

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

January 22, 1973

MEMORANDUM FOR:

DAVE GERGEN

FROM:

JOHN ANDREWS

SUBJECT:

Report to the Nation on Vietnam
Settlement

If the opportunity arises in one of your planning meetings, I hope you will push very strongly for a Presidential address to the Nation to follow close on the heels of the initialling or signing of a Vietnam agreement. And I would urge that he be totally candid in recognizing the national trauma caused by collapse of the October peace hopes.

In my judgment nothing is going to clear the air, in the wake of all the domestic and international bitterness over the December bombing, except an explanation by the President himself bringing the American people up to date from May 8 to the present. It would help a great deal in bringing the country together if he went on TV one night next week (presuming the peace is signed then) and said, "My fellow Americans, tonight I want to give you an accounting of the diplomatic and military actions of the past several months which have now brought us that for which so many Americans and Indochinese have sacrificed so much in the past decade -- a just and honorable peace in Vietnam. I was not able to take you into my confidence before because.... I thank you for your patience and trust.... I know it caused anguish and pain to many of you -- as it surely did for me, but..." etc, etc.

I found it striking how many of the demonstrators on Saturday had signs saying "Stop the bombing"; also that Sen. Hughes and others are barging ahead with their displays of protest on the Hill, as though the agreement were not hours from being initialled. It seems to me, in short, that a boil has been raised here which can be lanced only by Richard Nixon going to the people, the world, and saying "Now it can be told." I fervently hope that no one believes the emotional scars of the Christmas blitz will go away if we just keep mum and adopt the all's well that ends well line.

An early interim report breaking the eerie silence of recent weeks seems a must -- followed later by a full-dress Presidential review, prime time TV, of the entire Vietnam experience -- why it happened, what it meant, balance sheet, lessons learned, case closed.