

Kissinger Arrives Amid Signs of Hope

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Signal in Paris
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PARIS, Jan. 22—Henry A. Kissinger arrived here tonight and was met by yet another major—if indirect—signal that the secret talks he is due to resume Tuesday with Hanoi's Le Duc Tho may lead to quick cease-fire agreement.

The signal took the form of a surprise announcement by the North Vietnamese delegation that the Tuesday talks would take place at the Hotel Majestic, site of the formal peace talks which were indefinitely suspended last Thursday.

Although Kissinger made no statement upon arriving from Washington, the North Vietnamese announcement was widely interpreted as a sign of gathering mutual goodwill.

[In Washington, Secretary of Defense Melvin R. Laird hinted that the agreement might be initiated as early as Wednesday.]

Despite the propaganda and the substantive stalemate associated with the weekly meetings at the Hotel Majestic, the formal peace talks constitute a ma-

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major source of prestige for the Vietcong's Provisional Revolutionary Government.

The opening meeting at the Hotel Majestic four years ago, on Jan. 26, 1969, marked the first time that the Vietcong had received formal acknowledgement from the United States and the South Vietnamese government.

The importance the Communists attach to the Hotel Majestic forum has been underlined every time the United States and South Vi-

etnam have unilaterally suspended the weekly talks.

On such occasions the Communists have insisted that the United States first come back to the Hotel Majestic negotiating table as their price for resuming the secret talks which along have allowed both sides to narrow their differences.

Last Thursday none of the four delegations to the formal talks was willing to explain the joint decision to suspend the peace conference indefinitely, but it was generally taken as a good sign.

That Kissinger and Tho agreed to resume their nego-

tiations at the Hotel Majestic indicated that both sides were willing to conclude their long search for a cease-fire in a forum where all four delegations regularly meet.

More than technicalities and prestige may well be involved, observers suggested. One of the most ticklish points concerns the formal signing of the cease-fire accord by the respective foreign ministers once Kissinger and Tho have agreed on a final text and perhaps even initialed it.

The usefulness of the Hotel Majestic forum is that

it could allow both sides a way around signing difficulties.

Technically, the Hotel Majestic meetings involve "two sides" rather than four delegations. This distinction was designed originally to get around the Communists' refusal to recognize the legitimacy of the Saigon government and the allied refusal to recognize the Vietcong.

At this point, however, that distinction may also allow the United States and Saigon to sign the cease-fire document first — and thus save face for President Nguyen Van Thieu — with

North Vietnam and the Vietcong signing next in a ceremony which thus could be construed as providing formal recognition for the Vietcong's Provisional Revolutionary Government.

Meanwhile, American and North Vietnamese technical experts worked late into the night on final details of protocols and annexes which are to be added to the basic cease-fire agreement.

It was not known whether the technicians would meet again Tuesday. If they do not, this would be interpreted as an indication that

they have finally finished the hundreds of hours of drafting since they resumed their work Jan. 2.

Kissinger drove straight from Orly airport to a meeting with South Vietnamese Foreign Minister Tran Van Lam, who arrived from Saigon at noon today. Another Lam-Kissinger conversation was planned before the American presidential envoy is scheduled to meet Tho at 9:30 Tuesday morning.

These other developments were reported in Washington:

Secretary of Defense Mel-

vin R. Laird hinted that the agreement might be initialed as early as Wednesday.

Asked where and when American prisoners of war would be released, Laird replied that no more would be said until "after Wednesday." Later, an aide said that Laird's reference to Wednesday "was no accident."

Some Pentagon officials saw signs of a possible settlement by Wednesday when the Senate decided to postpone until Thursday the confirmation of Elliott Richardson as the next defense secretary.

At the White House, presidential press secretary Ronald L. Ziegler turned away all inquiries about reports that Kissinger had been authorized to initial a cease-fire agreement.

He also refused to comment on a statement by South Vietnamese Foreign Minister Tran Van Lam that Vice President Spiro T. Agnew would be in Saigon Sunday.

Ziegler said the President and Kissinger had met for an hour in the President's Executive Office Building hideaway yesterday morning before Kissinger flew out of Andrews Air Force Base for Paris.