

A Scoreboard for Truce Talks

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PARIS, Nov. 16 — However rapid or arduous renewed negotiations on a Vietnam cease-fire prove to be, both Washington and Hanoi have indicated that they have no intention of making more major concessions at this stage.

Both sides made substantial concessions in the draft agreement worked out here in Paris by Henry A. Kissinger, President Nixon's adviser on national security, and Le Duc Tho, the Hanoi Politburo member. An analysis of the agreement published by Hanoi on Oct. 26, compared with previously published demands by both sides, shows the essential points of compromise.

In part, concessions are reflected in what was left out as well as in newly phrased points.

The comparison is based on the eight-point program made public by Mr. Nixon last Jan. 24, on the nine-point secret program offered by North Vietnam on June 26, 1971 (published Jan. 31, after the President's speech), and on the statement by the Vietcong on Sept. 11, 1972. Among the salient issues are these:

TROOP WITHDRAWALS

The new draft provides that all United States and other foreign allied troops be withdrawn from South Vietnam in 60 days. Previously the United States has insisted on six months and, according to Hanoi, planned to leave some contingents behind until a month before any elections.

Hanoi and the Vietcong had demanded withdrawal by the end of 1971, defining that to require the removal of all matériel and the dismantling of bases. That has been dropped.

The United States had previously demanded that all forces in Indochina stay within their "national frontiers," an allusion to withdrawal of North Vietnamese forces that was dropped from the draft. Instead, it provides for the end of all United States military "involvement" and forbids anyone to send military manpower to South Vietnam, which constitutes a pledge against additional North Vietnamese infiltration.

ARMS SHIPMENTS

Continued arms shipments are permitted by both sides,

but only on a one-for-one replacement basis. Each side previously demanded that the other stop all military supplies.

CEASE-FIRE

The draft provides for a full cease-fire in South Vietnam and the end of all "acts of war" against North Vietnam within 24 hours after the agreement is signed.

The United States had previously demanded a cease-fire throughout Indochina. The Communists had proposed a Vietnam cease-fire affecting only American forces, to be followed by a cease-fire among Vietnam belligerents only after a new coalition government was formed.

SOVEREIGNTY

The draft speaks simply of "Vietnam" and the "three countries of Indochina," without mention of the demilitarized zone, implying that North and South Vietnam comprise a single sovereign country.

The United States previously referred to "all the countries of Indochina," without specifying how many it counted but implying that North and South Vietnam were legally separate. The Communists had regularly referred to "the two zones" of Vietnam.

PRISONERS

The draft provides for the release of all military prisoners and foreign civilians in phase with American withdrawal. The Communists had demanded the release of all political prisoners as well, while the United States spoke of freeing "innocent civilians" and military men.

ELECTIONS

The draft provides for "general" elections without any date, with details to be negotiated by President Nguyen Van Thieu's administration and the Vietcong. Elections would be run by a "three-component" structure representing Saigon, the Communists and intermediate South Vietnamese groups, with international supervision.

Previously, the United States had specified that the election could only be for president and implied that the existing South Vietnamese Constitution would remain in effect. It offered an "election board" including Communists and all other "political forces," but with the exclusive duty of organizing the election. It was to be held within six months, thus coinciding with completion of the American withdrawal.

President Thieu would have resigned a month before the election, and the president of the senate would have run a caretaker administration charged with all governmental functions except the election itself until it took place.

'Reparations' Dropped

The Communists insisted that Mr. Thieu resign, that the Saigon Government "change its policy" and negotiate a new "three-component" government with the Vietcong before elections could be held.

There are other lesser points of compromise, such as Hanoi's agreement to call postwar United States contributions "reconstruction aid" instead of "reparations."

The key Communist compromise, from the American viewpoint, was acceptance of a cease-fire with only a general political outline for future settlement and with negotiations among the Vietnamese to follow. Thus President Thieu is to be left in place, holding as much of South Vietnam as his forces can manage to control for as long as he can remain.

The key American compromise, from Hanoi's viewpoint, was acceptance of complete military withdrawal without simultaneous North Vietnamese withdrawal and recognition of the Vietcong's Provisional Revolutionary Government as having equal status and equal rights with Mr. Thieu. The United States abandoned the contention that Mr. Thieu's Government was the "sole legitimate" administration in South Vietnam.

The Balance Sheet

On the face of it Washington gave much more than Hanoi in terms of initial war aims. Washington's aim has always been to prevent the Communists' coming to power in South Vietnam; Hanoi's was to help them get established.

Which side has really given most depends partly on what it realistically hoped to achieve, as distinct from formal demands, and even more on how it sees its chances of finally tipping the balance in its favor.

An ironic aspect of the current situation, in which both sides use public statements as a weapon, is that each side talks as though it were strong and fully confident of holding its own. But both sides act as though they feel dangerously weak and need every hedge and buttress they can get.