

Peace at Last

A cease-fire allows America to escape its Vietnamese purgatory



North Vietnam's Foreign Minister Nguyen Duy Trinh (center) on the verge of signing the 1973 cease-fire agreement.

First opened in May 1968, the Paris peace talks between American and North Vietnamese officials finally bore fruit in 1973. The aim of the United States had always been to withdraw from the Vietnamese peninsula, but to leave a stable and independent South Vietnam behind. The North Vietnamese wanted the Americans to go, leaving them free to decide the destiny of all of Vietnam. The final agreement seemed initially to be a compromise in America's favor. An immediate cease-fire came into effect. The terms included the release of all Americans held prisoner, and the withdrawal of all American forces within sixty days. Both sides agreed that the South Vietnamese people had an absolute right of self-determination in their system

of government. Reunification of North and South would be addressed only through negotiation; the use of military force was specifically excluded.

But the weakness of America's position was apparent in the agreement that North Vietnamese forces stationed in the South, would neither be reinforced nor resupplied. This meant that they would stay in position, and offer a permanent threat to the stability and security of the South. Once it seemed certain that nothing would persuade the Americans to return in force to Southeast Asia, the North Vietnamese would feel free to brush aside their agreement and reunify the nation by force. Just over two years later, in April 1975, this is precisely what happened. **JS**

Thrilla in Manila

In professional boxing, "they never come back," but Ali rewrote the rules



Muhammad Ali's right hand glances off Joe Frazier in the seventh round of the epic bout in Manila.

Perhaps the most famous boxing matches of all time was the rematch between the two former world champions, Smokin' Joe Frazier, and Muhammad Ali, following their two previous fights (1971 and 1974), each won by one of the contestants.

Ali had been a recognized as an exceptional boxer since, as Cassius Clay, he won an Olympic gold medal in 1960. But his cock-sure personality and outspoken style led him to being denounced by many boxing commentators, a view reinforced for some when he converted to Islam and abandoned his "slave-name," then refused to serve in the U.S. Army, for which he was stripped of his title in 1967.

The rivalry between the two men had begun before the first match, when Ali represented those

who opposed the Vietnam War and Frazier the pro-war establishment. Ali arrived at the match under-prepared, whereas Frazier, resentful of the verbal abuse he had received from Ali (who had called him a "white man's champion," and who suggested he was no more than a gorilla), trained determinedly.

The grudge match began with an onslaught from Ali, but Frazier withstood it and continued to come forward as Ali tired. After the tenth round, however, with both boxers virtually exhausted, Ali was able to reassert his authority. In the fourteenth, Frazier boxed practically blind, refusing to throw in the towel, but the fight was stopped at the end of the round. After his victory, Ali collapsed; he said it was the closest to dying he has ever been. **PF**