

A News Analysis

The Discord: One or Two Viets?

By KENNETH J. FREED

WASHINGTON (AP) — The disagreements Henry A. Kissinger says are holding up a Vietnam settlement are more than problems of semantics. They go to the heart of what the war is about and make it unlikely there will be peace any time soon.

For the remaining two issues concern the political control of the South. In other words, should South Vietnam be guaranteed the right of an existence independent of North Vietnam?

Kissinger, in his first public discussion of the negotiations with the North Vietnamese since his Oct. 26 statement that "peace is at hand," refused to discuss the substance of the troublesome details.

But he inched close on several occasions in his Saturday news conference. "We wanted," he said, "some reference in the agreement, somehow, however elusive, 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."

NORTH Vietnam always has insisted there is only one Vietnam and the Saigon regime has subverted the Geneva agreement ending the war with France by insisting on a separate life.

In Hanoi's eyes, the demilitarized zone at the 17th parallel is not a permanent international boundary but only a temporary truce marker.

In the first of the nine points outlined in the tentative agreement, the United States agreed to language that

seemed to support this view:

"The United States respects the independence, sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity of Vietnam as recognized by the 1954 Geneva agreements."

BOTH sides say the October agreement was final on this point, and now each accuses the other of recanting.

Who changed position is uncertain. What is clear is that neither Kissinger nor his Hanoi counterpart, Le Duc Tho, had the same concept about the meaning of the tentative accord.

The United States is seeking a settlement with enough political stability to provide a "decent interval" between the end of the fighting and any resumption of conflict.

This decent interval would give South Vietnam time to establish itself in the countryside and the United States time to escape blame for a sellout of its ally if and when the conflict resumes.

HANOI WANTS a cease-fire with a loose understanding of the political agreement so it can continue its military support of its Viet Cong ally.

Kissinger said, "We cannot accept the proposition that North Vietnam has a right of instant intervention in the South."

Thus, when Kissinger said, "We have an agreement that is 99 per cent completed . . . we are only one decision away from a settlement," he was talking only of quantity.

For Hanoi to give Kissinger what he wants on this point would remove any claim it would have for legitimately intervening in the South if Saigon and the Viet Cong start fighting again.

THAT THE settlement is broken down over this crucial point is supported by a disagreement over a "technical" point, as outlined by Kissinger.

This deals with an international force to supervise a cease-fire. According to Kissinger, "Our estimate was that several thousand people were needed to monitor many

provisions of the agreement.

"The North Vietnam perception is that the total force should be no more than 250, of which nearly half should be located at headquarters; that it would be dependent for its communication, logistics and even physical necessities entirely on the party in whose area it was located."

Hanoi's demand supports the observation that North Vietnam is not interested in a tightly controlled and permanent peace. Further, Hanoi is aware that the failure of the International Control Commission to supervise the Geneva agreements effectively was due in part to its lack of size and mobility.

BOTH THE United States and Vietnamese stands on the nature of the agreement seem to result in part from the role played by South Vietnamese President Nguyen Van Thieu since the Oct. 26 disclosures.

Thieu demanded that all North Vietnamese troops pull out of the South, that the 17th parallel be re-established as a permanent border and demilitarized zone and that his government be acknowledged as having full and unlimited sovereignty.

Though Kissinger said Saturday that "none of these

U.S. proposals had asked for a withdrawal of North Vietnamese forces," it appears Kissinger did press Le Duc Tho on the other issues raised by Saigon.

"We cannot make a settlement which brings peace to North Vietnam and maintains the war in South Vietnam," he said. In the same segment of the exchange with newsmen, he referred to "the fundamental point" holding up an agreement. Asked to elaborate, he declined but went on to refer to a demand that "the parties of a peace settlement should live in peace with one another. . . ."

peace settlement should live in peace with one another. . . ."

THE NORTH, some diplomatic sources say, viewed this American position as a change forced by Thieu. If Kissinger switched on this, one source said, Hanoi may have felt he could not be trusted on other issues. Therefore, North Vietnam hardened and sought more strictly worded provisions.

The negotiations are not over, according to both Tho and Kissinger. But if the Paris talks are to end the conflict, one side or the other will have to make a major change in position.