



POWS

Kissinger's Adroit Work in Paris

Joseph Alsop

THE LANGUAGE bristles with diplomatic legalisms. The points covered are remote and obscure. The effects are not easy to predict. Yet several important meanings lurk in the Paris communique jointly agreed upon by Henry A. Kissinger and Le Duc Tho.

To begin with, this new agreement is a reaffirmation of the accord on a cease-fire, at a time when that accord seemed to be on the point of collapsing. Concerning promises made by representatives of the Hanoi government, you can never say they will be faithfully kept. But you can at least say the promises are rather more likely to be kept if Hanoi has been willing to reaffirm them.

Hence there is still a reasonable chance of a decent outcome in Vietnam.

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ONLY TIME will tell the practical effects of all the complex provisions concerning the Saigon - Viet Cong "joint military commission;" concerning "each party's area of control;" concerning "strict implementation" of this point or that in the original accord.

The Rube Goldberg machinery for divided authority in South Vietnam cannot be expected to endure in anything like the shape described in either the cease-fire accord or the new communique. One side or the other — the Saigon government or the Viet Cong — will more or less gain the upper hand.

But in this process that will determine South Vietnam's future, a huge, perhaps decisive role will surely be played by the degree of armed intervention by North Vietnamese troops. It is vain to hope that there will be absolutely no North Viet-

namese intervention. But in view of the new communique it is possible to hope that Hanoi's intervention will be limited and manageable.

This interpretation of the Kissinger - Tho communique is strongly reinforced by the communique's paragraph 13: "Article 20 of (the cease-fire accord), regarding Cambodia and Laos, shall be scrupulously implemented." This was the article calling for the departure from Cambodia and Laos of all troops of foreign origin, including North Vietnamese.

Without an important North Vietnamese presence in Laos, particularly, Hanoi is physically unable to support large scale intervention in South Vietnam. It is known, furthermore, that Kissinger succeeded in getting Le Duc Tho to specify an early date — July 1 — when Hanoi will begin withdrawing North Vietnamese troops from Laos.

Cambodia is a more thorny problem, involving Prince Sihanouk's strong supporters, the Chinese leaders in Peking. But the Paris meetings further produced a good chance of an eventual arrangement in Cambodia involving no North Vietnamese presence.

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IN SUM, although all is provisional, and every North Vietnamese commitment may later be disregarded, Kissinger's achievement in Paris has been both adroit and considerable. You may deplore the need for an American negotiator to be adroit. But the need arises directly from the determination of the U.S. Senate to strike from the Nixon Administration all possible means of enforcing Hanoi's compliance with Hanoi's own promises.