

Brezhnev Sees Vietnam Drawing to a Conclusion

By HEDRICK SMITH

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MOSCOW, Jan. 11—Leonid I. Brezhnev, preparing to begin two days of talks on European security and other issues with President Pompidou of France, declared today that "the Vietnam affair is drawing little by little to its conclusion."

"From the moment that talks begin," he said, "it means the two sides are determined to settle the affair peacefully."

His comments were made at an impromptu news conference at the airport near Minsk, where he was awaiting Mr. Pompidou's arrival. They contrasted with unusually sharp anti-American comments in the Soviet press and on Soviet television during the last week.

When journalists asked about his prospective visit to the United States, Mr. Brezhnev said that he had accepted an invitation from President Nixon and "the intention of such a visit exists, but nothing more has been arranged precisely." Recent reports have indicated that a meeting was more likely in the fall than in the spring.

Recalls Hard-Line Speech

Although Mr. Brezhnev refrained from making any direct link between his visiting the United States and a Vietnam peace settlement, he recalled his speech Dec. 21 condemning the American bombing of North Vietnam and asserting that the future development of Soviet-American relations would largely depend on how the Vietnam war was handled.

On European security issues, which were later reported to have been the focus of his four hours of talks this afternoon with President Pompidou, Mr. Brezhnev put more emphasis on achieving progress at Helsinki in preparations for a European security conference than on forthcoming talks in Geneva about East-West force reductions in Central Europe. And he did not hold out much prospect for major cutbacks.

"Personally, I think and believe that armaments should be reduced a little, even if only a little," he told reporters.

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"The question of reduction of forces will be discussed concretely later, after the Euro-

pean security conference. That problem is a separate one, a delicate and complicated question."

The Soviet Union and France, he asserted, would like the talks on force reductions "to take place outside the context of blocs."

"That is how it will be," he said.

Then, after about 10 minutes of questions and answers, Mr. Brezhnev spotted the landing French Caravelle carrying President Pompidou, and declared, "Hey, there's the plane," ending the news conference.

A Joke Between Leaders

The two leaders, meeting for the third time since October, 1970, greeted each other warmly and walked off the airfield sharing some joke. They then drove 15 minutes to two low-cut, modern dachas in a pine and birch forest, at the village of Zaslavl, where they immediately began their talks.

For Mr. Pompidou, the demonstration of renewed Soviet-French consultation is expected to be a windfall in the closely fought French elections that will be held March 4, especially in view of public-opinion polls reporting a strong showing by the Communist-Socialist coalition against the Gaullists.

Many diplomats have read Moscow's willingness to play host to Mr. Pompidou at this time, coupled with its notably lukewarm public treatment of the leftist coalition, as an indication that for reasons of foreign policy, Moscow prefers dealing with a conservative, capitalist, but cooperative, Gaullist leadership in France is pressing to help a potentially more unpredictable leftist coalition gain power.

As the talks began, well-placed diplomatic sources said they saw little likelihood of major new Soviet-French agreements. The talks are primarily intended to let the two leaders have a general discussion of all current international issues—from European security to Vietnam, the Middle East and other topics—at a time of active Europe diplomacy, these sources said.