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Soviet Does Not Expect Attack on Saigon

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MOSCOW, April 18—Soviet diplomats analyzing the fighting in South Vietnam have told well-placed sources here that they do not expect the Communist forces to try to capture Saigon and win the war in the current offensive.

The diplomats drew their conclusions from conversations with North Vietnamese and Vietcong officials and their own reports from Hanoi, according to the sources, who are also Russians.

More Peking Support

Today the Kremlin sent "ardent congratulations" to Prince Norodom Sihanouk and the victorious forces in Cambodia on their "liberation" of the capital yesterday.

The message, signed by the Soviet party chief, Leonid I. Brezhnev, President Nikolai V. Podgorny and Premier Aleksei N. Kosygin, said that "the Soviet Union has always supported the Cambodian patriots" against the ousted government of Marshal Lon Nol.

Moscow, which only last month closed the embassy of the Lon Nol Government here, has seemed anxious to advance its standing with the former Cambodian insurgents, who for five years have enjoyed more visible support from Peking.

The conclusions about Saigon, apparently expressed earlier this week, could be dated by the progress of the fighting since. Moscow has leaned toward a politically oriented

settlement in which it could act as a broker on behalf of Communist interests, partly as a counter to Chinese influence.

However, the sources asserted, the Soviet diplomats felt that the Vietnamese Communists might not push for all-out victory at this point for two reasons.

First, the Vietnamese Communists were said to feel that they would have difficulty crushing a relatively well-armed modern force making a last-ditch defense of Saigon, particularly with their own lines overextended.

Second, the North Vietnamese have reportedly told Soviet officials that their resources are stretched in trying to cope with the territory that they have already occupied. The sources said that the North Vietnamese expressed surprise that they had moved into the northern and central regions so quickly.

Rations Said to Be Cut

According to a report reaching here through Soviet channels, food rations in the region of Hanoi were cut 30 per cent to cope with new needs in the South. The North Vietnamese were reportedly trying to ship food and material to care for the large populations inherited in the current offensive.

Last night Soviet television showed pictures from Hanoi of North Vietnamese transport planes being loaded with food for flights south. This was followed by film of sun-helmeted Communist soldiers chatting with civilians in Da Nang.

The sources here have said that the North Vietnamese and Vietcong pressing toward Saigon might prefer to hold the ground they have taken and let the fighting wind down.

Any possibility of political negotiations was ruled out as long as President Nguyen Van Thieu remained in power. However, the sources understood that the Vietnamese Communists were willing, as they have said, to undertake political discussions with an alternate government.

No Victory Prediction

The Soviet press, which has usually supported Hanoi's line on the war, has stopped short of predicting immediate victory and has appeared cautious in discussing the United States, emphasizing resistance there to further involvement in Vietnam.

An article in the Government newspaper, Izvestia, by a prominent commentator, Valenty Matveyev, said that for the first time in two years Vietnamese developments opened a more real prospect for full implementation of the Paris peace agreements and that the North Vietnamese and Vietcong intended to observe them. The commentary also said that "the fall of the Thieu regime is only a matter of time, and judging by everything the time will be short."

The Kremlin message to Prince Norodom Sihanouk and Cambodian Communist leaders asserted that the capture of Phnom Penh "has been received by all Soviet people with feelings of profound satisfaction."