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editorial note 1 (normass/deepe)

SAIGON, NOVEMBER 4--We have a very detailed play-by-play of the final bunker-thieu confrontations and the precise reasons why the Vietnamese backed out of going to Paris. It is very dramatic and fascinating stuff--and is one of the ~~worst~~ worst periods in American diplomacy. There was an incredible mixup in it all. However, to make it comprehensible it needs word length to capture the full drama ~~it~~ and the intricate significances of the details. It impinges on the elections and Johnson's whole scheme of as well as developments in Paris--and the whole political point of the bombing halt as being ~~virtually~~ nearly a giveaway to Hanoi. I suggest a series of several articles of about 1200 words each, if you can squeeze all this in during the election spree. But to do a really good job, we have to have the space to get the quotes, ~~for~~ flavor and description to make the story come alive. What do you think? ~~Regards Bev.~~ Please urgent your reply. Regards Bev.

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nixon ~~2~~ x 1 (normass/deepe)

SAIGON, NOVEMBER 4--Purported political encouragement from the Richard Nixon camp was a significant factor in the last-minute decision of President Nguyen Van Thieu's refusal to send a delegation to the Paris peace talks--at least until the American Presidential election is over. 1800

In a wide-angle view, one of the most decisive moments of the Vietnam war--settling the conditions for ending it--is thus moving in parallel with the most indecisive moments of the American democratic process--Presidential election time. For the Allies here--this is one of the gravest moments--because the anti-Communist alliance is momentarily blown sky-high at a time when ^{MAXIMUM} ~~the gravest~~ unity is needed to meet ^{the Rocks} a ~~solid position~~ ^{STAND} from ~~Hanoi~~ the Vietnamese Communists.

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nixon 2 (normass/deepe)

Informed sources report the Saigon government understood ~~it~~ that the
 Nixon camp had urged it to maintain a firm position ^{on the bomb, halt and related issues} and that when the
 Republican candidate was elected President, he would support President
 Thieu's ~~intransigent~~ ^{STAND} strong position. Hence, at least in the eyes of the
 Vietnamese government, the American Presidential election ^{will partially} determines for
 them, ~~the future~~ ^{supporting} part of their potential role at the Paris peace talks--
 and the future of ~~the~~ South Vietnamese South Vietnam. The Saigon government
^{Reportedly B. G. ...} views that President Lyndon Johnson ^{has} virtually capitulated to the Communists
 by allowing the ~~separate~~ ^{AS part of} seating of the National Liberation Front delegation
 in Paris--against the ~~usual~~ consistent refusal of Saigon to accept it--because
 it would ~~it~~ probably lead to a ~~coal~~ coalition government and an eventual
 Communist take-over in ~~South~~ South Vietnam.

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nixon 3 (normass/deepe)

Nixon has publicly vetoed a coalition² government ~~arrange~~ arrangement for South Vietnam ~~and~~ senior Vietnamese government officials say they can not repeat not understand Vice President ~~Humphrey's~~ Hubert Humphrey's "double-talk" on Vietnam. *Hence, Saigon Has Nothing to Lose By Waiting to See Who is Elected President on Nov. 5.*

Informed sources say that during the more than two weeks of sessions between the ~~the~~ Thieu government and American Embassy officials, ^{these} two points became increasingly clear^{officials:} to the Vietnamese ~~government~~.

1. Hanoi was not making any real concessions in return for the bombing halt; at best there might be some vague understanding between the Americans and Hanoi--which Hanoi could twist and back out of when it wanted to. The Saigon government wanted concrete pledges from Hanoi--in writing--as to what the North Vietnamese were giving up. The American officials could not repeat not produce it and one ~~source~~ simply said, "We can not repeat not expect anything definite from Hanoi." *informed Sources Report.*

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nixon 4 (normass/deepe)

2. The Thieu government was never told explicitly by the American representatives that President Johnson had agreed to ^{allow} ~~show~~ the National Liberation Front ~~delegation~~ as a separate delegation at Paris. The American officials would only say the negative ~~that we cannot~~ ^{G.S.} they could not repeat ^{that} not guarantee Saigon ^{the} National Liberation Front would not repeat show up as a separate delegation. It was not repeat not ~~ready~~ ^{until} really until President Johnson's halt-the-bombing speech that the Vietnamese, ^{officials,} reading between the lines, realized that Johnson had ~~g~~ virtually capitulated to Hanoi's demand for a separate NLF delegation. Then, shortly before Thieu's speech on Saturday, radio ~~reports~~ ^{reports} broadcasts here carried the North Vietnamese press conference in Paris, saying that Hanoi was preparing for a four-power conference with a separate delegation ~~from~~ ^{from} the NLF.-- turned out to be the firmest ^{HAD RECEIVED} and this ~~was the final confirmation~~ ^{was} for the Saigon government. ¹⁰⁵ The ~~Saigon government~~ Saigon government had ~~never~~ consistently told the American officials here it would refuse to sit with the ~~NLF delegation~~ a separate NLF delegation--and when President Johnson put ~~them~~ ^{Saigon officials} on the spot, they defied him, thus putting Washington in an even more ~~glaring~~ ^{glaring} more embarrassing position.

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nixon 5 (normass/deepe)

~~Throughout the bargaining sessions~~

As the bargaining sessions ~~beginning~~ progressed from October 15 16, the South Vietnamese started asking more and more questions--and began receiving vaguer and vaguer answers from the Americans. The pivotal week was the last week of October--and this is when the reports of Nixon's support started coming into Saigon. At the same time--and probably even more significant--the Vietnamese government itself was becoming more and more unified in refusing to make too many concessions to Hanoi. And, with the encouragement from Nixon, Saigon--~~see~~ the Saigon government gradually decided to call President Johnson's bluff and refuse to send the delegation to Paris.

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nixon 6 (normass/deepe)

The only known written report about the alleged Nixon support for the Thieu government was a cable from Bui Diem, Vietnamese Ambassador to Washington, which was received at the Foreign Ministry in Saigon on October 28, sources close to the Ministry report. In it, Th the Vietnamese ambassador said that the Nixon camp had urged Saigon to maintain a firm stand--and when elected President, Nixon would further support the Saigon government's position. The cable ~~does~~ reportedly does not specify that Bui Diem had seen Nixon personally, nor does it mention the name of any Nixon aide. Nor, does it specify just what the conversation and Nixon's support actually covers. ^{ED.} As often happens happens here in many ~~dele~~ delicate Vietnamese-American discussions, just what an American says and means is sometimes vastly different than ~~how~~ ^{what + how} the Vietnamese interpret what is said and meant.

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nixon 7 (normass/deepe)

But, aside from the cable to the Foreign Ministry, there were also verbal messages that filtered into Thieu. One of these messages ~~came~~ verbal messages came from an official Vietnamese delegation, which had been in the U. S. since early September. Besides its official duties, Thieu had also detailed the delegation to contact both ~~Nixon~~ the Nixon and Humphrey camps to ferret out what might happen to South Vietnam no matter which was elected the next President. This delegation, which was originally scheduled to remain ~~in~~ in the U. S. until after the election--rushed back to Saigon the final week in October. It ~~also~~ made an assessment to the government on the American election prospects and also reportedly urged the government to remain firm because of the ~~alleged~~ ^{purported} backing from the Nixon camp. CAND. DATE

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nixon 8 (normasa/deepe)

Just how substantive and specific these ~~purport~~ purported assurances from the Nixon camp were in fact is not repeat not exactly known here. But, the significant ~~things~~ point is that the Thieu government interpreted them as meaning something substantive. And hence, ~~the~~ Thieu decided ~~maximum~~ ~~minimum~~ to rebuke Johnson, to refuse to send the delegation to Paris, and to make his next move after the election when Nixon might be the Presidential-designate. ~~In the eyes of~~ the Saigon officials, ^{Reported} consider Johnson as a lame-duck President—they call him a "dead-duck ~~President~~ ^{after the elections} and do not repeat not believe he will have a full authority to a make decisions without consulting his successor ~~after the elections~~.

In short, the Saigon government ~~is~~ reportedly ~~thought~~ decided it could not repeat not lose any more than Johnson had already given away to Hanoi—^{AND} ~~and~~ they ~~might~~ might have alot to gain if Nixon were elected. Also, Thieu's highly nationalistic speech, ~~and position~~ of refusing to send the delegation to Paris has enhanced his position to the point where, ^{Necessary} if ~~needed~~, he can afford internally to make some concessions. But, serious ^{total} observers here believe it is still virtually impossible for Thieu to make an about-face and sit down with the National Liberation Front as an independent delegation.

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nixon 9 (normass/deepe)

Even so, the whole decision to refuse to send the delegation to Paris was dangling in mid-air until virtually the last minute— before Thieu's mid-morning speech last Saturday before the joint session of legislatures. Earlier in the morning, the Foreign Ministry had ~~even~~ even issued a mild formal statement withdrawing Saigon's ^{formal} opposition to ~~Washington's~~ Washington's unilateral cessation of the bombing. Western diplomats believed that Thieu had "caved in" to pressure from Bunker. ^{He was with V. Thieu} The key factor seemed to be a last-minute compromise proposal made ~~by~~ ^{to the American officials} by the government, at the suggestion of Vice President ~~Ky~~ ^{the proposal was} Nguyen Cao Ky; that a Saigon delegation go to Paris and consult privately with Hanoi's delegation before any formal opening of the ~~present~~ ^{new} phase of the peace talks. The Saigon government wanted to establish with Hanoi "the rules of the game;" Saigon was afraid Hanoi would simply use the Paris peace talks as "an insulting platform" to denigrate the South Vietnamese and other Allies. But, the American ^{Reportedly} officials vetoed the plan, saying these preliminaries could go on for years and that Washington was in a rush.

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nixon 10 (normass/deepe)

ADL, that U.S. Reaction,
So, ~~then~~ Thieu unleashed his bombshell speech on November 2.

Unable to get anything concrete in writing from the American officialdom here, Thieu buttressed his position by simply pulling out the joint ^{HAD} communique of the last time he personally had met with President Johnson in Honolulu less than three months ago. The joint ~~Thieu's~~ communique in ^{it} on the Thieu-Johnson talks specifies "that the Republic of Vietnam should be a full participant playing a leading role in discussions concerning the substance of a final settlement." The more significant phrase is in the next to last ~~paragraph~~ paragraph specifying that the Paris talks "should lead to negotiations involving directly North Vietnam and South Vietnam," which implies that the National Liberation Front is ^{would not} ~~not~~ repeat ^{BE} not represented as a separate delegation.

Thieu pointedly recalled the Honolulu communique in his bombshell speech, implying that President Johnson had reneged on his previous promises ~~and~~ ^{then to Johnson} ~~and~~ dramatically repudiated Johnson while waiting to see who the next ^{the} whom American voters would elect as the next ^{U.S.} American President.

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