

gosc sag

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concern 1 (normass/deepe)

BIEN HOA, SOUTH VIETNAM, APRIL 22--The pragmatic problems of establishing a negotiated, rice-roots level peace with the Communists is shaping up as a major concern here.

Informed sources here indicate the lower-level problems in the provinces of a negotiated peace settlement between belligerents in South Vietnam revolve around two main points: politically, the formation of a coalition government between the anti-Communist and pro-Communist factions at the central, provincial and village levels, and on second, the military disposition of Communist forces--especially the North Vietnamese who are currently intermingled individually with local Viet Cong, rather than operating in separate units.

--more reuter

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concern 2 (normass/deepe)

"At my level, we are unprepared for a ceasefire," one informed source said in Bien Hoa, the headquarters city responsible for military and political control of the eleven provinces around Saigon.

"There's no plan as to our modus vivendi (ital) if there's not a war," he continued. "In the government areas, if there were a ceasefire by negotiations, we could move out on a grand scale, opening roads, building schools and bridges. That's not a massive problem and at higher levels, this has been analyzed I'm sure. If there were simply a ceasefire without a coalition government, every day of the ceasefire would work to the advantage of the Allies. Δ We are far better able to organize the population and get them involved than the Viet Cong.

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concern 3 (normass/deepe)

"We're counting on the pragmatic makeup of the Vietnamese people," he said. "I've ^{DRIVEN} down some roads and seen the tv antennas sticking out of thatch-roofed houses. These people aren't about to choose freely a monastic, communistic existence. So, the ~~CCJ~~ Communists must continue to fight while talking or the people will be wooed away from them by the Allies."

But, the sources believe, if there were a Bao coalition government as well as a ceasefire by negotiation between the belligerents, the situation would be un-workable in the provinces.

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concern 4 (normass/deepe)

"The people who propose a coalition government misunderstand one thing," an informed source explained. "These people--like Bobby Kennedy--are swayed by what they consider the r fact that most of the National Liberation Front is non-Communist, so a coalition government to ~~thannnnnnnnnn~~ these are these people ~~fighting~~ for fighting for a better government. As a position, this is possible--maybe as many as ~~t~~ ninety five per cent of the NLF is non-Communist.

"But, what they forget--the big obstacle--is the NLF leadership. The leadership is Communists and it's the leadership, not the followers, who will go into a coalition government, and that is just like asking the Vietnamese government in Saigon to commit suicide. The Allies can eventually have most of the NLF members in the government--but the NLF per se can't be admitted because it is directly controlled by Communists for Communist purposes and Communism is incompatible with the government these people have or any form there will be."

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concern 5 (normass/deepe)

The source said that Vietnamese in responsible positions see no basis of negotiations and often point out to American officials that the Vietnamese government is not strong enough at this time to participate in a coalition government. They see that if the Communists get their foot in the door, "they could seize control," he said.

Another source explained that "it will be extremely difficult to set up a coalition government in the Communist-dominated areas. The Vietnamese government could not hold any political-psychological presence in those villages under ~~the~~ Communist control. If the ~~Communist~~ Communists control the villages now and there's a ceasefire, then they'll control them even more tightly." Most informed sources do not repeat not see the agreement ~~of a~~ on a ceasefire as one of the first items to be decided ~~by~~ at the conference table, should negotiations~~l~~ begin.

--more reuter

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concern 6 (normass/deepe)

On the military side in the provinces around Saigon, roughly fifty per cent of the local Viet Cong order of battle strength is composed of North Vietnamese troops serving as ~~battlefield replacement~~ ^{distinctly different} replacements, reliable sources report. This is a ~~distinct~~ trend from the provinces along the demilitarized zone where ~~the~~ many whole units are of North Vietnamese origin, both for troops and officers.

"I don't see how the diplomats can spin out the Viet Cong and the North Vietnamese from these units here," one source explained. "The Communist units will hole up after peace in secret base areas and without neutral inspection--which they've never allowed before--it will be very difficult to ~~eng~~ enforce that side of any settlement. We'd know sooner or later from agent's reports if the units had been sent back home or disarmed, but that's ^{circumstantial} evidence only and it would take awhile to ~~verify~~ ^{verify} it

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concern 7 (normass/deepe)

The exact impact in the provinces of President Lyndon Johnson's peace offensive and Hanoi's tenuous acceptance has not been fully ascertained at all levels. The American Embassy officials are known to be amassing some political information along these lines, but the surveys are still underway and would be classified for general consumption. The view is that while the senior leadership in the provinces have become more determined to continue fighting against the Communists, some sources fear that low-level Vietnamese soldiers and government officials in isolated outposts and district towns might seek an "accommodation" with the Communists, thus giving up the fight.

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concern 8 (normass/deepe)

Senior Allied commanders are known to be "worried about the impact of that statement (by President Johnson). The enemy says this is an American sell-out. The Americans were driving the South Vietnamese to fight from the beginning and now the Americans are quitting. I believe this will require positive psychological explanations by the Vietnamese government—targeted at their own people—saying the Allies are standing firm together, that there's no intention to compromise the sovereign sovereignty of South Vietnam and that we're together in our objectives to maintain South Vietnam as an independent nation. I don't know how to bridge this political gap—this big chasm—but it's up to diplomats and they should think of something."

--more reuter

EOZC sag

yy ljp

concern 9 (normass/deepe)

(Hank: We will send you three or four more pieces this week. If it remains this ~~week~~ quiet on all fronts this week, what do you think about a ~~three~~ or ~~four~~ day field trip to the Mekong Delta next week, as I mentioned in my long memo? Regards Bev).

--end reuter