

6 November 1972

Dear Harold:

As you no doubt realize, we are swamped. The complexity of the Nixon-Kissinger-Thieu peace charade is a staggering thing to try to keep up with, and we have the ~~annual~~ problem of working on two time levels and fitting them together after the NY Times and the NO States-Item come is, not to mention the marvelous stuff you are sending from the Post.

In any case we have fallen badly behind, due also partly to the necessity to monitor radio and do some transcribing here and there, which even with tape recorders is still something that has to be handled rather immediately.

What I'm trying to say is that this will have to be rather sketchy. Today was a single day off, instead of two, and we had to spend it shopping and boming up on tomorrow's ballot, one of the longest in California history with 22 state propositions. Consequently I can't do more than make a gesture to replying to your mailings No. 21, 22-2, 23, 24 and 24-1. I shall do some copying later to include with this, but due to haste there may be some duplication which I hope you'll forgive.

Before I forget it, we mailed to you third class about a week ago a copy of a large SF magazine called ~~SunDance~~ SunDance with a long article on Nixon and the Mafia. Haven't read it, but the cover alone is irresistible and we thought you ~~might~~ ^{should} have a chance to see it. The article appears to have considerable on El Bosom and the San Clemente caper.

In your 23 you advance the idea that Nixon was forced into his peace caper by the mounting pressures of homing chickens like the Watergate. Agreed, but it's more complicated than that. I can't do more than sketch the general framework here, but our belief is that Nixon all along had counted upon the Vietnamese to cave in eventually, and apparently Kissinger did too if his statement "after all, North Vietnam is a very small country," can be taken as an index to ~~his~~ his thinking. In any case, the DRV did NOT cave in, not even under the piratical Lavelle bombing campaign or the full-blast bombing campaign which followed. What this really meant (but could not be admitted) was that Vietnamization of the war was an utter failure, and that peace based on that plan had become unattainable. Nixon obviously had hoped to have a lovely peace announcement for the GOP convention, but had to do without. As you say, the Watergate and similar disclosures began to have a cumulative effect, and the only thing left to do was to manufacture some sort of a peace coup. Purely for internal political effect. We agree there is no objective evidence Nixon intended to sign a peace agreement

As von Hoffman says so beautifully, Kissinger was sent dashing all over the world like a mad hamster, and there was a careful buildup of ~~leaks~~ leaks and hints that a peace settlement was in the works. Then suddenly on ~~xxxx~~ Oct. 26, Kissinger held his unprecedented news conference to say that peace is at hand and that only a few details remain to be ironed out.

What was not stated by Kissinger or anyone else in this country except Pacifica at the time was that less than 12 hours before the North Vietnamese in Paris had released the details of the agreement, saying it had been reached Oct. 8 but twice had been postponed at American request to dates set by the Americans themselves, the last being Oct. 31. Kissingers and Nixon's later statements that the North Vietnamese had arbitrarily set an Oct. 31 deadline for signing were unqualified lies.

These terms are relevant. The North Vietnamese allowed Thieu to stay on, but Kissinger had to pay by agreeing to an in-place ceasefire.

~~████████████████████~~ The American press got around to publishing the North Vietnamese version of the negotiations, dates etc. only yesterday, in a piece by Flora Lewis in the NY Times. Pacifica had it via Agence France-Presse from Hanoi within hours after Kissinger's news conference on Oct. 26.

On Oct. 11 the American military response to the then-secret peace deal to which Nixon and Kissinger had agreed came in the form of the bombing of the French mission in Hanoi. The French, as usual, had been helping Kissinger and the North Vietnamese get together. This may or may not be as important as it may seem, but it fits in with the bombing of the Polish mission in Hanoi several years ago just when secret American-North Vietnamese talks were about to begin in Warsaw, thanks to Polish arrangements. At the same time the military made sure the message was received by all concerned by bombing a Polish ship. ~~They~~ They more recently repeated this little stunt by bombing Hanoi while Soviet Premier Alexei Kosygin was in Hanoi on a peace mission. I could be mistaken in the person involved -- it could have been President Podgorny -- but I think it was Kosygin and haven't time to look up the reference.

Anyway, the bombing of the French mission appears to have been followed by Nixon's first request for a delay in the signing of the peace settlement. Later there was another request, to Oct. 31, but it is not clear what may have caused this. Just at the moment Kissinger, Haig and Abrams all were either in Saigon or on their way. The common supposition is that they went to placate Thieu, but in view of the vast military "replacement" shipments which have taken place since then, the planning and arranging for this tremendous movement ~~████████████████████~~ may have had a great deal to do with it.

By Oct. 26, in any case, there had been so much frantic dashing about by all concerned that something had to be trotted out to satisfy public curiosity if nothing else. So Kissinger went into his act, Nixon was supposed to look plausible once again as a peacemaker, and the Watergate type of story was pushed back into the inside pages.

Certainly we see no reason to think that Nixon had any intention of going through with a settlement. The North Vietnamese apparently came to that conclusion by Oct. 26 when they disclosed the details in Paris. Their belief must have been very firm, for such a revelation could be unforgivable (if they do it) and they must have felt driven to gamble on the possibility that campaign pressures would force Nixon to agree to sign when nothing else would. They certainly would have taken no unnecessary risks with a peace settlement which from their standpoint was more favorable than any offered by the Americans up to this point.

This raises an interesting question which may never be answered publicly -- whether there was any serious divergence between Kissinger and Nixon on such a peace settlement. Kissinger probably genuinely wants to accomplish a peace from the standpoint of his personal reputation as a latter-day Metternich, and it is well known that he has argued all along that the best we can hope for is to achieve a "decent interval" between the time we leave Vietnam and when the Communists take over the country. Nixon, on the other hand, at this time can have his sights set not much farther than tomorrow. ~~████████████████████~~ His primary problem has been to get re-elected. His apparent decision to convert all of Indochina into a latter-day Laos -- war by subcontract --

makes it look very much as though the military horned in on his peace caper and told him, in effect, look, do it our way or else. That may not have been the message when they bombed the French mission in Hanoi, but until a better answer is provided, that will have to do.

The interesting thing about the peace caper is that far more of the public recognized it as just that than one might have expected. Most of the reaction that has been published revolves around this interpretation, that this is just one more campaign trick. McG has had the sense to recognize this, and if anything the phoniness of the peace flap has served to make the war more of an issue than ever in the last hours of the campaign. The only question is, while a lot of people recognize it, are they enough? The snowballing effect in the past two days alone has been quite startling. Let us hope.

Before I knock this off I want to thank you and Lil for your kind and generous intentions with scarves to celebrate our coming retirement. I'll have to be frank. This is a warm climate and neither of us has worn a scarf since coming out here in 1945. I did wear one in China in 1948 and 1949, but that's the last time. It was one I'd woven myself and I'm still attached to it, but never have a chance to wear it. Jenifer has one she wove and is in the same fix. We would hate to see all that time, thought, effort and even the expense put into something we cannot use. We do thank you, but suggest they go to someone who has some prospect of using and enjoying them.

We're also a bit peculiar about this retirement business, perhaps. We just want to escape from an inhuman routine and begin living for the first time in a long time. I have laid down the law at the office, vetoing absolutely the usual retirement party and gift, mainly because I cannot bear in any way to contribute to the myth that things are just dandy at the AP. I could never bring myself to accept anything from management, and to avoid a confrontation this means refusing to accept anything from anyone. But over and above that, we are rather determined to make this particular change our way, and are discouraging well-meaning friends from things they hint they'd like to do. They find it pretty baffling, but in general are accustomed to making exceptions for us. These are people who have nothing to do with the AP and always have found the life it forces on its employees completely beyond comprehension. So they're used to our peculiarities. We would be even more grateful to you and Lil if you can accept our assurance that this is the way we would like it to be.

The enclosed selection of copies most likely will be something of an affront. The dates indicate how far behind we have fallen in many areas, and there are many of the clippings you have sent we have not yet been able yet to read, much less check against them to avoid duplication.

We note someone has informed you of JG's wife reported to be about to sue him for divorce, so we're not including a snippet from a John J. Miller gossip column containing that and nothing more.

Almost forgot one of the main things I wanted to say: If you'll relate the dates on which the two Times men saw Nixon so uptight at Nassau and Philadelphia with the main dates of the Vietnam negotiations, I'm sure you'll agree he had good reason to be uptight.

Best,

