

Letters to the Editor

Nixon's 'Secret Plan' to End the War

To the Editor:

So at long last—four years and hundreds of thousands of deaths later—President Nixon's secret plan to end the war is revealed. If we look beneath the predictable rhetoric and face-saving machinations of both parties, the terms seem to be those which any American Government could have negotiated at any time in the past decade—and which presented themselves to Mr. Nixon with particular clarity in 1968.

By agreeing to withdraw our troops from South Vietnam without insisting that the North Vietnamese do the same the Nixon Administration is doing precisely what it has accused the McGovern forces of advocating. To use the only appropriate description, we are conceding defeat and surrendering. This is surely the way Nixon himself would have described it if President Johnson had agreed to these terms four years ago.

A day before the peace terms were announced, The Times ran an article summarizing the state of the readiness of the South Vietnamese Army. It was clear from interviews with American military men on the scene that President Nixon's politically useful formula of "Vietnamization" was a total failure. The army of the Saigon Government is now being retrained in an emergency program by U.S. advisers.

The main complaint of the advisers is that their pupils refuse to adopt any tactics that require them to engage the enemy directly. When the South Vietnamese find themselves

under fire, they take cover and call in the U.S. Air Force.

This is the army we are leaving behind us to defend a Government that in recent months has abandoned the last pretense of "democratic" or "popular" rule. Is there anyone who really believes that this army and this Government will be able to prevent the Vietcong and the North Vietnamese from taking over Saigon at any time they choose?

What, then, has Mr. Nixon gained—even on his own estimate—by delaying the peace settlement for four years, at such a terrible cost? The answer is so obvious, so monstrous in its logic, that one hesitates to state it.

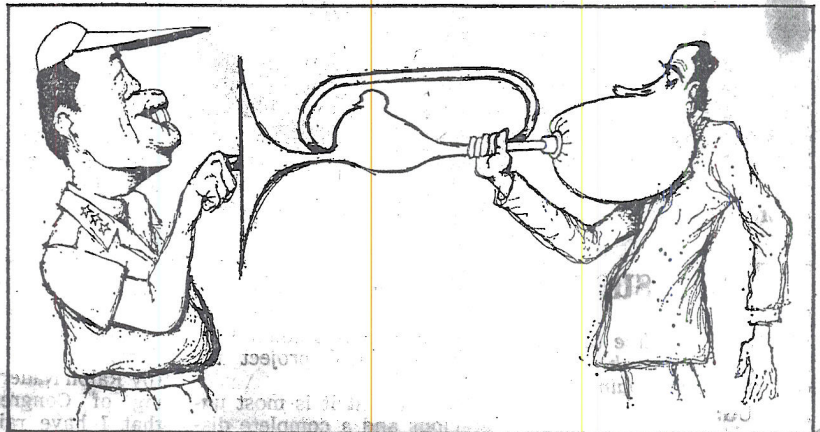
By making peace just before the election, the President has insured that there will be no embarrassing takeover of our client regime in Saigon until after the election. From the President's

point of view, early 1973 would be the best time for the inevitable to occur.

If a red flag is raised over Saigon before that, the logic behind his secret plan will be exposed a little too vividly. If the takeover comes too close to the 1976 election, there may be some damage to the political future of those Republicans of the right—like Spiro Agnew—who hope to succeed Nixon.

These are strange times for people who consider themselves advocates of peace. Any sane person must applaud the Kissinger agreement if it brings this immoral war to a halt. The incredible thing is that the leader who could have ended the killing four years ago, and who sacrificed so many lives for the sake of his own political hide, should now expect to be rewarded by a grateful electorate.

GERALD JONAS
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