

'FUNDAMENTAL' HANGUP IN PARIS

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Washington

The U.S. and North Vietnam are locked in a "fundamental" impasse over whether they are negotiating an "armistice" or "peace," Henry Kissinger ruefully acknowledged Saturday. 16 DEC.

None of the hopeful, counter balancing statements by the weary presidential envoy at his second extraordinary press conference in seven weeks could overcome the basic discord which he revealed.

"We have an agreement that is 99 per cent completed

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as far as the text of the agreement is concerned" and "we are one decision away from a

settlement," said the upbeat Kissinger. The downbeat Kissinger, however, admitted, "but that alone is not the problem," because "the technical implementing instruments that they (North Vietnam) have presented" to bring the agreement into force "are totally unacceptable . . ."

The barrier on which the negotiations have floundered, Kissinger indirectly acknowledged, is in fact the central issue in the war: Whether there is one Vietnam or two.

Kissinger virtually conceded that when he said, "he wanted some reference in the agreement, somehow, however illusive, however indirect, which would make

clear that the two parts of Vietnam would live in peace with each other and that neither side would impose its solution on the other by force."

INTERVENTION

The President's national security adviser, speaking in circuitous language because of his agreement with North Vietnam's Le Duc Tho not to discuss "the substance of the talks," said at another point, "we cannot accept the proposition that North Vietnam has a right of constant intervention in the south."

On October 26 at the White House, when Kissinger buoyantly proclaimed on behalf of President Nixon that "we believe peace is at hand," Kissinger spoke glowingly of moving "from hostility to normalcy." North Vietnam, he said, had "dropped" or cut back various demands that would open the road to "peace."

But many experts concluded from studying the terms of the nine-point agreement, which are still available in summary form, that they added up to a cease-fire accord, not peace.

SEPARATE

What now appears to have occurred is that the U.S., at least partially at the insistence of South Vietnamese President Nguyen Van Thieu, attempted to convert an ambiguous agreement into a hard and fast peace settlement that would assure the existence of a separate South Vietnamese nation.

North Vietnam evidently has a considerably different view of what it was negotiating.

Last week, Hanoi's most authoritative theoretical journal, Hoc Tap, said, in "revolutionary struggle, there is a time for us to advance, but there is also a time for us to step backward temporarily in order to advance more steadily later." By "temporarily coming to an agreement with the enemy," the journal bluntly stated, North Vietnam was making a zig-zag in a continuing battle.

North Vietnam's leaders undoubtedly assumed that Washington understood Hanoi's intentions. Kissinger, at the outset of the Nixon administration, often spoke in private — and the words became public — of the search for "a decent interval" to protect American "honor" between the American exit from the war and whatever was to follow afterward.

What has always been in question, however, is whether President Nixon also accepted the "decent interval" concept.

The whole thrust of Kissinger's presentation Saturday was that North Vietnam has reneged on the "unsettled"

portion of the agreement after previously giving its consent.

Hanoi's specific charge, echoed by the Viet Cong Saturday, is that the U.S. has joined Saigon in seeking to perpetuate the division of South Vietnam.

The nine-point Hanoi-Washington draft agreement, as made public October 27, states that "the United States respects the independence, sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity of Vietnam as recognized by the 1954 Geneva Agreements."

Kissinger's comments suggest that the U.S., in his original negotiations with

Tho, hoped to circumvent endless debate over this question about the "sover-

