

Hints Concerning a Negotiated Peace



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HANOI'S chief negotiator in Paris, Le Duc Tho, has dropped diplomatic hints that he's willing to resume secret talks with President Nixon's foreign policy czar, Henry Kissinger.

This has cheered the cautious Kissinger, who has already gone several futile rounds with the North Vietnamese at the bargaining table, but who now sees hope for a negotiated settlement of the Vietnam war. Here's his reasoning:

- In the past, the Hanoi leaders have refused to give up at the truce table what they have felt sure they could win on the battlefield. But their big offensive is now stalling, the military outlook less certain.

- In the past, the North Vietnamese have counted upon Russia to keep their arsenal well supplied. The Nixon-Brezhnev accords in Moscow, however, have shaken Hanoi's confidence in future Soviet support. Hanoi's messages to Moscow (it's no secret we can intercept them) have become increasingly bitter and suspicious.

- In the past, the Chinese have always urged the North Vietnamese to fight on. Since the Nixon visit to Peking, however, the Chinese have softened their militancy and have spoken favorably of a negotiated settlement.

- Communications intercepts also reveal a split in the Hanoi hierarchy. Apparently, the hawks are fiercely determined to go it alone, if necessary, without military aid from Russia and China. While

this hardline attitude has prevailed in the past, the doves are gaining support for a negotiated settlement and the military respite it would bring.

Kissinger is guarded, nevertheless, about the prospects for a negotiated peace. He doesn't expect Hanoi to settle the war at least until after the November election. The North Vietnamese will want to be sure whom the next President will be before they come to terms.

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SENATOR Abraham Ribicoff (Conn.), has issued a report stating that the military has been ordered to prepare for a possible escalation of the Vietnam war.