

## Risky Decision for Nixon

WASHINGTON — Vietnam can still be a peril to President Nixon's re-election.

The danger will not come from the doves and others who want the war over at once. It would come from quite a different direction — from his supporters who have accepted the President's word that he will get "an honorable peace" and who may not relish what comes.

IT IS NOW altogether possible that the most crucial you - give - some - and - we'll - give - some negotiations with Hanoi will come to a head before Nov. 7.

They are already reaching the point at which Nixon will have to make a very delicate compromise from which the most uncertain consequences could flow.

The razor-edge decision is this: How far can the President go in giving the Communist Viet Cong a role in a transitional Saigon government without inviting — even furthering—a Communist takeover?

The President has persuaded a decisive majority of the American people (67 percent to 25 percent according to Gallup) to approve his assurance that he will not do anything to "impose a Communist dictatorship" on the people of South Vietnam.

The President's dilemma is right here: Can he get a settlement with Hanoi without giving the Communists some role in a pre-election Saigon government and, if he does, will he not be seriously risking a Communist takeover which he has promised he would not permit?

It is clear that the secret Paris talks

have reached the most sensitive area of possible compromise between Hanoi and Washington. One dispatch puts it this way:

"Informed sources indicate that the main focus of the private bargaining now is over a political formula for shaping the future Saigon government."

My information parallels this report and suggests that the major negotiating differences have narrowed to determining how authority in Saigon shall be shared prior to new South Vietnamese elections.

The United States has already proposed, and President Thieu has agreed, that the Communist Viet Cong can have co-equal responsibility in a commission of government officials and neutrals to "organize and run" (these are Kissinger words) new South Vietnamese elections, that Thieu himself will resign a month ahead of the voting and that the integrity of the elections will be guaranteed by international supervision.

But Hanoi demands more. It wants to become a co-equal participant in running the Saigon government as well as the elections even before a new government is chosen.

THAT'S THE rub. Should the United States negotiate to put unelected Communists in the government of South Vietnam before the South Vietnamese people have decided whether they want them there?

If President Nixon makes that concession, many Americans will understandably feel that he is helping to "impose a Communist dictatorship on South Vietnam."