

N. Viets Walk Out of Talks To Protest Bombing Extension

By Jonathan C. Randal

Washington Post Foreign Service

PARIS—The North Vietnamese and Vietcong delegations walked out of the long stalemated formal Paris peace conference today to protest against the resumption of U.S. bombing north of the 20th parallel.

Despite the drama of the walkout, both Communist delegations made clear they had no immediate intention of breaking off contact with their American and South Vietnamese counterparts.

In fact, Nguyen Minh Vy for North Vietnam and Dinh Ba Thi for the Vietcong walked out of the hour-long meeting at the Hotel Majestic only after "demanding" that the United States and South Vietnam agree to hold the 172d session of the semi-public formal talks next Thursday.

Lending further support to the apparent Communist desire to avoid a complete break was the American assurance that U.S. and North Vietnamese experts were still scheduled to hold a technical meeting Saturday to work on details of the draft cease-fire agreement.

This tactical Communist moderation did not prevent North Vietnamese charges that throughout the November and December secret negotia-

tions the United States had threatened "two or three times daily" to break off the talks and resume bombing north of the 20th parallel.

U.S. Threats

Those threats began on Nov. 20, when Henry A. Kissinger and Hanoi's Le Duc Tho first resumed their efforts to complete the draft cease-fire accord worked out in October, according to North Vietnamese press spokesman Nguyen Thanh Le. They continued until the talks collapsed Dec. 13, he said, "when the American side issued threats against Tho and Xuan Thuy," the titular head of the Hanoi delegation here.

[U.S. officials have given another version of the breakdown of negotiations, saying that it only became apparent to them on Dec. 6 that the talks were in trouble and that North Vietnam was "stalling." In retrospect, these officials said, it appeared that Hanoi had decided even before the Dec. 4 negotiating session that there was no hope of a negotiation breakthrough. Aside from North Vietnamese behavior in the talks, the Americans noted that schoolchildren were evacuated from Hanoi starting Dec. 3.]

Le confirmed reports that the meetings on Nov. 24 and

25, just before the United States obtained a nine-day recess, were "very, very tense."

At the time, Tho was said to have raised his voice and pounded the table, most unusual behavior for the normally stolid Politburo member.

'Six Threats'

Le said that on one occasion, which he did not pinpoint, the United States "issued no less than six threats in a single day's negotiations."

Countering Kissinger's charges Saturday that North Vietnam had held up a final agreement, Le said: "The only conclusion to draw" was that "the more goodwill we showed, the more the Nixon administration adopted an unreasonable attitude. The more we proved our flexibility, the more the Nixon administration demanded fundamental modifications" of the original draft text and "the more the Nixon administration uses military pressure to [try to] subjugate us."

Le also referred to Kissinger's remark on Oct. 26 that "peace is at hand," saying: "Peace is no longer at hand, that bloody hand which is scattering a deluge of bombs over residential areas of Hanoi and Haiphong.

Nonetheless, somewhat sur-

prisingly in the face of the strong language used by the communist delegates at the conference, Le concluded with moderation that "peace is slow in coming and the negotiations have run into difficulties."

The walkout was the second staged by the Communists in the nearly four-year history of the formal talks. The Communists justified the first, on Feb. 24, as a protest against "escalation" of American bombing of North Vietnam. But it was widely believed that they were furious with the Chinese for talking about the war with President Nixon who was then in Peking.

Thereafter, the formal talks resumed on March, 16 only to be "indefinitely suspended" by the United States a week later. They resumed again, but were broken off from May 4 to July 13 during the height of the North Vietnamese offensive in South Vietnam.

Although the Communists "demanded" a session be held next Thursday, the conference regulations stipulate that any meeting must be accepted by all four delegations, or "the two sides," as the United States prefers to describe the participants.

Acting U.S. delegate Heyward Isham, Moreover, in the speech which the Communists did not stay around to hear, expressed the hope that today's session would be the last of the year. U.S. spokesman David Lambertson said that liaison officers early this morning had informed their communist counterparts that South Vietnam and the United States wanted to skip next week's session.

Isham told reporters upon emerging from the session, and the Communists had not waited for the allied response about the proposed date. He characterized their behavior as a "breach of all the established rules of procedure at these talks and not a mark of proper respect for the work that has to be done."

In fact, no serious business has been conducted in the formal sessions which the United States and South Vietnam have often condemned as essentially a propaganda forum for the Communists. Significantly, none of the four head delegates was present at the session.