

NIXON, Kissinger Meet on Pact

'Progress' Reported in Viet Talks

By Jonathan C. Randal
Washington Post Foreign Service

PARIS, Jan. 13—Henry A. Kissinger flew home tonight to report to President Nixon on his talks with North Vietnam's Le Duc Tho amid signs that substantial progress has at last been made this week in the quest for a Vietnam cease-fire accord.

But sources close to the six-day round of private negotiations which concluded today provided no evidence that Kissinger and Tho were ready to initial, much less sign, a final agreement. Indeed, the sources all but ruled out final signature of the pact before Mr. Nixon's Jan. 20 inauguration.

Before flying to Homestead Air Force Base in Florida to report to Mr. Nixon at the Key Biscayne White House, Kissinger told newsmen that he and Tho had "just completed very extensive and very useful negotiations."

Only minutes after Kissinger left Orly Airport, the North Vietnamese delegation issued a short statement saying, for the first time since October, that the negotiations "had made progress."

Every since North Vietnam charged Oct. 26 that the United States was dragging its heels on signing a draft cease-fire accord, Hanoi officials have eschewed such optimism and publicly demanded that Washington sign the original document as drafted.

In his departing airport statement, Kissinger said President Nixon will decide

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"what next step should be taken to speed a peace of justice and conciliation."

The U.S. presidential adviser and the North Vietnamese Politburo member met for seven hours and 53 minutes today—their longest session of a week in which they spent more than 35 hours together.

Lending weight to the pre-

vailing cautious optimism was Kissinger's additional airport remark that Tho would be remaining in Paris and that they "will be in the closest contact through our usual channel."

Tho left for Hanoi shortly after the breakdown of the previous round of talks—just one month ago—and the United States a few days later launched the heaviest air attacks of the war on Hanoi and Haiphong.

Tho's continued presence here this time suggests North Vietnamese faith in American willingness to proceed to an accord without further recourse to such heavy bombing.

As was also the case at the end of last month's round of talks, both sides announced that technical discussions would continue on details of the projected agreement. The next session is scheduled for Monday under the leadership of North Vietnam's Deputy Foreign Minister Nguyen Co Thach and William H. Sullivan, U.S. assistant secretary of state for South Asian and Pacific affairs.

Another source of optimism today was the midday arrival of a U.S. embassy-hired photographer and cameraman at the American-owned villa at suburban St.-Nom-la-Breteche. Informed sources said that a photographer had been summoned for "an event of historic importance"—a kind of family portrait of the 11 American and 15 North Vietnamese negotiators.

Neither American nor North Vietnamese officials would comment on the photographic session, which raised false hopes of a last-minute breakthrough somehow allowing both sides to reach total agreement. It was learned later that the session had been planned for some days apparently because the complete negotiating teams might not gather again in the future.

Despite all these signs—and the beaming countenances of Tho and Kissinger as they arrived and left the session separately—informed LeHerspare sources stressed that the marathon talks this week had not cleared away all major obstacles.

There was no verifiable way of knowing which problems of substance remained, but the sources stressed that most of the progress was made in the technical talks.

Such suggestions raised the possibility that the United States and North Vietnam concentrated this week on military questions and might be willing to leave purely political problems to be solved later

by the various Vietnamese parties.

Although such a course

might allow complete U.S. disengagement from South Vietnam and the return of U.S. prisoners of war held by Hanoi, it could also be expected to run into opposition from South Vietnamese President Thieu.

But informed sources here noted that Saigon's criticism has become noticeably less outspoken. This relative self-confidence is explained by a certain resignation about the inevitability of a cease-fire, the enormous amount of U.S. war materiel delivered in November and the controversial December bombardment of North Vietnam which was interpreted as proof of continued U.S. interest in Saigon's fate.

As an example of an agreement reached this week on military questions, sources close to the Communist delegations said North Vietnam had agreed to an increase in

the size and scope of the international cease-fire supervisory commission in which Canada, Indonesia, Hungary and Poland are expected to participate.

Without providing details, the sources said North Vietnam had dropped its earlier demand that the commission play a minimum role.

At his Dec. 16 news conference in Washington, Kissinger had charged that North Vietnam would agree to no more than 250 observers while the United States wanted at least ten times as many.

If indeed a compromise was found this week on the matter of observers, sources here reasoned that the agreement must cover questions such as points of entry, areas in which Communist and South Vietnamese troops would be regrouped and location of the observers' camp.

Agreement of this kind

could all but obviate the need for airtight wording on such a contentious problem of substance as the future nature of the Demilitarized Zone.

Similarly, sources close to the Communists suggested that the week's discussions may have worked out a compromise on the nature of the controversial National Council of reconciliation and Concord. The October draft accord stipulated that Vietcong, Saigon and neutralist representatives should sit on this body, but said nothing specifically about Communist demands that it should operate all the way down to hamlet level. A possible compromise, the sources suggested, would be to limit the council to province or district level.

Whatever the authenticity of such reports, observers suggested that both sides had good reasons at this point for not making the technical compromises which diplomats are convinced could easily be worked out.

Perhaps understandably, after so much distrust borne not just of 3½ years of secret talks but also of the December bombing, both sides certainly ensured that certain key problems remained on the table. Were all the problems solved now, both sides would be all but forced to initial an agreement.

American officials are said to understand that North Vietnam could hardly be expected to give President Nixon such an inauguration present in the light of the December bombing of the Hanoi-Haiphong heartland. And even for the United States, completing the agreement now could appear to be making unnecessary concessions just to meet a Jan. 20 deadline.

Bunker Briefs Thieu On Paris Peace Talks

Reuter

SAIGON, Jan. 13 — U.S. Ambassador Ellsworth Bunker reviewed the latest Paris peace talks at a brief meeting today with South Vietnam's President Thieu.

They met for 20 minutes, an embassy spokesman said. He gave no details of their discussions.