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Saigon Mood: 'Too Many False Hopes'

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SAIGON, South Vietnam,

Jan. 22—In a gloomy broadcast this evening, the Saigon radio said that the cease-fire agreement believed to be near completion "will not likely bring us a genuine and lasting peace."

The radio, which is operated by the Government, appeared to have captured the mood that has overtaken much of Saigon in recent days as the feeling grows that some form of cease-fire is inevitable despite the protests of President Nguyen Van Thieu.

"The peace we expect is likely drawing nearer than ever," the radio said. "But whether we can maintain and guarantee it or not is another problem."

At one point the radio declared: "The cessation of the shooting does not mean peace." Such doubts and fears are on the lips of men and women throughout the city these days.

'I Don't Like Thieu, but...'

At an elegant dinner party, a Vietnamese banker complains: "The cease-fire is fine for you Americans. You get out of here and get on with your problems at home. But we are stuck with trying to work it out with the Communists. It will not be a good time for us. I don't like Thieu,

but what else can I do but stand with him in this situation?"

Near the steamy, noisy central marketplace, a taxi driver says: "We cannot live with them. Those on the other side are different. The big men say there will be peace, but I can tell you there will be more killing. A family whose son fought with the Government and was killed by the other side will not forget. And they will look for revenge."

A high-ranking officer who has been working on plans to maintain military security in Saigon says that he is confident that the climactic news that a cease-fire agreement has been signed will be received quietly in the capital of South Vietnam. The reason, he says, is that "the people won't know to what degree the enemy will observe the cease-fire."

A businessman, who also expects little excitement here when the guns are silent, says: "It will take a while for the idea to sink in. We have been fooled too many times. There have been too many false hopes. It is not just a fear of the Communists: They might not be so bad. It is just that no one will know what to expect so everyone will just wait and see."

South Vietnamese have complained repeatedly about President Thieu's delay

ing that he should sign an agreement and bring the war to an end. They want peace desperately. But they almost invariably come around to agreeing that his demand that North Vietnamese troops withdraw from the South is vital for a true peace.

By now, it is apparent that the United States does not intend to require the North to declare formally that it will call back its soldiers. A good many South Vietnamese are beyond taking the Communists at their word. In its commentary this evening, the Saigon radio was unusually moderate in tone. On the issue of North Vietnamese troops in the South, it said: "It is uncertain that our existence, life and property will be guaranteed, because our enemy is still there, under one form or another, ready to agitate our peaceful life."

Later the radio argued that the agreement "brings nothing guaranteeing firmly that the Communists will seriously respect and implement it."

"In the past as in the present," the broadcast went on, "we have had numerous experiences with the Communists; we have known the Communists more than anyone else," and the Communists' previous acts of betrayal "are still weighing on us."