

A Report of Nixon Vow of Aid to Hanoi

Washington

North Vietnamese leaders recently told several visiting members of Congress that former President Nixon sent them a memorandum early in January, 1973, that they said promised \$3.25 billion in American aid after the signing of the Paris agreement to end the war in Vietnam.

The North Vietnamese did not show the visiting members of Congress the document, the congressional sources said, but gave quotations.

According to congressional sources, the North Vietnamese still expect the purported promise of aid to be fulfilled and are linking its fulfillment to their providing more information about American servicemen still listed as missing in action.

The members of Congress have been seeking a meeting with Secretary of State Henry Kissinger to discuss the reported memorandum in the light of a statement by Kissinger Jan. 24, 1975, three days before the signing of the Paris agreement.

Kissinger said that the United States had made no secret understandings to obtain the agreement and that no specific sums in postwar reconstruction aid had been promised to North Vietnam.

Kissinger could not be reached immediately for comment.

Representative Paul McCloskey (Rep.-Calif.), one of those who met with North Vietnamese leaders, confirmed the account of the meetings and said that its substance was conveyed to President Ford this week.

The congressional sources said that after the congressmen visited Hanoi in late December they decided not to make these matters public. They agreed that their first step should be to consult with administration leaders on how to respond to Hanoi's position.

McCloskey and the original sources say that they have had a request in to see Kissinger for several weeks.

McCloskey and other members of the House of Representatives met with Mr. Ford after

their return from Hanoi and urged him to make new gestures, including certain kinds of private aid to North Vietnam, in order to get more responses from Hanoi about Americans reported missing in action during the war.

The congressional sources said that Mr. Ford was reviewing several proposals by the State Department.

Two articles of the Paris accords refer to the aid and information issues that the congressmen raised in Hanoi.

Article 21 pledges the United States to "contribute to healing the wounds of war and to postwar reconstruction of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam and throughout Indochina."

In Article 8 (B), the parties promised to help each other with information about those missing in action and with the return of remains.

The only document given the visiting congressmen by the North Vietnamese was said to be the final agreement of the Joint Economic Committee, which was established by the accords to implement the terms of the article on postwar reconstruction.

According to the congressional sources, the United States pledged in the document, which has never been published, to give North Vietnam \$3.25 billion in aid — the exact figure said to be in the Nixon memorandum — and

broke this amount down into specific items such as tractors and bags of cement. This agreement was reached by the Joint Economic Committee in June, 1974.

The American-North Vietnamese committee had its last meeting in July, 1974, after the United States charged that North Vietnam was consistently violating the terms of the Paris accords.

The State Department position then was that the activities of the Joint Economic Committee were dependent on general North Vietnamese compliance with the Paris accords. From that time on, the State Department made clear publicly that it would seek no funds for North Vietnam under Article 21.

In a news conference on Jan. 24, 1973, Kissinger, who was then assistant to the President for national security, was asked about the aid pledge.

He said: "We will discuss the issue of economic reconstruction of all Indochina, including North Vietnam, only after the signature of the agreements, and after the implementation is well advanced, and the definition of any particular sum will have to await the discussions which will take place after the agreements are in force."

McCloskey said that he was not sure exactly what Kissinger meant by this statement but that North Vietnamese leaders he talked to said that Mr. Nixon's memorandum had made a firm pledge. The Nixon memorandum was addressed to Premier Pham Van Dong, they said.

The representatives who visited Hanoi in late December were members of the House Select Committee on Missing in Action. The others in the visiting group were G. V. Montgomery (Dem.-Miss.) chairman of the committee; Richard Ottinger (Dem.-N.Y.) and Benjamin Gilman (Rep.-N.Y.).

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