

Threat to Congress...

The lecture read to the President's Congressional critics by Herbert G. Klein, the White House Director of Communications, spells out Mr. Nixon's determination not to brook interference with his conduct of either the war or the peace negotiations. In the process, political facts at home and military realities in Vietnam are to be bent to the President's will. If the truth stands in the way, the White House communicators blithely revise it.

No other interpretation can explain Mr. Klein's complaint that "irresponsible" Congressional critics of the President's course have forgotten that the election gave Mr. Nixon "a very clear mandate to proceed the way he has on Vietnam."

What precisely was the course that had been presented to the voters? On the battlefield, it was a course of steady disengagement. The bombing of the North had been halted. Peace was "at hand." The prisoners were thought to be within sight of returning home.

That was the course on which the President had "a very clear mandate to proceed." It bears no resemblance to the course since taken—the apparent reopening of the question of Saigon's sovereignty with the implication of a permanently divided Vietnam; the terror bombing; the tragic rise of American casualties and prisoners.

To the question whether the course for which he asked Congressional support might include renewed carpet bombing, Mr. Klein replied: "I would not rule out any tactic that is necessary to protect American lives or to carry out the military objectives which are essential."

By no stretch of the imagination could the recent terror raids have been termed necessary to protect American lives. It was the bombing that wantonly destroyed lives—of American airmen and of Vietnamese civilians.

The threat to use "any tactic" to carry out Mr. Nixon's undefined "military objectives" must seem to the American people and the world as an awesome and unacceptable extension of Presidential power. It is an extension that is not rendered palatable by Mr. Klein's vague assurance that Mr. Nixon considers himself fully accountable and will offer an explanation when he considers the time to be right in the best interest of peace.

Such an open-ended extension of the President's powers should clearly be unacceptable to Congress. To block rather than merely to criticize such a usurpation of power is—so far from being irresponsible—a constitutional responsibility the Congress has evaded too long. The terror raids have stripped all credibility from the White House spokesmen's protestations that the Presi-

dent knows best and that not to let him have his way will jeopardize the negotiations.

Last year, Mr. Nixon impugned the patriotism of the nation's opinion makers and business leaders for their failure to rally to such "difficult" Presidential decisions as mining the harbors and bombing the cities of North Vietnam. Now, Mr. Klein has applied the same faulty doctrine to the nation's elected representatives by calling for "less rhetoric and more support in the Congress." To heed such a false warning would be tantamount to surrendering the Government of the United States to one-man rule.

...Paralysis in Paris

An air of unreality seems to surround the renewed peace talks in Paris. Far from having brought any sign of movement toward a settlement, the effect of two weeks of merciless United States bombing of the Hanoi-Haiphong area has apparently been to freeze the position of both sides.

North Vietnam has publicly restated its readiness to sign the "Accord on Ending the War and Restoring Peace in Vietnam" on which tentative agreement was reached in October—the basis for Mr. Kissinger's televised assurance to the American people less than two weeks before Election Day that peace was "at hand."

Since then there has been no official clarification by the White House of the precise obstructions that stand in the way of concluding a pact which the President's own envoy at one time characterized as 99 per cent complete. It is now more important than ever for the President personally to explain what is holding up a full agreement.

Both Congress and the people have a right to know whether the hold-up is in Hanoi, in Saigon or in Washington. What, in Mr. Nixon's estimation, is still needed to provide the "just and fair" settlement he has proclaimed as his goal? At times it has seemed far from clear that Mr. Kissinger himself knew what terms would satisfy the man in whose name he supposedly spoke at the negotiating table. Presumably that obscurity has now been cleared up for him. Now it is time for the President to let everyone know what will bring peace.