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Was This Trip So Vital?

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By Gaylord Shaw

MOSCOW — (AP) — "It all could have been done by mail," said a Western diplomat stationed in Moscow as he surveyed the first five Soviet - American agreements signed during President Nixon's Kremlin summit.

"None of them required a presidential visit," the diplomat added.

The American chief executive paused in his negotiations on major issues to sign two of the agreements. Lesser officials signed the others.

Grandeur

But the signing ceremonies — all held in the glittering grandeur of the Kremlin's Vladimir Hall with full press and TV coverage — could have been staged any afternoon in the far less pretentious State Department auditorium in Washington.

All the agreements were nailed down before Nixon left the White House. They were formalized here to fulfill the President's expressed desire — a desire shared by the Soviets — that the summit produce concrete results.

The night before leaving Washington, Nixon talked of past summit meetings with

the Russians — at Vienna, Geneva, Glassboro and Camp David.

"What they all added up to was cosmetics," he said. His Moscow trip, the President added, "is one directed primarily toward substance rather than toward cosmetics."

Month Earlier

The two accords signed on Tuesday were agreed on at least a month earlier.

One, on cooperation in medical science and public health, was announced Feb. 11 when the Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare, Elliot Richardson, and Soviet Health Minister Boris V. Petrovsky exchanged letters of agreement establishing a joint committee for health cooperation.

The second, on cooperation in environmental protection, was signed in Moscow more than a month ago by Ambassador Jacob D. Beam and Deputy Foreign Minister Andrei A. Smirnov.

Two more agreements came Wednesday. One, on cooperation in science and technology, was settled on April 11 when a broad exchange agreement was signed and announced.

Space

The other, establishing a joint space exploration program, was agreed on in Moscow April 6, and the details were fully reported in the American press weeks ago.

Yesterday's lone agreement, intended to prevent naval confrontations on the high seas, was concluded in Washington 10 days ago.