

ing of Hanoi. Even Kissinger said, at the time, that the agreement was "99% completed." When the bombing resumed, the North Vietnamese affirmed their willingness to talk as soon as the Nixon administration restricted the bombing.

When the bombing stopped, they were waiting at the conference table.

#### DID THE BOMBING CHANGE THE NORTH VIETNAMESE NEGOTIATING POSITION?

Doubtfully. There is no evidence of this. Historically such attacks have hardened the will of the North Vietnamese and NLF.

#### WHY, THEN, DID THE NIXON ADMINISTRATION CUT BACK THE BOMBING?

Around the world people and governments declared their opposition. Thousands of people demonstrated in France, Sweden, and other countries. Dockers in Italy and Australia boycotted American cargoes. China and Russia threatened an end to their rapprochements with the U.S. while the Swedish response was so strong that the U.S. asked Sweden not to send an ambassador to Washington. In the U.S., the "dead" anti-war movement woke up. Locally, 2,000 people marched in protest Christmas Eve. U.S. Congressmen and Senators--even Republican supporters of Nixon like Ohio's Senator William Saxbe--threatened to cut off war funds.

Furthermore, the Vietnamese air defense made the escalation costly. The U.S. has no way to replace the B-52's (between 15 and 34) lost over North Vietnam. According to the New York Times the morale of previously "safe" B-52 pilots is at an all time low.

It is doubtful that the Nixon Administration cut back the bombing because it had hit all military targets in the area. Latest reports from Hanoi say that many North Vietnamese are still alive.

#### HAS THE BOMBING HALTED?

Not really. The White House proclaimed a "bombing halt" to begin the New Year, but bombing continues throughout Laos, Cambodia, South Vietnam, and North Vietnam beneath the 20th parallel. Current bombing remains the heaviest in history other than the Christmas Season bombing of Hanoi and Haiphong. And Nixon is prepared to resume that as well should opposition let up.

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# IS PEACE AT HAND?

#### IS PEACE AT HAND?

On October 26, 1972, Henry Kissinger, American representative to the secret peace talks in Paris, told the American people, "We believe that peace is at hand."

Earlier that day North Vietnam had released the summary of a nine-point draft peace agreement between North Vietnam and the U.S. government.

#### WHAT ARE THE NINE POINTS?

In brief, the Nine Points call for a cease-fire in Vietnam and a three-part council to stage elections in the South. America would immediately halt the bombing of all Vietnam, and would pull all U.S. military personnel out of Vietnam within sixty days. North Vietnam would not be required to pull its troops out of the South--it does not even admit their presence--but it would release, within sixty days, all American POW's.

The Provisional Revolutionary Government (PRG, also known as the Viet Cong or the National Liberation Front) and the Saigon regime would hold power in territory respectively controlled by their forces. A three-part council, including representatives from the PRG, the Thieu regime, and neutralists, would supervise elections. An international commission would observe and supervise the cease-fire and elections.

#### WHAT PREVENTED THE SIGNING OF THE NINE POINTS?

On October 26 Kissinger predicted that remaining "ambiguities in formation," "linguistic problems," and "technical problems" could be resolved in one more meeting. But they weren't. Why?

December 16, Kissinger suddenly claimed that the "technical problems," such as the size of the international peace-keeping force, could not easily be resolved. In addition, he charged that the North Vietnamese had continually raised new issues.

January 3, 1973.

But it was the U.S. that raised new issues--a substantive revision of the Nine Points. Although Kissinger said that the U.S. had not directly asked that North Vietnamese troops withdraw from the South, the North Vietnamese reported that Kissinger insisted upon a phrase "implying total withdrawal" of North Vietnamese troops from South Vietnam. In fact, Kissinger himself said, "We cannot accept the proposition that North Vietnam has a right of constant intervention in the South," implying that the U.S. sought some pledge of withdrawal.

THE KEY ISSUE, THEREFORE, WAS THE ISSUE THE VIETNAMESE HAVE BEEN FIGHTING OVER EVER SINCE THE FRENCH PULLED OUT OF INDOCHINA. IS VIETNAM ONE COUNTRY?

The newspapers say that Saigon's objections are holding up an agreement. This is wrong. In their recent statements, both Nixon and Kissinger have agreed with Thieu that there should be two Vietnams.

Meanwhile, the United States continued the bombing of Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam beneath the Twentieth Parallel, dropping over 3,000 tons of bombs each day. The U.S. increased shipments of war supplies and equipment to the Thieu regime, adding some 400 planes to Saigon's air force, making it the world's third largest. The U.S. also began to introduce American civilians to carry on the work of U.S. military personnel in case a peace agreement required their withdrawal.

IS VIETNAM ONE COUNTRY?

Yes. The Nine Points, as agreed to in principle by Kissinger, handled the question by referring to the Geneva Accords of 1954. The first point read, "The U.S. respects the independence, sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity of Vietnam as recognized by the 1954 Geneva agreements."

The Geneva accords, negotiated to end the war between the French and the Viet Minh--now the leaders of North Vietnam and the PRG--called for the temporary division of Vietnam, "pending general elections which will bring about the unification of Vietnam." The Viet Minh were to occupy the northern half of Vietnam, the French the southern half. The elections were scheduled for July, 1956.

The elections were never held. In 1954 the U.S. recognized Ngo Dinh Diem, the new dictator in the southern half, as president of South Vietnam, and backed his refusal to go along with elections. A cable from U.S. Secretary of State Dulles to America's man in Geneva explained the American position: "(It is) undoubtedly true that elections might mean unification of Vietnam under Ho Chi Minh." Not long after, resistance to Diem began and the American Indochina War was underway.

## THE BOMBING

WHY DID PRESIDENT NIXON ORDER THE SATURATION BOMBING OF HANOI?

No one knows for sure. Some people charge he's crazy. Some people say he's frustrated and vindictive. And Nixon himself claims the bombing was necessary to force the Vietnamese to negotiate.

The most likely explanation is that America's leaders know no other way to enforce their will: that Vietnam become two countries. Saigon troops cannot defeat the highly motivated NLF and North Vietnamese troops. General Thieu cannot win a fair election. U.S. post-war "aid" cannot buy the allegiance of an independent Vietnam. The Nixon administration was telling the North Vietnamese: Give up your vision of a re-united Vietnam or we'll destroy you.

Possibly Nixon never took the negotiations seriously. The apparent October compromise pacified the U.S. anti-war movement while perhaps forestalling a Vietnamese offensive before the U.S. elections.

Of course, the heavy bombing of North Vietnam stands as a warning to other small nations not to resist the might of the United States.

WHAT DID THE BOMBING ACCOMPLISH?

A great deal of death and destruction.

Between December 18 and December 29 American warplanes carried out over 5,000 air strikes against northern North Vietnam. They dropped between 3,000 and 6,000 tons of bombs per day on Hanoi and Haiphong, home of over a million people.

Although the Pentagon says that U.S. planes are not attacking civilian targets, anti-war activists, newsmen, and international observers in North Vietnam have testified that hospitals and residential areas have been destroyed by repeated saturation bombing.

American losses have been high, too. Many American planes, including at least 15 \$8 million B-52 bombers, were shot down by the heavy air defenses ringing North Vietnam's populated areas. The U.S. admits seven fliers killed, twenty-ninewounded, and seventy-nine missing or captured.

DID THE BOMBING FORCE THE VIETNAMESE BACK TO THE NEGOTIATING TABLE?

No. They were negotiating when the U.S. renewed the bomb-