

Joe Belden: Presidential adviser Henry Kissinger this morning confirmed reports broadcast earlier today over Radio Hanoi that the United States and North Vietnam have reached a tentative peace agreement ~~in~~. He said final details remained to be worked out but added, "it is obvious that the war is drawing to a close." He said that one more series of negotiations, lasting perhaps only four days, could resolve the conflict.

Dr. Kissinger's appearance this morning was extraordinary in that it was broadcast over network radio and television. Usually the policy under which he speaks to reporters does not even permit him to be quoted by name.

Today he ~~had~~ laid to rest rumors which circulated following a broadcast from Radio Hanoi late last night. In that broadcast the North Vietnamese said a series of agreements ending the war had been reached and a time-table for the implementation ~~of~~ set, and that the United States had reneged.

This morning Dr. Kissinger said ^{that} this account was partially correct, agreements had been reached, but he said he ~~that~~ there had never been a definite time-table. Radio Hanoi said the accords were set to be formalized on October 31st. That date was arrived at after a series of delays asked by the United States. Dr. Kissinger said that North Vietnam had requested that the accords be formalized by the end of this month, but that the United States had only said that it would "make a major effort" to conclude the negotiations by October 31st. He said that this now seems impossible because some problems remain and "it was clear we could not sign an agreement with details still to be resolved."

Among those unresolved details is the future of the government of President Nguyen Van ^{of South Vietnam} Thieu. This morning Dr. Kissinger made it clear that the United States will not permit General Thieu to stand in the way of ^{an end to} ~~the end of~~ U.S. participation in the war. Speaking to the issue of a veto by the Saigon government of an accord with North Vietnam, Dr. Kissinger said, "We reserve our own freedom of judgment about how long a war should be continued." He said the Saigon government has similar freedoms, that the United States cannot impose a solution on it, but conversely, he indicated, neither can it be kept from achieving an end to the war. Saigon, he said, "is entitled to participate in the solution of a war fought on its territory and their views deserve great respect." A few sentences later, however, he ~~said~~ added that he is confident that our consultations with Saigon will produce an agreement in the same time-frame as with Hanoi, that is, one more session in Paris, presumably.

Dr. Kissinger said that the United States was taking the position that Saigon would be left free to decide whether it would participate in the U.S. agreement with North Vietnam. Observers noted that given the fact that Saigon is dependent upon U.S. economic and military aid to continue hostilities, Dr. Kissinger's words were equal to a clear-cut statement - albeit in diplomatic language - that the United States is rejecting any notion of a veto by South Vietnam.

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As for the agreement itself, it calls for a cease-fire, a complete ^{U.S.} withdrawal from South Vietnam within 60 days, ~~and~~ the exchange of prisoners of war ~~within~~ the same time-frame, a series of international supervisory commissions to police the agreement, the withdrawal of all foreign forces from Laos and Cambodia, and pledges not to annex territory.

As for the political future of South Vietnam, Dr. Kissinger said the agreements will guarantee the self-determination of South Vietnam through elections to be organized under international supervision. Details would be worked out in negotiations between the Saigon government and the Provisional Revolutionary Government. These two parties would appoint a "National Council of Reconciliation" to promote and supervise the elections. This group, which Dr. Kissinger took pains to emphasize "would not be a form of coalition government," would work ~~by~~ via "unanimity." Dr. Kissinger did not provide any further details about the proposed commission.

He explained the current status of ^{the} negotiations with North Vietnam. He said that details of the accords in terms of wording and what he described as "nuances" have to be ironed out. It was at this point that he said he foresaw only one more series of sessions, lasting perhaps three or four days, before a final agreement. He said, "We have gone most of the way."

Dr. Kissinger's statement to the press was prompted by a report over Radio Hanoi last night, as I've just said, the report saying

See Nixon's projected campaign schedule, as given by Bruce Blossat (Frederick Post, 13 Oct 72, this file).

Writer says intensive campaigning would not begin until Nixon had made a "Vietnam war announcement [with] a hard, convincing core to it, rather than a tone of vague promise."

Original schedule called for campaigning to begin 14-15 Oct.

Revised schedule called for campaigning to begin 18-22 Oct.

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- 17 Oct - Ziegler announces schedule not yet completed, except for visits to Philadelphia 20 Oct and Westchester County 23 Oct. (NYTimes 18 Oct, filed Nix Ad.)
- 20 Oct - Robert Semple, covering visit to Philadelphia, says schedule not yet completed for final two weeks of campaign. (NYTimes 21 Oct, filed Nix Ad.)

Joe Belden: Dr. Kissinger's statement to the press was prompted by a report over Radio Hanoi last night, ~~the~~ report saying that the United States had come to the brink of an agreement and then drawn back from it. This morning Paul Fisher at WBAI in New York read us a dispatch from Agence France-Press correspondent Jean Thoraval in Hanoi on that Radio Hanoi broadcast.

Paul Fisher: The North Vietnamese government today outlined the terms of an agreement it has reached with the United States on ending the war, and reproached Washington for not having stuck to the agreed time-table. The reproach, in very moderate terms, was included in a government statement broadcast over Radio Hanoi today.

In it, the North Vietnamese ~~government~~ ^{authorities} said they were taking the responsibility of informing ~~the~~ Vietnamese and world opinion on the current state of negotiations.

Hanoi said the two sides reached agreement on October 9th on a date for the ending of U.S. bombing and mining of North Vietnam, a date for the initialing of the agreement in Hanoi, and a date for the official signing ceremony in Paris by the foreign ministers of the two countries. However, according to the North Vietnamese statement, the United States several times asked for these dates to be put back. Then, last Sunday, ~~at 10:00 a.m. Vietnam time, 22 Oct, U.S. time?]~~ ~~October 22, Hanoi and Washington reached~~ October 22nd [Hanoi time?], Hanoi and Washington reached an agreement for ending the war and reestablishing peace in Vietnam. ^

On Monday, however, according to the Hanoi government, the Americans cited difficulties with the Saigon government and asked for a continuation of the talks. The statement said, "This way of acting ~~endangering~~ engenders a very serious situation, threatening the signing of the agreement."

According to Hanoi Radio the time-table of the peace negotiations ^{to date} went as follows:

1) On October 9th the North Vietnamese accepted an American proposal providing for a halt to ^{American} bombing and mining of North Vietnam from October 18th, the initialing of a protocol document in Hanoi the following day, and the official signature of the agreement in Paris on October 26th. The signature was to be carried out by the U.S. Secretary of State and the North Vietnamese Foreign Secretary.

2) On October 11th the North Vietnamese agreed to an American request to modify this time-table, The new schedule ~~provided~~ ^{provided} for: October 21st, an end to U.S. bombing and mining of the North, October 22nd, signature of the protocol in Hanoi, and October ~~31st~~ 30th, the foreign ministers sign the agreement in Paris.

3) Still according to Hanoi, the Americans asked for a further delay on October 20th. The third schedule, again accepted by the North Vietnamese, was as follows: October 22nd, a halt to the U.S. bombing and mining of ports, October 24th, the signing of the protocol in Hanoi, and October 31st, the official signature of the agreement in Paris.

Joe Belden: In Paris, the Foreign Minister of the South Vietnamese Provisional Revolutionary Government, Mme. Nguyen Thi Binh, called upon the United States to "give proof of its good will/^{and good faith} by honoring the accords." There was the 164th plenary session of the talks today. Mme. Binh said that the PRG supports the North Vietnamese declaration last night. She said the statement "shows the present state of negotiations and throws a glaring light on the attitude of the American side."

In his speech to the plenary session today, ~~Xuan Thuy~~ the head of the North Vietnamese delegation, Xuan Thuy, largely repeated the Hanoi broadcast and added, "It is manifest that at the present time all conditions are combined to rapidly settle the Vietnam problem and immediately reestablish peace." He said, "It is now time for the Nixon Administration to carry out immediately the accords reached between the Democratic Republic of Vietnam and the United States." He said the Vietnamese negotiations were getting nowhere until his government presented its plan at a secret meeting on October 8th. He charged that the Nixon Administration "seeks to create obstacles in order not to carry out the accords agreed upon between the two parties."

And following the session ~~next to reporters~~, when he was asked by reporters if his government will continue the negotiations, either in private or at the weekly plenary sessions if the agreement is not signed by next Tuesday, October 31st, as the North Vietnamese have demanded, he said, "Wait and you will see." The delegations did agree to meet again next week.

The reaction from Saigon has been a little confused. The first reaction came from the official radio of the Saigon government and it said, "A separate agreement between North Vietnam and the United States does not concern us in any way." A commentator on the government radio said, "The right to self-determination cannot be synonymous with secret arrangements, therefore the North Vietnamese Communists' private affairs and schemes are not related to the Republic of Vietnam. Let the Northern Communists demand nothing from us, because any such demand will be vain unless they put an end to their aggression in the Republic of Vietnam." That was from Radio Saigon. Later, however, the South Vietnamese Foreign Minister, Tran Van Lam, was quoted as saying, "We are on the way to peace." He added that the problems remaining seemed to be between Saigon and Hanoi, rather than between Washington and Hanoi.

Joe Belden: Earlier today, several hours before Dr. Kissinger confirmed the information broadcast over Radio Hanoi, we spoke to Franz Schurman of the Bay Area Institute about the reports of a near-accord between the United States and North Vietnam.

Franz Schurman: The question is whether Nixon can control his right wing and his generals. If Thieu were faced with a solid front in which all the American factions got together and said we must accept this agreement, he'd be in the Riviera in 24 hours. But the real problem is that Thieu feels ^{that} he ~~still~~ ^{still} has a lot of support among the American military - I'd say particularly the U.S. Navy in Honolulu - and certain right-wing elements in the government, and that he's trying to delay this whole thing until after the election in the hope that the right-wing faction will rise up and seize power again in Washington, so to speak.

So I think what one has to say is that the agreement has been concluded, not between the United States and the PRG and the DRV, but between Kissinger, presumably representing one side of Nixon, and the question is whether the United States can deliver. And I think we'll just have to see what happens. You know when Nixon ~~implied~~ ^{implied that} he's reducing the bombings of the North as a concession, to show appreciation for what the Vietnamese have ^{in Paris} conceded, in effect he was saying, "I'm going to try to demonstrate that I have control over this whole air war." And if the ~~air war~~ ^{bombing} should resume again, or extend, it's quite clear that Nixon doesn't have that control. And Thieu will hang on as long as he feels that he's got some support within the American government, let's say particularly certain military and right-wing circles.

Belden: One other brief question. What do you think will happen to the apparatus of the government in Saigon if an agreement is concluded and ^{the} American military goes away - what happens to their military and police?

Schurman: The Saigon regime itself is not a single monolithic regime, even though Thieu is sitting on the top. There are lots and lots of factions within the Saigon regime and a substantial portion thereof will try to make some sort of accommodation with the PRG. So I think that actually the agreement ~~is~~, I would say, basically in the long run assures the PRG power in South Vietnam in one fashion or another. But the key variable here is, you know, will the United States get involved again through the CIA as it did after the Geneva accords in 1954, will it try the usual kind of subversion to maintain its power? That's what ~~is~~ one can't know. Now presumably the Vietnamese in Paris and Hanoi are quite aware of this fact. I don't think they would have concluded any agreement whatsoever unless they felt that it satisfied some of their basic aims, at least in the long run. They would never risk a repetition of 1954.

Belden: That was Franz Schurman.