

VC Insist On Right To Sign

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PARIS, Jan. 21—Mrs. Nguyen Thi Binh, head of the Vietcong peace talks delegation, returned here tonight and insisted that her Provisional Revolutionary Government sign a cease-fire agreement on the same footing as the Saigon government.

Although not in itself new, her insistence on equal status for all four parties to the formal peace talks underlined what may be one of the final problems awaiting the Tuesday meeting between U.S. negotiator Henry Kissinger and Hanoi's Le Duc Tho.

Kissinger is due to arrive Monday night to resume what both the United States and North Vietnam appear to hope will be the last of the long series of talks which for the past four years have failed to end American involvement in Vietnam.

Smiling and looking plumper after a six-week absence from Paris, Mrs. Binh insisted that it was only "logical" that any cease-fire must be signed by all parties to the now suspended formal peace talks.

"Any attempt by the United States to force the South Vietnamese population to accept the Saigon administration," she told newsmen upon arriving from Hanoi via Peking and Moscow, "or to deny the existence of the PRG will be rejected and defeated by the South Vietnamese people."

Her insistence on equal status seemed directly addressed to South Vietnamese Foreign Minister Tran Van Lam, who is scheduled to arrive here from Saigon Monday morning.

Lam last week told a French radio correspondent in Saigon that Saigon would refuse to sign any document which mentioned the PRG by name or granted it equal status with the South Vietnamese government.

All kinds of compromises have been mentioned as a way around the seeming impasse separating the rival regimes, and there have been suggestions that a solution has already been found.

One such compromise would limit mention in the text itself to the National Liberation Front, the forerunner of the PRG, whose existence was announced in June 1969. But the

Vietcong would sign the document as the PRG.

In an effort to save face for Saigon, which has refused to recognize the legitimacy of the PRG, the United States and Saigon would sign the cease-fire first, followed by North Vietnam and the PRG.

Such a procedure would be in keeping with American claims that "two sides" rather than four delegations have taken part in the formal-peace talks.

Mrs. Binh, who was wearing a warm overcoat over her blue *aodai*, reiterated Vietcong promises that despite harsh words for the "dictatorial and war-loving" Saigon regime, her delegation was willing to commence negotiations with it

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as soon as the cease-fire was signed.

Such discussions "of internal problems" should take place, she said, on a basis of "mutual respect and non-elimination" of all parties involved, a suggestion that the Vietcong still hopes that neutralists will participate in these purely South Vietnamese negotiations.

She brushed aside a question about the site of those conversations. The Saigon government would like to have them held in South Vietnam, possibly in the old imperial capital of Hue, whereas the Communists are said to favor Paris.

Although she spoke of the necessity of "guaranteeing democratic freedoms, particularly free and democratic general elections, to allow the South Vietnamese population to determine its own future without any outside interference," Mrs. Binh turned aside detailed questions on how this issue would be resolved.

She reiterated demands that the United States follow up its cessation of bombing North Vietnam by suspending air operations against Vietcong areas in South Vietnam. She also demanded the end of Saigon's "campaign of repression, terror and systematic extermination of political prisoners."

The fate of political prisoners and the type and timing of elections are among the principal problems which observers are convinced have been sidestepped by Kissinger and Tho and will have to be settled in direct negotiations between the rival South Vietnamese regimes.

Despite the relative optimism among the Vietnamese who were present for Mrs. Binh's arrival, "vigilance" remained the order of the day. Xuan Thuy, titular head of the



Associated Press

South Vietnamese Foreign Minister Tran Van Lam bids farewell to U.S. Ambassador Ellsworth Bunker before leaving Saigon for Paris to participate in peace talks.

North Vietnamese delegation, said, "We must wait and see what Dr. Kissinger brings back with him," when questioned about the chances of initialing, and perhaps even signing, the cease-fire agreement this week.

Both he and other Communist officials appeared anxious to convey the message that a quick outcome of the peace negotiations should be noticeable by the end of the first Kissinger-Tho meeting Tuesday.

Le Duc Tho was not present at the airport to greet Mrs. Binh, and a Hanoi spokesman reported he was "slightly indisposed and tired," but would meet Kissinger Tuesday.

Another usual participant on previous occasions, Soviet Ambassador Pyotr Abrassimov, was missing, although his Chinese colleague, Huang Chenh, was present.