

'Top Secret' Talks With Ho Chi Minh



Jack Anderson

THE LATE Ho Chi Minh, father of North Vietnam, was sounded out about a peace settlement before he died. We have now obtained a report; still classified "top secret," on the historic meeting.

The approach was arranged by Henry Kissinger before he became President Nixon's foreign policy adviser. He sent two French friends, Herbert Marcovich and Raymond Aubrac, to Hanoi with a U.S. offer to stop bombing North Vietnam.

The aging Ho, who had once stayed in Aubrac's home, received his former host on July 24, 1967.

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HERE IS Kissinger's report of the meeting, based on Aubrac's notes:

"Aubrac said that what struck him immediately was how old Ho had become. He was dressed in a Chinese gown and walked with the aid of a cane. However, his intelligence was unimpaired, his eyes still had their old sparkle. He seemed to enjoy playing the role of a grandfather figure, not concerned with details.

"Aubrac had brought as a gift a little colored stone egg. Ho gave three presents in return: silk for Aubrac's daughter, some books, and a ring made of metal from the 2000th U.S. plane claimed to have been shot down over Vietnam. He remembered the first names of all of Aubrac's three children.

"After speaking about Aubrac's family

for about 15 minutes, Aubrac said: 'Mr. President, do you know why I have come?'

"Ho answered, 'Yes.'

"Aubrac asked whether he had any comments. Ho replied by saying that he did not like the phrase 'Peace in Vietnam.' It gave an impression of moral equivalence between the United States and North Vietnam; in fact, the U.S. is the aggressor and must be condemned...

"The details of the negotiations, said Ho, were in the hands of (Premier) Pham Van Dong. Ho then added: 'Remember, many people have tried to fool me and have failed. I know you don't want to fool me.'

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HE THEN turned the conversation back to family matters. He expressed regret that Aubrac had sold the house where he had stayed 21 years ago.

"Where shall I live when I next come to Paris?' He then asked whether he would be welcome in Paris, but avoided the question of whether he wanted an invitation.

"He terminated the conversation after 50 minutes and was escorted from the room. Pham Van Dong walked with Aubrac to his car. He said that 'we try to spare President Ho as many details as we can. He is an old man; we want him to live to see his country unified.'"

See also Jack Anderson, 23 Jun 72, this file.