

Parley Set Back In Paris

Kissinger Flies Home as Saigon Blocks Plans

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PARIS, June 9—White House negotiator Henry A. Kissinger flew back to Washington Saturday night after apparent last-minute South Vietnamese foot-dragging scuttled American hopes of signing a joint communique designed to implement the much-violated Vietnam cease-fire agreement.

In an airport departure statement, Kissinger sought to soften the impact of the failure by announcing he planned to return here Tuesday and that the negotiations were "still in progress."

He explained his rapid trip to Washington was necessary to prepare for the forthcoming visit to the United States of Soviet Communist Party chief Leonid I. Brezhnev.

Asked to explain the setback in his talks with Hanoi's Le Duc Tho—in view of optimism expressed Friday by an American official predicting a weekend signature—Kissinger replied, "American officials have sometimes been mistaken in their estimates of the length of time required to bring the Vietnamese parties to a common realization of the significance of certain words."

Against the background of Saigon's public opposition to dictation by the United States and North Vietnam—both earlier and during the current round of talks here—Kissinger's remarks were taken as principally directed against South Vietnam, although they could also apply to the North Vietnamese and to the Vietcong.

A feeling of anticlimax throughout the day was reminiscent of the on-again, off-again Kissinger-Tho negotiations during the fall and winter leading up to the formal Jan. 27 cease-fire agreement.

Kissinger quipped to newsmen, "This is getting to be like a long-running play."

In his formal statement, Kissinger said, "Because the negotiations are still in progress, I will say nothing further about my conversations with Le Duc Tho."

Left up in the air was whether all hopes for agreeing on a joint communique were

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dashed or merely subject to delay while the United States applies pressure on South Vietnamese President Thieu.

Nguyen C. Thach, Hanoi's deputy foreign minister, and William H. Sullivan, assistant deputy secretary of state, are scheduled to meet Monday with their respective technical experts.

Thach provided an encouraging note in announcing that Tho would remain in Paris for the time being—rather than return to Hanoi. But he warned that "we will decide after these talks [Monday] whether Dr. Kissinger and Le Duc Tho can meet again."

Kissinger's airport statement hinting at resolution of

outstanding problems next week did little, however, to explain the exact nature of what clearly were last-minute difficulties.

Both sides had been optimistic about winding up the negotiations either Saturday or Sunday—although informed sources noted that concrete measures reportedly included in the final communique were most moderate in scope.

Kissinger had felt confident enough to schedule his first news conference on Vietnam to explain the communique.

The French government dusted off the ballroom in the downtown International Conference Center for the signature ceremony, laid out a red carpet and blocked traffic around the Avenue Kleber meeting site.

The first sign of serious difficulty surfaced when the 4½ hour meeting at the Communist villa in suburban Gif-sur-Yvette got under way an hour behind schedule amid indirect American admissions that South Vietnam was delaying the signature.

In the absence of any detailed official explanation for the setback, analysts suggested South Vietnamese opposition was based as much on its repugnance at signing any document with the Vietcong's Provisional Revolutionary Government as on the substance of measures in the communique.

When Kissinger and Tho resumed their talks Wednesday after two weeks' interruption, rumors circulated that no signatures would be required on the final communique.

Communist sensitivities about having the PRG sign along with the United States, North Vietnam and Saigon were based on the Vietcong's difficulty in winning official recognition for the PRG from

major non-Communist governments.

Both during the January cease-fire signing ceremony and again during the International Conference on Vietnam a month later, Saigon proved equally sensitive about signing any document implying recognition of the PRG.

Whatever the reason for the delay, Kissinger found himself in the familiar situation of regretting his previous optimistic utterances.

After winding up a week's negotiations with Tho on May 23, Kissinger said, "We have every intention of concluding our discussions during the next series of meetings."

That statement—issued against a background of Sullivan's flying visit to Saigon to win approval from Thieu for the communique's principal passages—was clearly interpreted at the time as meaning the United States would brook no footdragging by Saigon.

But, when Kissinger returned June 5, he hedged his earlier optimism. He then stated that if he and Tho "continue the progress and cooperative spirit that was shown the last time, then the prospects are reasonably good that we might conclude in this round."

Despite the familiar pattern of last minute setbacks in the long series of Kissinger-Tho talks, there was no immediate suggestion that the basic context of the joint communique had been called into question. At best, the joint communique embodied only modest progress on firming up the shaky Vietnam cease-fire and practically nothing substantial on solving the Cambodian crisis, according to informed sources.