

# Vietnam: Hopes and Questions

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Henry A. Kissinger's talks in Paris have raised not only hopes in Washington, but also many questions, for which there are some clear answers, and an even larger number of guesses, surmises and "I don't know's."

Q. What makes these negotiations in Paris and elsewhere different from previous fruitless sessions? A. We don't know for sure. But

following President Nixon's trip to Moscow in May, President Nikolai V. Podgorny visited Hanoi, and since July the pace of the Paris talks has quickened. Well placed sources say the talks have been more substantive and less polemical than before.

Q. Does this mean the Russians have been active?

A. Probably. Hanoi has hinted in its own press that both Moscow and Peking have been pressing it to reach a political settlement that probably falls short of North Vietnam's maximum goals.

Q. What were these goals?

A. An end to American involvement in Indochina, the toppling of the Saigon Government of President Nguyen Van Thieu and the establishment of a three-part coalition Government that would sooner or later become dominated by the Vietcong.

Q. Has Hanoi changed its goals?

A. Not publicly. But in its statements recently Hanoi has insisted that it did not want to impose a Communist government in Saigon. But rather, a "truly neutral" one in which the Vietcong, the Saigon Government and unnamed neutrals would have equal shares of power. Officially, Hanoi still de-

## Clear Answers on the Prospects of Peace Talks Are Few

mands that Mr. Thieu resign, but hints have come from Hanoi recently that it was prepared for him to stay as head of the Saigon part of the coalition.

### Kissinger View Recalled

Q. What does the United States say about Hanoi's position?

A. It has said very little lately. In the past, Mr. Kissinger has said a coalition was only a "vener" for a Vietcong takeover since the Communists were the best organized group in South Vietnam, but speculation is heavy here that Mr. Kissinger has been pressing for assurances from Hanoi that a new Saigon Government, would, new Saigon Government, would

Q. What kind of assurances?

A. We are now in the realm of guesswork. But the United States would want a cease-fire arrangement by which Hanoi would pull its forces out of the South and not send any back into the country, thereby preventing the Communists from taking over the country by force after the Americans ceased their military operations. Also, guarantees would have to worked out to make sure that the Saigon Government part of the coalition would include the strongest anti-Communist elements, and that the neutral third was truly made up of nationalists who were neither pro-Hanoi nor pro-Thieu.

Q. Would this really guarantee that the Communists would not take power eventually in Saigon?

A. No. But it would satisfy President Nixon's pledge that he would not make a deal "imposing" a Communist regime in Saigon.

Q. What does Mr. Thieu think about such possibilities?

### Thieu a Sticking Point

A. Publicly, he has strongly opposed any coalition with the Communists on the ground that history has proven that once in a coalition the Communists seek to take all power through intimidation, assassination, and subversion. He has supported a cease-fire so long as it included all of Indochina—Laos and Cambodia as well as Vietnam.

Q. Doesn't this look as if Saigon and Washington may not see eye to eye?

A. Yes. But so far, the differences have been muted. Mr. Thieu probably realizes that he has a minimum leverage on the United States.

Q. Will Mr. Thieu be more conciliatory toward the idea of a neutral or coalition government?

A. In the past, he has usually yielded to American persuasion.

Q. What about the American prisoners of war held in Hanoi?

A. They would presumably be released as part of the total settlement, which would have to include the cease-fire and political agreements.

Q. When will such a settlement occur?

A. Nobody knows. Many difficult problems remain to be settled, not the least of which is Mr. Thieu's resistance to a coalition. Nevertheless, many normally skeptical officials here believe that the odds definitely favor an accord of some kind in the near future. Some even talk of a settlement by Election Day, but others believe that it will take longer than that.