

Red negotiator's return JUL 7 1971 suggests peace is near

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WASHINGTON —The key to a Vietnam settlement isn't the new Communist peace plan so much as the appearance in Paris of North Vietnam's politburo member Le Duc Tho.

He left Paris 14 months ago with the terse announcement that he wouldn't return until he had an agreement in his pocket.

To bring him back, President Nixon has made a number of unpublicized overtures through Communist and neutral intermediaries. These secret soundings have now brought Le Duc Tho to Paris.

His appearance definitely is the result of intricate backstage diplomacy. In making the secret arrangements, Hanoi had insisted he talk to someone with more authority than Ambassador David K. E. Bruce. It's no coincidence, therefore, that Le Duc Tho arrived at the same time Henry Kissinger, the President's national security adviser, also scheduled a trip to Paris.

North Vietnamese diplomats in Paris had complained that Bruce was unfriendly. Both of his predecessors, Averell Harriman and Henry Cabot Lodge, had maintained cordial personal relations with the North Vietnamese. But Bruce has been cold and formal.

This is one reason, the intermediaries hinted, that the North Vietnamese have refused to hold secret meetings in the Paris suburbs such as took place under Harriman and Lodge.

Belittling Bruce

Washington has also treated Bruce more as a glorified spokesman than a negotiator. The Paris delegation has been restricted, for example, to the most routine intelligence about the war they are supposed to be settling. The top-secret stuff — battle plans, position papers, contingency plans and policymaking documents—aren't sent to Paris.

The air strikes at missile sites and other tactical targets in North Vietnam last November caught Bruce completely by surprise. He received his first word of the attacks from the North Vietnamese.

Annoyed, he directed his military liaison man, Lt. Gen. Julian Ewell, to send an urgent message to the Pentagon requesting more details. Admiral Thomas Moorer, the Joint Chiefs chairman, sent back a Washington Post account of the raids. The reply was regarded in Paris as an insulting message to Bruce, suggesting he should be satisfied with what he reads in the newspapers.

Meanwhile, Le Duc Tho still has no agreement in his pocket, but meaningful peace negotiations may now be possible.

Footnote: Washington is keeping an anxious eye on Saigon, which in the past has sought to snag the Paris negotiations. This is the reason, apparently, that Kissinger is traveling to Paris by way of Saigon. The U.S. has also taken the precaution, in the past, of intercepting the secret messages between South Vietnam's top people in Paris and Saigon. The South Vietnamese messages that have fallen into our hands have been identified by the code name "Gout." The National Security Agency, which handles secret codes and communications, stamps the intercepted messages "immediate precedence" and sends them by teletype to the White House marked "Exclusive for Dr. Henry A. Kissinger-White House." At the bottom of each message, the date and time of the interception are given.

WASHINGTON WHIRL

Hoover and Tamm — For years, the International Association of Chiefs of Police passed fulsome resolutions in praise of "The Honorable J. Edgar Hoover." It didn't detract from Hoover's glory that the resolutions were quietly prepared by the FBI and approved in advance by its director. But lately, Hoover has been feuding with the IACP's executive director, Quinn Tamm, himself a former FBI official. Hoover's supporters claim that Tamm botched up almost every top job at the FBI. Tamm's friends say he not only had a great career at the FBI but that Hoover himself recommended him for the IACP job. They say it was only after Tamm began to get personal publicity and to emerge as a rival to Hoover as a law enforcement spokesman that the FBI chief turned against him. It now looks as if Hoover, at last, may win the feud. The IACP's board is talking about firing Tamm for making "indiscreet statements."

Under the Dome — Sens. Hubert Humphrey, D-Minn., and George McGovern, D-S.D., two presidential hopefuls who are frequently critical of military spending, bother to show up for the limiting the Pentagon budget. . . . Sen. James Eastland, D-Miss., has a habit of rubbing his fingers and has a . . .