

Salinger's Trip

SFChronicle

AUG 17 1972

McGovern Sent His Own Man to Paris

North Viets Rejected POW Plea

Washington Post Service

Springfield, Ill.

Senator George McGovern sent a personal emissary to ask the North Vietnamese to release American prisoners before the November election, but Hanoi turned him down.

McGovern, campaigning yesterday in Illinois, acknowledged the effort but did not explain what prompted it.

McGovern's communication was through Pierre Salinger, press secretary to the Late President Kennedy and a campaign aide of McGovern's.

MEETINGS

Salinger said yesterday he met with North Vietnamese officials in Paris twice in the last month, asking about the possibility of an early release of prisoners before the fighting is over.

Salinger said he also informed the North Vietnamese that McGovern wants a quick settlement to the war, even if that means a Nixon peace agreement that would wipe out the war in Vietnam as a political issue in the fall campaign.

These developments came

to light in a somewhat tangled manner in which McGovern at first seemed to deny any connection with Salinger's conversations in Paris, then later in the day announced that he had requested the inquiry.

It began with a United Press dispatch from Paris

See Back Page

From Page 1

quoting unidentified "friends of the McGovern campaign." The story said Salinger had called on the North Vietnamese delegation to urge a peace settlement with the Nixon administration and to ask them not to delay until after the election.

When reporters confronted McGovern here with questions about that report, he said he "gave no such instructions to Salinger."

"I know nothing of any such report," McGovern said. "There's no truth in it at all."

The Democratic presidential candidate recalled that Salinger told him he was traveling to Paris after the Democratic National convention and said "he might make some inquiries about the status of negotiations and I told him I would be interested in talking to him when he returned." But McGovern said there had been "no instructions whatsoever."

STATEMENT

A few hours later, after a phone conversation with Salinger, McGovern issued this statement about the trip to Paris:

"At my request he met

with members of the North Vietnamese delegation in Paris. The only purpose of the discussion was to determine if any change had occurred which would permit the return of the prisoners prior to the end of the hostility.

"Mr. Salinger found no change in the publicly stated position of Hanoi. Mr. Salinger also made clear that I have repeatedly stated my conviction that the end of the war should not be delayed by a single day because of the American election campaign."

CONFRONTED

Confronted later again by reporters, McGovern insisted there was no inconsistency in his two statements.

Salinger said McGovern called him the day after the Democratic convention and "asked me if I would make contact with the North Vietnamese delegation on one point only — if there was any chance of releasing prisoners and if there was any change in their position on the prisoners and anything that would induce them to change."

When asked if McGovern had received some signal from Hanoi Salinger refused to comment.

QUESTIONS

He first met with two members of the delegation staff in Paris on July 18 and put those questions to them. "They told me they would get answers for them," he said. That was the day before White House foreign policy adviser Henry Kissinger met in Paris with Le Duc Tho of North Vietnam, a meeting about which Salinger was told.

Two and a half weeks lat-

er, the delegation called him and they met again on August 9. "They told me the word from Hanoi was that there was no change on the POWs and the prisoners will not be released until hostilities are ended," Salinger said.

"I think his (McGovern's) motivation was humanitarian," Salinger said in a telephone interview from New York, "rather than feeling that anything could be done. Particularly in view of the North Vietnamese leaders' sympathetic comments about Senator McGovern, they might have been willing to make some kind of a gesture."