

No Pact As Talks Wind Up

Kissinger Flies Home To Brief Nixon

12-14-72
By Jonathan C. Randal
Washington Post Foreign Service

PARIS, Dec. 13—Henry Kissinger flew to Washington tonight to report to President Nixon without announcing that a definitive cease-fire agreement was reached here during what once was billed as the "final" round of negotiations with North Vietnam.

Seven weeks after proclaiming "peace is at hand," Kissinger issued an ambiguous airport departure statement which confirmed the end of the current top-level secret talks but set no date for their resumption.

Amid his now customary flow of jokes, Kissinger told newsmen at Orly airport that he and his Hanoi counterpart, Le Duc Tho, "will remain in contact through messages, and we will then decide whether another meeting is necessary and when."

But a North Vietnamese newsman present for Kissinger's departure said "things do not look too good."

In the absence of immediate official North Vietnamese reaction here, this laconic remark was yet another indication that today's six-hour private session between Kissinger and Tho had failed to remove still important substantive obstacles.

Lending credence to such pessimistic interpretations — and effectively puncturing the growing euphoria of the past week—were accounts by a well informed European diplomatic source and the Communists, who have been warning increasingly against excessive optimism.

If only to maintain a thread of contact, William Porter, ambassador to the formal peace talks, and his North Vietnamese counterpart, Xuan Thuy, will continue to hold periodic "technical" meetings to work out details of a revised cease-fire agreement, the White House and Kissinger announced.

See TALKS, A7, Col. 1

TALKS, From A1

Assisting Porter will be William Sullivan, Assistant Secretary of State for Southeast Asian Affairs, and members of Kissinger's national security council staff.

[In Washington, White House spokesman Ronald Ziegler said that if any further meetings between Kissinger and Tho are needed "the decision will be made by both sides." White House officials declined to discuss the outcome or the state of the negotiations, but said Mr. Nixon would confer with Kissinger at 10 a.m. Thursday.]

American sources suggested the two sides would not confer until after Thursday's weekly session of the formal talks. That meeting may provide indications of what was accomplished during the "final" negotiations, which, except for a nine-day break, have taken place almost daily since Nov. 20 in an effort to revise the original draft cease-fire accord worked out in October.

Complicating an analysis of the ambiguous U.S. statements today was the fact that American sources here have been suggesting for days that even if the current round of secret talks were successful nothing would be announced immediately.

The sources had reasoned that before any triumphant trumpeting took place Kissinger would have to brief the President, then very probably fly to Saigon to see South Vietnamese president Ny Van Thieu to extract his reluctant acquiescence to any revised draft.

Two Interpretations

Thus, the ambiguity of statements made both by Kissinger and Ziegler allowed for both optimistic and pessimistic interpretations.

If indeed all major issues somehow had been settled during the current rounds, then the statements suggested that further Kissinger-Tho encounters were unnecessary.

But given the increasing indications of remaining major obstacles, the wording of the statements could also be interpreted as meaning that further sessions would be required to break the deadlock.

Moreover, the American statements suggested that Tho would stay in Paris rather than return to Hanoi, a decision which inevitably would delay a cease-fire agreement

if further talks are in fact required.

During the nine-day suspension in the talks between Nov. 25 and Dec. 4 Tho remained here. But at that time both sides had announced the duration of the suspension, as opposed to today's unilateral American announcement.

Lending weight to the pessimistic interpretation of the American announcements was confirmation from a well-informed European diplomatic source that few if any of the

substantive issues had been solved since Nov. 20.

Although he also confirmed that "a great deal of progress has been made on technical matters," the source said, "we are in the presence of a treaty full of brackets." In diplomatic drafts brackets are used to indicate alternative language which has yet to be accepted.

The source also suggested that Kissinger's departure today meant that the U.S. negotiator would have to return to

Paris to continue his talks with the North Vietnamese.

Earlier, the Hanoi newspaper Nhan Dan accused the United States of responsibility in delaying signature of the cease-fire agreement by asking for fundamental revisions in the original October text.

And in Peking, Premier Chou En Lai made a similar statement Wednesday promising to continue aid to North Vietnam "if the United States prolongs its war of aggression."