on the issue. Finally there is the matter of the U.S. Presidential elections. No candidate wants to run on anything resembling a jingo platform and, as Aristotle said, poftics and ethics are inseparable.