

KISSINGER LINKS AID BILL TO TALKS

Says Defeat by Senate Was
a Factor in Suspension of
Secret Parley in Paris
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WASHINGTON, Feb. 2 — Henry A. Kissinger has expressed the view that the Senate defeat of the foreign aid bill last Oct. 29 was among a number of factors that led to the suspension of the secret negotiations between the United States and North Vietnam in November.

Mr. Kissinger, President Nixon's adviser for national security, told an unpublicized meeting of relatives of American prisoners of war last Friday that the unexpected Senate defeat of the aid measure might have led the North Vietnamese to believe that United States economic support for the Saigon Government would be ended shortly without any concession by Hanoi in the negotiations.

Three weeks after the Senate vote the North Vietnamese suddenly reversed themselves and declined to send a member of the Politburo to a meeting scheduled for Nov. 20.

Mr. Kissinger addressed the relatives in a private meeting at the White House last Friday. It was one of a series of sessions he has held with them during the last year to explain the administration's policy on the war.

In other conversations in the last week Mr. Kissinger has reportedly expressed the view

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that many factors may have influenced the North Vietnamese decision, including these:

¶The negative international reaction to the one-man South Vietnamese election on Oct. 3. North Vietnam may have believed that the spectacle of an uncounted election might reignite antiwar sentiment in the United States and erode support for President Nixon's continued backing of President Nguyen Van Thieu.

¶The pace of the withdrawal of United States troops. The withdrawals announced during the period may have persuaded the North Vietnamese that the American involvement was headed toward an early conclusion regardless of the progress of the Paris talks.

Implicit in the theory that the defeat of the aid bill may have contributed to the North Vietnamese reversal is the suggestion that the bipartisan coalition—antiwar senators, liberals disillusioned with foreign aid, and fiscal conservatives—might have inadvertently created obstacles to the secret peace talks.

Perhaps to avoid that implication, Mr. Kissinger has declined to speculate in public on the North Vietnamese motive in announcing that Le Duc Tho, a senior Politburo member, was unable to attend the Nov. 20 session because of illness. The United States responded that the meeting could serve no useful purpose without him, the theory being that lower-level officials could not make substantive decisions.

Hanoi did offer to send Xuan Thuy, the head of its Paris negotiating team, but the United States declined. As a result each side has accused the other of breaking off and thereby deadlocking the talks.

It was on Nov. 17, three weeks after the defeat of the aid bill and while the debate on the merits of the program was still raging, that North Vietnam advised the United States that Mr. Tho was ill. A reduced version of the measure was passed by the House of Representatives and sent to the White House on Jan. 25.

Mr. Kissinger outlined his views during a two-hour question-and-answer session with 25 wives and relatives of prisoners in the Roosevelt Room of the White House. His audience included the leaders of the major organizations of prisoners' families, including the board of the National League of Families of American Prisoners and Missing in Southeast Asia.

According to a source familiar with the meeting, Mr. Kissinger was applauded. Later he was thanked on behalf of the families for his efforts over the past 30 months, disclosed last week by the President, to negotiate a settlement of the war.

The families were asked to hold Mr. Kissinger's remarks in strict confidence.

For the first half of the two-hour session, it was said, Mr. Kissinger briefed them on the secret negotiations, which began in August, 1969, repeating much of what he said at his news conference last Wednesday.

He reportedly stressed the flexibility of the new eight-point American peace proposal, which includes a plan under which President Nguyen Van Thieu would agree to resign 30 days in advance of a new presidential election.

As an example of the Administration's flexible approach, Mr. Kissinger is reported to have said: "If the 30-day time period is too short, we are prepared to consider alternatives. If the North Vietnamese propose 40 days, or 50 days, we are not going to walk out of the room."

It was said that Mr. Kissinger also stressed, as he had in public, that North Vietnam had been stanch in its demand that the United States bring about the overthrow of the Thieu Government as part of any agreement involving the release of the prisoners.

He noted, the account continued, that the Vietcong spokesman in Paris, expecting that President Nixon would offer in his speech last Tuesday to set a timetable for withdrawal in exchange for the release of the prisoners, had rejected the idea in advance. Mr. Kissinger cited that as a demonstration of the fact that the other side would require political concessions as well as military ones in exchange for the prisoners' release.