



# End of the Line For Secret Talks

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**T**HE SUSPENDED STATE of the Vietnam peace talks here in Paris underlines a curious deficiency in the present management of American foreign policy. Washington can negotiate effectively with dictatorial regimes — notably in Russia, China and North Vietnam.

But serious problems crop up when negotiations engage leaders who have to refer their decisions to a broader public. That category includes the leaders of Japan and Western Europe. It also includes President Nguyen Van Thieu of South Vietnam.

The present difficulty in the Paris talks is easy to identify. Washington and Hanoi have negotiated an agreement which compromises the sovereignty of South Vietnam and its local allies. There is no provision in the agreement for full withdrawal of North Vietnamese troops from South Vietnam. There is no reliable provision for withdrawal of North Vietnamese troops from Cambodia and Laos.

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**S**AIGON has dug in hard against these features of the agreement. President Thieu has insisted that the United States insert into the agreement clauses that amount to an underwriting of the sovereign independence of South Vietnam as a national state.

The American negotiators here in Paris have, not surprisingly, been angered by Saigon's stand. The U.S. delegation here points out that every American proposal for peace in Vietnam since May 1970 has accepted the presence of North Vietnamese troops in South Vietnam. All of these

offers, it is asserted by American officials, were previously cleared with President Thieu.

Now it appears to the American negotiators here that President Thieu is in fact acting to scuttle the agreement worked out so painfully between Washington and Hanoi.

I have no doubt that the complaints lodged against President Thieu are well founded.

The peace agreement was negotiated in a very special way. The accord was reached at the highest levels, in secret talks.

President Thieu is not a leader in good position to go along automatically with a decision of that kind. His regime has to clear decisions with an administration in Saigon, and with the generals that control South Vietnam administratively.

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**T**HE POINT of all this is that Washington has probably now gone about as far as it can with the style of diplomacy which characterized President Nixon's first term. There is increasingly less room left for big deals done secretly and swiftly at the highest levels by leaders who can deliver their countries. The string is running out on the kind of thing Mr. Nixon, working with Henry Kissinger, negotiated with Chou En-lai and Leonid Brezhnev and Le Duc Tho of North Vietnam.

Once Vietnam is settled, the most important international business will involve leaders who can't deliver in the fashion of the Communist bosses. It will center on the West Europeans and the Japanese. Those dealings will require a different pace and style.