

Editorials

Commentary

President warns of re-escalation

by Rowland Evans and Robert Novak
 WASHINGTON — President Nixon is planning to issue this private warning to the North Vietnamese in Paris: if Hanoi's negotiators refuse to compromise, they run the risk of a U.S. military reaction — possibly including a resumption of full-scale bombing of the North.

That is part of a hard-line stand which the Nixon foreign policy team assumed when they took over the Paris negotiations on Jan. 21 in an attempt to get down to serious business.

ALTHOUGH THE word "ultimatum" is not being used in discussions by Mr. Nixon and his foreign policy consultants, the effect of the present plan is not far from it. But absolutely ruled out is any implication to Hanoi that U.S. action might include the use of nuclear weapons.

That's what distinguishes Nixon's Vietnam scenario from Gen. Eisenhower's Korean ploy in 1953. The Eisenhower warning carried the specific implication that nuclear weapons might be employed. Partly as a result, the North Koreans buckled down to serious bargaining and the war ended that summer.

Word that Nixon intends to make this start toward early settlement of the Vietnam war fits his decision to retain Ellsworth Bunker as U.S. Ambassador in Saigon, the only top-level carryover from the Johnson administration.

BUNKER HAS been skeptical about Secretary of Defense Clark Clifford's strong words against stalling at Paris by the Saigon regime. Keeping Bunker on the job should give the South Vietnamese new heart and reduce the possibility that panic in Saigon could lead to a government crisis.

Nixon is aware also that, if the final settlement has the appearance of a U.S. surrender, however it may be camouflaged, the impact on the Soviet Union — and U.S. allies around the world — could be disastrous. The appearance of an American defeat, as Mr. Nixon's advisers view it, would likely lead to new Communist pressures elsewhere.

THUS NIXON is taking a long view of the Vietnam settlement and placing it in the context of world politics. This will make it essential not to extricate the U.S. from South Vietnam without reasonable assurances that the Communists won't promptly take it over.

Although much of the initiative for these talks has come from the Russians, Mr. Nixon's intimates have used them for two major purposes: to make clear that he wants the help of the Soviets in persuading Hanoi to agree to a genuine compromise but also to inform Moscow that heightened military activity could be the alternative.



President's staff: information agency

by Rowland Evans and Robert Novak
 WASHINGTON — An exchange between Richard M. Nixon and his new chief advisor for national security affairs, Dr. Henry Kissinger, at the President's first meeting with his Cabinet tells much about the coming shape of things at the White House.

Briefing his entire Cabinet on Dec. 12, the day after he unveiled it over nationwide television, Nixon suddenly turned to Kissinger in the midst of a discussion on Vietnam. He asked Kissinger to give his advice on a controversial Vietnam problem.

KISSINGER ROSE and said that in his new job he would be giving no advice — only information and options for the President to select from. Obviously pleased, Nixon chuckled but insisted that on this one occasion Kissinger could break his rule and say what he really thought ought to be done. Reluctantly, Kissinger obliged.

The incident reveals how the Nixon team hopes to change the whole character of the White House staff operation. What Mr. Nixon is driving for has eluded many Presidents before him: to use

his own staff strictly as an information-gathering device and leave to his Cabinet all the major policy advice.

Thus, having agreed to this process with Nixon before his appointment was announced, Kissinger

naturally attempted to follow it out at that first pre-inauguration Cabinet meeting.

Under Nixon, Kissinger won't try to compromise conflicts. Nixon wants conflicting opinions to come to him, sharpened and with all the flavor left in.

THIS RADICAL change of the White House staff function does not end with the cabinet. Mr. Nixon has specifically pledged to his Cabinet that his staff will answer to the demands of the Cabinet, not vice versa as under Mr. Johnson.

Nixon has made heavy impact on his staff with these Nixon guidelines. It suggests that Nixon really intends to run the government through his Cabinet as no President since Harry Truman.



Mr. Nixon and his cabinet.

Nixon clashes with economic reality

Washington — In the long, difficult negotiations over the continuation of the 10 percent income tax surcharge between Johnson and Nixon lieutenants the past two weeks, the clash of economic reality against political preference became obvious in the President-elect's camp.

Economic reality was the dominant factor at working-level negotiations behind White House doors. President Johnson's economic triad — Secretary of the Treasury Joseph Barr, Chief Economic Advisor Arthur Okun, Budget Director Charles Zwick — were adamant in pressing to keep the tax another year. They described it as essential both to slow down galloping inflation and prevent a huge budget deficit.

THEY RECEIVED no arguments in these discussions from the three men who will hold the big three economic jobs in the Nixon administration: David Kennedy (Treasury), Paul McCracken (Council of Economic Advisors), Robert Mayo (Budget).

Mr. Nixon's necessary ac-

ceptance of the surcharge renewal typifies the sobering



mood of the Johnson-Nixon transition. For all of the campaign promises of changes galore, Mr. Nixon for the time being is adopting the Great Society's fiscal policy, backing its Vietnam policy, and retaining a surprising number of its actual policymakers. That may explain why there is absence of wild cheering and blaring trumpets among the newcomers as the guard changes along the Potomac.

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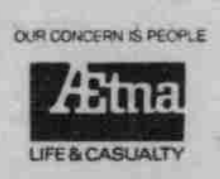
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