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Kissinger, Chou meet George McGovern's ghost

WASHINGTON — Sitting at the table in Peking, looking across at Chou En-lai, it seems probable that Henry Kissinger has already discerned, perhaps near the elbow of the adversary he so much admires, the outline of a familiar ghost.

Not one of Shakespeare's ghosts "of ashy semblance, meager, pale and bloodless." On the contrary, this is a healthy ghost, smiling, well dressed, wearing perhaps a wide-lapeled suit, blue shirt, soft tie with matching handkerchief.

Because ghosts are the outward sign of inward fear, Kissinger has seen this ghost before. But never quite so clearly. Never before has the ghost seemed to dominate the scene, to be more important even than a presidential emissary

Pie Dufour is on vacation.

who has arrived on a giant plane emblazoned with the words, "United States of America."

The ghost of George McGovern will become most clear at the precise moment when Kissinger leans toward Chou En-lai and suggests with all the forcefulness at his command that President Nixon's latest peace offer is an extraordinarily good one which should not be ignored.

Cease-fire. American troops out within four months. No more bombing. Thieu to resign 30 days before elections.

Perhaps, Dr. Kissinger will hint, the President might be receptive to modifications in his most generous of propositions. Would North Vietnam prefer that Thieu resign 60 days before elections? Ninety? Would Hanoi like to state its interpretation of the word "elections"? Suggestions will be welcome.

Moreover, Kissinger is telling Chou, Mr. Nixon seems to have put North Vietnam in a very tight squeeze. The bombing hurts. The offensive has been halted. Supplies are cut off at Haiphong Harbor. Presidential visits to Russia and China have tended to isolate Hanoi. The President has gone over the heads of the North Vietnamese and is dealing directly with the two big brothers.

He has persuaded both big brothers that little brother is misbehaving, quarreling and carrying on in a manner that may embroil the whole neighborhood and endanger the big peace.

It is a powerful argument. The trouble is that it would be an even more powerful argument if it were not for that damned ghost sitting there smiling across the table.

The ghost does not speak. He doesn't have to. What he stands for, as Kissinger well knows, is a better deal.

"Out" is what the ghost of George McGovern stands for. Every American out of Vietnam just as fast as a President George McGovern could get them out. No deals. No cease-fires. No support for President Thieu, not for 30 days or 60 days or ever. No bother with elections. Just, out.

And so long as that ghost is sitting there, why shouldn't Hanoi wait? Wait to see if the ghost becomes the ghost of a President rather than a likely presidential nominee? Four months from now. What's four months to a nation which has fought for 20 years.

That ghost is the only possible reason why Dr. Kissinger's latest peace offer could end in failure as have all his previous peace offers. The mind of Henry Kissinger is very logical. As he examines the two arguments, he cannot avoid the conclusion that the argument of the ghost being stronger, the ghost will prevail.

Unless, of course, Dr. Kissinger changes his argument—so that it sounds a great deal more like the argument of the ghost