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dialogue 1 (normass/deepe)

SAIGON, OCTOBER 31--A major Allied confrontation on the war-peace and what-kind-of-peace issue has been evolving and worsening in the past two weeks of dialogue between American Ambassador Ellsworth S. Bunker and South Vietnamese President Nguyen Van Thieu, informed sources report.

Strains at the top levels of the American-South Vietnamese alliance are reportedly more intense now than at any time since President Thieu was inaugurated a year ago this week--on October 31--and more intense than at any time since the American commitment of combat troops in early 1965.

The high drama of Thieu-Bunker <sup>meetings</sup> meets in days seems to indicate <sup>that</sup> the enormous political stakes of the discussions are by the far the most <sup>the</sup> <sup>Combat</sup> significant ever to confront the ~~two~~ two Allies here since U. S. intervention. ~~with troops.~~

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dialogue # 2 (normass/deepe)

But, the face-downs between Thieu and Bunker are only the immediate focal point of the confrontation. <sup>From</sup> ~~For~~ a wide-angle vantage point, what has shaped up is the classical hawk-dove controversy intensifying to its shrillest "life or death" pitch. Polarizing around President Thieu and his government are the ~~entire~~ emotional sympathizers of a ~~ma~~ number of ~~American~~ American military and civilian officials, as well as ~~the~~ <sup>AND Support</sup> direct political encouragement from ~~number~~ some of the other Allied embassies with troops serving in South Vietnam. These American and other Allied hardliners solidifying around the Thieu government maintain that <sup>Now</sup> ~~this~~ is the time to keep the military pressure on <sup>NORTH VIETNAM</sup> ~~Hanoi~~ and the Viet Cong—rather than taking it off and giving them time to regroup their military forces or to win at the conference table what they have already lost on the battlefield. If there is to be a peace settlement, it <sup>Should merely</sup> ~~would simply~~ rubber-stamp the favorable Allied military position in the South, they maintain.

~~"Thieu is aim~~

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"In this mess, Thieu is simply the mirror of the American conscious,"

one Western diplomat told an American. "You told the South Vietnamese you were going to come here to save them; they cut all their ties and decided to sink or swim with you. Now you tell them the war costs too much and you want to pull out, with war only half won. Everyone knows when the first G. I. is

pulled out of South Vietnam, it is only a ~~w~~ question of time before the Communists take <sup>OVER</sup> ~~it~~. Obviously, Thieu thinks he's fighting for ~~the~~ the whole future of his country in these sessions with Bunker."

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dialogue <sup>3</sup>/<sub>2</sub> (normass/deepe)

American-South Vietnamese high-level relations have yet to reach a super-crisis stage, informed sources report, because the problems of reaching an agreement between Washington and Hanoi are still considered even more of an <sup>OBStacle</sup> ~~obstacle~~ than the U. S. headaches in Saigon. But, the diplomatic difficulties in Saigon are also substantial.

Like a teeter-totter, the Saigon government has effected a hard-line counter-~~barging~~ bargaining, counter-balancing weight to any Hanoi move to get Washington to soften its position. It is difficult to tell at this point if the Saigon government is simply maintain<sup>ing</sup> a tough bargaining posture until Hanoi agrees to Allied demands—which would be ~~exp~~ expected—or if it ~~stands its~~ will continue to remain adamant even at the risk of seriously fracturing future American-Saigon relations.

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dialogue 3 (normass/deepe)

Publicly and officially, President Thieu has said the South Vietnamese and American officialdoms are in complete agreement on the issue of ~~stopping~~ halting the bombing over North Vietnam. But informed sources say this is an inaccurate presentation of some of the story sessions between the American Ambassador and Saigon officials. *Past stormy*

These sources say the points of American-Saigon disagreement are as follows:

1. Conditions for and the official joint communique on halting the bombing over the North Vietnam. This has yet to be ~~entirely~~ finally settled since the first Bunker-Thieu meeting on October 19~~th~~ 16 when the American Ambassador drove to Independence Palace at six in the morning.

2. What happens after the bombing is halted, with specific reference to the respective roles and status of the delegation of the Saigon government, as separate ~~from~~ and independent from the American delegation. Both <sup>allies</sup> sides agree that the National Liberation Front can ~~sit~~ sit ~~with~~ at the conference table as part of the Hanoi delegation, but Thieu insists that Hanoi head that delegation and that ~~the NLF will not repeat not be allowed to speak on matters in the South.~~ Hanoi must speak for the NLF. NLF. *But*

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dialogue #4 (normass/deepe)

3. While not ~~a~~ repeat not directly related to the Palace discussions, the Saigon officials see a bilateral American-North Vietnamese troop withdrawal shaping up soon after the new phase of the peace talks begin. The government is not particularly ~~worried~~ <sup>5</sup> worried about that--since the balance of military power would still remain preponderantly on Saigon's side. But, this withdrawal of foreign troops would be accompanied by either a de facto or announced ceasefire--and the Saigon officials are opposed to this at an early date because it would erase their military superiority, because the Viet Cong would scatter all over the country, including <sup>into</sup> the cities and chaos would ~~reign~~ reign. Also, the Vietnamese government remembers all too well its last ceasefire with the Communists--during Tet, when the Communists unleashed their smashing offensive into the cities.

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dialogue 6 (normass/deepe)

But rippling out from these specific disagreements, the Saigon officials—and some <sup>western</sup> observing diplomats—believe that what is at stake in the these behind-the-scenes confrontations is the future of South Vietnam as an independent ~~can~~ non-Communist country. There is a perceptible crescendo of ~~probationary~~ Vietnamese political wails that the Americans are about to "sell-out" South Vietnam. Even Western diplomats note the growing impression that American policymakers seem more interested in extricating U. S. troops from a costly war than they are insuring the <sup>Non-Communist</sup> independent survival of South Vietnam to which they originally committed their troops to defend. Some South Vietnamese politicians—as well as editorials in leading Saigon newspapers—are ~~increased~~ increasingly accusing President Lyndon B. Johnson of using the peace initiative as a political gimmick to ~~gain~~ influence the American election and to insure himself a <sup>glamorous</sup> place in ~~the~~ the history books.

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dialogue 7 (normass/deepe)

Some Americans agree with this Vietnamese view, as the political climate even within the ~~Ameri~~ U. S. community is becoming super-charged with emotion.

"I'm one of the first Americans to say we should put the screws to the GVN (the Vietnamese government) when they are sloughing off at the ministry level," one civilian who professed to be a "dissatisfied Democrat" said. "But, in these meetings between Thieu and Bunker, we're obviously twisting the Vietnamese arms until it impinges on their own sovereignty. And what for? /So LBJ can go down in bold-face print in some history book! But, who care about ~~the~~ his history book when 28,000 Americans have already died here."

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dialogue 8 (normass/deepe)

Within the Vietnamese community, only Thieu and perhaps a dozen senior members of the government have been kept fully abreast of all the peace developments; the even the Cabinet ~~is~~ has not repeat not been fully informed as a ~~group~~ body. Thieu and the upper-chambers of the government have thus maintained an unprecedented degree of Saigon secrecy about the details of the talks. Vietnamese newspapers are urging the government to keep the population more informed.

Outside observers, including anti-Saigon members of the diplomatic set, ~~and the other leaders~~ their compliment Thieu for playing ~~his~~ cards extremely well and for keeping their head during what one Saigon newspaper called "their gravest hour."

The Thieu-Bunker confrontations have instantly mended the split between Thieu and his flamboyant, hard-line Vice President Nguyen Cao Ky—a feat that Ambassador Bunker had been trying to do for the past year without success. Other Vietnamese upper-class politicians, who long thought Thieu would buckle under American pressure, at ~~last~~ began to praise him. But, under the crust this political crust of the elite, the issue of peace ~~is~~ or continuation of the war—remains political dynamite among the masses of Vietnamese who are becoming increasingly war-war weary.

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dialogue 9 (normass/deepe)

The peace issue internally is highly inflammable and is open to exploitation <sup>by</sup> among the gifted Viet Cong propagandaists, as well as the left-wing nationalists, ~~are~~ who are already beginning to accuse Thieu and Ky of seeking to prolong the war so they can "maintain their ~~lux~~ luxury life," as one Vietnamese laborer explained.

Other sources, with access to information in the upper-chambers of the Thieu government, indicate that the Saigon leadership is becoming badly un-nerved by these continuing confrontations with Bunker.

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dialogue <sup>80</sup> (normass/deepe)

"The GVN is beginning to lose its crackers over these sessions with Bunker," one informed source explained. "There's a hysteria setting in and the Americans aren't helping it any by leaping around all the time.

"Evidence of this hysteria is a senior Vietnamese official's ~~bff~~ <sup>have</sup> blabbing around town that the Americans here ~~had~~ received director orders from Walt Rostow (senior Vietnam planner to President ~~Ly~~ Johnson) ~~the~~ that the Thieu-Ky regime should be dumped out of office by January.

"Everyone knows that's politically unfeasible," he continued.

"The ~~am~~ Vietnamese believe that because they have no knowledge of world affairs and are totally unprincipled themselves. Everyone knows that if the American dump Thieu and Ky, it would be the most unbridled act of cynicism and treachery in history--as well as unveiling a total American defeat for the whole world. But, that's what's going around the town--from government officials.

"Then, you ~~mm~~ meet another Vietnamese official that tells you Thieu just received word from the (Richard M.) Nixon camp to stand firm--and when Nixon <sup>this is the case</sup> is elected President, he'll back Thieu's ~~st~~ position. No one believes all this--but it's an indication <sup>that</sup> pretty soon the ~~the~~ whole town will be fighting shadows and looking under ~~their~~ beds. Here you have half the American support <sup>149</sup> Thieu, instead of LBJ, and half the Vietnamese are supporting Nixon, instead of Thieu." *IT Could only Happen in Vietnam.*

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dialogue 9 (normass/deepe)

The details of the hard-line stand of the Thieu and the National Security Council are relatively complex and technical. First, on the official American-South Vietnamese communique ~~that~~ a declaring a cessation to the halt of the bombing over North Vietnam, Hanoi demanded that the document would specifically refer to an "unconditional" halt. The <sup>to use the word "unconditional"</sup> Vietnamese refused this terminology, saying it would be an unprecedented political victory for the Communists, not only in South Vietnam but throughout Asia. It would mean that Hanoi had been right, that the Americans, rather than North Vietnam, was the aggressor, <sup>and</sup> that it would make the South Vietnamese appear as U. S. puppets, just as Hanoi had always maintained.

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dialogue 12 (normass/deepe)

*Second*  
~~Besides~~, the Saigon government officials argued, the three concessions Hanoi had supposedly agreed to give up in return for a bombing halt were very hollow. The restoration of the DMZ demilitarized zone was not much of a concession from Hanoi because the American Marines and Vietnamese First *Down* Bv Division had consistently beaten the Communist advances ~~down~~ across the line in a series of victories since the siege of Khe Sanh was broken in April. Besides, restoring the DMZ did not repeat not stop the Communists from shuttling down enormous quantities of men and supplies ~~for~~ *Current* further west through Laos, and with a bombing halt and the dry season on the Laotian side of the hills, they would be *ABLE* ~~in the best position~~ to do it with maximum efficiency.

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dialogue 13 (normass/deepe)

The second concession Hanoi was ~~also~~ supposedly making was the cessation of attacks on South Vietnamese cities. But, Thieu and other officials were told this meant only artillery and rocket attacks—~~no~~ but not repeat not ground attacks—on the ~~pi~~ principal cities. They argued this was not repeat not much of a concession, since the Allied defense of the cities had been fairly successful in preventing these and ~~since~~ since these attacks were political liabilities for the Communists anyhow. If the Communists gave up ~~ground~~ ground attacks as well as indirect fire attacks not only on the major cities, but also on the 44 ~~provi~~ provincial capitals and 250 district capitals—where they could really do some damage—then ~~it would~~ *HANOI would* be *Conceding something,* considered an outright concession, but not ~~the~~ repeat not the flimsy *Concession* *Supposedly* one they had agreed to.

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dialogue 14 (normass/deepe)

The third concession from Hanoi--accepting the Saigon government at the expanded peace talks--was not repeat not a concession at all, the Vietnamese officials argued. The South Vietnamese government was legally elected and <sup>is</sup> ~~was~~ sovereign--so <sup>its</sup> ~~it's~~ right to represent South Vietnam at the next phase of the peace talks was beyond discussion.

~~At~~ This then lead<sup>d</sup> into disagreement about the roles of the two Southern components at the next phase of the Paris talks. Thieu and the others held to their previous decision that the ~~NLF~~ <sup>Saigon</sup> National Liberation Front could join the Hanoi delegation--but ~~they~~ wanted further assurances the NLF would not repeat not be allowed to speak on matters of the South. The Saigon government ~~reportedly~~ reportedly could see that after Hanoi and the Americans had agreed on the withdrawal of their respective troops, <sup>excl</sup> they would ~~walk~~ out of the meeting--thus leaving Saigon ~~face~~ face-to-face with the NLF. If that happened, Saigon would simply walk out, it was reported.

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dialogue 15 (normass/deepe)

But, the even more complicated ~~half~~ <sup>ABOUT</sup> of the problem came ~~between~~  
~~the relationship between the Saigon delegation~~ on the Allied delegation. Saigon  
wanted to ~~play~~ have a separate, independent delegation with its own  
chairman, while the Americans would have the same, <sup>Both of these would</sup> sitting across  
from the ~~Hanoi~~ merged Hanoi-NLF delegation, which would be chaired by  
Hanoi. This concept of the "three-legged conference table" seems to ~~be~~  
have been even more difficult to resolve than the role of the NLF. American  
officials reportedly told Thieu and Ky this <sup>ARRANGEMENT</sup> would be unacceptable to  
Hanoi; that if Saigon had a separate delegation then the NLF would <sup>WANT</sup> have  
one also. Various ways to resolve this have been suggested in <sup>Recent</sup> ~~past~~ days,  
including that Saigon would head the Allied delegation, with Messrs.  
Harriman and Vance taking a second role <sup>12.5</sup> ~~which~~ seems to be unacceptable  
to the Americans. The latest proposal <sup>is</sup> ~~which would be a classic~~ ~~would~~  
be that the hawkish Vice President ~~Nguyen Cao Ky~~ would lead the Saigon  
delegation, no matter where it was assigned to sit.

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dialogue 16 (normass/deepe)

The question of the ceasefire is only beginning to shape up as the Saigon government projects developments after the bombing halt, after the next phase of the talks begins and after the Americans and Hanoi agree to bilateral disengagement of foreign troops. At that point, the Saigon government would be "nose-to-nose" with a highly ~~dis~~ disciplined Communist ~~infrastructure~~ infrastructure in a number of villages throughout the country. <sup>OVER VAST AREAS OF THE COUNTRY</sup> A ceasefire would freeze the political control of the Viet Cong and, <sup>Senior U.S. Ambassador</sup> as one official explained, "instead of having two Vietnams, we'd have hundreds. The map of South Vietnam would be freckled with hundreds of separate entities."

"If the Americans force us to have an early ceasefire," he continued, "we'll just give the whole country to the Communists because they'll get it anyway. They'll lay down their weapons and run into the cities. They'll be everywhere, the government won't be able to stop them and you'll have chaos instead of peace." We need time to weed out the ~~infrastructure~~ infrastructure or else there will be red flags all over this country."

END  
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