

A 10 Saturday, Jan. 27, 1973 THE WASHINGTON POST

Serious Pitfalls Facing

By Laurence Stern

Washington Post Staff Writer

In a phrase of immense qualification, Henry Kissinger counseled on Wednesday that the peace agreement due to be signed today in Paris must be judged "in terms of the evolution that it starts."

It was markedly at variance with President Nixon's earlier announcement to the nation that "we today have concluded an agreement to end the war and bring peace with honor in Vietnam and Southeast Asia."

The evolution to which Kissinger alluded will have to flower from an international treaty which is as dense and triple-canopied in its ambiguities as the jungle terrain in which much of the Vietnam conflict has been conducted.

The closest thing to a certainty is that the remaining

American troops will leave Vietnamese soil and our POWs will come back in the next two months.

Beyond that, the course of evolution will depend heav-

News Analysis

ily, as Kissinger emphasized, on the intentions of all the interested parties to the conflict: Hanoi, Saigon, the Vietcong, Washington, Moscow and Peking.

From Saigon have already come ominous sounds of disparagement both of the treaty and the two chief instruments of its implementation: the Commission of Control and Supervision as well as the National Council for National Reconciliation and Concord.

President Nguyen Van Thieu has spoken of launching an intensive campaign to wipe out the Communist

network in South Vietnam during the next six months in anticipation of the national election called for in the treaty.

Political conciliation by firing squad has been a time-honored electoral technique by both sides in the political struggle that has raged in the South for the past 20 years. But it is probably not the approach envisioned by the drafters of the Paris accord.

News dispatches from Saigon also spoke of "drastic" post-cease-fire measures being taken by the government including the authority for police and troops to shoot on sight "anyone creating trouble among the population or inciting to rebellion and support of the Communists."

In one province of the Mekong Delta, according to one reputable American correspondent, local officials are

being instructed to shoot on sight anyone suspected of being an NLF member and to bury the body.

To what extent the peace-keeping machinery will be able to check an incipient domestic blood-bath against suspected Communists in the streets and jails of Saigon or against government hamlet chiefs in the countryside is not clear in the language of the agreement.

Saigon's skepticism toward an international control body is rooted in more than the Thieu government's antipathy to the terms of the settlement. The villa of the old International Control Commission created under the 1954 Geneva accord, a mouldering relic in Saigon's Chinese suburb of Cholon, is an appropriate symbol of the organization's success in carrying out its mandate.

As to the proposed council

'Evolution' of Peace Agreement

for reconciliation and concord, highly placed South Vietnamese diplomats here undoubtedly reflect their government's view when they speak of it as an exercise in futility.

One Saigon official noted that the formation of the Council may well founder on the issue of choosing its membership. Thieu is opposed to the establishment of an independent neutralist segment on the council that might swing to the Communist side on crucial issues.

"We would insist on our neutralists and the Communists would probably insist on their neutralists. So we would end up with a two-segment council—a deadlock," he said.

It is a hauntingly familiar prospect, one which has deadlocked the peace negotiations in Laos since they were convened last October.

Under the agreement the

council would be made up of "three equal segments"—a variant of the original Communist proposal for an interim government in Saigon that would be equally composed of the present government, a neutralist bloc in the middle and the Communist Provisional Revolutionary Government, familiarly described as the Vietcong.

It is significant that one of the 10 points in the Thieu government's manifesto of "drastic" post-cease-fire measures, as published in the semi-official newspaper Tin Song is as follows:

"Neutralist and pro-Communist elements openly carrying out political activities will be arrested and charged before military tribunals as soon as possible."

Thieu and senior members of the American mission in Saigon have long taken the position that the Saigon government could ill

afford to observe legal and constitutional niceties because the country is at war.

However, the mandate of Article 11 of the peace agreement is that the "two South Vietnamese parties" proceed to "achieve national reconciliation and concord, end hatred and enmity, prohibit all acts of reprisal and discrimination against individuals or organizations that have collaborated with one side or the other."

But the underlying reality is that the Thieu government opposes the agreement, even as its emissaries go to the table to sign it. The southern Communists accept it because it confers international legitimacy upon their presence and enables them to bid for power in open political competition in the South—something that is now forbidden under the Saigon constitution.

Infiltration is another as-

pect of the war to which the agreement provides no iron-clad solution. Despite the creation of the control commission with its border and coastal teams, military experts familiar with the terrain know that troops and weapons can be carried into the South if the Communist wish to do so. Vietnam's heavily jungled borders and miles of coastline are a logistical sieve.

And so it will be a long time before the ultimate judgment can be pronounced on whether peace with honor has been achieved in Vietnam. The country's history is studded with examples of foreign powers dominating the tiny peninsular nation and then extricating themselves.

For the Vietnamese the prevailing experience of the past two millennia has been war, among themselves and with others.