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# Kissinger's New Agreement

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 Dr. 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. A reasonable chance was what the cease-fire accord originally offered. Detailed reaffirmation of the cease-fire accord means, in turn, that this reasonable chance continues to exist.

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. Over time, of course, 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 Vietnamese intervention. On this point, Hanoi has broken too many promises already. But in view of the new communique it is possible to hope that Hanoi's intervention will be limited and manageable. Hence the reasonable chance above-mentioned.

This interpretation of the Kissinger-Tho communique is strongly reinforced by the communique's laconic 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 Dr. Kissinger succeeding 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.

In sum, although all is provisional, and every North Vietnamese commitment may later be disregarded, Dr. 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 deter-

mination of the U.S. Senate to strike from the hands of the Nixon administration all possible means of enforcing Hanoi's compliance with Hanoi's own promises.

Dr. Kissinger's negotiating assets have in fact been brutally devalued on Capitol Hill. But he has had other assets. One set of them, oddly enough, is clearly in Hanoi itself. Quite recently, the North Vietnamese official press has published important discussions of "big unit war"—which is another way of saying armed intervention in South Vietnam on a major scale.

In these discussions, "big unit war" has been firmly condemned as wrong and unwise. All this can only mean there is an increasingly self-assertive younger generation in the North Vietnamese Communist Party, whose members believe that their seniors in the Politburo have already poured out far too much blood and treasure on the adventure in South Vietnam.

Concurrence in this belief was not suggested by the speeches of Hanoi's first party secretary, Le Duan, during his Peking visit. But here the striking feature was the responses Le Duan got from the Chinese leaders. The Chinese always talked of the vital importance of preserving the new peace in Vietnam. Their silence about the "continuing struggle" was all but deafening.

Partly because of their own quarrel with the Chinese, the Soviets also want no resumption of large scale fighting in Vietnam. So these were the assets Dr. Kissinger had, to replace those our own Congress had devalued.