

# Negotiator Behind Truce Scenes

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William Healy Sullivan

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WASHINGTON, Jan. 28— During the October news conference in which he proclaimed that "peace is at hand," Henry A. Kissinger noted that none of the issues involved in the negotiations were simple.

But one protocol, covering plans for international supervision of the cease-fire, he explained, is so complex that "as far as I can tell, only my colleague, Ambassador Sullivan, understands completely." It was a rare public compliment from Mr. Kissinger, but eminently deserved, according to those who know and work with its recipient, a genial Irishman named William Healy Sullivan.

That brief moment of recognition was one of the few times in the last four years that Mr. Sullivan, the State Department's top expert on Southeast Asia, has felt the public spotlight.

As ambassador to Laos during the Johnson Administration, Mr. Sullivan was often in the news, since he had the delicate and important job of participating in informal discussions with the North Vietnamese mission in Vientiane on selecting a site for what were then termed "preconversations" on ending the war.

#### Returned to Washington

In April of 1969, Mr. Sullivan returned to Washington as Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific affairs.

In that position, which carried special responsibilities for Vietnam, Mr. Sullivan has continued to work behind the scenes with his characteristic tirelessness, handling the State Department's side of the Paris negotiations.

When the talks reached an apparent breakthrough in October, Mr. Sullivan accompanied Mr. Kissinger, President Nixon's adviser on national security, to Paris, serving as the liaison between the technical-level talks, where the protocol, or annex, on supervision was hammered out, and the discussions between Mr. Kissinger and Le Duc Tho, North Vietnam's negotiator.

Mr. Sullivan, who is described by his wife as a "hard worker who likes other people who work hard, too," has been out of touch with the outside world since then.

He returned to Washington after peace failed to materialize in December, but was the first high-ranking Ameri-



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**A rapidly moving career marked by devotion to detail** (Mr. Sullivan, left, at cease-fire signing with William J. Porter, new Deputy Under Secretary of State, and William P. Rogers, right, State Department chief.)

can official to fly back to Paris in January when the talks resumed after the bombing of the northern part of North Vietnam. As befits a man whose rapidly advancing career has been marked by an unusual devotion to detail, Mr. Sullivan remained behind in Paris this weekend after the agreement was signed to make certain a list of prisoners of war was received from the Communists.

#### 'He Doesn't Tell Us'

His 16-year-old daughter, Margaret, who answered the telephone at the Sullivans' suburban Maryland home yesterday, said she did not know when her father would be coming home, or even where he and Mrs. Sullivan were staying. "He doesn't tell us anything," she said. Mr. Sullivan was graduated in 1943 from Brown University, where he majored in political science and was elected to Phi Beta Kappa, the honorary academic fraternity. While an undergraduate, he expressed a desire to become a foreign correspondent.

After being asked by a professor why he didn't choose to "do something responsible," he entered the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University in 1946, after three years of wartime service as a naval officer.

There he met and, after their graduation, married, a fellow student, Mary Elizabeth Johnson. He immediately joined the Foreign Service and, although he had specialized in Latin American studies at Tufts, was sent

directly to Bangkok.

Assignments in Calcutta, Tokyo, Rome and The Hague came later and contributed to Mr. Sullivan's fluency in a number of languages, including French, which has lately been most useful in his dealings with the Vietnamese. His English still bears the flinty accent of Rhode Island, where he was born Oct. 12, 1922, the son of Dr. Joseph W. Sullivan, a Cranston dentist.

In 1961 Mr. Sullivan, then a middle-rank Class 3 Foreign Service officer, served as one of 126 American delegates to the Geneva conference on Laos.

The head of the delegation, W. Averell Harriman, was impressed by Mr. Sullivan's "Irish ability to see the other fellow's point of view" and proposed after a short time that he be elevated over several higher-ranking members to become deputy head of the delegation.

Mr. Harriman recalled a protest by the State Department that so junior an official "would not be recognized as my deputy" by the others. But Mr. Harriman said he "told them that any Class 1 or Class 2 officer who chose not to report to him could go home."

An ardent amateur athlete when time permits, Mr. Sullivan was able to indulge his boyhood passion for ice skating in Geneva and, later, his equal love of swimming in the warm climate of Vientiane.

The Sullivans' two sons, John, 21, and Mark, 19, are both away at college and their 24-year-old daughter, Anne, is living in New York City.