

Kissinger, Russ Trips Not Linked

By Peter Lisagor

WASHINGTON —(CDN) — While the Paris peace talks on Vietnam are expected to resume in the next few weeks, administration officials discourage the notion that high-level Soviet and American diplomatic travels have been orchestrated to break the negotiating impasse.

The planned visit of presidential adviser Henry Kissinger to Peking from June 19 to 23 and the trip of Soviet President Nikolai Podgorny to Hanoi are described here as "strictly coincidental."

Officials are plainly hopeful that Podgorny might try to persuade the North Vietnamese to pursue the diplomatic route again. During President Nixon's recent stay in Moscow, Russian functionaries freely hinted that the Kremlin might take on a mediator's role with Hanoi.

The White House has insisted that Kissinger's trip to Peking, his fourth to the Chinese capital in less than a year, flows from a desire of both President Nixon and Chinese leaders to maintain contacts, as reflected in the Shanghai communique at the end of the president's summit journey to China last February.

The Kissinger journey is unrelated to Podgorny's travels, as well as to the Moscow summit and the Chinese warnings about U.S. bombing close to their borders in North Vietnam, according to the White House.

The ubiquitous presidential assistant is not going to Peking, however, merely to discuss "routine matters," presidential press secretary Ronald Ziegler said. The joint announcement of his trip stated that he would engage in "concrete consultation" and exchange views on issues of common interest.

For both China and the United States, Vietnam is an issue of common interest and will undoubtedly be discussed but not in concert with anything that Podgorny may be discussing in Hanoi, according to sources here.

Kissinger's latest excursion to Peking is seen rather as further pursuit of Nixon's "triangular diplomacy," in which Washington stays in touch with both Peking and Moscow and avoids, as much as possible, any hints of collusion against the other.

Japan also figures in the game. Kissinger reassured the Japanese on a recent visit that the U.S. ties with them remain strong and that Washington had not embarked on its opening to Peking at their expense. Now, presumably, he will allay any fears in Peking about U.S.-Japan relations.

On the Paris peace talks, officials here admit that the soft tone adopted by Ambassador William Porter, the chief U.S. negotiator, on his return to the French capital the other day was deliberate and hopefully calculated to start negotiations again on a more promising note.

The chief Hanoi negotiator, Xuan Thuy, is expected back in Paris soon. Madame Binh, the Viet Cong delegate, already has returned to Paris after a sojourn in Africa.

If Podgorny indeed seeks to encourage Hanoi to approach negotiations seriously, it may show up in the next couple of weeks, officials here believe.

There is evidence that U.S. bombing, combined with the mining of the enemy harbors, has been crippling to the North Vietnamese offensive and damaging to civilian life in the north.