

So long as there remains a chance for a peaceful solution, the world's hopes must be with the emissaries of peace and the men whose lives depend on its success.

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The Peace Moves

The peace manoeuvres of the United States are reaching almost the pace of escalation that we had become used to in more negative days. This in itself is heartening, of course: to find diplomatic envoys instead of generals assuming the initiative. If there is any weakness to the current Viet Nam offensive, it is in the main fact that no new terms or peace offers seem to have been drafted. From all indications the presidential messengers to the Vatican, Poland, Yugoslavia, India, France, Canada and other countries appear only to be repeating that Mr. Johnson is prepared to enter "unconditional discussions"--a pledge he first announced last April. The key difference now, however, is that the offer is being made during a halt in the bombing of North Viet Nam.

It is a highly significant difference, noteworthy especially in terms of the experimental lull last May. At that time the halt in bombing of North Viet Nam was accompanied by what amounted to an ultimatum; speedy resumption of air attack was threatened unless Hanoi complied with certain U.S. stipulations. Not unexpectedly, Hanoi, if impelled only by self-respect, rejected the United States message, thus facing renewed and intensified bombing in less than a week. Today the circumstances are not the same, and one can feel with confidence that Washington is sincerely out to create an atmosphere conducive to negotiations. The bombing of North Viet Nam stopped for Christmas, and there is no sign of any ultimatum. This is precisely the kind of atmosphere long advocated both by Western and Communist statesmen who argued that no people could be expected to consider negotiations under duress.