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The Reds' Big Victory March

Saigon

Thousands of Viet Cong and North Vietnamese troops rolled through Saigon on military vehicles yesterday in a huge victory parade at which Provisional Revolutionary Government leaders

spoke of the unity of Vietnam.

With the PRG leaders taking the salute on the review platform outside Independence Palace were North Vietnamese President Ton Duc Thang and Politburo member Le Duc Tho, who negotiated the Paris peace agreement with U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger.

National Liberation Front Chairman Nguyen Huu Tho, main figurehead of the PRG, and Lieutenant General Tran Van Tra, head of the military committee now governing the Saigon area, made speeches praising the revolution and the "unity of Vietnam and oneness of its people."

There was no indication in the speeches that direct political reunification of North and South was at hand, although General Tra ended his with the words: "Long live Vietnam, independence, liberty and unification of the nation."

(North Vietnamese Communist party leader Le Duan spoke at victory celebrations in Hanoi yesterday as though the country had already been reunified.)

(The North Vietnam news agency quoted him as saying that 45 million people throughout Vietnam were celebrating their victory over neo-colonialism and the ending of the "scourge of partition.")

Among the other main personalities attending the Saigon parade were North Vietnam's army chief of staff, General Van Tien Dung, at the head of a group of northern generals in full dress uniform, and the PRG foreign minister, Mrs. Nguyen Thi Binh.

But a notable absentee was the famed General Vo Nguyen Giap, North Vietnamese defense minister, who has long been reported in poor health.

Sailors and airmen also

rode in the parade, but there were no aircraft in the skies. There were no foreigners among the parading troops despite reports that a small group of U.S. deserters would be taking part.

The most striking contingent was a battalion of female guerrillas, mostly teenagers, dressed in the Viet Cong black pyjama-like garments, black and white check scarves, floppy bush hats and white sneakers.

The start of the three-day celebrations coincided with reports reaching here of the crumbling of the last pockets of resistance in the Mekong delta.

Reuters