

Hanoi Officials Hint War May End Before Election

Reuter

PEKING, Sept. 5—Senior North Vietnamese officials have hinted that the Indochina war could possibly end before or shortly after the American presidential election in November, travellers just back from Hanoi said here today.

But if no agreement is reached by November, the North Vietnamese affirmed that they had "surprises ahead" on the battlefield, the travellers said. Hanoi officials admitted to the visitors, how-

ever, that the U.S. bombing and harbor-mining was having an effect.

The visitors, who had talks with officials just below the level of North Vietnam's ruling triumvirate, said this was the first time they had heard even a cautious note of optimism from Hanoi channels about the possibility of a Vietnam cease-fire within a definite time frame.

[A contradictory report filed by UPI from London quoted Communist diplomats who re-

cently visited Hanoi and said these sources indicate that North Vietnam will wait until after the U.S. presidential election before considering a possible settlement of the war.]

The reports came 24 hours after the exiled Cambodian head of state, Prince Norodom Sihanouk, had told reporters here that a few days ago Premier Chou En-lay had said there was a possibility of President Nixon stopping the war just before the election or within a month or two afterwards.

Like Chou, the returned visitors from Hanoi indicated that North Vietnamese officials had also said there was an equal possibility that the war could continue indefinitely.

Observers here note that President Nixon and other senior U.S. officials have recently referred to the possibility of a quick end to the war. Diplomats speculate that Mr. Nixon, Chou and the North Vietnamese leaders may know more about secret negotiation than has yet become public.

Diplomatic sources here said today it was possible that North Vietnam might be prepared to make some concessions—possibly fewer than the Americans—to reach a peaceful solution.

Some observers believe Chou's theory that a quick end to the war is possible could stem from information which the President's foreign policy adviser Henry Kissinger conveyed when he was here in June.

Observers believe the North Vietnamese leaders have reservations about Mr. Nixon's intentions—hence their references to continued warfare. Their allusion to "surprises ahead" if there is no settlement soon may refer to attacks on Saigon, it is believed here.

The pro-Communist forces have been edging closer to the South Vietnamese capital and one battle last week took place only 35 miles north of it.