

Caution in Hanoi

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HANOI, Jan. 22—North Vietnam is officially maintaining a "very careful" attitude toward the "conclusive" peace talks which open Tuesday in Paris but high sources here say they see no obstacle to agreement.

In a discussion with this reporter on the eve of the new talks between U.S. presidential adviser Henry A. Kissinger and North Vietnam Politburo member Le Duc Tho, Foreign Ministry spokesman Ngo Dien said: "We are very realistic people so we stick to the facts.

"We have been fighting for a long time—for centuries—and with Mr. Nixon, we want to be more careful, especially since the December events (the massive 12-day bombing of the Hanoi-Haiphong region). But we are doing everything possible to facilitate some peaceful conclusion of all this."

The caution to which Dien referred extends in all directions. For example, only a very abbreviated version of a strong editorial which appeared in the main official

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newspaper Nhan Dan was broadcast in English today by Hanoi Radio. This editorial, titled "Demand of Whole Mankind: Peace Now," was quite moderate in comparison to the bitter denunciations of "criminal Nixon" during and after the December bombing raids.

Today's editorial referred to quote "President Nixon." The broadcast version said "protest waves have rolled

across the five continents" opposing "the war of aggression in Vietnam" and insisting that the United States "sign the peace treaty."

These protests, Nhan Dan said, reached a "climax last Saturday when Nixon was inaugurated as President for another term."

Not included in the version broadcast by Hanoi Radio, however, was the much stronger language about continuing American policy which Nhan Dan's editorial-

ists used in assessing the implications of the President's inaugural address.

This suggested that North Vietnam does not want anything to register in Washington that might be viewed as provocative to jar the present delicate attempt to conclude a cease-fire accord.

At the same time, North Vietnam wants to maintain the caution and vigilance of its own people for what comes after a cease-fire. This

clouded outlook was stressed by Premier Pham Van Dong to an Australian delegation here yesterday. Members of the group said afterward.

The premier said that what is of key importance is how the provisions of the cease-fire will be applied, and his listeners construed what he said as anticipation that the cease-fire accord will be reached.

Nhan Dan, evidently to overcome any idea among the Vietnamese people that a cease-fire agreement will justify relaxation or assure peace, told them today that President Nixon has not yet spoken concretely about the return of peace to Vietnam.

Instead, the editorial said, according to an unofficial translation, that the President spoke "in an empty way" and with quote "evasive promises" about a so-called generation "of peace" and an "era of negotiation."

Mr. Nixon's remarks, Nhan Dan continued, show that Nixon's "plot" to pursue the "doctrine which bears his name" and which has "already failed" reflects "the peril of an American policy of aggression and intervention in other countries."

It said "the tortuousness and embarrassment which appear in the speech reveal the difficulties that the American ruling circles meet, both in the United States and abroad." This editorial was reported intact by many foreign newsmen here. But when this sole American reporter asked the Foreign Ministry spokesman if his government had any reaction to the President's speech, the answer was "no comment."

Foreign and domestic specialists on Indochina here do see the prospective initialing and signing of a cease-fire accord and the initiation of a cease-fire as a

course that can be mined with potential time bombs, no matter how successful the Kissinger-Tho talks may be.

There presently is intensive combat under way in South Vietnam in the scramble for position in advance of a cease-fire, and the application of a cease-fire accord, as Premier Pham Van Dong said, is indeed seen generally as a prickly problem.

In addition to the resolution of the Vietnam cease-fire, there is the Laotian conflict to be unscrambled, but that is thought to be relatively easy compared to the Cambodian problem. And in Vietnam alone, one of the most optimistic Western diplomats here said:

It's going to be accusations and counter-accusations all around" between the Communist forces in South Vietnam and the government of South Vietnamese, President Nguyen Van Thieu.

The diplomat noted "there are masses of opportunities to violate the cease-fire on both sides." Not surprisingly, therefore, no responsible source in this capital is projecting anything but continuing caution about the road ahead.