

Nixon, Kissinger seem united in peace effort

WASHINGTON—The Capital is buzzing these days with rumors about a split between President Nixon and his security adviser Henry Kissinger over the terms of a ceasefire in Vietnam. But as usual in this gossipy town, the facts are less dramatic than the rumors.

It may, and probably is, true that Kissinger as well as Secretary of State Rogers and most of the senior officers in the State Department were opposed to the President's recent bombing offensive in North Vietnam. And also, that Kissinger would be more willing than the President to take a chance on signing the ambiguous truce terms of Oct. 26.

But Kissinger is too much of a scholar, with too good a sense of humor and history, to put his own thoughts ahead of the President's.

It is probably nonsense to suggest, as many people in Washington are now doing, that Kissinger was not faithful to the President's instructions in the Paris negotiations. Or that Kissinger's judgment that "peace is at hand" in late October was any different from the judgment of the President, who was just as optimistic in his public statements that a cease-fire was just about to be signed.

Sense of tragedy

Kissinger is a servant of the President and has never pretended he was anything else. He has carried out the President's instructions in Paris to the letter. He has put all the blame on Hanoi for the impasse in the Paris cease-fire negotiations, and has said nothing in public about the bombing in North Vietnam, which he undoubtedly opposes.

Nixon makes his point

The President, according to the best information available here, has made his point to Hanoi negotiate or suffer, and is ready, as Kissinger is, to go back to the Paris talks.

Meanwhile, there is some private evidence here that the President has taken a very hard line in private with General Thieu in Saigon that he is prepared to sign the cease-fire agreement on roughly the terms

negotiated by Kissinger in Paris at the end of October.

There have been some important private messages in these last few days between

James Reston

Washington and Hanoi, and between Washington and Moscow and Peking to get the cease-fire talks going again.

Avoiding a break

Kissinger is well aware of all this and is keeping quiet. He is avoiding a break with the President, and the President is avoiding a break with him. For if the bombing is resumed and there is an open split between the President and his principal foreign affairs adviser and negotiator, Kissinger will be free to resign and write the whole story of the Paris talks and why they broke down, and this would probably be highly embarrassing to Nixon at the beginning of his second term.

Congress coming back

Accordingly, a really serious effort is now under way, very privately, to end the bombing and get Kissinger and Le Duc Tho back to Paris to arrange a compromise. The President has made his point, whatever it is, by his attacks on Hanoi and Haiphong, and it has been costly in men and lives on both sides, but the Congress is coming back to Washington in a few days, and by the time the President starts his second term on Jan. 20, both he and Kissinger obviously want a settlement.

Much more is going on behind the scenes here than ever gets into the headlines. Washington has a direct line of communications to Hanoi. And the emphasis now is on ending the bombing and getting back to the negotiating table.

Failing this, Nixon, will start his second term on Jan. 20 with demonstrations on Capitol Hill, and a more serious confrontation with the Democratic majority in Congress than he has faced so far. This he is working quietly to avoid, and while the bombing has dominated the headlines, the evidence is that he is working a settlement before he goes to Capitol Hill for his inauguration by the end of January.

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