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On November 2nd in a campaign address Richard Nixon said:

Nixon [voice]: "As you know, we have now made a major breakthrough toward achieving our goal of peace with honor in Vietnam. We have reached substantial agreement on most of the terms of a settlement. However, there are still some issues to be resolved. There are still some provisions of the agreement which must be clarified, so that all ambiguities will be removed. I have insisted that these be settled before we sign the final agreement. That is why we refuse to be stampeded into meeting the arbitrary deadline of October 31st."

But contrary to the President's campaign promise, it does not appear that peace is at hand.

This is the Indochina Report, for the week of November 5th, prepared by the Asia Information Group. Today's program is about the disclosure of the peace agreement reached between the United States and the Democratic Republic of Vietnam. Recent developments over the past week raise many questions which we will address in today's program. Is Nixon using the claim that peace is at hand to win election votes? Could the war have been settled four years ago on similar terms? Is Thieu the real obstacle to peace?

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We begin with the summary of events surrounding the disclosure of the peace agreement.

On October 31st the Nixon Administration refused to sign the agreement that would have ended the war in Vietnam. The existence of this agreement was revealed on October 26th in a statement by the government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam. The statement said that the United States and North Vietnam had arrived at an agreement on a complete settlement of the Vietnam war. In fact the statement said that President Nixon wrote a letter to North Vietnamese Premier Pham Van Dong on October 20th, in which he expressed satisfaction with the explanations given by the government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam on points that had troubled the United States. But the U.S. has three times asked for postponement of the signing of the agreement, the DRV statement said. October 31st was set as the date of signing by the U.S., after it had postponed the signing twice before, but the U.S. demanded on October 23rd a third postponement beyond October 31st. It was at this point, convinced that the Nixon Administration was stalling, that North Vietnam disclosed the secret negotiations, to publicly demand that the U.S. keep its pledge to sign the agreement on October 31st.

The basic content of the peace agreement was publicly outlined by North Vietnam, in what Kissinger called "a very fair account." According to the North Vietnamese statement the plan, agreed to by both sides, provides that "the Vietnam problem will be settled in two stages, in accordance with the often expressed desire of the American side." The first

stage includes ^a ~~the~~ cessation of the war in Vietnam/~~within~~^{a cease-fire in South Vietnam} 24 hours of the signing of the agreement, U.S. withdrawal from South Vietnam within 60 days, and the release of prisoners held by all [sic] sides. It also includes an agreement on the principles for guaranteeing self-determination in South Vietnam after the U.S. has gone. In the second stage the two South Vietnamese parties, the Saigon Government and the Provisional Revolutionary Government, will settle together the internal matters of South Vietnam. From the enforcement of the cease-fire to ~~the~~ installation of the government formed after free and democratic elections, the North Vietnamese statement explained, the two current administrations in South Vietnam, the Saigon Government and the PRG, will remain in existence with their respective domestic and external functions. These two administrations will consult with one another to form a three-segment National Council for National Reconciliation and Concord. This council will see that the agreements are implemented and hold general democratic elections in South Vietnam within three months. The U.S. is not committed to any political tendency or any personalities in South Vietnam, the agreement states, and does not seek to impose a pro-American regime in Saigon.

But Nixon did not sign the agreement on October 31st as he had agreed he would, and Henry Kissinger has continued to raise new obstacles to the settlement, despite the fact that every detail had already been agreed upon in full. It appears now that Nixon is trying to drag out the negotiations past the elections and sabotage the nine-point agreement, while using the claim that "peace is at hand" to win votes on November 7th. Here is that report.

Kissinger claimed in his October 26th press conference that what is delaying a settlement are only minor points which could be resolved in one or more meetings with North Vietnamese negotiators. Yet the points he mentioned, such as the question of international supervision of the cease-fire, are complex matters on which the two sides had already come to agreement. Kissinger stressed linguistic problems, yet according to a North Vietnamese spokesman the English and Vietnamese texts had been compared in several sessions, lasting up to 17 hours, by language experts, and approved. Before going to Saigon last week, Kissinger himself returned to Paris and went over the agreement, section by section, phrase by phrase, with North Vietnamese negotiators.

And now almost every day the U.S. is raising new areas of difficulty. On October 30th, through Administration leaks, Kissinger indicated that the question of North Vietnamese troops in South Vietnam had not been resolved. But the nine-point settlement, already agreed to by both sides, states clearly that the question of Vietnamese armed forces in South Vietnam shall be settled by the two South Vietnamese parties, without foreign interference. The Administration stresses the problems of getting Gen. Thieu to accept the settlement, yet according to a North Vietnamese spokesman in Paris, from the beginning of the negotiations the U.S. stated that they were representing the Thieu government.

Nixon could have ended the war at any time since he took office. Instead, for four

years he has deceived the American people, saying that peace was near and that he was winding down the war. At the same time he developed the strategy of Vietnamization, a plan not to end the war but to continue the war. Disguising U.S. involvement by withdrawing most U.S. ground troops, Vietnamization replaced them with a massive Saigon army backed by U.S. air power. Always Nixon has maintained the goal of keeping U.S. control of the government in Saigon. When Nixon broke his agreement to sign the nine-point settlement on October 31st North Vietnam stated that it was now up to him to set a new date. Meanwhile both North Vietnam and the PRG have stressed that by not signing the agreement as planned the Nixon Administration - quote - "must bear before the people of the U.S. and the world responsibility for delaying the signing of the agreement and thus prolonging the war in Vietnam."

The Nixon Administration claims that the nine-point agreement represents North Vietnamese acceptance of Nixon's peace proposals of January 25th and May 8th. This is not the case, however. The nine points are, in essence, the seven-point~~s~~ peace proposal of the Provisional Revolutionary Government, and represent the basic points for a settlement Nixon could have negotiated when he took office in 1969. Here is that story.

Henry Kissinger has said that the new nine-point peace agreement is based on - quote - "major concessions by the North Vietnamese government at the October 8th private talks in Paris." The Democratic Republic of Vietnam did in fact propose what it calls a new, extremely important initiative at the October 8th meeting. But the fundamental points of this new plan are in essence the kind of settlement which the National Liberation Front, and more recently the Provisional Revolutionary Government, have been proposing for four years. The PRG has always called for a settlement based on two points, 1) a complete U.S. ^{military} withdrawal from Vietnam, and 2) an end to U.S. intervention in the internal political affairs of South Vietnam. Once this is done, the PRG has always said, internal problems will be solved by the South Vietnamese people themselves, based on the principle of self-determination. This should be accomplished through ^{genuinely} free and ~~genuinely~~ democratic elections without outside interference. The present draft agreement calls for just that.

The U.S. would withdraw militarily from Vietnam within 60 days. With the U.S. out, the agreement says, general elections would be organized by the National Council of National Reconciliation and Concord. This council would be composed of three equal segments, including the PRG, independent peace forces, and representatives of the current Saigon Administration. During this period there would be two official administrations in South Vietnam, the PRG and the Saigon Administration. In this way the PRG would not be forced simply to run for office in the Thieu government, as past U.S. proposals have demanded. The elections would be held, not under the Thieu government, but under a joint council composed of very broad sectors of the South Vietnamese population.

Nixon could have had this kind of peace four years ago when the NLF presented its first ten-point proposal in Paris. He could have it now, based on the nine-point agreement. It

is Nixon with his commitment to maintain ^{the} U.S.-controlled Thieu regime that has prevented self-determination and prolonged the war for four years.

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The following statement in reaction to the peace agreement disclosure was made by Jane Fonda, for the Indochina Peace Campaign, on October 27th.

Jane Fonda [voice]: "The peace terms revealed to the American public by North Vietnam, if agreed to by the American government, would represent a great victory for the anti-war movement. They would ensure an end to the massive killing, a return of our prisoners of war, and self-determination for the people of Vietnam. Rather than leaving peace in politicians' hands, as Kissinger suggested, we should - to use his own term - stampede the Nixon Administration into a settlement now. Only the continuous pressure of the American anti-war movement can cause the Nixon Administration to ratify the agreements.

"Kissinger's talks may be an election maneuver, designed to prevent further military attacks during the present dry season in South Vietnam, and neutralize domestic attacks by George McGovern and the anti-war movement.

"The unresolved question is whether the U.S. Government will abandon its support of the Thieu regime's policies: terror against the urban population, mass jailings of political opponents, brutal pacification programs, suspension of the democratic rights of the people of South Vietnam, and denunciation of any coalition government. The United States must withdraw support from these policies and permit the formation of a coalition regime, with or without Thieu's inclusion.

"We have demanded a coalition government for years. So have the Vietnamese people. So has George McGovern. It is unforgivable that Nixon and Kissinger should wait this long to accept this proposal, if they actually have. Their talks coincide so closely with the Presidential election that it cannot be accidental.

"This time is critical. We call on all anti-war organizations everywhere to concentrate on exposing the U.S.-appointed Thieu dictatorship. As long as we read that Thieu is the stumbling block to a peaceful settlement, we can be sure ^{that} the Nixon Administration is not negotiating seriously.

"Kissinger has been outwitted by the Vietnamese at the art of diplomacy, by ~~their~~ ^{Nixon} the revelation of his secrets. We have the opportunity to force the Administration to do what they should have done four years ago."