

EVIDENCE MOUNTS OF PUSH FOR PEACE IN ALL INDOCHINA

But Political Settlement Still
Seems Elusive as Saigon
and Hanoi Differ Widely

OCT 23 1972

KISSINGER MEETS THIEU

Nixon Envoy Is Reported to
Reassure Ally of Future
U.S. Guarantees
NYTimes

By BERNARD GWERTZMAN

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Oct. 22—Indications mounted today that intensive negotiations were under way for a cease-fire, to end not only the Vietnam war but also the fighting in neighboring Laos and Cambodia.

From comments made by officials in Saigon, Phnompenh and Vientiane, as well as in Hanoi and Washington, it seemed that agreement was near on the terms for implementing an all-Indochina cease-fire as the first step in an over-all settlement.

But the conclusion of a settlement that would prove acceptable to all parties still seemed uncertain because Hanoi and Saigon appeared far apart on the kind of political alignment that would emerge in South Vietnam once the fighting stopped.

Kissinger Continues Effort

In the middle of these secret and highly delicate negotiations was Henry A. Kissinger, President Nixon's adviser on national security, who continued his efforts today to gain the concurrence of South Vietnam's President Nguyen Van Thieu in a compromise solution.

Mr. Kissinger, who has held long negotiations in recent weeks with North Vietnamese officials in Paris, was reported to be assuring Mr. Thieu of American support to prevent a Communist take-over in South Vietnam while, at the same

time, urging him to agree to a formula that would allow the Vietcong to participate in postwar South Vietnamese political life.

The Indochina solution, now under intensive negotiations, involves a "military" segment—the cease-fire in place, the withdrawal of American and North Vietnamese forces, and the release of prisoners; and a "political" segment, in which Hanoi is demanding a neutral government that would include Communist and neutral representation, along with that of the Saigon Government.

The whole package could collapse, officials here have said, if any of the major elements could not be successfully negotiated.

As usual, there were no statements issued here or in Saigon on the progress of Mr. Kissinger's talks, but there were these developments:

¶ A high Saigon official said that Mr. Thieu had set up a

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58-man group to come up with ideas on how a cease-fire could be implemented in a situation where there were no clearcut front lines. Similar studies have been undertaken by the Pentagon.

¶ Apparently to ease concern in Cambodia, Mr. Kissinger flew to Phnompenh for four hours to brief President Lon Nol on the developments. Yesterday, William H. Sullivan, a Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs who is accompanying Mr. Kissinger, went to Laos and Thailand to talk with officials there.

¶ The Laotian Premier, Prince Souvanna Phouma, who was briefed by Mr. Sullivan, flew to Paris today on his way to the United States for talks. In a carefully worded statement at Orly Airport, Prince Souvanna said that the war could be "settled quickly, if one is to believe the newspapers—they are generally well-informed." Preliminary talks toward a cease-fire had begun in Laos last week between the Communist Patmet Lao guerrillas and Government officials.

¶ In Cambodia, a high government official was quoted by United Press International as saying that officials had recently held a series of meetings with the North Vietnamese-backed Cambodian guerrillas, aimed at ending the fighting there.

¶ Supporting the view that a cease-fire was close, American pilots based in Thailand

reported almost no activity on the Ho Chi Minh trail, the supply route from North Vietnam to South Vietnam that cuts through Laos. Part of the reason for this was the monsoon, but another factor was believed to be speculation by the enemy that a cease-fire might be near.

The progress toward a truce followed an apparent concession in recent weeks by North Vietnam, which earlier had rejected cease-fire proposals put forth by the United States. In the past, Hanoi had said that a cease-fire could come about only after a political settlement was reached.

Now, according to comments made by Premier Pham Van Dong and other officials in Hanoi, North Vietnam is willing to accept a cease-fire, provided South Vietnam also agrees to follow-up political steps.

These included the following: Saigon and the Vietcong would agree on the neutral members of a three-way interim government that would rule the country for about six months until general elections were held and a new government and presumably, a new constitution were created. This three-part group would consist of Vietcong, Saigon and neutral elements in equal numbers.

The North Vietnamese proposal has interested American officials because they believe that as long as the South Vietnamese Army remains intact, the Communists will find it very hard to win any election that is fairly conducted. With this in mind, Mr. Kissinger was reported to have been suggesting to President Thieu that he end his refusal to allow any interim coalition with the Communists.

Earlier, Hanoi had insisted that Mr. Thieu resign, but reliable neutral and Hanoi sources were reported to have said that Mr. Thieu could now remain as head of the Saigon "third."

Well-placed Saigon officials, however, have said that none of the political proposals by

Hanoi was acceptable to Mr. Thieu, who in recent days has repeated his refusals to share political power with the Communists.

Mr. Thieu has asserted that the Communists would take advantage of such a coalition to prevent honest elections and would use subversion and terror to seize power in Saigon. North Vietnam has denied that it is seeking more than a "neutral" Saigon, but many American officials have said that Mr. Thieu is justified in his apprehensions.

President Nixon, in a Veterans Day radio address, said today of Vietnam veterans and their families, "We are not going to make a mockery of their sacrifice by surrendering to the enemy."

To prevent a Communist take-over, Mr. Kissinger was thought to be proposing various guarantees to Mr. Thieu, in which third countries would supervise elections and make sure that they were held fairly. France has been mentioned as one possibility.

It was not clear whether, if Mr. Thieu maintained his refusal to cooperate with the Vietcong, Hanoi would alter its apparently conciliatory manner of recent weeks. The impact of recent comments by Hanoi has been that it was doing all it could to facilitate a settlement, but that Mr. Thieu was being recalcitrant.

These statements, particularly in the absence of any comments by the United States, have contributed to an impression that Mr. Thieu was holding up a peace settlement.