

Hanoi Seems to Cast Doubt On a Kissinger-Tho Parley

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By BERNARD GWERTZMAN APR 28 1973

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WASHINGTON, April 27 — North Vietnam appeared to raise doubts today that its chief negotiator, Le Duc Tho, would meet in Paris with Henry A. Kissinger in mid-May, as announced two days ago by the White House. But a senior White House official insisted that "we have a written commitment" from Hanoi and a "firm date" for the meeting.

The official said that North Vietnam had agreed that Mr. Kissinger and Mr. Tho would meet after the completion of preliminary talks, which began this morning in Paris between William H. Sullivan, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for East Asia and Pacific Affairs, and Nguyen Co Thach, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs.

Mr. Sullivan and Mr. Thach met for five and a half hours at a French Communist villa in suburban Gif-sur-Yvette, where talks were held many times during the intensive negotiations last fall and winter leading up to the cease-fire agreement, which went into effect three months ago today.

Talked About Accord

Following the day's session Mr. Sullivan made no comment, but Mr. Thach said, "We talked about all clauses of the Paris agreement."

It was announced that they would meet again on Sunday. The senior White House official said it was expected that Mr. Sullivan and Mr. Thach would have a third meeting and that Mr. Sullivan would return to Washington Tuesday to report to President Nixon and Mr. Kissinger.

During the session Mr. Sullivan, Mr. Thach and their aides took two 15-minute breaks for walks in the garden of the villa, the first time in the series of talks there that they have had warm, pleasant weather.

The apparent doubts about the Kissinger-Tho meeting, which the White House has said will seek ways of achieving "strict implementation" of the cease-fire, resulted from a statement by the North Vietnamese Embassy in Paris today as well as from confusion over the way the White House announcement was made Wednesday.

Joint Announcement Recalled

On Wednesday both the White House and the Hanoi Government announced the Sullivan-Thach talks "to prepare a review of the implementation of the Paris agreement and of appropriate measures to bring about the strict implementation of the agreement."

The senior White House official said that while the Kissinger-Tho meeting was already scheduled, Hanoi had not wanted to disclose it. But he added: "We felt that if you said Sullivan and Thach were meeting 'to prepare a review,' we were under some obligation to say for whom."

Therefore, the official said, Ronald L. Ziegler, the White House press secretary, was authorized to provide in answer

to questions, the additional information that Mr. Kissinger and Mr. Tho would meet in mid-May.

The North Vietnamese Embassy said today:

"According to Western news agency dispatches, the White House has announced that there would be a meeting between special counselor Le Duc Tho and Dr. Kissinger around mid-May 1973. This is a report made unilaterally by the United States. The Embassy of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam does not yet have any information on the subject of this meeting."

Mr. Thach was quoted as having told newsmen that "there is no question yet of a Kissinger-Le Duc Tho meeting."

The White House official said that it was possible that North Vietnam wanted to haggle over whether to have the meeting. But he said that "the fact is that we have documents to prove that they agreed to the time and place" for the session.

He noted that the Paris embassy, while saying it had no information on the session, did not deny there would be a meeting. "They may be angry because we 'scooped' them," he said.

Chances Are Assessed

The official said that there was about a "50-50 chance" the latest talks would lead to more compliance with the cease-fire, but he said it was too soon to make any firm estimates.

The North Vietnamese have charged the United States with supporting cease-fire violations by the Saigon Government; with failing to carry out commitments to sweep North Vietnamese waters of mines, and with resuming reconnaissance flights over North Vietnam.

Hanoi has also rebuked the United States for continuing to give strong political, military and economic backing to the Government of President Nguyen Van Thieu in South Vietnam.

The United States, while acknowledging the suspension of minesweeping and the renewal of reconnaissance flights, has said that these breaches are less serious than those carried out by the North Vietnamese.

Washington is seeking Hanoi's commitment to end the fighting in Cambodia and assurances that it will stop clandestine infiltration of men and supplies from North Vietnam into the South.

2 Germans Died in Escape

HELMSTEDT, West Germany, April 27 (Reuters)—East Ger-



Associated Press

A civilian prisoner held by South Vietnam waiting yesterday at Bien Hoa Air Base for flight to Loc Ninh release point. Scheduled release of civilians was postponed.

3 Months After the Truce, No Letup in the Charges

SAIGON, South Vietnam, April 27 (Reuters)—The South Vietnamese Government and the Vietcong blamed each other today for 12,000 violations of the cease-fire in which more than 25,000 soldiers and civilians are reported to have been killed since Jan. 28.

Both sides issued statements reviewing the first three months of the truce and calling for a complete cessation of hostilities.

The South Vietnamese demanded that North Vietnam withdraw all its troops and stop infiltrating others, release all South Vietnamese soldiers and civilians, and cooperate in stopping the fighting.

The Vietcong statement said South Vietnam, at the prompting of the United States, had continued the war with the aid of American military officers disguised as civilians.

The statements were issued by leaders of the two delegations to the Joint Military Commission, which for the last month has been seeking to bring about an effective cease-fire.

The leader of the South Vietnamese delegation, Lieut. Gen. Du Quoc Dong, said that in

the first 90 days of the cease-fire the Vietcong had been "stubborn and treacherous."

Maj. Gen. Hoang And Tuang, acting chief of the Vietcong delegation, declared that neither the United States nor the Saigon Government really wanted to end the war.

The exchange of civilian prisoners by both sides is expected to start tomorrow—one day late. The international cease-fire commission refused to observe the proposed release of Communists today because of fears for the safety of truce observers.

The commission officials declined to fly to the Vietcong-held town of Loc Ninh, where 200 Communist civilians were to have been released, saying the Vietcong had not agreed to a sufficiently wide air corridor for the flight.

The prisoners were waiting beside aircraft at Bien Hoa Air Base, north of Saigon, when news came that their release had been delayed and they were to be returned to their cells for 24 hours.

The Vietcong are scheduled to release 63 South Vietnamese civilians tomorrow at Loc Ninh.