

Saigon and Vietcong Aides Hold First Paris Meeting

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PARIS, Feb. 5 — Delegates from the Saigon Government and the Vietcong met alone together here today for the first time. Their purpose was to prepare for the South Vietnamese political negotiations provided in the cease-fire agreements. The negotiations are to test whether the hostile sides can eventually reach a non-violent settlement to their generation-long dispute.

Both sides made a point of calling their first session "preliminary." They said that they had agreed "on a certain number of points" and would meet again on Wednesday at the Hotel Majestic, where the cease-fire pact was signed on Jan. 27.

They also agreed not to disclose any details on their talks.

The two sides were represented by deputy delegation leaders, Nguyen Phuoc Thiep for the Saigon Government and Dinh Ba Thi for the Vietcong's Provisional Revolutionary Government.

According to official Saigon sources, their talks reflected a basic change in attitudes.

The South Vietnamese Government's strategy has changed, according to these sources, in favor of an effort to press for a political settlement as rapidly as possible.

That meant, the sources said at a South Vietnamese reception here tonight, that the interminable quibbles that marked the four years of negotiations before the cease-fire agreement should now be set aside and attention should be paid to settling substantive issues.

Officials of the Provisional Revolutionary Government could not be reached for comment on the Saigon strategy, and, in fact, they may not be aware yet of an important change, since only procedural issues have come up so far.

However, the Vietcong delegate, Mr. Thi, said after today's meeting that "we have agreed on a certain number of points."

"There are still some problems which we have to settle," he added.

Mr. Thi said that his side wanted to resolve political problems "as quickly as possible in a spirit of reconciliation, of national concord, equality and mutual respect." This is a standard formula for the Vietcong, however, and does not necessarily reflect anything new.

Until the cease-fire on Jan. 27, and for some days afterward, Saigon's position was to continue holding out for points of protocol symbolizing the dispute with the Communists.

Today's meeting was to prepare the procedural and etiquette framework for the basic political negotiations among South Vietnamese leading to a settlement. The Saigon sources said the session had gone "very well, very cordially."

Mr. Thiep, the Saigon Government representative, said that the "consultations" now under preparation would be held "in Saigon at a higher level," once the procedure and "modalities" had been worked out here.

The actual negotiations will take place in Saigon, although there still appeared to be some minor difference of opinion whether the initial formal session should be held in France or Vietnam.

The Saigon sources indicated

that the preliminary talks might be completed when the two sides meet Wednesday, or in one or two additional meetings here.

[Reuters reported that Pham Dang Lam, the chief South Vietnamese negotiator at the peace conference, was asked here whether Mrs. Nguyen Thi Binh, the Foreign Minister of the Provisional Revolutionary Government, would go to Saigon for the talks, and that Mr. Lam replied, "Mrs. Binh is welcome in Saigon."]

The most pressing point on the timetable established in the cease-fire accord is an exchange of lists of civilian prisoners held by each side, due next Saturday.

The wariness with which both sides approached today's encounter was evident. Saigon says that its desire now is to proceed as soon as possible to establishment of the National Council of Reconciliation and National Concord provided in the cease-fire pact as the body that will put into effect the clauses for moving from a military to a political solution and with arranging and supervising general elections in South Vietnam.

According to a South Vietnamese spokesman, Mr. Thiep expressed "the sincere desire of our Government to open consultations with the other side as soon as possible to form the Council of Reconciliation and National Concord."