

KISSINGER ON WAY TO SOUTH VIETNAM TO CONSULT THIEU

After Secret Talks in Paris,
Hanoi's Spokesman Is Also
Leaving, Bound for Home

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SPECULATION INCREASES

'We Are in Sensitive Time,'
White House Says—Both
Sides Withhold Details
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WASHINGTON, Aug. 15—President Nixon's adviser for national security, Henry A. Kissinger, left Switzerland tonight for Saigon to consult with President Nguyen Van Thieu of South Vietnam on efforts to negotiate a settlement of the Vietnam war.

At about the same time that the White House was disclosing Mr. Kissinger's travel plans, the North Vietnamese mission in Paris announced that Le Duc Tho, the Politburo member charged with conducting Vietnam negotiations who met with Mr. Kissinger in Paris yesterday, would return to Hanoi tomorrow.

The timing of the two men's trips seemed to indicate that the Vietnam negotiations in Paris were reaching a delicate stage, but neither the White House nor the North Vietnamese would provide any details.

'A Sensitive Time'

Ronald L. Ziegler, the White House press secretary, urged newsmen not to speculate, but his own comments contributed to the guessing and theorizing going on in Washington political and diplomatic circles.

"We are in a sensitive time now; it wouldn't be wise to speculate," Mr. Ziegler said.

Mr. Kissinger left Zurich tonight for Saigon aboard a special United States Air Force plane. He had arrived in Zurich yesterday to help celebrate his parents' 50th wedding anniversary in the nearby resort

of Laax-Flims.

Yesterday Mr. Ziegler announced Mr. Kissinger's private meeting in Paris with Mr. Tho and Xuan Thuy, the regular Hanoi representative at the Paris talks, and his plans to go to Switzerland. But he did not disclose the Saigon trip until this morning.

Full Itinerary Undisclosed

The air of mystery about Mr. Kissinger's travels was maintained by Mr. Ziegler, who after announcing the Saigon trip refused to say where Mr. Kissinger would go from there. Mr. Kissinger is slated to arrive in Saigon tomorrow night, Saigon time, and to leave on Friday, Mr. Ziegler said.

In answer to questions, Mr. Ziegler ruled out either Paris or Hanoi as a further stop, and cautioned against speculation about stops in Moscow or Peking. He said that Mr. Kissinger would return to Washington in time to brief Mr. Nixon before the President goes to Miami Beach next Tuesday for the Republican convention, where he

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will be nominated for a second term.

In making his announcement, Mr. Ziegler said that "the President has asked Henry Kissinger to go to South Vietnam for a general review of all aspects of the Vietnam problem, including the negotiations in Paris."

He said that Mr. Kissinger would meet with President Thieu and the leading United States officials in South Vietnam, Ambassador Ellsworth Bunker and the United States commander in Vietnam, Gen. Frederick C. Weyand.

Mr. Nixon communicated with Mr. Kissinger today, before Mr. Kissinger left for Saigon, the White House said. The President was at Camp David, his nearby Maryland retreat, where he is working on legislative and economic matters in advance of next week's convention.

Mr. Ziegler was asked whether this trip signified that a "breakthrough" had been reached in Paris, making it necessary to consult with Mr. Thieu.

To this Mr. Ziegler said "we have at no time discussed the contents of the talks and will not do so now. We have not characterized them in any way. We are in a sensitive time now, it wouldn't be wise to speculate. Our desire is to negotiate constructively. I won't answer in any way to encourage specu-

lation."

Speculation Builds Up

Mr. Ziegler did say that the trip had been planned for several weeks and was not a direct result of anything at yesterday's session.

But despite Mr. Ziegler's warnings, there was considerable speculation.

Because of Mr. Thieu's recent speeches urging the United States not to make any unilateral concessions to the North Vietnamese—such as a halt to the bombing—some believed that Mr. Kissinger was being sent to Saigon to reassure Mr. Thieu, perhaps to carry a message from Mr. Nixon.

Others, noting that Mr. Tho was also leaving Paris, speculated that the talks might be reaching a critical stage and that Mr. Kissinger might be going to Saigon to try to extract some additional concessions from Mr. Thieu.

It has been evident for some time that the chief barrier to a negotiated settlement has been Hanoi's insistence that a political realignment in Saigon be agreed to as part of an over-all package.

The North Vietnamese have demanded that Mr. Thieu resign and that a new coalition government, including Vietcong and neutrals acceptable to them, be created.

In the past Mr. Nixon has asserted that he would not "impose" a coalition Government on Saigon, but Mr. Thieu in the past did agree to an American plan by which he would resign one month prior to a new election.

Nothing has been said publicly that would indicate any imminent breakthrough. The anti-American rhetoric from Hanoi seems as strong as ever. And in their recent statements, Administration officials have charged North Vietnam with intransigence.

Thus, it is possible that Mr. Kissinger may simply be reporting to Mr. Thieu about a deadlock at the talks, and Mr. Tho may be going to Hanoi for the same reason.

Political observers here have noted that the sense of movement caused by Mr. Kissinger's travels tends to help Mr. Nixon in his campaign against the Democrats, who have charged him with failing to end the Vietnam war.

While in Saigon, Mr. Kissinger will also probably discuss the United States troop level in South Vietnam. Mr. Nixon has set a level of 39,000 to be reached by Sept. 1, and in the past he has announced further cuts before the previous deadline.

It is anticipated that the next cut—in the absence of any political settlement—would bring the figure to the 25,000-

30,000 mark, or what Mr. Nixon has called the "residual force level." He has said those forces will not be removed until all prisoners were released.

Mr. Nixon's peace plan provides for the removal of all United States forces in South Vietnam, an end to the bombing of North Vietnam and of the mining of its ports, once an internationally supervised cease-fire is agreed to and the North Vietnamese agree to the release of all prisoners.

He has left the political future to the Vietnamese to discuss, but has been vague on how this would be done.

The North Vietnamese, in their public statements, have called for the United States to set a date for complete withdrawal and to end all support to the Thieu regime, allowing the South Vietnamese to set up a coalition government without Mr. Thieu. After this, Hanoi has said, a cease-fire can be established and prisoners released.

Mr. Kissinger's meeting in Paris yesterday was his 16th private session, and third since the current round of talks began last month. Regular semi-public negotiations are also held on Thursdays in which the Vietcong and the Saigon Governments take part, but these so far have made no discernible progress.