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PRESIDENT NGUYEN VAN THIEU RESIGATION

April 21 1975

HISTORY OF THE VIETNAM WAR ON MICROFILM

THIEU ADDRESSES NATION ON SITUATION, RESIGNS 21 APR

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[Address by RVN President Nguyen Van Thieu from Independence Palace--live]

[Text] Mr Vice President, Mr President of the Senate, Mr Acting Speaker of the lower house, Mr President of the Supreme Court, Mr Prime Minister, Mr President of the inspectorate, dear senators and deputies, dear supreme judges and inspectors, dear members of the government and advisers to the government, dear brother army men and policemen, dear compatriots, dear brother and sister combatants and cadres:

First of all, I apologize for addressing you directly today without preparing a message for you, compatriots nationwide and the brother and sister combatants and cadres. Because the urgent issue required an urgent decision and maximum secrecy, for reasons of national security, I permitted myself to invite members of both chambers of the National Assembly, of the Supreme Court, of the Constitutional institutions and all of you on very short notice to come to a setting that should have been different from that of Independence Palace. This is also true with the compatriots and the brother and sister combatants. This is a very important talk, but it was not announced beforehand. For reasons of national security and because of the importance of the talk to national security, I ask the compatriots and the brother and sister combatants, cadres and members of the national police to appreciate that.

Had time permitted, I would have convened a plenary session of both chambers of the National Assembly with the presence of the Supreme Court and various mass and religious organizations, so that I could deal with the situation that I am going to elaborate on today. May I ask you to generously excuse me for dealing with this urgent issue in such a way that, it is reasonable to say, is not fully consistent with etiquette.

Gentlemen, compatriots, brothers and sisters:

Today, may I summarily review the developments in our country since the day that I assumed leadership. I have gone through two presidential terms and my second term will expire in 6 months.

In 1965, in South Vietnam, we controlled only half of the entire population and about half of our territory. The situation was very serious. The communist aggressors had the upper hand and were able to win over us militarily within a very short period. At that time, thanks to the vigorous intervention and the firm determination of our U.S. ally and other allies, thanks to the presence of half a million allied troops from six allied countries, and thanks to the effective use of U.S. Air and Naval Forces to punish the North Vietnamese aggressors both in the north and the south, we advanced toward a very fine situation up to 1968.

At that time, communist North Vietnam was in a weakened position. Unable to endure the bombing raids, North Vietnam agreed to go to Paris for negotiations.

The coordination between attacks and uprisings and uprisings and attacks has multiplied the strength of our armed forces and people and created an unexcelled, combined strength that no reactionary force can match. In only 1 month, our southern revolution has made big leaps forward. Our armed forces and people are staging relentless attacks and uprisings everywhere. Our compatriots and combatants are surging forward, annihilating the enemy and regaining mastership. Our armed forces and mass forces are directing staggering blows at the country-selling and people-harming Nguyen Van Thieu clique, which has sabotaged the Paris agreement.

An important part of the Saigon armed forces has been wiped out or has disintegrated; the puppet and lackey administration has been destroyed or has collapsed in big chunks; and the enemy's coercive forces have been swept away or have had to flee in disorder from many municipalities, cities and district capitals and many other vast areas. All of the south is surging forward in the flight of victories. By staging resolute and relentless attacks and uprisings and closely coordinating attacks with uprisings and uprisings with attacks, our armed forces and people in the south will certainly win many till greater victories.

XUAN THUY ATTENDS MEETING MARKING LENIN'S ANNIVERSARY

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[Text] Hanoi VNA April 21--The 105th anniversary of Vladimir I. Lenin was celebrated at a grand meeting here tonight under the auspices of the Central Committee of the Vietnam Fatherland Front and the Vietnam-USSR Friendship Association. Present were Xuan Thuy, secretary of the Vietnam Workers Party Central Committee and Presidium member of the VFF Central Committee; Nguyen Van Kinh, member of the VWPC and president of the Vietnam-USSR Friendship Association; Nguyen Khanh Toan, alternate member of the VWPC and vice president of the said association; Tran Huu Duyet, Presidium member and general secretary of the VFFCC; Hoang Van Loi, vice minister for foreign affairs; and representatives of government offices, mass organizations, and the Vietnam People's Army. Also present were Nguyen Van Tien, head of the Special Representation of the Republic of South Vietnam in the DRV and B.N. Chaplin, Soviet ambassador here.

Following the opening speech by Xuan Thuy, Nguyen Khanh Toan, main speaker at the commemorative rally, reviewed the great services rendered by Lenin to the working class and oppressed nations all over the world. He also outlined the great achievements the proletariat and oppressed peoples have made by following the path charted by Lenin.

In connection with Vietnam, he said that the success of the revolution here is the success of Marxism-Leninism in a former colony and semifeudal state, and the success of the correct line of the Vietnam Workers Party.

Quoting the late President Ho Chi Minh's remarks about Lenin, Nguyen Khanh Toan said that the Vietnamese people, inspired by Lenin's all-out revolutionary spirit, have recorded wonderful, glorious victories in their struggle for national liberation. He expressed sincere gratitude to the Communist Party, the government and the people of the Soviet Union for their great, effective assistance to Vietnam.

Taking the floor next, the Soviet ambassador warmly acclaimed the brilliant exploits of the heroic South Vietnamese people and armed forces, and hailed the unshakable friendship and militant solidarity between the peoples of the Soviet Union and Vietnam. "Steadfast with the principles of proletarian internationalism, the Soviet people will strongly support the Vietnamese people's struggle for independence and freedom, till final victory is won," he stressed.

The communists agreed to do so because they had a sole aim to have the United States end unconditionally and permanently its airstrikes against North Vietnam. Only when the U.S. airstrikes had ended could North Vietnam have the opportunity to stand up again and rebuild its aggressive potential in preparation for unleashing a new, even more vigorous aggression against the RVN. Thus, the communists had an aim. What was their aim? They wanted... [sentence not finished] the U.S. ally only wanted peace talks, although it foresaw that they would help achieve nothing.

For this reason, it is no wonder that from 1968 to 1972 the peace talks made no progress. The communists became more and more stubborn, fighting while talking and talking while fighting. They applied this tactic skillfully. They succeeded in deceiving the world and the United States.

In 1972, when the communists became strong, that is, after they had 4 years to build regular units at the corps and division levels and received thousands of tanks and artillery pieces from the Soviet Union and Red China, they launched a general offensive in the summer.

The communists wanted to reverse the trend by a military victory. Nevertheless, we subsequently drove the communists out of Binh Long, Kontum, Binh Dinh, and Quang Tri. As a result, they agreed to negotiate because they were subject to renewed, even heavier, airstrikes and their potentials did not permit them to continue their aggression. If they had not agreed to negotiate seriously, they would have been permanently annihilated.

The communist strategy is as follows: When they are strong militarily, they fight vigorously while holding perfunctory talks. And when they are weak militarily, they fight that way but come on strong in the talks. They agreed to resume the peace talks. But after the talks between the South Vietnam-U.S. side and the communist side resumed at the Paris conference table, we realized they were stalling. At the time, there was collusion between the communists and the United States with a view to reaching the agreement of 26 October 1972. This agreement, which I spent much time explaining to our compatriots--I am sure that my compatriots still remember--was an agreement by which the United States sold South Vietnam to the communists.

I had enough courage to tell Secretary of State Kissinger at that time the following: If you accept this agreement, this means you accept selling South Vietnam to the North Vietnamese communists. As for me, if I accept this agreement, I will be a traitor and seller of the South Vietnamese people and territory to the communists. If you accept it, it is for U.S. interests or some private reason which I do not know about. It is a sharing of interests among you powers that I do not know about. You make some concessions or exchanges among you. You want to sell the interests and lives of the South Vietnamese. As for me, a Vietnamese, I cannot do so.

I refused to accept this agreement. I opposed this for 3 months. During these months I struggled vigorously for three main points.

My life-and-death struggle was testified to by the fact that I invited Senate Chairman Nguyen Van Huyen, lower house Speaker Nguyen Ba Can, the foreign minister, the chairman of the Supreme Court, the vice premier, the chief of the general staff, the vice premiers and, sometimes, a few politicians to each meeting.

These are the three points which I said could lead to the loss of the country:

First was the three-segment government at the top which would direct the two governments of the RVN and the NFLSV. And this three-segment coalition government would exercise its power downward to the provincial, district, village and hamlet levels. In my opinion, this was a coalition government at the central level--this is not to mention the three-or four-or two-segment government. I stressed that I could not accept it.

Second, they told me that there are only three countries in Indochina: Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam. Thus, I asked Secretary of State Kissinger: which Vietnam? Is it the Vietnam of the Saigon government or of the Hanoi government? If you accept this agreement, this means that you accept the Vietnam of Hanoi. According to the communists, this Vietnam includes both the north and the south. I cannot accept it. I want to return to the Geneva agreement according to which there are two Vietnams and two administrations--the Hanoi and Saigon administrations. I call the communist country the DRV, and they must call this country the RVN. Neither country must invade the other. The 17th parallel and the Geneva agreement must serve as a basis, pending the day of national reunification through peaceful and democratic means. The date of reunification is unknown. The north and the south--that is, two separate countries--will apply for UN membership. The 17th parallel and the demilitarized zone will be maintained until the day of national reunification.

The third point was that with regard to the North Vietnamese troops, Secretary of State Kissinger acknowledged that they had the right to remain in the south legally and as a matter of course. As I said, this was the most important point. Nothing was more weird than the fact that the aggressors, after the war had been ended and peace restored, had the right to leave their troops on someone else's territory forever.

I said then that a most important prerequisite was the withdrawal of North Vietnamese troops to the north. Mr Kissinger replied that the United States had negotiated this issue for 3 years with the Soviet Union and Red China but to no avail. That was why the United States had given up.

I said: Ah! This is why at the outset the U.S. President raised the following condition for North Vietnam: The North Vietnamese troops, as the aggressor troops, must withdraw first, before the United States would withdraw its troops.

This sounded sensible and logical. It sounded very resolute. But later, the United States gradually deescalated its demand, saying that the U.S. and North Vietnamese troops would be bilaterally and simultaneously withdrawn. This also sounded reasonable, logical and peaceful. However, why did President Nixon say in a speech that the United States would unilaterally withdraw its troops? He did not demand that North Vietnam withdraw its troops.

I asked Mr Kissinger if the United States no longer demanded that North Vietnam withdraw its troops. He said yes. That was why I disagreed. I said: You gentlemen agree, but I don't. North Vietnam must withdraw its troops. This is an inevitable and normal condition to be met when the war ends, especially when the war in this south is a war of aggression waged by the North Vietnamese communists.

Finally, we had to reach a compromise solution. I said that I would only agree to a solution whereby the problem of North Vietnamese troops was settled. This solution was: The problem concerning the armed forces of the two South Vietnamese parties and the armed forces of South and North Vietnam shall be settled by the Vietnamese governments, the Vietnamese elements, themselves on the basis of gradual reductions in the troop strength and demobilization.

I believed that this was not our desired solution to the North Vietnamese troops problem and was not an ideal solution. But we could get nothing better. We could not drive all of them out of the south at a time when the United States had stopped fighting and aiding us. That was why I considered this solution acceptable if North Vietnam had good will.

North Vietnam had 300,000 troops in the south and we had a million. North Vietnam should show good will by demobilizing their 300,000 troops, and we would reduce our troop strength to 700,000. The reported 100,000 liberation troops should be demobilized, and our side would further reduce our troop strength by another 100,000. After the North Vietnamese and liberation troops had been demobilized and after we had demobilized our own troops, all South Vietnamese would perform their military duty in the south and all North Vietnamese troops would return to the north and perform their military duty there. This would be a fair settlement.

I categorically rejected the proposed three-segment coalition government. That was why it was subsequently changed into a three-segment national council of national reconciliation and concord, charged solely with holding elections. It would have no ruling power in this south. Therefore, as I recall, I said: Our government, constitution, regime, armed forces, police, administrative system and people remain. Nothing will change.

I also said that when general elections are held, we will struggle against the communists politically, and the three-segment national council of national reconciliation and concord shall be the body that will hold internationally supervised elections. My struggle was successful in this respect. I also insisted that there are four Indochinese nations, and not three, and that the demilitarized zone and the 17th parallel must be respected.

Three months elapsed before my demand was met. There was untold menace and pressure. With regard to pressure, let me say frankly, and let you gentlemen here are witnesses, that Mr Nixon told me as follows: All accords are, in the final analysis, mere sheets of paper. They will be worthless if they are not implemented and if North Vietnam violates them. Therefore, the important thing is what you will do after signing the agreement, and what facilities we will make available to you if North Vietnam reneges on and violates the agreement and renews its attacks against the south. So, you should not be concerned about the signing of this agreement which, in my view, is the best. There can be no better agreement. We want it to be better, but we cannot make any more moves vis a vis the Soviet Union and Red China; and we have given up. Furthermore, President Thieu, you should know that no matter how good the agreement you draft may be, the problem will not be for you to refer to the signed agreement if the communists fail to respect it and send troops to attack you again. They would not be afraid of the agreement. The real problem is: What will the Americans make available to you, President Thieu, and the Vietnamese people so they can resist the communist attacks? This is the really important matter. And I invite you to Washington to lay the new groundwork for the relations between Vietnam and the United States in the postwar period and for the commitments to provide mutual assistance in protecting the freedom and independence of South Vietnam, should the communists violate the agreement.

I thought that I was practical and I know that our southern compatriots are practical, too.

Actually, if the communists violated the agreement using the abundant aid they received from the Soviet Union and Red China and if we showed them the beautifully worded agreement, they would not be afraid of it. But if we received adequate U.S. military aid, if the Vietnamization plan and the plan to modernize the RVN Armed Forces were carried out, and if the Americans resumed their assistance to us with their Air Force facilities to punish the aggressors, this would be more practical for us, I thought.

Our survival depended on bombs and ammunition needed on the battlefield, on economic facilities and on U.S. backing. This was more practical than having a beautifully worded agreement but nothing with which to cope with the enemy. That sounded very enticing and logical. And the most important pressure on me at that time was that if the RVN Government refused to sign the agreement, the U.S. Congress would certainly and immediately cut all U.S. military and economic aid to the RVN Government--"and even if later on you agree to sign the agreement, you will be unable to get U.S. aid. That is an irreversible decision by the U.S. Congress. And when the communists again launch attacks against you, you will have no military and economic aid for defense, and we will not intervene. Do you think that the future or the present is important?"

Those were the conditions and solemn commitments made not between, I think, the persons of Mr Nixon and Mr Nguyen Van Thieu or between two individuals or two administrations, but between a U.S. president and a Vietnamese president, between a representative of our great U.S. ally, leader of the free world, and one of its allies which was fighting--the RVN.

The commitments were made with the honor of two countries, particularly the honor of a superpower, leader of the free world. What were these commitments?

First, when communist North Vietnam renewed its aggression and violated the agreement, the Americans would react violently and immediately to check the aggression.

Second, the Americans would recognize only the RVN Government as the sole government in South Vietnam.

Third, the Americans would promptly provide abundant military and economic aid to the South Vietnamese people to help them fight the communist aggressors in case of renewed communist aggression. The Americans would provide the South Vietnamese people with sufficient economic aid to help them develop their country.

He also said Vice President Agnew would come to Vietnam in a few days and would publicly announce these three commitments in Saigon. But when Mr Agnew arrived, he only talked about two commitments and he failed to mention the third one--he ignored the one dealing with U.S. interference, reaction and vigorous retaliation. I became doubtful about the U.S. commitments at that point.

Gentlemen, compatriots, brothers and sisters: Concerning the agreement of 26 October 1972, I did not think that a secretary of state like Mr Kissinger could not realize that it was an agreement leading the nation and country of Vietnam to its death. I believed he realized this. I do not want to stress that he accepted this, but since everyone realized this, he must have realized it. I thought there was some reason for his acceptance of this agreement. At that time, I told you compatriots that the superpowers had their great interests throughout the world. Since their interests in a small and weak country like ours were small, they would dare sacrifice us in their exchange of interests. But we had nothing for them to sacrifice. We had nothing left to be sacrificed. We had only a small land, this South Vietnam, where we could breathe the air of freedom and democracy to live. We could sacrifice nothing. Thus, you compatriots can see that my stand at that time was to not cut off a piece of land and yield it to the communist aggressors; to not accept a coalition, because coalition is like a sugar-coated poisonous pill; to not allow the communists to act as they pleased in South Vietnam; and to not accept a coalition as conceived by the communists.

In my opinion, without this four-point stand, South Vietnam could not stand firm but would be gradually lost. These four points were the essential minimum. What would be next? Because of such commitments and with confidence, I went to the United States in March 1973. I told President Nixon and the U.S. Government and Congress that I did not request endless aid from them for 20 or 30 years, because the economic potential and natural resources of South Vietnam are very abundant. If they wanted South Vietnam to develop vigorously without needing their aid for 20 or 30 years, like the ROK and Nationalist China or any country after World War II, they should give us a lot of aid for 3 or 5 years so that we could develop our economy and then gradually reduce it to zero by 1980.

I cited an example. Suppose I am a sick person who is just recovering my strength.

If they give me a pill daily, this would only alleviate my disease. I would remain unable to work, to stand up and walk or run, and to earn money. If someone hit me, I would fall. However, after recovering from my illness, if I were given abundant medicine--seven or eight kinds of medicine--and if I underwent physical training, I would become as strong as an athlete in the next 3 or 4 years and could then work and earn my living. And when I achieved self-sufficiency, I would no longer need their care.

If the patient is not completely healed, he will be unable to produce anything. If he is given medicine for 3 years, he will become as strong as an athlete. At that time, the assistance can be stopped.

However, I regret that later on the Watergate incident occurred in the United States. The U.S. political situation has stopped abundant economic aid and the continuation of the Vietnamization program and the program to modernize the RVN Armed Forces. In addition, international economic changes involving energy and food have created difficulties and contradictions among the U.S. people. The communists are not so stupid as to fail to recognize this. They are very cunning and have fully exploited these events.

U.S. military and economic aid has decreased, the Vietnamization program has not been properly carried out, and the program to modernize the RVN Armed Forces has not been implemented. While 300,000 North Vietnamese troops are still here, the allied troops have gone. Prior to the cease-fire, the communists had stored in the south five times more munitions than we had. Since then, they have repaired their airfields, built highways, laid oil pipelines and continued to receive tanks and artillery pieces from the Soviet Union and Red China while the Americans have pretended not to notice any of these activities and have remained inactive. They have succeeded in building their army in the south to 570,000 men, forming more divisions and army corps; bringing in more tanks, artillery pieces, rockets and antiaircraft guns; and building more highways and airfields. They have added various types of modern weapons and equipment to their arsenal in the south. Meanwhile, all types of U.S. aid to the south have decreased as has the U.S. determination to cope with the communists.

We are now in a very difficult position. We desire to show that we respect the Paris agreement so as to please the world and U.S. public opinion, and we want to prove that we love peace and respect the Paris agreement. Therefore, we have continued to invite the communist side to negotiate, advancing one proposal after another, and we have adopted a defensive rather than offensive attitude. Even if we wanted to launch attacks, we lack enough facilities to launch vigorous and deep thrusts against the enemy's rear area. We cannot bomb North Vietnam because we lack the facilities to do so. If we had done that, the Americans would have cut aid more rapidly. Therefore, the communists have gained the upper hand.

In March 1973, when I was in the United States, the Tonle Cham incident had already occurred. The communists attacked this base not because they wanted to capture one of our most forward positions.

They did it to test U.S. determination, to see whether the Americans dared to react although they had said that they would. However, the Americans did not react, and the communists have since grown bolder in their aggressive acts.

Following the Tonle Cham incident, many other remote bases fell to the communists one after another. Because of the positions of these bases, we were unable to provide them with supplies, reinforcements, and air support and to evacuate the wounded. The communists gradually attacked and seized them. We did not have enough facilities. We lacked helicopters and other types of aircraft to support these bases, and we were unable to withdraw from them.

In purely military terms, it is very stupid to establish an outpost in a remote area without the necessary means to carry out supply activities and medical evacuation. Militarily, such outposts had to be evacuated or abandoned. However, when we abandoned such outposts, people claimed that they were abandoned because the RVN troops were fleeing and not because they were under communist attack, and that the RVN forces lacked the determination to fight. If we had decided to fight and defend these outposts, we would not have had the facilities to do so. Therefore, the fall of some outposts triggered the fall of countless others and entailed the loss of many of our good combat units. The loss of small bases has led to the loss of larger bases and the fall of district capitals.

This represented a test of U.S. resolve and reaction. But the United States remained silent. The United States has also remained silent after province capitals have fallen. The United States has not dared to react. Such an attitude has inevitably encouraged the aggressors, who have become increasingly stronger; whereas we, who have fought in self-defense, have been steadily weakened by our friend. The aggressors' big brothers have helped them become increasingly stronger. Despite this, the United States has not made any moves vis a vis the Soviet Union and Red China, nor has the United States dared to touch the hair on the legs of the North Vietnamese communists and the communists in the south. Even when Phuoc Long fell, the United States did not react.

Thus, what has happened? Since 1973, U.S. military aid has decreased. The Vietnamization program has not been implemented and the program for modernization of the RVN Armed Forces was abandoned following the signing of the Paris agreement.

There can be no magic in combat. In combat, there must be an equilibrium in the balance of forces. Combat requires bombs, ammunition and other facilities.

In addition to the will to fight and gallantry, we must be realistic. We cannot just bite others to demonstrate our gallantry. We are fighting the communists who possess facilities made available to them by the Soviet Union and Red China. We are not fighting an enemy who possesses just primitive weapons and machetes, as he did in the past. The communists now possess more abundant, modern and powerful facilities and have more troops. Therefore, the time has come when the communists have compelled us to use our regular units to defend our territory. We have been fully aware that the communists were laying a trap.

However, because we have the territory, people, communication, bridges, economy, ricepaddies and rivers, we have had to defend this by spreading out our armed forces. And, until recently, we had effectively defended our territory for 2 years.

Meanwhile, the communists have steadily introduced into the south more troops, tanks, heavy artillery pieces, antiaircraft guns and rockets. In certain areas, their forces were over one and 1/2, two and even three times larger than ours. In certain provincial capitals, district capitals or military bases, if we had one division, the communists deployed two divisions to confront us; if we had one regiment, they deployed one division; if we had one battalion, they deployed one regiment; if we had 15 tanks, they deployed 20; if we had 10 heavy guns, they deployed 20. This means that their forces have been twice as large as ours. As a result, the balance of forces has tilted toward the communists. Consequently, many of our bases and province capitals were inevitably overrun.

The time came when we had to ask: Will the United States provide us with aid and will it intervene after all? Shall we sit by and wait for the United States to provide us with aid so that we can fight and launch counterattacks? If the United States did not intervene, we would at some future time lose everything. If the province capitals, the district capitals and the RVN units were lost, the head of South Vietnam--the capital and this prosperous region--would be lost.

The time had come when we had to make up our minds. Realizing that the Americans had adopted a defeatist attitude toward the communists' acts of aggression, we had to decide our own affairs. Therefore, after Ban Me Thuot--the most important, prosperous and densely populated area of the Central Highlands--came under communist attack, we wondered if our forces could defend Kontum and Pleiku. Our forces could defend these areas which, we believed at that time, would fall sooner or later. After Ban Me Thuot fell, we wondered where we could get troops to recapture it. We came to a political decision not to insure the life or death defense of Kontum and Pleiku.

On the basis of the views of the prime minister, the general commander of the Joint General Staff and the commanders of the military regions concerned, we decided to deploy our forces from Kontum and Pleiku to recapture Ban Me Thuot. If Ban Me Thuot were retaken, we believed, we would have the opportunity to retake Kontum and Pleiku.

This was a tactical decision and, in the final analysis, a political decision. It was a military, tactical decision, as far as Military Region [MR] II was concerned. Unfortunately, a redeployment of troops or withdrawal is not an easy task. It is a most difficult task for an army. Furthermore, the communist forces in Ban Me Thuot and those used to intercept our troop movements from Kontum and Pleiku to Phu Bon were greater than ours. We had only one regiment moving from Kontum and Pleiku to Phu Bon. Therefore, it was already extremely difficult for us to preserve part of our forces moving from Kontum and Pleiku to Tuy Hoa and Ninh Hoa.

We did not have sufficient forces to concentrate on Hill 28 to check the communist advance from Ban Me Thuot. All hopes of retaking Ban Me Thuot then vanished because our forces everywhere had to confront the enemy on a one to three ratio--the communist forces being three times larger than ours. Faced with this situation, we had to reluctantly use our airborne units, which were also overwhelmed by an entire communist division. You see, gentlemen and compatriots, even our seasoned airborne combatants were overwhelmed, after they had fought selflessly and inflicted heavy losses on two or three enemy regiments.

With that trend, Nha Trang, Phan Rang, and Cam Ranh were threatened because they were defended by only regional and militia forces. This was also true with Phu Yen. Over the past few years, we had maintained one division in Qui Nhon and Binh Dinh. However, over these years, the communists had increased their troop strength there and had obtained more weapons. Therefore, despite the fact that our 22 Division fought courageously, it sustained losses and, in the end, had to withdraw.

In Hue and Danang, the problem also concerned the balance of forces between the enemy and us. I readily acknowledge that a few other factors were involved in the loss of Hue and Danang. Specifically, some commanders had adopted a defeatist attitude; some disturbances were caused by the compatriots' evacuation. I am speaking frankly, I am not trying to blame the troops or the compatriots. I want to say that some developments on the battlefield were foreseeable and some others were not. Faced with the enemy pressure and his artillery attacks on Danang, we could not insure a protracted life or death defense of our positions.

It is true that we at the central level had given the life or death defense orders. However, when the field commanders, who were closely associated with the troops and the people, could not fulfill their missions despite their determination, we had no way of helping them fulfill their missions unless we could send them additional troops, which we did not have; unless we could provide them with additional aircraft and bombs, which we did not have; and unless we provided them additional tanks and heavy guns, which we did not have.

It is recalled that the U.S. troops were regularly provided with more B-52 support than were our RVN troops. That was why the U.S. troops could win victories easily and succeeded in forcing the enemy to bow his head.

After 1973, our troops fought many battles that won the admiration of the U.S. generals who returned to South Vietnam, especially since I ordered our forces to fight the enemy in economical Vietnamese ways. These U.S. generals said that even U.S. Marines supported by B-52's could hardly fight so victoriously. Yet, your barefooted divisions, they said, could fight. They had to express their admiration.

Nevertheless, during that period, when we asked for \$1.4 billion in U.S. aid, the United States reduced the requested amount to \$700 million; and the \$300 million has been hanging in air for about a year now. During that period, the RVN Armed Forces have lost some 60 percent of their combat potential. It is like a boxer who has lost about 60 percent of his strength.

Militarily, when an army is strong, it will remain strong; and if it is weak, it will become weaker. It is also like a patient. If a patient remains strong enough, he will recover; and if he is weak, he will become weaker. When the United States reduced its aid and we consequently lost some 60 percent of our combat potential, you can imagine the inevitable. Our casualties have increased manifold, because we have not had enough air support. Furthermore, our artillery has been inferior to that of the enemy. The casualties inflicted on us by enemy artillery have soared. The fatality rate among the wounded has increased because we have not had enough helicopters to evacuate the wounded. Even worse, at the hospitals, bandages have been used and reused two or three times. This is inhuman treatment of wounded combatants. It is inhuman to use a bandage, then wash it and use it again.

Because of the shortage of ammunition, we have had to count every single cartridge. We have lost a certain number of our tanks and artillery pieces. The United States undertook in the Paris agreement to carry out replacements on a piece-to-piece basis, but it has not made these replacements. It has stopped providing us with these means.

As a matter of course, our war materiel has gradually decreased. That is why we have lost. On the contrary, the communists at the outset had an amount of war materiel which has steadily increased. Therefore, they have gained a dual advantage--that is, they have obtained more war materiel, whereas our volume of war materiel has decreased.

Thus, no matter how brave our combatants may be and no matter how skillful our commanders may be, we must suffer losses and lose land and people. We have realized this fact and cannot endure it. Many times we have seen that we must resort to an illogical tactic to defend our land and protect our people. We have had to fight an illogical war because this is our responsibility. The communists have no responsibility.

Suppose I am the owner of a plantation of 9 or 10 hectares. To prevent my fruit and poultry from being stolen, I need 30 or 40 keepers. If a burglar breaks into my plantation every night and fells a tree and steals 10 pieces of fruit, this is sufficient to destroy my plantation. But, in this case, the robbers are more numerous than the keepers and are equipped with more modern weapons. However, the Americans have asked us to undertake an impossible task.

I have therefore told them: You have asked us to do something that you failed to do with half a million powerful troops and skilled commanders and with nearly \$300 billion in expenditures over 6 long years. If I do not say that you were defeated by the communists in Vietnam, I must modestly say that you did not win either. But you found an honorable way out. And at present, when our army lacks weapons, ammunition, helicopters, aircraft and B-52's, you ask us to undertake an impossible task like filling up the ocean with stones. This is like the case in which you give me only \$3 and urge me to go by plane, first class; to rent a room in the hotel for \$30 per day; to eat four or five slices of beefsteak and to drink seven or eight glasses of wine per day. This is an impossible, absurd task.

Likewise, you have let our combatants die under the hail of shells. This is an inhumane act by an inhumane ally.

Refusing to aid an ally and abandoning it is an inhumane act. This is why, on the day a U.S. congressional delegation came here, I told the congressmen that it was not the problem of \$300 million in aid, but it was the question of complying with the U.S. pledge to assist the Vietnamese people in the struggle to protect their independence and the ideal of freedom for which the Americans fought together with our people here and for which some 50,000 U.S. citizens were sacrificed.

The United States is proud of being an invincible defender of the just cause and the ideal of freedom in this world and will celebrate its 200th anniversary next year. I asked them: Are U.S. statements trustworthy? Are U.S. commitments still valid? Some \$300 million is not a big sum to you. Compared with the amount of money you spent here in 10 years, this sum is sufficient for only 10 days of fighting. And with this sum, you ask me to score a victory or to check the communist aggression--a task which you failed to fulfill in 6 years with all U.S. forces and with such an amount of money. This is absurd!

Gentlemen, compatriots and brothers and sisters:

All of this has led to the current situation in our country. I accept the criticism of the world people and our ally as well as the correct criticism of our Vietnamese people. I admit that some, but not all, of our military leaders were cowardly and imbued with a defeatist spirit and lacked the bravery of combatants in recent battles. In some areas, our combatants fought valiantly and I don't think that our allied troops could have fought as valiantly as they did.

We must be just. Therefore, I have said that wrongdoers must be punished and those scoring military achievements must be properly awarded. We do not try to conceal the shortcomings of those wrongdoers. We are proud to say that, in some of the recent battles, we scored achievements that our U.S. allied troops probably could not have scored if they had been here.

Let us now again talk about the general situation in our country. The communists have introduced into South Vietnam 20 divisions and numerous rockets, antiaircraft guns, artillery pieces and tanks. We regret that the situation has changed so rapidly in central Vietnam. However, as president and as a man with some military knowledge, I have the courage to say that the current situation would be the same regardless of the rate of development of the situation in recent days. I can say this to you, gentlemen, and you will have a chance to check with militarists: Even if we had not withdrawn our troops from Kontum and Pleiku with the explicit purpose of using them to recapture Ban Me Thuot, I believe that Kontum and Pleiku would no longer be under our control. We would have lost everything, troops, tanks, artillery pieces, and our people in these areas. Because we withdrew our troops from them, we succeeded in salvaging more than half of them.

Considering the situation at that time, Quang Tin would have soon been lost; even Major General Truong admitted that. Next to the fall of Quang Tin would have been the fall of Quang Ngai.

Binh Dinh and Qui Nhon would then have been isolated and could have stood for a few more weeks at the most. Hue would have been encircled by four or five communist divisions. The people in that city would have been shelled.

Since we had only the First Division in Hue and a marine division deployed between Hue and Danang and the Third Division in Danang, we had to withdraw from those areas, although rather too rapidly.

Even if we had not done what we did, I think that the outcome would have been the same as now.

In Phu Yen and Tuy Hoa, we only had regional and popular forces which could not defend these provinces. Since we had only 2 or 3 divisions to defend Nha Trang, we also lost that city. We cannot say that our combatants did not fight in Phan Rang and Phan Thiet. There were not only people fleeing before the enemy's advance; there were people who fought very valiantly. I sent many generals to the area. Besides the general commanding the military region, Maj Gen Nguyen Vinh Nghi was also present. General Nghi volunteered to work under the command of another military region commander, General Toan, to defend Phan Rang airbase. He did not bother about his military rank or fear danger. However, our troops were in a weak position and our military equipment was inadequate. Phan Rang was lost to the enemy in the end after some defense and so was Phan Thiet.

Therefore, under the current conditions, we must try to redeploy our troops to defend MRs III and IV. We are now in a position in which we must rely on the valor and determination of our combatants, the support of our compatriots, and the utmost sacrifice of our combatants. We cannot say that we can defend these areas by reliance on our troops' strength and weapons. In the days ahead, the fighting will be very perilous, fierce and challenging to our armed forces and people.

Gentlemen: Today, before both chambers of the National Assembly, the Supreme Court, the government, the compatriots and the brother and sister combatants and cadres nationwide, I declare my resignation as president and, in accordance with the constitution, Vice President Tran Van Huong will assume the position of president.

Article 55 of the Constitution stipulates that upon taking office, the president shall take the oath of office before the people nationwide, in the presence of the Supreme Court and the National Assembly. However, because of the situation and because of its urgency, my resignation today is not ceremonious vis-a-vis the compatriots nationwide, as well as you and the brother combatants and cadres. Time does not permit me to announce it more ceremoniously in a more solemn setting. Four years ago, I assumed a mission entrusted to me by the people nationwide. Upon my departure, I should have solicited the views of the people, in one way or another, even though the Constitution does not provide for a referendum or any way in which the people nationwide can voice their nonconfidence in the president in office.

However, because of the situation I do not require that because it would be costly and because, I believe, since I have taken the decision to resign I will assume full responsibility for this decision before the people nationwide and for the reasons I advance.

In light of Article 55 of the Constitution, the swearing-in of President-Designate Tran Van Huong should have been held in a solemn setting. However, as I have said, the situation does not permit us to do so. Another reason is that a discontinuation of the functions of the chief of state must be prevented to avoid political instability, a political vacuum, and the enemy's exploitation of the situation. Therefore, I have an urgent request. I urgently and earnestly ask both chambers of the National Assembly and the Supreme Court to concur with my request that Vice President Tran Van Huong be allowed to take the oath of office here later, in order to avoid political instability and a political vacuum that may be detrimental to national security.

Gentlemen, compatriots, brothers and sisters:

As you know, I am not a man who lacks courage. I can proudly affirm that I have ample physical courage, because I have been a combatant for 20 years now. If I were doomed to death, I would have died while I was a second lieutenant. At that time, with the blessing of providence, I survived. I have lived to this day, undergoing untold trials in combat. In my military career, I have spent little time in the office. I have spent most of the time in combat. Even while I was president, no one compelled me to go to Binh Long, Kontum, Quang Tri, Binh Dinh and Hue during the Mau Than Tet holidays. Sometimes enemy shells fell close to me, and once a helicopter flying next to mine was shot down. Despite all this, I believed that my presence among the combatants helped them fight victoriously, and they did win.

With regard to my political and moral courage, let me recall--not merely to cite the meritorious service I have rendered to the compatriots and the brothers and sisters--that on 2 November 1968 the United States strongly pressured me into heading a delegation to Paris to attend the four-party conference on the same footing as the NFLSV. I balked at going, and you may recall the speech I delivered before both chambers of the National Assembly on 2 November 1968. It is reasonable to say that my life was at stake, because those who wanted to overthrow my regime also had ample means and the experience to do so. But I was not afraid.

In 1971, when the presidential election was described as a solo race, I was being pressured into giving up the solo campaign after the other two slates had withdrawn. Despite this pressure, I believed that if I withdrew a political vacuum would inevitably have risen. I still recall that I told the compatriots at that time that I was not greedy for power and status. I also told the compatriots, that this political vacuum would lead the country to an incalculable political adventure, and that this political vacuum was a setting that people were attempting to create in order to impose a disadvantageous political solution, called a peace solution, on the RVN in 1971-1972. Therefore, I resolutely ran alone so as to maintain the constitutional and legal position of the president of the south and to successfully defend our position, should negotiations be held.

With my resolve and courage, I disregarded untold pressure and threats. At that time, although I had my own solution, they had already laid the groundwork for attaining a solution. Owing to my resolve and courage, a tentative political solution was reached in October 1972. At that time, they were seeking a solution. Therefore, had the opportunities presented themselves--namely, internal political disturbances in the south--they would have imposed their own solution. If the south remained politically stable, they would take their time in finding a solution. They were ready to seize every opportunity that would allow them to impose an undesirable political solution on the south.

In 1972, once again, I proved to the compatriots that I did not lack courage and clear-sightedness in the political sphere and that I did not fear any threat to my life. I only feared the threat that they would immediately cut off all economic and military aid and that, later on, if the communists resumed the fighting, the U.S. Congress would not correct its decision on an aid cut and there would not be a single cent in economic aid.

Please excuse me for telling this: I only feared that after signing the Paris agreement in 1973, the south would be lost and the Americans would wash their hands of the situation if the communists resumed the war and if we did not receive any economic and military aid. I dared not say this was an empty threat. I thought that this was an opportunity for the Americans to wash their hands, because they said that I was stubborn and refused to achieve peace and to sign the agreement when the opportunity was good. They described the Paris agreement as very fine before U.S. and world public opinion. Thus, when I dealt with a point, comma or a word in the agreement, they blamed me for being stubborn and bellicose. If I refused to sign and waited for something else, this was a pretext for them to cut their economic and military aid and to abandon us definitively.

We were not stupid. I think that you were not so stupid that you could not foresee that the communists would violate the Paris agreement. I have foretold this since the night of 26 October 1972, and I have repeated this several times since. As we have seen, the communists have not respected the 1954 and 1962 agreements on Laos. They have now resumed the war although a bipartite coalition government has been set up. And Laos will be taken over by the communists who will establish a completely communist regime. Because they failed in 1954, they did what they did in 1962. And because they failed in 1962, they are doing what they are in 1975.

Regarding the situation in Vietnam, the communists signed the 1954 Geneva agreement because they could not completely defeat the French Army. They won only half of the country and signed the agreement with a view to driving the French troops completely out. As a result of the French troops' withdrawal, the south became very weak because it did not have an army of its own, its administration was still young and the people were not organized. The communists resumed the fighting in 1955-1956 and have been fighting hard since 1963-1964. After their failure in 1968, they agreed to hold peace talks. And then in 1972, they again failed in the fight and returned to the peace talks. They thought they could not win because the U.S. troops were here with B-52s.

Thus, it would be better for them to sign the Paris agreement. After the U.S. troops' withdrawal, with the aid of the Soviet Union and Red China, they would be able to take over the south.

I have told this to the Americans: If there were a fence around the north and the south and if the northern and southern peoples fought within this fence and without foreign aid to either side, you could say that the south had failed because it was weaker than the north. But this is not the case. Here, the United States has not properly assisted the south while the Soviet Union and Red China have aided the north 10 times more vigorously. Thus, if the south is fighting here, this is not a fight against the north alone. North Vietnam can do nothing better than South Vietnam, because it can produce no bullets, weapons, rockets, or tanks. So, this small RVN is fighting against the Soviet Union and Red China while its ally fails to protect and aid it. And now the United States has reduced its economic and military aid to South Vietnam.

Some American people and congressmen hold that as long as Mr Thieu remains in power there cannot be negotiations; Mr Thieu is not the man to agree to negotiate; Mr Thieu is bellicose and refuses to implement the Paris agreement. As long as Mr Thieu remains in power, U.S. aid cannot be given in full because so long as he receives U.S. aid, he will continue to fight and will not agree to negotiate.

This is the U.S. scheme to stop providing us with aid and to wash their hands of us. This is a scheme of people who have completely lost their conscience and humanity, or this may be the opinion of people who misunderstand me. Therefore, I resign today.

We'll see whether or not negotiations will be satisfactorily conducted with the agreement of the communists and South Vietnam when Mr Thieu is no longer in power. In the affirmative, it is something that our people and the world people would gladly welcome. If, with Mr Thieu's departure, abundant U.S. aid will be immediately provided to help the RVN Armed Forces conduct the fight, this will be very lucky for us, and my departure is just like a grain of sand in the desert.

It is an insignificant act on my part, but a very well-deserved sacrifice. Exchanging a presidential position for adequate, and even abundant aid to help the southern armed forces and people continue the fight to defend their country and then to negotiate a solution which guarantees a free and democratic South Vietnam which will not be ruled by the communists--that's beyond my expectations and I would be really grateful to the Americans.

But, if they say that as long as Mr Thieu remains in power negotiations cannot be conducted and U.S. aid cannot be provided and if they use me as an excuse for their disengagement and to wash their hands of us in disregard of their conscience, sense of responsibility, justice and inhumanity, this is another matter which will be judged by history and the world's people.

Now that more than half of our country has been lost to the communists, the U.S. Government has said that the situation must be stabilized in order to conduct negotiations and that stabilization of the situation and our military position must precede the negotiations. We cannot stabilize our military position with saliva, but with guns, munitions and plenty of weapons which must be rapidly provided us in sufficient quantities. We cannot stabilize our military position with the debates, which have lasted for a year, over the U.S. aid which has decreased from \$700 million to \$300 million. The Americans have refused to accord us that amount, and they are now bargaining for \$340, \$350, \$355 or \$360 million.

The honor of an allied country and the fate of one of its allies are being bargained in the same manner as the purchase of a fish in the market. I am very sorry that I cannot accept that. I cannot, on the account of my presidential position, inflict harm to the Vietnamese people and sacrifice our combatants' lives who lack munitions to fight. I cannot let other people bargain our people's destiny with offers of \$10, \$2 or \$1 million and conduct debates for months when the results have not been determined and no guarantee is in sight.

This is one of the reasons for my resignation. I will see if I was merely a pretext or the real cause.

The second point [as heard] is that we should pay no heed to the communists' statements and propaganda. I hope that our Vietnamese people are mature and wise enough not to believe their words. The truth, however, remains the truth. Certain segments of world public opinion have been poisoned, because they are naive and ignorant and are not experienced enough to realize the nature of communism. Some segments of U.S. public opinion have been poisoned. Some people who professed to be outstanding world politicians have also been poisoned.

Therefore, the communists have claimed that as long as Mr Thieu remains in office, there can be no negotiations and peace; that as long as Mr Thieu remains in office, we will continue to fight; and that as long as Mr Thieu remains in office, the Soviet Union and Red China will continue to provide aid to North Vietnam, which will fight to victory because the United States does not provide aid to South Vietnam.

I am not afraid of what the communists have said, because I believe that the overwhelming majority of the Vietnamese people are knowledgeable and experienced. However, I must readily admit that the fact that certain segments of public opinion have been poisoned has adversely affected the world's economic and military aid and good will for supporting the RVN. This is because certain segments of public opinion have stuck to the allegation that if Mr Thieu steps down there can be a satisfactory settlement, the war and death will be ended and world peace will be restored.

The third point is that within the internal ranks of our south, some religious groups, some segments of the populace, some politicians and some political groups--who are eating national rice and are being protected by the armed forces and the combatants,

who are sacrificing their blood and bones daily--have acknowledged that even if I step down the communists would not negotiate and it would be unlikely that the United States would provide the south with abundant aid. They believe that prearrangements have already been made; that the United States has decided to wash its hands of us; and that Mr Thieu has been used, primarily by the communists, as a mere pretext. Therefore, these gentlemen have clear sightedly and fairly pointed out that the real problem is not Mr Thieu, who is only a victim on whom people have put the blame in order to find a pretext to abandon Vietnam.

On the other hand, some religious groups, some politicians, some mass organizations and some well-known persons have said: Mr Thieu should step down and let us negotiate with the communists. South Vietnam will certainly have freedom and democracy and the communists will have to agree to that. There will be no coalition. The communists are afraid of us and respect us. Although we do not share their views, the communists will respect us and accept our proposals. We will score achievements without a fight.

These people and groups are now vigorously voicing their opinions. I don't know whether they have said this because they are too self-confident, because they have illusions, or because they were compelled to say so by some motive force.

They have said that as long as Mr Thieu remains in power, there can be no national unity and, therefore, no victories can be expected and that the communists will not be defeated. They have said that as long as Mr Thieu remains in power, the communists will continue to fight and will conquer all the south and there will be many more deaths and much suffering for our people. They have said that as long as Mr Thieu remains in power, the Americans will not provide aid to us and our army will be unable to fight.

Even some of our brother army men, either because they are rather credulous or victimized by propaganda...[sentence unfinished] A vigorous propaganda drive is being launched to put all the blame on Mr Thieu just as Mr Diem was the one blamed for everything in 1963. Gentlemen and compatriots, you probably know the origin of this propaganda--some have said that as long as President Thieu remains in power, the Americans will not provide aid to us and we will be unable to fight. Our country will be lost. We will be killed and so will our wives and children. If no fighting can be conducted, the military situation will not be stabilized and no negotiations will be held. Therefore, President Thieu should step down so that we will have sufficient aid to conduct the fighting to stabilize the situation, conduct negotiations, and protect the free south.

The communists have succeeded in using these arguments in their propaganda to poison world and U.S. public opinion. In Vietnam, I find that there has been a strong tendency to blame me for everything. Peace cannot be achieved because of me. People want to fight and win, but they are prevented from doing so. That's also because of me.

Therefore, I have performed a righteous act in sacrificing my person and my position.

Why have I resigned today? The aid problem is being carefully discussed in the United States today and such figures as \$350, \$355 and \$360 million have been advanced just like people bargaining when they buy something. But none of the figures surpass the \$722 million mark requested by the U.S. President from the Congress.

The \$722 million which U.S. President Gerald Ford asked from the Congress will not suffice for South Vietnam and its armed forces to check the North Vietnamese communists and to stabilize the military situation in order to start serious negotiations. The communists know this, and they have only to take advantage of their victories to push for a military victory without negotiations.

To achieve the goal expected by the United States--that is, to stabilize the military situation in order to get negotiations underway on the basis of the Paris agreement and thus achieve a political solution--there must be more than \$722 million. Moreover, there must be B-52s to punish the communists in the south and, if possible, also the communists in the north. It is also necessary to have tanks, heavy artillery, equipment, small and big guns, signal equipment and ammunition. These things must be sent in continuously and immediately. It is not a matter of months or weeks, but rather a matter of days. This materiel must be abundant enough to reequip the divisions that are being equipped and to activate more regular divisions to fight the 20 North Vietnamese divisions.

I challenge--suppose the Republic of South Vietnam's troops withdraw--the U.S. troops to come in with the same numerical strength as the RVN troops and with the same quantity of weapons and ammunition and without the B-52s. For how many days would the U.S. troops be able to cope with the communists? So how can we be told to do it?

Therefore, it is illogical, unjust and contradictory to say that I am a man who does not want to negotiate. Had I not the goodwill for negotiations how could the 27 January 1973 Paris agreement have been concluded? Though that agreement was a crippled one, I had to accept it. I showed the maximum good will in accepting it. We displayed maximum good will in accepting the text of an agreement which failed to respond to our ideals and standards. We only expected two things: the goodwill of the communists and their masters--the USSR and communist China. The third thing we expected was sufficient military and economic aid to permit us to cope with North Vietnam. None of these three things has materialized.

The Americans fought a war here without success and went home. The Vietnamization plan was worked out and we accepted it, but its implementation has been suspended. After suspension of Vietnamization, there was a promise that if the communists intruded and invaded again, there would be a reaction. But there has been no reaction. Thus, the minimum thing to do is to give us equipment to fight with; but they have not given it. What does this amount to?

This amounts to a breach of promise, injustice, lack of responsibility and inhumanity toward an ally who has suffered continuously--the shirking of responsibility on the part of a great power.

Therefore, I think that the vice president is like me--a patriot who knows how to negotiate, who is willing to negotiate. Any government--either the government of Premier Nguyen Ba Can or a subsequent government which may be set up by President Huong--must be a government of negotiation which will clearly tell the United States and the world and the communists that we will take our suitcases to Paris to sit down and wait for you fellows to enter the negotiation hall without preconditions. Once entering that hall, you fellows may speak of scrapping the Paris agreement or whatever, provided there is an immediate dialog without preconditions. And President Huong and the government will demand that communist North Vietnam immediately stop all acts of armed aggression in the forthcoming days, so as to resume serious negotiations.

President Huong and the government will, at the same time, call on the United States to provide immediate and sufficient aid. If the United States considers it necessary to stabilize the military situation to lay groundwork for serious negotiations, the aid must be sufficient, swift and timely to enable us to negotiate. The other side must be called on to halt its military action and resume negotiations.

The reason that I resign today is because today the U.S. Congress is going to scrutinize the problem of aid. I think that after my resignation today, maybe tomorrow, the \$300 million will be raised to \$722 million or to more than \$1 billion and then a continuous airlift will bring in tanks and heavy artillery. Since Mr Theiu is gone, here comes the aid, aid and more aid. I hope so. Let us wait and see whether the U.S. Congress will do this.

I hope that now, when the military situation is tense in Military Regions III and IV and after Mr Theiu has gone and President Huong has taken over, perhaps the United States will appeal to the USSR and communist China and world opinion will appeal to the communists to halt the military offensive immediately and reopen negotiations. Such a thing may be achieved in 3 or 4 days or a week. If I wait until tomorrow or the day after to resign, and if the communists launch the offensive, then I fear that it may be too late. At that time they would say it is too late to hold back. Then, if the U.S. Congress appropriates only \$350 million, it will say: We are sorry, but it is too late now that we have decided on \$350 million; we cannot increase it to \$722 million.

Not sooner, not later, because I think that my sacrifice today will in some respects help change the situation prevailing in the United States about U.S. military aid and change the military situation on the southern battlefield. President Huong and the government have enough good will to do this. I also have had goodwill. I have made several appeals, even when bombs and shells were flying overhead. I made an appeal on 4 April. Even today as I resign, I am still appealing. However, they still say that I am a warlike person.

Therefore ladies, gentlemen, compatriots, brothers and sisters: My conscience--the voice of my conscience--has forced me to choose between the two paths.

I would stay on as president, to lead the resistance of all our armed forces and people. However, I am not in a position to supply adequate means for the army to fight. Moreover, I might also be misunderstood by the people as an impediment to peace and as continuing to cause mourning, destruction, misery, death and ruin. World public opinion continues to say that I am the cause of the fact that the south does not have peace at present. Let us wait and see whether the U.S. Congress will prove that I am the cause or used me as a pretext for cutting military aid.

The second solution is to resign--this is one of the things I spoke about earlier. I think that my resignation is a very small sacrifice if all our people and armed forces will get abundant aid with which to fight and preserve the remaining territory, and if, without my presence, future negotiations with the communists can help protect a free and democratic south and achieve the right to self-determination of the South Vietnamese people in the spirit of the Paris agreement. I call on all people, organizations, religions and politicians who have so far referred to me as an impediment to peace and considered me important in bringing about peace and protecting the south and unable to defeat the communists and restore peace, thus causing only mourning and misery, for the sake of patriotism and love for the people, to assist President Tran Van Huong in bringing about peace, honor, freedom, prosperity and democracy; in insuring strict implementation of the Paris agreement with the communists forced to respect it; and in achieving the southern people's realization of national rights to self-determination as specified in the Paris agreement. In short, I do not want anybody to use me--President Nguyen Van Thieu--personally as an excuse to maltreat this nation. Those persons, from this moment onward, can no longer use that excuse and must now show their sincerity and honesty.

Ladies and gentlemen, compatriots, brothers and sisters: I have served the compatriots, brothers and sisters for the past 10 years. As I have said, I do not lack courage. It is not that any demonstration or slander can discourage and demoralize me and prompt me to step down nonsensically and irresponsibly. It is not due to the pressure of our ally or the difficult and hard struggle against the communists that I have to avoid responsibility and leave my office.

The presidents of some big countries are proud of the fact that they have undergone six, seven or 10 crises. They have written books in which they proudly offer themselves as heroes and outstanding politicians. As for me, over the past 10 years, all years, months, days and all hours in my life have been bad, as my horoscope forecast. As for my fate, I can enjoy no happiness; I have enjoyed no happiness; yet, I have not sought ways to enjoy life. A ruler of a country can enjoy either honor or disgrace. He must accept this so he can lead the people. If I have some good points, the compatriots will praise me even if I do not want it.

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But if I have some bad points and errors, I am ready to accept judgments and accusations from the compatriots.

Today, as I leave my office, I ask the compatriots, combatants and cadres, together with all popular organizations and religions, to forgive those errors I have committed against the nation during my presidential term.

I would like to thank the National Assembly, all constitutionally established organs, all organizations, religious individuals, compatriots of all walks of life and the brother and sister combatants and cadres for the cooperation and assistance they have given me through all the ups and ~~downs~~ of the country until the present. Our nation will remember forever the merits of these compatriots and friends. Personally, I will also keep them in my memory.

I am resigning but not deserting. From this moment, I place myself at the service of the president, the people and the army. As I step down, Mr Tran Van Huong will become president and our nation will not lose anything. Perhaps, our country will gain another combatant on the battlefield. I will stand shoulder-to-shoulder with the compatriots and combatants to defend the country.

Now, I thank the compatriots, gentlemen and the brother and sister combatants and cadres throughout the country; and I say ~~goodby~~ to them. I would like to repeat my request that the bicameral National Assembly and the Supreme Court allow, in the presence of you ladies and gentlemen, Vice President Tran Van Huong to be sworn in as president, in accordance with Article 55 of the Constitution. Thank you.