

NOV 26 1972  
**The Gap**  
**In Paris**  
**Peace Talk**

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PARIS — Dr. Henry Kissinger is learning in the resumed Vietnam peace negotiations in Paris that there is many a slip between the cup and the lip.

The optimistic atmosphere that prevailed in American diplomatic circles on Kissinger's return to Paris for what was and still is intended to be the final round of negotiations with the North Vietnamese has faded.

Despite the happily smiling face the President's national security adviser and chief diplomatic negotiator continues to present to the cameramen, the present climate inside the French Communist Party's little villa at Gif-Sur-Yvette, where the secret talks — except for Friday's one hour session — are taking place, is just about as somber as the early morning overcast Paris sky.

Le Duc Tho, Hanoi's hard-line politburo member, is being very tough with Kissinger, partly, it is assumed, because the United States

—Turn to Page 14, Col. 1

—From Page 1

failed to sign the peace agreement on the last scheduled date of Oct. 31, and partly because the American negotiator is trying to get some additional concessions for South Vietnamese President Nguyen Van Thieu, who continues to balk at the terms of the agreement Kissinger negotiated with the North Vietnamese last month.

**Not As Fast**

There could, of course, be a sudden break in the impasse, but the deal is not going to be concluded as quickly as Kissinger predicted on Oct. 26 when he told newsmen that only one more

negotiating session, "lasting not more than three or four days" was needed to nail down the final details.

The fifth day of meeting has passed and there is no sign yet of the gap between the new positions of the two sides being narrowed, much less bridged.

Furthermore, President Thieu is intensifying his opposition to the draft agreement and demanding, with growing insistence, that the loopholes be plugged before he is called upon to join in signing it.

French reports from Saigon say Thieu in his reply to President Nixon's recent personal letter, maintained very strong objection to the agreement in its present form.

He insisted, according to these reports, on the necessity of getting a commitment from Hanoi for the eventual withdrawal of all North Vietnamese troops from the south.

He also emphasized the need for strict international control of the demilitarized zone between North and South Vietnam, and a clear



**LE DUC THO**  
 Rigid stance

understanding that the proposed three-segment national council to organize new elections is not to have any governmental authority or to supplant in any way his own presidential power.

Saigon Radio also has started attacking Kissinger personally, accusing him of

having overplayed his hand in the negotiations and of wishing to create a legend about his diplomatic genius.

What, in effect, appears to have happened in the Vietnam peace scenario is this:

When Kissinger left Paris in October, he thought he had a Vietnam peace deal virtually sewed up. He realized it was a compromise that involved agonizing concessions by both North Vietnam and South Vietnam, but he felt that under prevailing circumstances, it was reasonably fair to both sides.

**Thieu Position**

He went to Saigon in the hope of getting President Thieu to accept the deal, but Thieu, in a rough meeting, refused to do so unless certain conditions were met. These were, in their order of importance from Saigon's standpoint, the following:

- Some definite assurance from Hanoi that most if not all the North Vietnamese troops in South Vietnam would be gradually withdrawn within a specified period of time after the armistice was proclaimed.
- That an effective system of international control be in place when the ceasefire went into effect.
- That Hanoi reaffirm its recognition of the Demilitarized Zone, and stricter international control be maintained over that zone to deter North Vietnamese infiltration into the south.

**Opening Advocacy**

- That the authority of the proposed Council of National Reconciliation and Accord be more clearly defined to make it unmistakably clear that it would have no governmental authority.

Kissinger agreed to seek some satisfaction for President Thieu at the resumed talks in Paris. He has, in fact, presented Saigon's case with such firmness that the South Vietnamese delegation in Paris is satisfied with his opening advocacy of President Thieu's position.

What worries the South Vietnamese, however, is that the Americans may weaken in their defense of President Thieu's position in order to conclude the peace agreement with North Viet-

nam.

The North Vietnamese negotiators have so far shown no disposition to meet President Thieu's demands as presented by Kissinger. On the contrary, Le Duc Tho has proposed changes in the Communist side's favor in some of the major provisions of the agreement that he negotiated with Kissinger last month.

**Tough Stance**

Undoubtedly anticipating that the United States would seek some satisfaction for Saigon when the talks were

resumed, Tho was all set to serve notice that Hanoi's position had hardened. He did so as soon as Kissinger made the pitch for President Thieu.

It may have been just classical diplomatic tactics for Tho to come on with a tough stance when he expected Kissinger to seek some further concessions, but French diplomatic reports from Hanoi indicate the hardliners in the regime are far from happy with the political aspects of the draft agreement, which leaves President Thieu in power indefinitely and with no definite obligation to accept the Viet Cong in a coalition government or even to agree with them on the holding of new elections in South Vietnam.

Hanoi is aware that President Nixon would like to get the American war prisoners home by Christmas and a peace settlement in effect before his second term inauguration in January.

The North Vietnamese may hold out now for a while to see what President Nixon is prepared to give to get a settlement by January.

There is a feeling in Paris conference circles that neither Hanoi nor Saigon is in a hurry to conclude the peace agreement.

Hanoi probably would still settle for the original draft agreement, but it is not prepared to meet President Thieu's demands, especially the one calling for the total withdrawal of North Vietnamese forces from the south. North Vietnam is expected in the end to give some satisfaction on this issue, but not a commitment for the complete withdrawal of what Saigon estimates to be 300,000 troops.

As the first week of the so-called final round of the negotiations drew near its close, no one in Paris thinks the peace agreement will be signed tomorrow or the next day.