

At the same time that Mr. Harriman was visiting Warsaw, Mr. Arthur Goldberg, the U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations, was in Rome for an audience with Pope Paul, whose concern and anxiety about the war has prompted him to issue several appeals for peace.

Also on Wednesday, Mr. McGeorge Bundy, President Johnson's special assistant for national security affairs, met Prime Minister Lester Pearson in Ottawa. Yesterday, Mr. Pearson and Mr. Johnson discussed the Vietnamese situation over the telephone.

The Soviet Union has been very much involved in the diplomatic activity, although there is as yet no sign that the Russians are willing to intervene directly with any peace move. In Moscow, U.S. Ambassador Foy D. Kohler had talks with Soviet President Nikolai Podgorny and Deputy Foreign Minister Vasily V. Kuznetsov; and the Soviet Union also disclosed that Mr. Alexander Shelepin, the number two man in the Communist Party, is to visit Hanoi.

None of this means that Hanoi is ready to negotiate. If we are to judge by President Ho Chi Minh's message to the Pope on Tuesday, North Vietnam is as adamant as ever that acceptance of its unacceptable "four points" is the only road to peace. To President Ho, the offer of "unconditional negotiations" was merely an American smoke screen for intensification of the war.

If he sticks to this view, peace talks will be impossible and both Hanoi and Peking must be aware of the consequences. Sympathy for their cause almost certainly would be weakened, particularly among the Afro-Asian nations. The United States likely would escalate the conflict by bombing the industrial centres of Hanoi and Haiphong. Pressure would increase for direct Chinese intervention, which Hanoi apparently does not want, and for an American air strike against China, which China does not want.

These are the grim alternatives to the conference table.