

# Recess of Talks In Paris Viewed As Hopeful Sign

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PARIS, Jan. 18—Both allied and Communist delegations agreed today to suspend indefinitely the deadlocked four-year-old Vietnam peace talks in yet another indication pointing to rapid conclusion of a ceasefire agreement.

Although purposely left unexplained by all four delegations, the suspension suggested that the conference might meet again only after a cease-fire agreement was ready for final signature, or even signed.

Totally lacking at the 174th session of the semi-public session was the tension and bad feeling which invariably surrounded previous suspensions and often reflected real or impending battlefield violence.

Continuing the formal talks made like sense with presidential adviser Henry A. Kissinger scheduled to resume secret negotiations here Tuesday with Hanoi's Le Duc Tho "for the purpose of completing the text of an agreement." The formal conference has served little other purpose than providing a propaganda forum for the battlefield adversaries since the first meeting on Jan. 26, 1969.

## Cease-fire Role

American officials here have made no secret in recent months that they hope the formal conference might take over a substantive role of "implementing responsibilities," bureaucratic jargon meaning overseeing the execution of a cease-fire accord.

Acting U.S. delegation chief Heyward Isham indeed added to this impression of an impending change of status for the conference when he told newsmen after the session, "We will bid you farewell for the moment."

There was more than just a hint that the United States, North Vietnam, the Vietcong and South Vietnam had agreed beforehand to the suspension. Technically, acting North Vietnamese chief delegate Nguyen Minh Vy inside the meeting suggested next Thursday or any other date for the next session. The United States and South Viet-

nam took the second option.

Under the rules governing the conference, all four delegations must agree on a new meeting date and the details are worked out by their respective liaison officers.

## 'Prospects of Peace'

In the conference itself, a new atmosphere of relative goodwill was evident. Acting South Vietnamese chief delegate Nguyen Xuan Phong went so far as to comment: "We have reached a point in the negotiations where we can already see the prospects of peace."

The North Vietnamese and Vietcong delegates preached "vigilance" in view of the American "about-face" refusal to sign the original October draft accord and the December bombing of Hanoi and Haiphong.

"Prudence is imperative for you, for us and for world public opinion," Hanoi press spokesman Nguyen Thanh Le told reporters. Alluding to Kissinger's Oct. 26 phrase that "peace is at hand," Le said: "We can only be sure when peace is in the palm of the hand."

Meanwhile, American and North Vietnamese experts met again to hammer out the remaining details of a cease-fire accord, and informed sources said that their most immediate concern involved purely military questions.

## Mutual Compromises

Sources close to the negotiations provided a number of insights into the mutual compromises behind last weekend's breakthrough in the long quest for a cease-fire.

South Vietnam abandoned its formal efforts to incorporate into the text withdrawal of North Vietnamese troops in the South and to obtain a "hermetically" sealed Demilitarized Zone between the two Vietnams, the source said.

In return, the North Viet-

namese were said to have eased their insistence that the number of foreign troops on the international cease-fire supervisory commission be severely limited and that their movements be restricted.

North Vietnam also made a major concession concerning the fate of the thousands of political detainees held by South Vietnamese authorities. The October draft agreement did not link their release and that of the American prisoners of war held by North Vietnam. But, privately, the United States, the sources insisted, had promised to see that South Vietnam releases the political detainees within 90 days of a cease-fire's signature.

## Fate of Prisoners

Now, the sources added, the fate of these political prisoners will be left up to the negotiations after the cease-fire between Saigon and the Vietcong's Provisional Revolutionary Government.

The sources also disclosed that North Vietnam had bowed to American, and especially Saigon, objections to the definition of the controversial National Council of Reconciliation to be made up of Vietcong, Saigon and neutralist representatives.

The objectionable wording in Vietnamese — variously translated as "power structure" in French and "administrative structure" in English — has been amended or simply dropped. But the sources said that the negotiations between the rival South Vietnamese governments would have to decide whether the council should operate only nationally, as Saigon wants, or all the way down to villages and hamlets as the Communists want.

Indeed, the sources raised the possibility that it might take weeks and even months before the council would operate at all, since there is no way of determining whether the question would be at the top or the bottom of the agenda of the future negotiations among South Vietnamese.

By the same token, the sources add, elections destined to provide the country with permanent institutions may be greatly delayed. Deciding on the kind and timing of elections is one of the major tasks assigned the council and the doubt about a timetable for establishing the supervisory body puts the voting it is to organize that much further off, the sources reasoned.