

Politicians Laud Peace Breakthrough

The improved outlook for an early cease-fire in Vietnam was unanimously welcomed by American politicians, but Democratic enthusiasm was tempered by doubts on the timing.

While Republicans saw the nine-point draft agreement as a vindication for President Nixon's policies, Democrats continued to question whether such a deal might not have been possible four years ago.

Democratic vice presidential candidate Sargent Shriver, speaking in Detroit, said he still believed "the killing could have stopped three years ago when Mr. Nixon came into office with a clean slate. He did not have a lot of animosity because he was a new face. He was like a pitcher coming into the game."

Sen. James L. Buckley (R-N.Y.) saw it differently. "It appears that patient diplomacy combined with the maintenance of military pressures are paying substantial dividends," he said. "We appear to be on the brink of a major success which will vindicate the great sacrifices which this nation has made to stem Communist expansion in Southeast Asia."

The chairman of the Republican National Committee, Sen. Bob Dole of Kansas, sought to tone down the political debate over Vietnam. In a telegram Thursday he urged, "in the interests of the continued success of these negotiations," that Democratic candidate George McGovern "refrain from further political discussion of the war." He said that because of the delicate stage of the talks there is a need to keep "a discussion of war and peace in Vietnam above and beyond the routine of politics as usual."

In line with this, Vice President Spiro T. Agnew said he would make no further mention of Vietnam in his campaign speeches. "I don't want to put the administration in the position where some nuance in what I say will seem to be in conflict to what Henry Kissinger said," he told reporters late Thursday after a campaign swing.

But McGovern did not drop Vietnam from his talks.

"If there is one thing I'm humbly proud of," he said yesterday in Los Angeles,

"It's that I stood up against this war for many years, even when I thought it might destroy my political career." Repeating his criticism of Mr. Nixon for not acting sooner, he told a breakfast meeting of supporters, "I did not wait until it was popular to stand up against this war to make my move. I don't think the American people are going to forget that."

He said the President owed Americans an explanation about why it took "another four years to put an end to this tragic war."

W. Averell Harriman, one of the elder statesmen of the Democratic Party and the United States' first negotiator at the Paris talks on Vietnam, said yesterday that while he believed presidential adviser Henry A. Kissinger's contention that peace was at hand, he still thought that "we could have had a reasonably good settlement in '69." Appearing on NBC's Today show he

said: "We'd have saved these four years of utter agony in the United States, the division in our country, the 20,000 that were killed, the vast treasury that has been consumed..."

Harriman said the United States had won its point in getting Hanoi to agree to a cease-fire prior to framing a political deal. "We've been very stubborn and stuck to the idea that this is the way we wanted it," he said. "And I don't think it's been worth it. We could have done it the other way. And I'm satisfied that if Hubert Humphrey had been President we would have come to agreement."

Sen. Hubert H. Humphrey (D-Minn.), who lost to Mr. Nixon in 1968, said the impending peace would be a "political plus" for the President but that the effect would be less meaningful in the election than other issues like the cost of living.

Sen. Edward M. Kennedy (D-Mass.) said, "There will

be questions in the minds of parents who have lost their children since 1969, 22,000 young Americans. ... What different conditions exist today that did not exist in 1969?" A similar question was asked by Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chairman J. W. Fulbright (D-Ark.), a long-time critic of the war. "What have we gotten in this agreement that we couldn't have gotten four years ago?"

Senate majority leader Mike Mansfield of Montana said he took Kissinger "at his word" when he said that peace, and not politics, is the main concern of the administration. Speaking in Utah, he said that he believed Kissinger when he said that it was at Hanoi's insistence that the October date was selected. In Paris, however, a North Vietnamese spokesman said yesterday that it was Mr. Nixon who proposed that the agreements be signed Oct. 31.