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# Congress Moving to Seize the Initiative for Peace

ALREADY taking shape following the disastrous failure of the cease fire negotiation is a determination in Congress to seize the initiative for peace. This comes out of a growing conviction that the White House now has no way out of the tangled web that Henry A. Kissinger so painfully delineated.

The gloss of optimism he put on the sorry record of failed intentions and the haunting, humiliating memory of "peace is at hand" rates as hardly more than cosmetics. To think that Hanoi will now negotiate on Washington's terms is the same kind of wishful dream stuff of a decade of tragedy and frustration dressed up in ignorant predictions of light at the end of the tunnel and victory just around the corner.

Senate Majority Leader Mike Mansfield has been steadfast in supporting past attempts to use the power of the purse to shut down the war. Three times the Senate voted to cut off funds for Vietnam after a date certain and three times the House rejected the Senate resolution.

THIS has the highest priority for Mansfield today and he is determined in the new Congress to try once again to compel the administration to end the war and bring the remaining American troops home. As past efforts have shown that is easier said than done. But the shock and total disillusion over what had been heralded in late October as imminent success gives it a new urgency.

Those considering this course suggest that privately it might even be welcome to President Nixon. If Congress took the initiative out of his hands he could say to President Nguyen Van Thieu in Saigon and to the small right wing fringe here at home that he had no option but to move out. The consequences would fall on Congress and not on the chief executive.

This is on the assumption that Thieu's stubborn fear for his own future is the root cause of the failure. Despite Kissinger's kind words about compassion and understanding it is evident that Thieu worked his own form of blackmail to undermine the negotiation. Part of that blackmail has been the vilification of Kissinger over the Saigon radio in Hitlerite terms.

IF AND WHEN Congress gets down to still one more attempt to bring an end of the shooting the charge will inevitably arise that this is certain to prolong the conflict. Every effort to get a negotiated peace during the past two years has drawn this same charge. It was raised against Sen. George McGovern in the campaign when he promised to end the war, bring home the troops and the American prisoners immediately after his inauguration, incidentally even his principal foreign policy advisers who are convinced that "peace is at hand" was part of a planned deception on the eve of the election feel that it made no essential

difference in the outcome. They consider it to have been a kind of insurance against the use of the war issue by the Democrats and an extra push toward a landslide.

In light of what has now happened this is singularly unimportant. What matters is that the war goes on with the massive bombing of the north adding thousands to the toll of dead and injured. These, of course, are "natives" and apparently in the American conscience count for nothing. By one calculation four tons of bombs fell every minute night and day during the latest round of Kissinger-Le Duc Tho talks.

This will not bring an end to the war. It will not compel Hanoi to return to the bargaining table. That has been amply proved in the past. The North Vietnamese have the will and the capacity to conduct an underground war for an indefinite time terrible though the cost may be.

Hanoi has just signed a new military-economic agreement with the Soviet Union. This will mean something in the ability to continue the war. If the United States goes to even further lengths to shut off Haiphong Harbor and bomb the land entries, the hopeful Nixon overture to Moscow will be in jeopardy. That is a measure of what Thieu's demand for victory, and it is no less than that, can cost.