

Key Session Due in Paris; Snags Seen

From News Dispatches

U.S. presidential adviser Henry Kissinger yesterday met briefly with top North Vietnamese negotiators in Paris—after both sides had indicated no meeting was scheduled—and announced later that a full-fledged session would take place Saturday.

A well-placed source in Paris gave this version of the status of the talks: U.S. and North Vietnamese negotiators have reached a critical point where continuation of the discussions now depends upon the session scheduled for Saturday.

Washington Post correspondent Jonathan C. Randal reported the source said that both Kissinger and the North Vietnamese had requested further instructions from their respective capitals.

In Saigon, a high South Vietnamese government official said flatly that the first four days of talks had brought no progress toward a peace settlement.

The official, a close associate of President Thieu who declined to be named, said the Communist side was being stubborn and making unacceptable demands, but he would not go into detail.

He said he had received the information from South Vietnamese officials in Paris who are briefed daily by Kissinger.

At the center of the reported difficulties appeared to be revised American demands that Kissinger presented Monday when the secret talks resumed.

The North Vietnamese were said by the source to be so incensed by the toughening American demands that they, in turn, have insisted on major revisions of the draft which they had previously said was final, according to Randal.

At one point Thursday, Tho, usually a reserved negotiator, became so angry that he began shouting and pounding on the table, the source said.

Their meeting Friday was not concerned with substantive negotiations, the source added, but rather was designed to help mask the impasse pending instructions from Hanoi and Washington. This also was the purpose of the smiles and joking which Kissinger and Tho displayed Thursday for the benefit of newsmen, photographers and television cameramen, Randal said.

Both sides had indicated yesterday in Paris that there would be no meeting today, but Kissinger met alone with the North Vietnamese, and it was later announced that a full session would take place Saturday.

Today's surprise meeting, lasting little more than one hour, took place against a backdrop of conflicting rumors suggesting that the talks had "run into serious difficulties," in the words of "reliable sources" quoted by Agence France-Presse, the French news agency.

Sources close to the North Vietnamese delegation echoed this pessimism, Randal reported. They said, "Things are very gloomy." They ac-

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cused the United States of "again bringing up matters of principle" since Monday when the secret talks resumed.

In essence, the United States was said to have supported almost all of Saigon's objections to the draft accord, Randal reported.

Militarily, the United States called for the mutual withdrawal of American and North Vietnamese troops from South Vietnam. Politically, the United States was said to

have acceded to Saigon's demands of eliminating the so-called neutralists from sharing power with the Vietcong and Saigon after a cease-fire.

The North Vietnamese retorted by again demanding the immediate resignation of South Vietnamese President Nguyen Thieu, by refusing mutual troop withdrawal, by insisting on immediate release of political prisoners in the south and on the neutralist presence in the "administrative structure" scheduled to be set up during the transition period.

The source gave the following detailed account of the

first four days of the talks, Randal reported.

When the talks resumed Monday near Paris, Kissinger presented a series of radical counter-proposals, including Saigon-influenced demands which were not included in last month's draft accord.

In essence, they insisted on step-by-step mutual withdrawal of American and North Vietnamese troops from South Vietnam, or, failing that, on political concessions which the North Vietnamese felt represented a major reversal of previous American positions.

North Vietnam has made it an article of faith not to accept this concept on ground any Vietnamese was on his own territory anywhere in Vietnam, unlike the Americans who were regarded as "aggressors" in Vietnam.

The centerpiece of these demands was the elimination of the so-called neutralist segment from the National Reconciliation Council. The draft accord had stipulated that the neutralists should share responsibility in the transition period with the Vietcong and Saigon for carrying out the cease-fire.

The new American position was designed to meet Saigon's publicly expressed fears that any three-segment organization was simply a form of coalition government which President Thieu has consistently rejected.

Furthermore, nowhere in the revised American proposals was there any mention of three-segment cooperation at lower levels of government.

Although the draft accord did not spell out in detail what was intended, it had been widely presumed that three-segment coordinating committees would be set up at provincial, village and perhaps even hamlet level.

The revised American proposals also lacked any of the draft's language which had hinted at the future neutrality

of South Vietnam, once again apparently in deference to Saigon's opposition.

Similarly, the revised American proposal further watered down the already vague draft language on the exact tasks of the National Reconciliation Council, which had been defined as "activating" the application of the cease-fire's clauses. The new language

spoke even more vaguely of "activating the functions tending toward the carrying out of the agreement's clauses."

The new American language also made no mention of the type and timing of elections which should take place at the end of the transition period in order to provide South Vietnam with permanent government institutions.

Finally, the North Vietnamese believe the United States reneged on its tacit promise to oblige Saigon to release the tens of thousands of political prisoners held in South Vietnam within 90 days of the cease-fire.

After studying the American proposals Monday night, North Vietnam's reaction Tuesday was to insist once again on Thieu's immediate resignation, a demand which had been dropped in the draft accord.

Furthermore, North Vietnam refused to envisage mutual withdrawal of their own and American troops and insisted on the immediate release of all political prisoners and detainees held in South Vietnam. North Vietnam maintained its demand for a three-segment National Reconciliation Council.

During both the Wednesday and Thursday negotiating sessions, Kissinger sought to engage in a discussion on matters of detail rather than confronting the deadlocked issues, the sources told Randal.

This finally provoked Tho's fit of anger. In essence, the sources added, he warned that the original Oct. 31 deadline for the agreement's signature had expired, the American elections were over and unless the United States got down to serious negotiations the tempo of North Vietnam's war effort in the South could be stepped up.