

Tuesday, February 27, 1973

VIETNAM

President Nixon today accused North Vietnam of failing to abide by its stated "unconditional obligation" to release American war prisoners - and he instructed Secretary of State Rogers - to give the matter "highest priority" at the Indo Chinese peace talks now under way in Paris. The President took this action shortly after Hanoi announced the suspension of American prisoner releases because - says Hanoi - "the cease fire is not being respected by the other side." Adding that no additional U.S. prisoners will be freed until the cease fire is strictly enforced, civilian captives released by the Saigon government - and greater protection provided Communist members of the joint military commission now in South Vietnam.

Today was the deadline for the release of another one-hundred-twenty Americans but it didn't happen. So far, one-hundred-sixty-three have been freed with an estimated

four-hundred-twenty-eight still in Communist hands. The gradual release of prisoners was to parallel a proportionate withdrawal of American troops from South Vietnam with the entire operation to end by March Twenty-Eighth. So far more than half the twenty-three thousand U.S. troops have been withdrawn. President Nixon's actions were relayed to the news media by Presidential news Secretary Ziegler who refused to speculate on what the U.S. might do next if Hanoi refuses to speed up the releases.

In Paris, Secretary Rogers was unable to talk with any of Hanoi's representatives, all of whom boycotted a scheduled meeting. It was not known whether the boycott was in reaction to President Nixon's message to Secretary Rogers.

In Washington, Senate Democratic Leader Mansfield and Republican Leader Scott both agreed that the return of American prisoners should take precedence over any proposals of U.S. aid to North Vietnam. Says Scott - "It's premature to discuss aid" and says Mansfield - "we ought to be sure

it's a true cease-fire first."

The fighting continued today in South Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos - with Saigon claiming more than a hundred violations by the Communists. Also, American B-Fifty-Twos were in flight again, carrying out bombing missions over Cambodia.

MID EAST

At least twenty-three persons were killed and another fifty wounded in Syria where security forces are clashing with Moslems over a proposed new constitution that would give even more power to strong man President Hafez Assad. No mention of the violence on Syria's state controlled radio. The reports are coming by way of Beirut. The word is that the Moslems are especially incensed because Syria's new constitution does not declare Islam to be the official state religion.

At U.N. Headquarters in New York - the International Civil Aviation Organization today agreed to hold debate on Egypt's demand for "appropriate measures" against Israel because of last week's shooting down of a Libyan airliner. Israeli Ambassador Jacob Doron offered no objection to the debate - though he did express hope that the discussion would not be characterized by bitterness.

CAPITOL HILL

Also in Washington Anti-Poverty director Howard Phillips before a House sub-committee defended his reorganization of the office of Economic Opportunity - saying there will be no "wholesale termination of programs." He testified against a background of several law suits filed against him - challenging his alleged plans to impound some one hundred thirteen million dollars in O E O funds and discontinue some poverty programs previously funded: Not so, says Phillips - most O E O programs will be transferred to cabinet level departments. And he adds as a parting shot - the nation's poor are entitled to a dollar's worth of results for every dollar spent in their name.

Assembled in Washington for a meeting of the national Governor's conference, Democratic Governors went into a special session with their party's congressional leaders. The purpose - to map strategy for a fight against cuts in domestic programs and the impoundment of funds. They

issued a joint statement, calling President Nixon's budget plans a "mockery - a meat-axe approach directed against the poor and the elderly." But two Republican governors, Virginia's Linwood Holton and Washington's Dan Evans - strongly endorsed the President's policies - saying - "he's absolutely on the right track - trying to bring the budget into line and give more responsibility to the states."

Also today the Republican party lost one of its Congressional members - Representative Donald Riegle, Junior of Michigan - who defected to the Democrats. Riegle who is thirty-five - has long been an administration critic, especially on Vietnam. As a Republican he was elected four times in Michigan's heavily Democratic Seventh District where United Auto Workers are his principal constituents.

A Senate Committee heard testimony from the head of an Internal Revenue service employee's union who charged that I R S agents are required to produce a quota of

delinquencies in auditioning tax payer' returns. Vincent Connery told an Appropriations group that it was required to produce X number of dollars in tax deficiencies during the time he worked for the I R S and before he resigned six years ago to head the Union. The committee is holding hearings into allegations that agents unduly harrass tax payers in auditing procedures.

TEACHERS

A tentative settlement was reached in Philadelphia - designed to bring an end to the public school teacher's strike that has crippled ^{school} operations for the past two months. The accord - if approved - eliminates the threat of a one day general work stoppage by some two hundred thousand union workers in the Philadelphia area which had been set for tomorrow in support of the teachers. Bill - it would have been the first general strike in the city's history.

WATER

In Jacksonville, Florida city officials have found that cutting a man's water off isn't always a simple procedure - especially when they're dealing with a sheet metal worker who has a talent for plumbing. The city disconnected water service to the residence of Ransom Volp ~~at~~ last May - claiming non-payment of bills - only to learn last December that Volp had reconnected the lines and was still getting water from the city supply. It was again disconnected - and Volp put it back again, with the water going on and off - that ~~way~~ way for several more times. Now the city is hauling Volp into court charging him with thirteen counts of misdemeanor - including damage to equipment and using city water without setting his account straight. And so long until tomorrow.

SHOOT OUT

Richmond, Virginia - one high school student was killed - another wounded - when caught in a cross fire between two other teen age boys who were firing pistols at each other. At least one eighteen year old youth has been arrested in the shooting which took place outside Richmond's Armstrong High School only a few minutes before classes were to open. The school is located in a predominantly black neighborhood of the city and has about fourteen hundred students.