

Retaliation on Reds Due Soon, Unless--

By Peter Lisagor

WASHINGTON — (CDN)

— As President Nixon ponders the grim choices open to him in Vietnam, some Administration officials cling to the frail hope that the Russians may yet put a halter on Hanoi.

Meanwhile, though, the President is faced, not with theories, but with a condition on the battlefield.

Sources indicate he has been angered by developments both in the combat situation and in the diplomatic arena, and the atmosphere here is one of imminent retaliatory moves un-

less an unforeseen break occurs.

Timetable

Some of his advisers believe the Communist delegates in Paris might have been willing to negotiate in earnest last week had the North Vietnamese offensive kept to its timetable.

According to this judgment, North Vietnam's politburo member Le Duc Tho expected greater gains, possibly including the capture of the old imperial capital of Hue, which would have given him a stronger bargaining position in the private talks he anticipated with

presidential adviser Henry Kissinger.

Instead, because the timetable was delayed, Tho was unprepared to move from his past uncompromising position, and the talks were ordered suspended by the President.

Settlement

This analysis of events is not fully shared within the Administration, although there is a lingering expectation that a negotiated settlement may still be in the cards.

A North Vietnamese spokesman said late yesterday that Kissinger met secretly with Tho last Tuesday. Presumably Kissinger's negative account of the session led to the President's decision to boycott the regular Thursday meeting.

Those officials who are willing to conjecture about the Russian role have differing views. Some key authorities believe the Kremlin's private assertions that Hanoi has acted on its own.

They even give some credence to the notion, considered fanciful by some specialists on Soviet affairs, that Russian military officials were not fully in accord with the Kremlin's political line when heavy armor and other equipment was dispatched to Hanoi.

No Part

Soviet diplomats continue to insist that Moscow in no way conspired in the planning or the execution of the massive invasion.

When Kissinger returned from his long secret weekend in Moscow from April 20-24, during which he con-

ferred with Communist Party chief Leonid Brezhnev, the hints here were strong that Russia was playing a restraining role in Hanoi.

Administration sources encouraged speculation about friction between Hanoi and Moscow, and privately fed the idea that the President had agreed to return to the Paris talks, after having suspended them, at the request of the Russians.

Speech

No effort was made to refute or soften reports that in his April 26 speech, in which he spoke of "firm expectations" of progress in the talks, the President was acting upon indications from the Russians that Hanoi would come to the renewed talks in a serious frame of mind.

Clearly, Kissinger found this not to be the case, and the explanations for it began to follow. It is conceded here that the judgments about a possible mixup in signals in the Kremlin and a delayed timetable in Hanoi have a self-justifying ring to them, as if officials were determined to rationalize premature hopes that had proved to be deceptive.