Peace and the Election Date

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Washington

President Nixon never intended to risk putting the Vietnam peace plan into force on October 31, one week before the American election, according to sources inside the administration.

The Nixon Administration according to these sources, planned to stretch North Vietnam over the November 7 election date in the secret bargaining, in order to complete the accord at a less hazardous date.

The reasons for this circuitous strategy, it is said, were to prevent North Vietnam from exploiting a sudden pre-election ceasefire, to avoid danger to the Saigon government of President Nguyen Van Thieu, and to avoid the risk of a backfire on President Nixon's re-election.

'MESSY'

If the Vietnam peace plan had gone into effect on October 31 as projected in the last of several shifting timetables in the draft accords, administration sources now acknowledge, President Nixon would have been exposed to a "messy" situation during the critical week before the presidential election.

The cease-fire was bound to be less than 100 per cent secure, for no cease-fire in Vietnam ever will be inviolate, administration officials concede.

In the week before the U.S. election, it is said, President Nixon therefore would have been exposed to a double charge: That he rushed into an insecure-war-end pact for political purposes, and that an unsafe agreement was being visibly breached.

RESULT

As a result, it is said, the President chose instead to expose himself to what he regarded as the lesser hazard of a charge of duplicity by North Vietnam.

That charge did come, in North Vietnam's first disclosure of the summary of the nine - point peace plan on October 26, when it evidently concluded it had been outmaneuvered on its strategy for concluding an accord before the election, to pin down President Nixon.

North Vietnam charged on October 26 that the U.S. three times had agreed to a sequence of dates for concluding the agreement, including dates for presidential envoy Henry A. Kissinger to initial the accord in Hanoi, and a series of dates for a signing ceremony by foreign ministers in Paris.

Change

By backing out of the agreement on October 23 on grounds of "difficulties in Saigon," Hanoi charged the U.S. had revealed that its real goal was "to drag out the talks so as to deceive public opinion and to cover up its scheme of maintaining the Saigon puppet administration for the purposes of aggression in Vietnam and Indochina."

North Vietnam has intensified that accusation ever since the proposed October 31 signing date slipped by. Its official newspapers, Nhan Dhan, charged Wednesday that the U.S. is "plotting some kind of double dealing . . . stepping up the war and threatening to destroy the agreement."

The Nixon administration has insisted that it was and is sincere about concluding an agreement and continues to express "confidence" that this will be accomplished in coming "weeks."

PHRASE

All the timetables for concluding the agreement, U.S. officials insist, were, in the diplomatic phrase, "ad referendum" — subject to concurrence by South Vietnam and final approval in Washington.

Unofficial claims are now circulating that Kissinger pressed beyond President Nixon's attempt to induce south Vietnam to shift its demands enough to produce an agreement by October 31, and that Mr. Nixon pulled back.

←—— Copy of Marder's article, as carried by Washington Post 9 Nov 72, attached, picks up at this point.

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David Selvin of Pacifica Washington bureau, in his report on the above, also says:

"Meanwhile, the current edition of what the Washington Post calls the extremely conservative Washington weekly "Human Events" said that national security adviser Henry Kissinger had tried to - quote - "foist" the final accord on the President, thereby provoking - quote - "a bitter dispute" among top officials involved in the negotiations, and that even the White House has been having serious second thoughts about the tentative provisions."

Transcript, from KPFA News 9 Oct 72, filed Nix Ad.