

White House, Rebutting Shriver, Denies Peace Chance Was Lost

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WASHINGTON, Aug. 18 — The White House issued a rebuttal today of charges made by Sargent Shriver, the Democratic Vice-Presidential nominee, that President Nixon "blew" an opportunity to end the Vietnam war in 1969.

"There was no peace opportunity, real or possible, during the period in question," the White House said.

The rebuttal was issued by Herbert G. Klein, director of communications for the executive branch, and was mailed to editors and correspondents here and in other cities. Mr. Klein's covering letter said that the information had been compiled by the National Security Council, the Defense Department, and the State Department.

Shriver Backers Ignored

The document took issue, not only with Mr. Shriver's comments, which already have been sharply attacked by Secretary of State William P. Rogers, but also with a supporting statement issued by W. Averell Harriman and Cyrus R. Vance, who served as the Johnson Administration's chief negotiators in Paris.

But even though the document attacked the statement made by Mr. Harriman and Mr. Vance, it attributed it to Mr. Shriver, presumably for political impact.

The document denied an allegation by Mr. Harriman and Mr. Vance that North Vietnam had signaled its interest in negotiations by withdrawing 90 per cent of its forces from the northern provinces of South Vietnam in the fall of 1968.

"According to our best esti-

mates, the North Vietnamese Army in fact moved less than 50 per cent of its forces out of the northernmost provinces of South Vietnam. As for the country as a whole, we estimate the North Vietnamese Army withdrew less than 20 per cent of its forces," it said.

The document then summarized findings of a Nixon Administration study, reported at length in Wednesday's editions of The New York Times. That study said that the withdrawal had been a result of both military and political reasons, with the political factor limited to an effort to get the United States to halt the bombing of North Vietnam completely.

"The study revealed no readiness on Hanoi's part to compromise on its own negotiating demands," it said.

In another attack on Mr. Shriver, the White House report said that Mr. Shriver had sought a job in the Nixon Administration in a meeting with John D. Ehrlichman of the White House staff on Oct. 25, 1969. Mr. Shriver denied on television last week that he had sought a job.

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