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## Why Still No Peace?

On Oct. 26, announcing that "peace is at hand," Henry Kissinger said he believed the United States could wrap up the details of an agreement with North Vietnam in one more negotiating session of three or four days' duration. A month later and after a six-day negotiating session, the talks remain uncompleted. They are to be resumed Dec. 4. What's going on?

Three broad explanations have been offered by observers. One is that on Oct. 26 Mr. Kissinger misstated the peace prospects to aid his chief's election prospects. This we dismiss out of hand as an insult to—among other things—Mr. Nixon's political judgment. A second theory holds that Mr. Nixon, appreciating his adviser's reputation for credibility, tricked him into offering Hanoi certain terms which the President intended all along to weasel on. Not only is there no evidence that this is true, but it misreads, in our judgment, the nature of the working relationship of the two men. No doubt there is a subtle interplay between the Nixon intentions and the Kissinger movements and statements. But, no matter what Hanoi may fear or Saigon hope, we think it is an interplay calculated and controlled by the two principals throughout.

A third possible explanation stems from the likelihood that the Oct. 26 announcement did not so much "end the war" as precipitate an 11th-hour struggle for cease-fire position by the contending Vietnamese. We find this view far and away the most persuasive. By Oct. 26 Washington and Hanoi had agreed in principle to end their fighting against each other. But Washington had not secured Sai-

gon's agreement to the particulars, and Hanoi had perhaps not secured the National Liberation Front's. In any event, each Vietnamese party realized it was at that final stage where it could make only one last effort to use the bargaining weight of the American presence for its own advantage. This is why, by the way, President Thieu sent his personal emissary to confer with Mr. Nixon yesterday.

For Saigon, this final stage has meant using the American presence (while it remains) to pry Hanoi's troops out of South Vietnam and to zip closed the DMZ and the old sanctuaries and supply routes in Laos and Cambodia. For Hanoi this has meant offering the United States its prisoners and some kind of political figleaf in South Vietnam—in return for the chance to keep in the South as much military force as possible in order to retain captured territory, to protect Vietcong cadres not in Mr. Thieu's jails and to help free those in the jails. For Hanoi the significance of this effort lies in the huge forces (army, air force, police) Saigon has at its disposal—forces even now being readied for post-cessate-fire struggle by quick massive injections of extra American arms and "civilian" advisers.

The principal point is that everyone assumes—we believe correctly—that a settlement will mean two quite different things for the U.S. and for Vietnam. For the U.S. it will mean ending its own combat role and retrieving its prisoners; but for Vietnam it will likely mean continuing the war by other—political/guerrilla—means. It is for advantage in that next stage that, at Paris and on the battlefield, the Vietnamese are now vying.

