

Capital Subdued After a 'Long Agony'

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WASHINGTON, Jan. 24—This time there was no dancing in the streets, no honking of horns, no champagne lifted in salutation, no slapping on the back—in short, no jubilation.

The word of peace in Vietnam came to this old Federal city, which seven times before had heard the news of an end to American wars, as an anticlimax. No show of emotion had greeted the slow beginnings of American involvement in Indochina a decade ago, and none was visible in public or private Washington last night or this morning.

From all overt signs, this was a day in the streets of Washington not unlike most of the 4,000 days on which American troops have been fighting in Southeast Asia. Only two things were obviously different: The skies were unusually blue and benign for midwinter, and many streets were closed off for the passage of the funeral cortege of former President Lyndon B. Johnson.

Nixon Restrained

On the evening of Aug. 14, 1945, after he had announced the end of World War II, President Truman went out into Pennsylvania Avenue to flash the "V for victory" sign and to mingle with the cheering crowds.

Last night, President Nixon made a 10-minute television address—an address noteworthy for Mr. Nixon's restraint—and then retired for the night. Nor did he manifest any great jubilation, according to those who saw him during the day.

Even Henry A. Kissinger, whose friends were saying

openly that he deserved the Nobel Peace Prize, conducted his discussion with the press gravely, allowing himself only one or two small jokes in an hour-and-a-half news briefing.

There was no celebration in the National Security Council offices, nor elsewhere in the White House. "Everyone was too busy or too tired," said Gerald Warren, the deputy White House press secretary.

"Too tired." The description was apt for the city as well as the White House staff, and for the country as a whole, for that matter.

Senator Robert W. Packwood, an Oregon Republican who had supported the President's conduct of the war despite growing doubts, watched Mr. Nixon on television. When he turned the set off, he found that he and his wife, who had debated the war for hours upon end over the last four years, had very little to say to each other.

'No Words Left'

"It was the way you feel after one of those four-and-a-said. "You're completely wrung out emotionally. There are no words left inside you."

For many, there was no cause for celebration because there was a gnawing awareness that there had been no victory.

"We've signed a piece of paper to get our troops out of South Vietnam and get our prisoners home," said Representative Otis G. Pike, a Suffolk County Democrat who served as a pilot in World War II. "But it's no victory and the war may not even come to an end."

"We've know for a long time there wasn't going to be any V-V Day," said Richard D. Holbrooke, managing editor of Foreign Policy magazine, who

worked in Vietnam as a foreign service officer for several years.

"Everyone knows deep in his heart that we didn't win this war. Maybe we didn't exactly lose it, but it came out as a stalemate, which is essentially what it has been for years. And for the doves—the people who most wanted to get out of Vietnam—any possible joy was obliterated by the 12 days of bombing at Christmastime."

Some of the doves sounded weary. Representative Donald W. Riegle Jr. of Michigan, an early Republican supporter of the antiwar movement, said that "if you look at all that has gone by the boards, all of the bloodshed and everything else, it is a pretty bleak tally sheet."

But others were bitter. Former Attorney General Ramsey Clark conceded that he felt a kind of "exhausted relief," but he also mocked the president's claims to have achieved "peace with honor" in Vietnam.

"What's honorable about bombing a hospital?" asked Mr. Clark, who visited North Vietnam in late July and early August.

Another thought voiced by several persons asked to explain the capital's rather flat mood was the tardiness of the settlement.

Senator George D. Aiken of Vermont, the Republican dean of the Senate, remarked that, "what we got was essentially what I recommended six years ago—we said we had won and we got out." And Peter Rosenblatt, a Washington lawyer who worked on Vietnam for President Johnson, said "there has been such a long agony that no one is excited when the end of the struggle finally comes after so many false beginnings."