

Rumors of Plans for Cease-Fire

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By Felix Bolo
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Saigon

United States presidential envoy Henry Kissinger had a further meeting with President Nguyen Van Thieu yesterday in what appeared from a welter of reports, rumors and leaks to be an attempt to get Thieu to accept a policy of compromise with the Communists and a cease-fire.

But it also appeared that Thieu was resisting all pressure and was rejecting any form of compromise, including a "tripartite" government.

Although nothing official has yet been announced about the content of the Kissinger-Thieu talks (yesterday's session lasted more than three-and-a-half hours), remarks made by President Thieu Thursday night to a group of parliamentarians have enabled observers to infer the main points of Kissinger's proposed compromise, a compromise reported at least partly accepted by Hanoi.

PROPOSAL

Politically, the Americans would now appear to be supporting the proposal by the Provisional Revolutionary Government of South Vietnam for a tripartite "government of national harmony" on condition that Thieu is one of the three parties in that government. Hanoi is understood to have accepted that condition.

The tripartite government would be in charge of preparing and organizing new elections.

Militarily, there would be a cease-fire throughout Indochina. It would be a simultaneous cease-fire indicating

that the Americans have agreed to stop envisaging a military settlement separate from a political one. The fact that it would be throughout Indochina indicates that Hanoi has agreed to drop the idea of separate military settlements for Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos.

FORMULA

Nothing has transpired however about a formula for a cease-fire — whether it would be a cease-fire on the spot or whether it would take the form of a regrouping of "foreign" troops into designated zones.

The deputies and senators

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present Thursday night at Thieu's reception at Doc Lap palace said that the president explained in a grave voice but clearly and frankly the situation facing South Vietnam and its government. One senator quoted a significant remark by the head of state: "The war is heading toward a solution that is unacceptable to us."

The senator added that Thieu repeated he is ready to step down as head of state, but that he is afraid the proposed solution would allow the Communists "to take over South Vietnam," although they have failed to win victory on the battlefield.

In an editorial comment yesterday the semi-official Saigon newspaper Tin Song said this was "a matter of life and death" for the South Vietnamese. Observers noted that Thieu has said any coalition with the Communists would be a suicidal move.

PRESSURE

If it is true that the American negotiators are putting the pressure on Thieu — some diplomatic observers think however it is "window-dressing" until the U. S. presidential elections are over — it is equally certain that Thieu is resisting these pressures with all the power at his disposal and he is trying to win over to his

cause all nationalists, even in the opposition.

The length of the current talks here between the Americans and South Vietnamese—a total of eight hours and 40 minutes over three sessions—does in fact indicate that the consultations are difficult one. They may continue for a third day.

But already well-informed South Vietnamese are saying that a new American-South Vietnamese counterproposal has been worked out at the meetings. It is said to involve a cease-fire whose basis would be announced early next month, before the U.S. elections. Meanwhile, South Vietnamese military authorities are predicting that Communist forces are shortly going to unleash a new offensive "for political reasons."

RUMORS

Adding to the flood of rumors, it was disclosed that Philip A. Habib, the U.S. ambassador to South Korea and former deputy head of the U.S. delegation to the Paris peace talks, arrived in Saigon two days ago.

The embassy spokesman offered no reason for Habib's trip from Seoul, where martial law has just been declared. But it was noted that Habib is a constitutional expert who helped draw up the constitutions of both South Vietnam and South Korea, and therefore he might be requested to give guidance on possible governmental changes here.

Official reticence to disclose any details of the secret meetings was so great that embassy officers refused to say even how long Kissinger would stay in Saigon or whether any further meetings are planned with the South Vietnamese.

"I don't know how long Henry is staying, and even if I did I couldn't tell you," one American official said.

Kissinger was reliably reported to be in good spirits despite the long round of talks.

At one point, after the afternoon consultation with Thieu, Kissinger returned to the embassy where he jocularly autographed copies of newspaper pictures supposedly showing him posing in the nude. The mock photograph had been published in the Harvard University humor magazine, the Lamppoon.