

DELEGATION
OF
THE REPUBLIC OF VIET-NAM
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STATEMENT

BY

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CHIEF OF THE DELEGATION

OF

THE REPUBLIC OF VIET-NAM

AT THE **170th** PLENARY SESSION OF THE PARIS MEETINGS ON VIET-NAM

DECEMBER 14, 1972

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Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Viet-Nam war may have ended long ago if you had not been so obstinate in seeking to impose your peace conditions as well as to obtain a military victory on the battlefield.

Indeed, throughout these past years, your efforts only aimed at resolving the conflict by the force of arms, while you used this forum as a propaganda platform.

Now that, with the present balance of forces, you realize a military victory is beyond your reach, you try to secure through negotiations, not a just and honorable peace for everybody, but a peace to your own liking. You cynically exploit the concern of public opinion and the anxiety of the prisoners' families for the fate of those held by you, the sincere desire of the United States to disengage itself from the Viet-Nam war, and the longing for peace of the Vietnamese people and of other peoples throughout the world, in order to make the South Vietnamese people, who have already suffered so much from your aggression, pay an exorbitant price for the peace to which it aspires.

However, a genuine and lasting peace can be established only if one party does not seek to secure provisions advantageous to itself in an accord or to escape from its obligations without taking into account the legitimate concern of the other parties or the higher interests of the nation.

Unfortunately, this is not the attitude which you have displayed in the course of the current negotiations.

I.- Your refusal to tackle the crucial problem for peace which is that of the withdrawal of the 300,000 North Vietnamese troops presently operating in South Viet-Nam gives a clear

indication of your concept of the settlement of the conflict. For you, peace means only the departure of the Allied forces and the end of the "Vietnamization" program in the South, the cessation of the bombing in the North and of the mining of your ports, which would amount to giving you a free hand.

The fallacious pretexts you are raising ceaselessly in order to justify the maintaining of your troops in South Viet-Nam does not leave any doubt as to your intentions and to the dominating role which you arrogate to yourself after the departure of the Allied forces.

The experience of the years following the signing of the 1954 Geneva Agreements on the Cessation of Hostilities in Indochina and the 1962 Geneva Agreements ending the war in Laos, has shown that it was indeed the North Vietnamese troops left in place in South Viet-Nam and in Laos in blatant violation of these Agreements, who enabled North Viet-Nam, when the time was right, to unleash new hostilities against these two countries.

With the current massive presence in South Viet-Nam of over 300.000 North Vietnamese troops, equipped with the most modern weapons and having at their disposal enormous stocks of arms and war materiels scattered over the territories of South Viet-Nam, Laos and Cambodia, as well as the great networks of supply and infiltration routes already set up, the risks of a resumption of hostilities will be even greater.

If we insist on the necessity of the withdrawal of North Vietnamese troops, it is because our major concern is to ensure for the South Vietnamese population a lasting peace to which it is entitled after so many years of mourning and suffering, together with conditions which will enable it to decide by itself its own future without being exposed to pressure, coercion or interference of any kind.

II.- In the political field, one cannot conceive a correct political solution which were not formulated by the Vietnamese

parties themselves for any solution imposed by the outside or by one of the Vietnamese parties on the other, would obviously be contrary to the right to self-determination.

It is precisely in this spirit that the Government of the Republic of Viet-Nam proposed long ago to engage in direct and secret talks with the NLF, on one hand, for the settlement of internal problems of South Viet-Nam, and with North Viet-Nam, on the other hand, with a view to defining the relations between the North and the South, pending the later reunification of the country.

All these offers were systematically rejected by your side. Instead of negotiating a correct political solution to the conflict between Vietnamese, you used and continue to use the prisoners of war you hold as hostages to extract unjustifiable concessions favorable to you.

Thus, in seeking to put an end to what they call "all foreign interference in the internal affairs of South Viet-Nam" through the disengagement of the Allies, the Hanoi authorities simply want to arrogate to themselves the right to resolve the political problem of South Viet-Nam in their own way.

Such a pretention is utterly inadmissible for it rests with the South Vietnamese population, and it alone, to decide on the political future of South Viet-Nam.

Therefore, one sees clearly where the obstacle lies to the rapid concluding of a peace agreement acceptable to all the parties. This obstacle is nothing other than the desire of the Hanoi authorities to pursue through other means the realization of their designs and the refusal by the communist side to engage in negotiations between Vietnamese for the settlement of problems which concern them directly and solely.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Indeed, in a war such as the current Vietnamese conflict, a war which has lasted too long already, which has exacerbated passions to the utmost and which has generated such division and distrust among Vietnamese, one cannot count on the miracle of transforming in one day the state of war into a state of peace.

But what is quite achievable in the immediate future since it only depends on the good will of the belligerent parties and since it does not cause any prejudice to the final settlement, is a stop to the killing in order to create a favorable climate for the conclusion of the negotiations.

To this effect, I want to read to you a part of the important speech given by President Nguyễn-van-Thiều on December 12, before a joint Session of the National Assembly :

"Today, less than two weeks before Christmas and because of the shortage of time, motivated by good will to restore peace to the people of North and South Viet-Nam and with the view to creating a climate of concord favorable to contacts and negotiations among Vietnamese parties in order to arrive at a final peace settlement, the Government of the Republic of Viet-Nam puts forth the following ideas :

"A truce of substantial duration could be observed before Christmas Day and prolonged until after the 1973 New Year. During this truce, all the parties would jointly agree to stop all offensive military activities, and two concrete and useful actions could easily be taken :

- First : the release of the prisoners of war, so that they could be repatriated in time to celebrate Christmas with their families.

- Second : all the Vietnamese parties, that is to say North Viet-Nam, the Republic of Viet-Nam and the NLF, would hold consultations to discuss all problems of mutual interest and to lay the basis enabling serious and useful negotiations to take place and leading to a settlement putting an end to the war and restoring peace".

"These negotiations would deal with both the military and the political problems concerning, on the one hand, the two zones of North and South and, on the other hand, the South Vietnamese among themselves. These negotiations could take place anywhere, in any form, public or private, and in which all problems could be raised".

"Throughout the years, at Christmas time, in order to mark the deep meaning of peace related to this holiday and also for humanitarian reasons, a truce was always observed. Now that peace is nearer than ever before, the Government of the Republic of Viet-Nam expresses more than ever the hope that progress however small, towards the realization of this objective, could be accomplished on the occasion of Christmas 1972".

"The Government of the Republic of Viet-Nam thinks that if the truce which it proposes is seriously implemented and is not exploited by any of the parties to prepare new attacks and new killings on a large scale, and if at the same time the consultations progress in a satisfactory manner through the good will of all the parties, then the truce could be prolonged and periodically renewed, thus making it possible to transform the consultations into serious negotiations and to achieve useful progress".

In the same message, besides this truce proposal and the start of consultations among the different Vietnamese parties concerned, President Nguyen-van-Thieu declared that the Government of the Republic of Viet-Nam would be prepared to hand over to the Hanoi authorities, on the occasion of the proposed truce, all the North Vietnamese prisoners of war in

exchange for the release of members of the Allied forces held by the communist side.

He also declared that, as a gesture of good will on the part of the Government of the Republic of Viet-Nam, 1,015 North Vietnamese prisoners of war, sick and wounded as well as able-bodied, would be released on the first day of the truce.

We sincerely wish that you would fully grasp the importance of the proposals I have just presented to you, proposals which were dictated by no considerations other than concern to stop the killing in time and to open the way to genuine negotiations, those which must take place among Vietnamese for the settlement of their own problems.-

