

Drama Behind Scenes: A Step-by-Step Primer for Peace

By GAYLORD SHAW

WASHINGTON (A.P.) — Nearly two weeks ago Henry Kissinger flashed word across the Atlantic to President Nixon that major ingredients of a Vietnam peace agreement had been reached.

The negotiator's cable, it now appears, set in motion a carefully orchestrated series of events that offer a textbook lesson in how to package peace.

Step by step, announcement by announcement, Nixon and his key White House aides—several of them former advertising-agency executives—built toward the dramatic conclusion.

That came Tuesday night when Nixon, sitting behind his Oval Office desk, watched for the camera's red light to blink on and told the nation:

"Good evening. I have asked for this radio and television time tonight for the purpose of announcing that we today have concluded an agreement to end the war and bring peace with honor in Vietnam and in Southeast Asia."

**PERSISTENT REPORTS** — never confirmed publicly by knowledgeable officials — say that Kissinger and Hanoi's Le Duc Tho rapidly flattened remaining barriers after resuming their Paris talks on Monday, Jan. 8.

On Thursday, Jan. 11, according to these reports, Kissinger believed the agreement was basically wrapped up. In fact, according to some accounts, he was ready to initial it then and there.

But Nixon wanted Kissinger to come back to the United States for consultations. And he wanted to touch base with South Vietnamese President Nguyen Van Thieu, whose balkiness earlier had helped torpedo soaring peace hopes—an atmosphere of optimism fed by Kissinger's "peace is at hand" statement Oct. 26.

The first hint of the Nixon plan came in an off-hand comment by a White House official on Friday, Jan. 12. "You're going to be plenty busy down there," the official told a newsman after Press Secretary Ronald L. Ziegler announced that Nixon would be going to his Key Biscayne, Fla., home that day.

**THE TRIP** came on short notice — correspondents had hardly four hours to pack and get to the airport—but it seemed routine enough: The President, said Ziegler, would be spending two or three days in Florida working on his inaugural address.

Before dawn the next morning, however, reporters were awakened in their Miami hotel rooms by telephone calls from Ziegler. Kissinger was coming immediately to Key Biscayne, Ziegler announced, to confer with Nixon after six days of "serious negotiations" with Tho.

The predawn calls marked the first time any U.S. official had publicly confirmed that the renewed talks met Nixon's demand that the North Vietnamese bargain seriously.

The next announcement came the following day, Sunday, Jan. 14. It was made by Ziegler after Nixon, Kissinger and Gen. Alexander M. Haig Jr. strolled briefly in the morning sunshine outside the President's office so cameramen could photograph them.

**HAIG WOULD** leave that evening, Ziegler said, to consult with Thieu and other Asian leaders.

The suspense elevated: Had progress been made in Paris? Was peace at hand?

The next White House announcement the next day—Monday, Jan. 15—provided a partial answer. "Because of progress in the negotiations," Ziegler said, Nixon had ordered a halt to all bombing, shelling and mining of North Vietnam.

The package of rapid-fire announcements created the impression—without optimistic statements putting the White House out on the limb again—that a settlement was near.

If that was the goal, it was successful. For the next two days, even as the White House sealed a lid on Vietnam comment, newspapers and broadcasters reported that peace was approaching.

**THAT UPBEAT** trend accelerated on Thursday when Ziegler, standing behind micro-

phones in the one-time display Florida White House press room, announced that Kissinger would return to Paris the following Tuesday for the purpose of "completing the text of an agreement."

He wouldn't elaborate and carefully avoided any display of optimism. But, although unspoken, the message was clear: Peace was, indeed, at hand.

Nixon's cryptic references to Vietnam in his Saturday inaugural address—the longest and most costly war in American history is drawing to a close, he said—offered no specifics. But, at the same time, it did nothing to deflate the peace-is-at-hand mood.

Kissinger flew to Paris on Monday to complete "the text of an agreement." But, it now appears, the text already had been completed on a lower

level by teams of technical experts.

**NIXON'S ADVISER** and Tho spent less than four hours going over the lengthy documents before both affixed their initials and Kissinger headed home.

By the time he landed at Andrews Air Force Base, technicians were installing broadcast equipment in Nixon's Oval Office. The President's packaging of peace would soon be complete.