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CURRENT FOREIGN POLICY

Viet-Nam: The Negotiating Process

Since 1969 the United States, together with the Republic of South Viet-Nam, has made a series of public proposals to end the war in Viet-Nam (see Current Foreign Policy "Program for Peace," October 1971). President Nixon also decided early in his administration to explore the possibility of private negotiations. On August 4, 1969, he sent his Special Assistant for National Security Affairs, Dr. Henry Kissinger, to Paris as his personal representative to begin secret talks.

This pamphlet includes President Nixon's January 25, 1972, statement revealing these negotiations and excerpts from Dr. Kissinger's and Secretary of State William P. Rogers' January 26 and 27 press conference remarks about them. It also contains the latest published peace plans of both sides as of February 7, 1972.

JANUARY 25, 1972— PRESIDENT NIXON'S STATEMENT

Good evening. I have asked for this television time tonight to make public a plan for peace that can end the war in Viet-Nam.

The offer that I shall now present, on behalf of the Government of the United States and the Government of South Viet-Nam, with the full knowledge and approval of President Thieu, is both generous and far reaching.

It is a plan to end the war now; it includes an offer to withdraw all American forces within 6 months of an agreement; its

acceptance would mean the speedy return of all the prisoners of war to their homes.

Three years ago when I took office, there were 550,000 Americans in Viet-Nam; the number killed in action was running as high as 300 a week; there were no plans to bring any Americans home, and the only thing that had been settled in Paris was the shape of the conference table.

I immediately moved to fulfill a pledge I had made to the American people: to bring about a peace that could last, not only for the United States, but for the long-suffering people of Southeast Asia.

There were two honorable paths open to us.

The path of negotiation was, and is, the path we prefer. But it takes two to negotiate; there had to be another way in case the other side refused to negotiate.

That path we called Vietnamization. What it meant was training and equipping the South Vietnamese to defend themselves, and steadily withdrawing Americans as they developed the capability to do so.

The path of Vietnamization has been successful. Two weeks ago, you will recall, I announced that by May 1, American forces in Viet-Nam would be down to 69,000. That means almost one-half million Americans will have been brought home from Viet-Nam over the past 3 years. In terms of American lives, the losses of 300 a week have been reduced by over 95 percent—to less than 10 a week.

But the path of Vietnamization has been the long voyage home. It has strained the patience and tested the perseverance of the American people. What of the shortcut, the shortcut we prefer, the path of negotiation?

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

BUREAU OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS

OFFICE OF MEDIA SERVICES

Progress here has been disappointing. The American people deserve an accounting of why it has been disappointing. Tonight I intend to give you that accounting, and in so doing, I am going to try to break the deadlock in the negotiations.

We have made a series of public proposals designed to bring an end to the conflict. But early in this Administration, after 10 months of no progress in the public Paris talks, I became convinced that it was necessary to explore the possibility of negotiating in private channels, to see whether it would be possible to end the public deadlock.

After consultation with Secretary of State Rogers, our Ambassador in Saigon, and our chief negotiator in Paris, and with the full knowledge and approval of President Thieu, I sent Dr. Kissinger to Paris as my personal representative on August 4, 1969, 30 months ago, to begin these secret peace negotiations.

Since that time, Dr. Kissinger has traveled to Paris 12 times on these secret missions. He has met seven times with Le Duc Tho, one of Hanoi's top political leaders, and Minister Xuan Thuy, head of the North Vietnamese delegation to the Paris talks, and he has met with Minister Xuan Thuy five times alone. I would like, incidentally, to take this opportunity to thank President Pompidou of France for his personal assistance in helping to make arrangements for these secret talks.

This is why I initiated these private negotiations: Privately, both sides can be more flexible in offering new approaches and also private discussions allow both sides to talk frankly, to take positions free from the pressure of public debate.

In seeking peace in Viet-Nam, with so many lives at stake, I felt we could not afford to let any opportunity go by—private or public—to negotiate a settlement. As I have stated on a number of occasions, I was prepared and I remain prepared to explore any avenue, public or private, to speed negotiations to end the war.

For 30 months, whenever Secretary Rogers, Dr. Kissinger, or I were asked about secret negotiations we would only say we were pursuing every possible channel in our search for peace. There was never a leak, because we were determined not to jeopardize the secret negotiations. Until recently, this course showed signs of yielding some progress.

Now, however, it is my judgment that the purposes of peace will best be served by bringing out publicly the proposals we have been making in private.

Nothing is served by silence when the other side exploits our good faith to divide America and to avoid the conference table. Nothing is served by silence when it misleads some Americans into accusing their own government of failing to do what it has already done. Nothing is served by silence when it enables the other side to imply possible solutions publicly that it has already flatly rejected privately.

The time has come to lay the record of our secret negotiations on the table. Just as secret negotiations can sometimes break a public deadlock, public disclosure may help to break a secret deadlock.

Some Americans, who believed what the North Vietnamese led them to believe, have charged that the United States has not pursued negotiations intensively. As the record that I now will disclose will show, just the opposite is true.

Questions have been raised as to why we have not proposed a deadline for the withdrawal of all American forces in exchange for a cease-fire and the return of our prisoners of war; why we have not discussed the 7-point proposal made by the Viet-Cong last July in Paris; why we have not submitted a new plan of our own to move the negotiations off dead center.

The Record

As the private record will show, we have taken all these steps and more—and have been flatly rejected or ignored by the other side.

On May 31, 1971, 8 months ago, at one of the secret meetings in Paris, we offered specifically to agree to a deadline for the withdrawal of all American forces in exchange for the release of all prisoners of war and a cease-fire.

At the next private meeting, on June 26, the North Vietnamese rejected our offer. They privately proposed instead their own 9-point plan which insisted that we overthrow the Government of South Viet-Nam.

Five days later, on July 1, the enemy publicly presented a different package of proposals—the 7-point Viet-Cong plan.

That posed a dilemma: Which package should we respond to, the public plan or the secret plan?

On July 12, at another private meeting in Paris, Dr. Kissinger put that question to the North Vietnamese directly. They said we should deal with their 9-point secret plan, because it covered all of Indochina including Laos and Cambodia, while the Viet-Cong 7-point proposal was limited to Viet-Nam.

So that is what we did. But we even went beyond that, dealing with some of the points in the public plan that were not covered in the secret plan.

On August 16, at another private meeting, we went further. We offered the complete withdrawal of U.S. and allied forces within 9 months after an agreement on an overall settlement. On September 13, the North Vietnamese rejected that proposal. They continued to insist that we overthrow the South Vietnamese Government.

Now, what has been the result of these private efforts? For months, the North Vietnamese have been berating us at the public sessions for not responding to their side's publicly presented 7-point plan.

The truth is that we did respond to the enemy's plan, in the manner they wanted us to respond—secretly. In full possession of our complete response, the North Vietnamese publicly denounced us for not having responded at all. They induced many Americans in the press and in the Congress into echoing their propaganda—Americans who could not know they were being used by the enemy to stir up divisiveness in this country.

I decided in October that we should make another attempt to break the deadlock. I consulted with President Thieu, who concurred fully in a new plan. On October 11, I sent a private communication to the North Vietnamese that contained new elements that could move negotiations forward. I urged a meeting on November 1 between Dr. Kissinger and Special Advisor Le Duc Tho, or some other appropriate official from Hanoi.

On October 25, the North Vietnamese agreed to meet and suggested November 20 as the time for a meeting. On November 17, just 3 days before the scheduled meeting, they said Le Duc Tho was ill. We offered to meet as soon as he recovered, either with him, or immediately with any other authorized leader who could come from Hanoi.

Two months have passed since they called off that meeting. The only reply to

our plan has been an increase in troop infiltration from North Viet-Nam and Communist military offensives in Laos and Cambodia. Our proposal for peace was answered by a step-up in the war on their part.

That is where matters stand today.

We are being asked publicly to respond to proposals that we answered, and in some respects accepted, months ago in private.

We are being asked publicly to set a terminal date for our withdrawals when we already offered one in private.

And the most comprehensive peace plan of this conflict lies ignored in a secret channel, while the enemy tries again for military victory.

That is why I have instructed Ambassador [William J.] Porter to present our plan publicly at this Thursday's session of the Paris peace talks, along with alternatives to make it even more flexible.

U.S. Peace Plan

We are publishing the full details of our plan tonight. It will prove beyond doubt which side has made every effort to make these negotiations succeed. It will show unmistakably that Hanoi—not Washington or Saigon—has made the war go on.

Here is the essence of our peace plan; public disclosure may gain it the attention it deserves in Hanoi.

Within 6 months of an agreement:

- We shall withdraw all U.S. and allied forces from South Viet-Nam.
- We shall exchange all prisoners of war.
- There shall be a cease-fire throughout Indochina.
- There shall be a new Presidential election in South Viet-Nam.

President Thieu will announce the elements of this election. These include international supervision and an independent body to organize and run the election, representing all political forces in South Viet-Nam, including the National Liberation Front.

Furthermore, President Thieu has informed me that within the framework of the agreement outlined above, he makes the following offer: He and Vice President Huong would be ready to resign 1 month before the new election. The Chairman of the Senate, as caretaker head of the government, would assume administrative responsibilities in South Viet-Nam, but the elec-

tion would be the sole responsibility of the independent election body I have just described.

There are several other proposals in our new peace plan; for example, as we offered privately on July 26 of last year, we remain prepared to undertake a major reconstruction program throughout Indochina, including North Viet-Nam, to help all these peoples recover from the ravages of a generation of war.

We will pursue any approach that will speed negotiations.

We are ready to negotiate the plan I have outlined tonight and conclude a comprehensive agreement on all military and political issues. Because some parts of this agreement could prove more difficult to negotiate than others, we would be willing to begin implementing certain military aspects while negotiations continue on the implementation of other issues, just as we suggested in our private proposal in October.

Or, as we proposed last May, we remain willing to settle only the military issues and leave the political issues to the Vietnamese alone. Under this approach, we would withdraw all U.S. and allied forces within 6 months in exchange for an Indochina cease-fire and the release of all prisoners.

The choice is up to the enemy.

This is a settlement offer which is fair to North Viet-Nam and fair to South Viet-Nam. It deserves the light of public scrutiny by these nations and by other nations throughout the world. And it deserves the united support of the American people.

We made the substance of this generous offer privately over 3 months ago. It has not been rejected, but it has been ignored. I reiterate that peace offer tonight. It can no longer be ignored.

The only thing this plan does not do is to join our enemy to overthrow our ally, which the United States of America will never do. If the enemy wants peace, it will have to recognize the important difference between settlement and surrender.

This has been a long and agonizing struggle. But it is difficult to see how anyone, regardless of his past position on the war, could now say that we have not gone the extra mile in offering a settlement that is fair, fair to everybody concerned.

By the steadiness of our withdrawal of troops, America has proven its resolution to end our involvement in the war; by our

readiness to act in the spirit of conciliation, America has proven its desire to be involved in the building of a permanent peace throughout Indochina.

We are ready to negotiate peace immediately.

If the enemy rejects our offer to negotiate, we shall continue our program of ending American involvement in the war by withdrawing our remaining forces as the South Vietnamese develop the capability to defend themselves.

If the enemy's answer to our peace offer is to step up their military attacks, I shall fully meet my responsibility as Commander in Chief of our Armed Forces to protect our remaining troops.

We do not prefer this course of action.

We want to end the war not only for America but for all the people of Indochina. The plan I have proposed tonight can accomplish that goal.

Some of our citizens have become accustomed to thinking that whatever our government says must be false, and whatever our enemies say must be true, as far as this war is concerned. Well, the record I have revealed tonight proves the contrary. We can now demonstrate publicly what we have long been demonstrating privately—that America has taken the initiative not only to end our participation in this war, but to end the war itself for all concerned.

This has been the longest, the most difficult war in American history.

Honest and patriotic Americans have disagreed as to whether we should have become involved at all nine years ago; and there has been disagreement on the conduct of the war. The proposal I have made tonight is one on which we all can agree.

Let us unite now, unite in our search for peace—a peace that is fair to both sides—a peace that can last.

JANUARY 26, 1972— DR. HENRY KISSINGER

(excerpts from statement and press conference)

... There has been no issue of greater concern to this Administration than to end the war in Viet-Nam on a negotiated basis. We have done so because of what we felt the war was doing to us as a people and because we felt that it was essential that whatever differences that may have existed about how we entered the war and how we

conducted the war, that we ended it in a way that showed that we had been fair, that we had been reasonable, and that all concerned people could support.

We have not approached these negotiations in order to score debating points. We have not conducted these negotiations in order to gain any domestic benefits. In the very first meeting that we conducted with the other side, we mentioned these principles: We said, one, we want a just settlement. Secondly, we recognize you will be there after we have left and therefore, it is in our interest that we make a settlement that you will want to keep.

We have said that we will try to make a settlement that takes account of your sacrifices and of your concerns. I mentioned principles that were advanced in meetings that were not intended for publication at a time when we would have liked nothing better than to be able to conclude secretly what has been, for many of us, the greatest goal that we have set for ourselves in this Administration.

I mention that because whatever the debates now should be—and even though we don't argue that other proposals are not possible, we put these proposals forward with the intention to be fair, to be just—that if we do not succeed in convincing fair-minded Americans that we have made a serious effort, then no matter what debating points we score besides are irrelevant.

I think this is important to understand, the spirit in which we approach it. And in order to illustrate this spirit, let me read you the two notes, one with which we transmitted our last proposal to the other side and the other one in which we proposed that we were ready for a meeting.

U.S. Notes

The note which we transmitted with our October 11 proposal read as follows:

"At the September 13 meeting, Minister Xuan Thuy stated that the U.S. side should review the various suggestions made by the North Vietnamese. The North Vietnamese side has also said that it would be forthcoming if a generous proposal is made by the U.S. side. The U.S. believes that this new proposal goes to the limits of possible generosity and fully takes into account North Vietnamese propositions. The United States hopes that the North Vietnamese response will reflect the same attitude.

"Dr. Kissinger is prepared to meet on November 1, 1971 with Mr. Le Duc Tho or

some other appropriate official from Hanoi, together with Minister Xuan Thuy. He will be prepared at that meeting also to take account of other points that have been discussed in previous meetings in this channel.

"In the interim, it is expected that both sides will refrain from bringing pressures through public statements which can only serve to complicate the situation.

"The U.S. side is putting forward these new proposals as one last attempt to negotiate a just settlement before the end of 1971."

Then when on November 17 we were told that Mr. Le Duc Tho was ill, on November 19, we transmitted the following message:

"On October 11, 1971, the U.S. side made a comprehensive proposal designed to bring a rapid end to the war on a basis just for all parties. The United States proposal took fully into account the propositions of the North Vietnamese side, including all the concerns raised at the last private meeting on September 13, 1971.

"The U.S. side further indicated that it would be prepared to take account of other points that have been discussed in previous meetings in this channel. The U.S. proposed a meeting on November 1, 1971, between Dr. Kissinger and Special Adviser Le Duc Tho or some other appropriate official from Hanoi, together with Minister Xuan Thuy. The North Vietnamese, in an October 25, 1971, message said that Special Adviser Le Duc Tho and Minister Xuan Thuy agreed to meet with Dr. Kissinger on November 20, 1971. The U.S. side accepted this new date.

"On November 17, 1971, the North Vietnamese side informed the U.S. side that Special Adviser Le Duc Tho was now ill and unable to attend the November 20 meeting. The U.S. side regrets this illness. Under these circumstances, no point would be served by a meeting.

"The U.S. side stands ready to meet with Special Advisor Le Duc Tho or any other representative of the North Vietnamese political leadership, together with Minister Xuan Thuy, in order to bring a rapid end to the war on a basis just for all parties. It will wait to hear recommendations from the North Vietnamese side as to a suitable date."

Two Contentious Issues

... Now, let me sum up what the two contentious issues are so that we can narrow the debate. There is no debate—I have watched some commentaries and read some newspapers—about the cease-fire as part of the settlement. We may well differ about

how we define the cease-fire, but that is not a contentious issue.

In fact, of the nine points of the other side, seven have been more or less—I don't want to say agreed to, but the differences have been narrowed to manageable proportions. There are two issues, one is the withdrawal, the other is the political evolution.

With respect to the withdrawal, there is an ambiguity about the word "date certain." The North Vietnamese position is that we should set a date, that we will implement it, regardless of what else happens, regardless of whether there is a prisoner exchange, regardless of how they negotiate their own proposal. In other words, that we should get out unilaterally.

Moreover, they define withdrawal not just as the withdrawal of American forces, but the withdrawal of all American equipment, all economic aid, all military aid, which is, in considering the fact that they receive from \$800 million to \$1 billion worth of aid from their allies, a prescription for a unilateral turnover.

On the political evolution, our basic principle has been a principle we have been prepared to sign together with them, that we are not committed to any one political structure or government in South Viet-Nam. Our principle has been that we want a political evolution that gives the people of South Viet-Nam a genuine opportunity to express their preferences.

We have pointed out, in innumerable meetings, that we recognize that this is a tough problem. We have indicated with extraordinary repetitiveness, as those of you who have heard me will not challenge, with extraordinary repetitiveness, that we know that Vietnamese traditions are different and that we are prepared to listen to their version of what a free political process might be like.

We have searched our souls to try to come up with a proposal that seems free to us and after all, the agreement by the existing government—to have a commission comprising the people that wish to overthrow them run, organize, and supervise the election, to put the election under international supervision and to resign a month before the election—is not just a trivial proposal.

The North Vietnamese position has been that they want us to agree with them, first, on replacing the existing government and secondly, on a structure in which the probability of their taking over is close to certainty.

They want us, in other words, to do in the political field the same thing that they are asking us to do in the military field, to negotiate the terms of the turnover to them, regardless of what the [South Vietnamese] people may think.

Now, the North Vietnamese had proved to be masters in ambiguity. Throughout these months while we were negotiating the nine points and they were lacerating us for not responding to the seven points, successions of Americans came back from Paris, saying that they knew that if we would just make a proposal in the military field this would unlock the door. At the precise moment they had told us, with even greater repetitiveness than I am capable of, that there was no solution that did not include a political element; that there was no military proposal, as indeed, they have now said publicly to the New York Times and yesterday in anticipation of what they thought might be the President's proposal last night.

They have said that they want a government composed of people who stand for peace, neutrality, and independence. There is another magic word which eludes me at the moment. And Americans cannot object to this proposal. The only thing is, they [the North Vietnamese] are the only ones who know who stands for peace, neutrality, and independence.

Whenever in these negotiations we have said, "All right, you don't like Thieu. How about this fellow, or that fellow, or that fellow?" there is almost no one that we know who they believe stands for peace, neutrality, and independence.

U.S. Position

So I would like to express this to you. The issue is to us: We are prepared, in all conscience and in all seriousness, to negotiate with them immediately any scheme that any reasonable person can say leaves open the political future of South Viet-Nam to the people of South Viet-Nam, just as we are not prepared to withdraw without knowing anything at all of what is going to happen next. So we are not prepared to end this war by turning over the Government of South Viet-Nam as part of a political deal.

We are prepared to have a political process in which they can have a chance of winning, which is not loaded in any direction. We have given our views of what this political process might be. We are prepared to listen to their views of what that political

process might be. And we said in both notes of last fall, notes that were not intended for publication, at a time when we were hoping to be able to step before you with an agreement, that we are prepared to listen to their points.

Now, there has been some question of, "Did they ask us to replace or overthrow"—or whatever the word is—"the existing government in South Viet-Nam?"

We have every interest in stepping before you with total honesty. They have asked two things of us:

Position of Other Side

One, an indirect overthrow of the government; that is to say, that we have to withdraw. The way they phrase it, we would have to withdraw all American equipment, even that which the South Vietnamese Army has. They have asked us to withdraw all equipment, all future military aid, all future economic aid, and the practical consequence of that proposal, while they are receiving close to \$1 billion worth of foreign aid, would be the indirect overthrow of the Government of South Viet-Nam, something about which there can be no question.

But they have further asked us, and we do not want to be forced to prove it, to change the government directly, generously leaving the method to us, and, therefore, the President's statement was true and is supportable.

We have no interest in engaging in a debate with the North Vietnamese that would force any more of this record into the open. We do have an interest that the American public understand exactly what is at issue today.

So, I repeat, on the political side, the war is not continuing because we want to maintain a government. We said on July 26 and on August 16, on July 26 orally and on August 16 in writing, that we would abide by the outcome of any political process in South Viet-Nam and that they were not committed to any particular government.

We have, in the proposals of October 11 and in the proposals we shall make tomorrow [at Paris], that is to say, January 27—the proposal the President made last night—we have outlined a detailed process by which immediately upon signature of an agreement, one of the most important aspects of sovereignty, the organizing and running of elections, would be put outside the existing government, and where the

existing government would resign a month before the election, and we have told the other side that we are prepared to consider other proposals.

So, this is where we stand today. I am sorry that I have taken so much time in explaining it, but I think it is important that we understand what the issues are and that we debate them in the spirit in which we have tried to advance them, which is to find a just settlement that can bring real peace to Indochina and that can unite our own people.

Now, I will be glad to take questions.

Q. Dr. Kissinger, knowing the attitude now of the North Vietnamese as you do, could you give us a prognosis of what you expect the full exposure of the secret negotiations really to accomplish, beyond what I think you have implied here, of composing some of the domestic disharmony that has been caused by the Viet-Nam war?

Dr. Kissinger: Of course, we would have to say that composing the domestic disharmony is a very major objective of our entire policy. If we can end the war that has divided us so much as a united people and with some dignity, then that is of very profound significance for America.

So we admit, this is one motive. The other is, we had reached a point at which our public and our private positions were diverging so much that rather than accelerating a settlement, the secret negotiations had the practical consequence of making it more difficult.

The great advantage of secret negotiations is that you can leapfrog public positions without the turmoil that any change in positions brings about internationally and domestically in some of the countries concerned.

But here we were in a situation in which we were being pressed by sincere Americans at least to answer a proposal which we were already dealing with and in which a whole liturgy was developing on the negotiations with perfect good faith, and in which the resulting division made the other side believe that the negotiations really were a form more of psychological warfare than of negotiations.

Thirdly, it is conceivable to us, since the Vietnamese did not survive 2,000 years under foreign pressure by developing qualities of excessive trust in foreigners, it is conceivable to us that they may have

PRIVATE PROPOSAL

NORTH VIETNAMESE 9-POINT PROPOSAL AT PRIVATE MEETING JUNE 26, 1971 MADE PUBLIC AT PARIS, JANUARY 31, 1972

1. The withdrawal of the totality of U.S. forces and those of foreign countries in the U.S. camp from South Vietnam and other Indochinese countries should be completed within 1971.

2. The release of all military men and civilians captured in the war should be carried out in parallel and completed at the same time as the troop withdrawals mentioned in Point 1.

3. In South Vietnam the U.S. should stop supporting Thieu/Ky/Khiem so that there may be set up in Saigon a new Administration standing for peace, independence, neutrality, and democracy. The Provisional Revolutionary Government of the Republic of South Vietnam will enter into talks with that Administration to settle the internal affairs of South Vietnam and to achieve national concord.

4. The United States Government must bear full responsibility for the damages caused by the United States to the peace of the whole of Vietnam. The government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam and the Provisional Revolutionary Government of the Republic of South Vietnam demand from the U.S. Government reparations for the damage caused by the U.S. in the two zones of Vietnam.

5. The U.S. should respect the 1954 Geneva Agreements on Indochina and those of 1962 on Laos. It should stop its aggression and intervention in the Indochinese countries and let their people settle by themselves their own affairs.

6. The problems existing among the Indochinese countries should be settled by the Indochinese parties on the basis of mutual respect for the independence, sovereignty, territorial integrity and non-interference in each other's affairs. As far as it is concerned, the Democratic Republic of Vietnam is prepared to join in resolving such problems.

7. All the parties should achieve a cease-fire after the signing of the agreements on the above mentioned problems.

8. There should be an international supervision.

9. There should be an international guarantee for the fundamental national rights of the Indochinese peoples, the neutrality of South Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia, and lasting peace in this region.

The above points form an integrated whole and are closely related to one another.

considered our proposals of October 11 a negotiating ploy and therefore, by making them public and by President Thieu publicly committing himself to this evolution, we added a crucial new ingredient to the situation which we hope may unlock some of the problems.

We may be unduly influenced by our own bureaucratic experience, but it is not unknown that governments delay acting on things unless there is some impetus that requires a decision and that if something is painful or difficult, there is a tendency to push it into the future. . . .

Q. Dr. Kissinger, you described a process of negotiation that was taking place secretly over a period of several months and then it suddenly stopped. You have received no answer from the other side from November on. Why do you think the process stopped?

Dr. Kissinger: Let me be precise about what happened. The easy explanation is that they objected to our proposal, but that could not be true, because we submitted our proposal on October 11. We received a rather conciliatory reply, not as to substance, but as to the willingness to meet, on October 25, as I recall, in which they pointed out to us that our proposed date of November 1 was not possible and for the first time in our experience with them, even

gave us the reasons why it was not possible.

Our experience has been that they would never accept the date we proposed. That has never happened, so they gave us another date and explained why that other date was preferable for them. We accepted that other date, which was November 20.

On November 17, or three days before that meeting, they notified us that Le Duc Tho was ill. Now everyone who has been engaged in these negotiations knows that in his absence no major change can occur. We tested it ourselves in our experience by meeting five times alone with Minister Xuan Thuy, whom we respect. It is no reflection on Minister Xuan Thuy, it is simply a fact of the power relationship in Hanoi, that Le Duc Tho, being a member of the Politburo, has authority that no official of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has.

So . . . what happened between October 25 and November 17 . . . is a question that also occupies us.

Q. What have you done to try to contact them to try to get it started again?

Dr. Kissinger: As I have pointed out, after they turned it down on November 17, we told them on November 19 that we stood ready to meet at any time, and that we were awaiting their recommendations. We reiterated what I had said previously. We reiterated that we were not offering this

proposal on a take-it-or-leave-it basis; but that we were prepared to consider other proposals that they might choose to make. This is the one to which they have never responded.

Since then, we have indirectly pointed out to them that the channel was still open through a number of devices that I cannot explain to you, but which were not formal communications. But there can be no question that they can be under no misapprehension that we have been prepared to meet, and I can reiterate that today.

We are still ready to resume talks in either public or private channels, or by other methods with which they are familiar. So there is no question about our readiness to negotiate.

Prospects for Settlement

Q. Two specific, related questions: One, is there any specific significance to the particular timing of this revelation; and two, given the deterioration of the military situation in Laos and Cambodia and the apparent impending military buildup on the other side for Tet, what prospect, if any, is there for getting them to terms?

Dr. Kissinger: We had always thought that if our negotiations with the other side, our secret negotiations, would not make some significant progress by the time Con-

UNITED STATES PROPOSAL AT PRIVATE MEETING OCTOBER 11, 1971

1. The United States agrees to the total withdrawal from South Vietnam of all U.S. forces and other foreign forces allied with the government of South Vietnam. This withdrawal will be carried out in the following manner:

- All American and allied forces, except for a small number of personnel needed for technical advice, logistics, and observance of the ceasefire mentioned in point 6, will be withdrawn by July 1, 1972, provided that this statement of principles is signed by December 1, 1971. The terminal date for these withdrawals will in no event be later than seven months after this statement of principles is signed.
- The remaining personnel, in turn, will be progressively withdrawn beginning one month before the Presidential election mentioned in point 3 and simultaneously with the resignations of the incumbent President and Vice President of South Vietnam also provided for in point 3. These withdrawals will be completed by the date of the Presidential election.

2. The release of all military men and innocent civilians captured throughout Indochina will be carried out in parallel with the troop withdrawals mentioned in point 1. Both sides will present a complete list of military men and innocent civilians held throughout Indochina on the day this statement of principles is signed. The release will begin on the same day as the troop withdrawals and will be completed by July 1, 1972, provided this statement is signed by December 1, 1971. The completion of this release will in no event be later than seven months after this statement is signed.

3. The following principles will govern the political future of South Vietnam:

The political future of South Vietnam will be left for the South Vietnamese people to decide for themselves, free from outside interference.

There will be a free and democratic Presidential election in South Vietnam within six months of the signature of the final agreement based on the principles in this statement. This election will be organized and run by an independent body representing all political forces in South Vietnam which will assume its responsibilities on the date of the final agreement. This body will, among other responsibilities, determine the qualification of candidates. All political forces in South Vietnam can participate in the election and present candidates. There will be international supervision of this election.

One month before the Presidential election takes place, the incumbent President and Vice President of South Vietnam will resign. A caretaker Administration, headed by the Chairman of the

Senate, will assume administrative responsibilities except for those pertaining to the election, which will remain with the independent election body.

The United States, for its part, declares that it:

- will support no candidate and will remain completely neutral in the election;
- will abide by the outcome of this election and any other political processes shaped by the South Vietnamese people themselves;
- is prepared to define its military and economic assistance relationship with any government that exists in South Vietnam.

Both sides agree that:

- South Vietnam, together with the other countries of Indochina, should adopt a foreign policy of neutrality;
- reunification of Vietnam should be decided on the basis of discussions and agreements between North and South Vietnam without constraint and annexation from either party, and without foreign interference.

4. Both sides will respect the 1954 Geneva Agreements on Indochina and those of 1962 on Laos. There will be no foreign intervention in the Indochinese countries and the Indochinese peoples will be left to settle by themselves their own affairs.

5. The problems existing among the Indochinese countries will be settled by the Indochinese parties on the basis of mutual respect for independence, sovereignty, territorial integrity and non-interference in each other's affairs. Among the problems that will be settled is the implementation of the principle that all armed forces of the countries of Indochina must remain within their national frontiers.

6. There will be a general ceasefire throughout Indochina, to begin when the final agreement is signed. As part of the ceasefire, there will be no further infiltration of outside forces into any of the countries of Indochina.

7. There will be international supervision of the military aspects of this agreement including the ceasefire and its provisions, the release of prisoners of war and innocent civilians, and the withdrawal of outside forces from Indochina.

8. There will be an international guarantee for the fundamental national rights of the Indochinese peoples, the neutrality of all the countries of Indochina, and lasting peace in this region.

Both sides express their willingness to participate in an international conference for this and other appropriate purposes.

gress returned, we would owe it to the public and to the Congress to put before them the framework within which negotiations had been conducted. It was not fair to our public debate to engage in a series of battles with the Senate in which we were trying to protect a channel that was not active.

We went through last year without answering months of criticism of refusal to respond to the seven points. We are not blaming the people who did it, because they

had no other evidence to go on. But we endured months of criticism about deadlocks, about failure to respond to the seven points, about lack of imagination, because we thought that there was a chance of making progress and, therefore, this decision was made at the end of December, at a time when we actually did not think that there would be a major offensive, but a series of high points.

Now, the fact that there may be an offensive impending may add another ele-

ment to it in this sense: This war has to end sometime, and sometime it must end through negotiations. It is not we who are looking for a military victory. We have tried to end it on the basis of the principles which we put before the North Vietnamese months ago. I don't mean the formal principles, but the principles of justice, of recognition that they would be there, of recognition that while they may have reason to be suspicious, we know that if they don't have an interest in maintaining the settle-

CURRENT PUBLISHED PROPOSALS

REPUBLIC OF VIET-NAM AND UNITED STATES PROPOSAL FOR A NEGOTIATED SETTLEMENT OF THE INDOCHINA CONFLICT AS PUBLISHED JANUARY 25, 1972 BY THE WHITE HOUSE AND PRESENTED AT PARIS JANUARY 27, 1972

1. There will be a total withdrawal from South Vietnam of all U.S. forces and other foreign forces allied with the government of South Vietnam within six months of an agreement.

2. The release of all military men and innocent civilians captured throughout Indochina will be carried out in parallel with the troop withdrawals mentioned in point 1. Both sides will present a complete list of military men and innocent civilians held throughout Indochina on the day the agreement is signed. The release will begin on the same day as the troop withdrawals and will be completed when they are completed.

3. The following principles will govern the political future of South Vietnam:

The political future of South Vietnam will be left for the South Vietnamese people to decide for themselves, free from outside interference.

There will be a free and democratic Presidential election in South Vietnam within six months of an agreement. This election will be organized and run by an independent body representing all political forces in South Vietnam which will assume its responsibilities on the date of the agreement. This body will, among other responsibilities, determine the qualification of candidates. All political forces in South Vietnam can participate in the election and present candidates. There will be international supervision of this election.

One month before the Presidential election takes place, the incumbent President and Vice President of South Vietnam will resign. The Chairman of the Senate, as caretaker head of the government, will assume administrative responsibilities except for those pertaining to the election, which will remain with the independent election body.

The United States, for its part, declares that it:

- will support no candidate and will remain completely neutral in the election;
- will abide by the outcome of this election and any other political processes shaped by the South Vietnamese people themselves;
- is prepared to define its military and economic assistance

relationship with any government that exists in South Vietnam.

Both sides agree that:

—South Vietnam, together with the other countries of Indochina, should adopt a foreign policy consistent with the military provisions of the 1954 Geneva Accords;

—reunification of Vietnam should be decided on the basis of discussions and agreements between North and South Vietnam without constraint and annexation from either party, and without foreign interference.

4. Both sides will respect the 1954 Geneva Agreements on Indochina and those of 1962 on Laos. There will be no foreign intervention in the Indochinese countries and the Indochinese peoples will be left to settle their own affairs by themselves.

5. The problems existing among the Indochinese countries will be settled by the Indochinese parties on the basis of mutual respect for independence, sovereignty, territorial integrity and non-interference in each other's affairs. Among the problems that will be settled is the implementation of the principle that all armed forces of the countries of Indochina must remain within their national frontiers.

6. There will be a general ceasefire throughout Indochina, to begin when the agreement is signed. As part of the ceasefire, there will be no further infiltration of outside forces into any of the countries of Indochina.

7. There will be international supervision of the military aspects of this agreement including the ceasefire and its provisions, the release of prisoners of war and innocent civilians, the withdrawal of outside forces from Indochina, and the implementation of the principle that all armed forces of the countries of Indochina must remain within their national frontiers.

8. There will be an international guarantee for the fundamental national rights of the Indochinese peoples, the status of all the countries in Indochina, and lasting peace in this region.

Both sides express their willingness to participate in an international conference for this and other appropriate purposes.

ment, we will have a continuation of what happened in 1954.

People say they were tricked in 1954. I don't want to enter that debate as to whether they were or not. All I want to say is if they feel that they were taken advantage of, then within a foreseeable future the war will start again. So it is in our interest to have a settlement that takes this into account.

Now the question is: Is there to be another round of warfare? We believe that we can contain the offensive, and it is even possible, maybe even probable, that the reason they make the offensive is as a prelude to a subsequent negotiation. This at least has been their pattern in 1954 and was their pattern in 1968.

So this is an attempt to say to them once again, "It is not necessary. Let's get the war over with now." But our basic decision was made at a time prior to the event. . . .

Q. Dr. Kissinger, can you give us, sir, in your judgment, the reason why the North Vietnamese, in dealing with the United States, would insist on the United States reaching comprehensive solutions, including a political solution? Why are they unwilling to negotiate with us, in your judgment, on the military issue and take their chances in settling the political issues with the South Vietnamese?

Dr. Kissinger: The only explanation which I have, and there may be better ones,

is that they apparently are not confident that if military and economic aid continues to South Viet-Nam that they can win their war with the South Vietnamese, because if they were, there is no reason why they should not accept our proposal, as you indicated. What they are, in effect, asking from us is precisely what the President said yesterday:

They are asking us to align ourselves with them, to overthrow the people that have been counting on us in South Viet-Nam. They are asking us to accomplish for them what they seem not confident of being able to achieve for themselves.

That is the only explanation I can give, but I do not absolutely insist on it. It is a curious phenomenon; that is, it is they who

CURRENT PUBLISHED PROPOSALS

EXCERPTS OF VIET CONG (PROVISIONAL REVOLUTIONARY GOVERNMENT) PROPOSAL PRESENTED AT PARIS PEACE TALKS FEBRUARY 3, 1972

While resolutely fighting against U.S. aggression, the Vietnamese people have always shown their goodwill and desire to settle peacefully the Vietnam problem. Their negotiating position, the most reasonable and logical one, designed to bring about genuine peace and independence has been given a full expression in the seven-point solution put forward on July 1, 1971, by the Provisional Revolutionary Government of the Republic of South Vietnam, and in the nine-point proposal made on June 26, 1971, by the Government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam.

Proceeding from the fundamental rights of the Vietnamese people and the South Vietnamese people's right to self-determination the Provisional Revolutionary Government of the Republic of South Vietnam wishes to elaborate on the two key problems in the seven-point solution to stop the U.S. war of aggression, and to put a complete end to the "Vietnamization" policy as follows:

1. Regarding the withdrawal of U.S. troops and the cessation of the U.S. air war and all U.S. military activities in Vietnam.

The U.S. Government should stop its air war and all military activities in Vietnam, rapidly and completely withdraw from South Vietnam all U.S. troops, advisers, military personnel, weapons and war materials and those of the other foreign countries in the U.S. camp and dismantle the U.S. military bases in South Vietnam.

The U.S. Government should set a specific terminal date for the complete withdrawal from South Vietnam of all U.S. troops, advisers, military personnel, weapons and war materials and those of the other foreign countries in the U.S. camp without posing any conditions whatsoever. This specific terminal date will also be the terminal date for the release of all military men of the parties and of the civilians captured during the war (including the U.S. pilots captured in North Vietnam).

2. Regarding the political problem in South Vietnam.

The U.S. Government should really respect the South Viet-

namese people's right to self-determination, put an end to all interference in the internal affairs of South Vietnam.

Nguyen Van Thieu and his machine of oppression and constraint, instruments of the U.S. "Vietnamization" policy, constitute the main obstacle to the settlement of the political problem in South Vietnam. Therefore, Nguyen Van Thieu must resign immediately, the Saigon administration must end its warlike policy, disband at once its machine of oppression and constraint against the people, stop its "pacification" policy, disband the concentration camps, set free those persons arrested on political grounds and guarantee to the people the democratic liberties as provided for by the 1954 Geneva agreements on Vietnam.

After the above has been achieved, the Provisional Revolutionary Government of the Republic of South Vietnam will immediately discuss with the Saigon administration the formation of a three-segment government of national concord with a view to organizing general elections in South Vietnam, to elect a constituent assembly, work out a constitution, and set up a definitive government of South Vietnam. The general elections will be held according to procedures agreed upon among the political forces in South Vietnam so as to insure effectively their free, democratic and fair character.

Agreement on the above two key problems will make it easy to resolve the other problems with a view to ending the war, and restoring peace in Vietnam. For its part, the Provisional Revolutionary Government of the Republic of South Vietnam is prepared to negotiate an over-all solution for the purpose of signing a comprehensive agreement.

If the United States Government really wants a peaceful settlement of the Vietnam problem, it should respond to the seven-point solution whose two key problems have been elaborated upon and should engage in serious negotiations at the Paris conference on Vietnam.

have insisted that we deliver on the political process, rather than rely on themselves.

Q. Dr. Kissinger, doesn't your interpretation make the prospects rather bleak that they will accept the proposal?

Dr. Kissinger: No. It makes it bleak that they will accept this proposal as long as they believe we may do it for them. If we will not do it for them, then the longer the war continues, the worse that situation gets which they are trying to avoid, and they may settle for a political process which gives them less than 100 percent guarantee, but a fair crack at the political issue.

Q. In view of the criticism you said you endured last year, and in view of your great concern today about undermining the belief of the American people, why did the Administration so vigorously fight things such as the Mansfield amendment and other resolutions of that nature?

Dr. Kissinger: Because there were many variations of the Mansfield amendment. The difficulty has been that we did not want to give the other side the impression that we were in a position where we were forced to accept the withdrawal demand and not be able to discuss the other aspects, and because the precision of their knowledge of the relative constitutional provisions of balance between the Congress and [the] Executive was not so clear.

We did this to maintain the balance. We did inform the Congressional leaders that secret negotiations were going on, but they did not know all the details.

Q. About the time you were opposing the Mansfield resolution, the bombing was also resumed in North Viet-Nam at the end of December. Could these two things have had any influence on the North Vietnamese to stop the secret talks?

Dr. Kissinger: The bombings took place

five weeks after the reported talk, and when there was an enormous step-up in their infiltration, so that one could say the response to the most sweeping offer we had made was a massive step-up in their infiltration and a move toward a military solution. I think you have cause and effect in the reverse order.

Q. Who would decide the composition of the Electoral Commission, the members of it?

Dr. Kissinger: The composition of the Electoral Commission would not be decided by the Saigon government. The composition of the Electoral Commission would be subject to negotiation at the conference and, therefore, would have to be acceptable to the other side before the agreement could be implemented.

Q. Doctor, I believe it was said that the new proposals were being accompanied by

some alternatives. Are these continuing to be discussed?

Dr. Kissinger: The new proposal was accompanied, in the speech, first by a renewed offer to discuss the military issues alone, just in case the North Vietnamese have changed their minds on this, which we think is unlikely, but we just want to make sure that this was true; and secondly, we have offered, on October 11, and we will repeat that offer tomorrow in Paris, a staged approach to the implementation of this agreement by which the withdrawal and exchanges could begin while the other details were still in the process of negotiation, as long as they were completed within the six-month period.

JANUARY 27, 1972— SECRETARY OF STATE ROGERS

Following are excerpts from his statement and relevant questions and answers at a foreign policy conference for editors and broadcasters:

The war in Viet-Nam . . . has been reduced in size and scope; and in terms of American involvement, greatly reduced. The amount of money that we are spending there has gone from about \$22 billion a year to about \$8 billion a year. . . . You are all familiar with the very strenuous, intensive efforts that the President has made to bring about a negotiated peace. I'll be glad to answer questions about that . . .

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Q. Mr. Secretary, some politicians have said that the President's recent statement on Viet-Nam with the 8-point peace proposal was unrealistic, and the Communists initially seem to have rejected it. Do you see a possibility of them reconsidering, and if they don't, what is the next program for the United States in Viet-Nam?

A. The President made the speech [of January 25] . . . in order to give the American people the full facts, so that the American people would understand that we have made every possible effort to bring about a peaceful settlement of the war by negotiations.

I was convinced myself that the reason the North Vietnamese had failed to respond to the President's latest proposal that was

made in October [1971] and the reason that they made attacks on our proposals . . . they were criticizing before in the private session . . . was to attempt to divide the American people from its government. And they, I am sure, have a feeling that maybe they can do that. They were reasonably successful some years ago in that attempt. Because they were not successful militarily, and because the South Vietnamese have been successful, our program has been successful, one of the last remaining hopes they had was to divide the American people from their government.

So we felt that we should disclose what we had done, our willingness to consider other proposals, to make our proposal public, which Ambassador Porter did today in Paris—I have just talked to him—and to indicate a flexibility [on our part] And I think we have been able to convince the American people that we have done everything that reasonable men could do to bring about a negotiated settlement.

Where We Stand

Now, when you analyze where we stand, you can analyze it this way: The North Vietnamese insist that the Government of South Viet-Nam be removed and a government of their choosing—Communist government—take over. Our position is we are prepared to have any government in South Viet-Nam that the people in South Viet-Nam want. And we are prepared to work out any reasonable machinery to determine what the people of South Viet-Nam want.

Now, the North Vietnamese keep talking about self-determination, but they mean by "self-determination" that they should determine who should represent the South Vietnamese people. And they think they should represent the South Vietnamese people, and they want to put a Communist government in. That we can't accept.

On the other hand, the United States and the Government of South Viet-Nam have agreed that we should take every possible step to have an election, which is the only method that we know of that can determine what the people want, and we are perfectly flexible about how that election is to be conducted.

Now, we have offered to have a total withdrawal of our forces from South Viet-Nam before that election takes place. We are prepared to have a commission, an electoral commission, control the election, and included in that commission will be a fair

representation of the Viet Cong, NLF. We are prepared to have it supervised by an international group to be sure that it is fair, and to use any other devices that the other side wants, to be sure that it represents the will of the people.

The present government has agreed to resign before the election and to be bound by the election. It has agreed to have everyone in the country eligible to vote.

Now that is the area of difference. And the United States cannot retreat from that matter of principle.

On the other hand, we are completely flexible about how that election is to be conducted, or how we could determine who the people of South Viet-Nam want to represent them. And I don't know how anyone could suggest that that isn't completely fair.

In view of the tremendous involvement of the United States in the Indochina war, forgetting, putting aside whether it was wise or not wise in the beginning, but considering the total investment that we have made—45,000 Americans killed, over 300,000 Americans wounded, the longest and most agonizing war we have ever experienced—we can't at this stage, when our program is successful (and if you go to Viet-Nam, you can see it, how successful it is) we can't at this stage just say, "All right, we will take part in throwing the present government out and letting the Communists put their leaders in and we'll just get out." That is impossible. We would lose our standing throughout the world. We have defense commitments with Korea and Japan and the Philippines, and other countries—Thailand. If we did that, our credibility, our standing in the world would go to zero.

So, we are fully prepared to work out any kind of a sensible solution to this problem. We have agreed to total withdrawal of our forces from South Viet-Nam, and I think the conclusion that has been reached by the American people—and certainly by the international community—is that we have done everything we can to bring about a negotiated peace.

I might say that I have just looked this morning at the cables we have had from around the world, and the world reaction is extremely favorable to the proposals that the President has made.

Q. Mr. Secretary, do you feel that an eventual settlement may be delayed because we are in a Presidential election year?

A. I don't think it is possible to predict

that. I think that a natural question that arises is, is the fact that we made this disclosure about these private meetings, is that going to speed up or delay the possibilities of a negotiated settlement? My own view is that if there is any inclination at all on the part of the other side to negotiate a settlement—and I think that is in doubt—but if there is any inclination at all to work out a negotiated settlement (and it is possible that they will come to that conclusion if they think they can't achieve their full objectives; they may feel they will have a better shot at achieving their objectives by a negotiated settlement) then the statement by the President the other night, which was so effective and I think will have the effect of unifying the American people, may convince them that they can't divide the American people. And if they are convinced of that, I think they will be more inclined to work out a negotiated settlement.

Political Issues

I am somewhat encouraged by the fact that they have not rejected our proposal in Paris this morning. There has been a good deal of invective about it, but it hasn't been rejected.

And secondly, they have been asking a few questions about what we mean, and how could they be sure that the electoral process would be fair? Now, that is a good sign. That is exactly what negotiations are supposed to do, supposed to provide an opportunity for each side to ask the other, "What do you mean?" and, "How can we be sure?" and so forth—"Let's work it out."

Now, if they should get in that frame of mind, so that they want to actually negotiate, that would be fine. It is possible that we could work out a settlement. It is a perfectly natural question for them to say, "Well, how can we be sure that the election will be fair?" Now, it seems to me we have to say, "Well, what do you want to do to provide fairness? If you are prepared to have an election, what should we do to provide fairness?" We understand the difficulties, but by providing for an election commission who will have complete authority over the elections, and an international supervisory body consisting of other nations, and a total withdrawal of American forces prior to the election, and a resignation by the present government, we certainly have laid down some principles that provide a basis for fair elections.

U.S. Presence in Area

Q. Mr. Secretary, it seems that the issue of American air power in Thailand and the waters off Viet-Nam, and our relationships with Cambodia and with Laos, were conspicuous by their absence in the President's remarks. Are these negotiable elements in this present situation, or for some future negotiating area?

A. Well, as far as Cambodia and Laos are concerned, they are included, because we have indicated that we would like to have an Indochina conference and an Indochina settlement. So there again, it is up to those on the other side as to how you negotiate a settlement. We would like to have a cease-fire in all of Indochina and a nonalignment position for the countries in Indochina, and a permanent peace.

Now, in the case of Thailand, of course, it is different. We have a defense treaty with Thailand, the SEATO treaty, and Thailand is not involved in the war as Cambodia and Laos are. So we would expect that we would, at least for the short run, continue to have some Americans in Thailand. But that doesn't affect the settlement in Indochina involving Laos, Cambodia, and Viet-Nam.

Q. What about the air bases in Thailand?

A. Well, obviously if you are going to have a settlement, it requires a cease-fire, and a cease-fire will certainly include any use of Thai bases. In other words, the proposal contemplates the end of the war, a cease-fire, so we certainly wouldn't use any of our bases for that purpose.

South Vietnamese Attitude

Q. There appears to be a tacit assumption that the results of any elections in South Viet-Nam would be favorable to the United States. What is your own assessment concerning the results of a free election were it held today, and what would be the response of America were that election to choose a Communist government, given the tremendous cost of that war?

A. Yes. Well, that is a good question. The United States is completely, fully, prepared to accept the results of an election, whatever they are. And no one can predict elections with any complete certainty, even in this country, as you ladies and gentlemen know.

But you have asked for my own judgment

on that. I think that the people of South Viet-Nam want to retain their independence and sovereignty. And I think it is interesting that there has been a failure to recognize that they have been fighting this war too, they have had a lot more men in the war than we have. They are carrying almost the whole combat responsibility now. I have been there on two occasions, and I have no doubt that they support an independent, free South Viet-Nam.

Now, I think it is very difficult to predict the outcome of the election in terms of personalities; but certainly the present Government has provided stability and a good deal of economic viability over these years, and it has introduced a land reform program that is quite sweeping in nature. So my guess would be, and I think it is a very sound guess, that the people in South Viet-Nam would support a free system. I think they are opposed to a Communist takeover of their country.

Q. Mr. Secretary, if the North Vietnamese refuse to accept a negotiated settlement, what are the alternatives facing the Administration, and how will we go about pursuing them?

A. If the other side is not interested in negotiating a settlement, then it is quite apparent that it is impossible to negotiate a settlement. And if that is the case, we will proceed with a Vietnamization program which has succeeded rather well. And the President pointed that out in his statement the other night. So we will proceed along that path. We will have, as you know, American forces down to 69,000 by May, and we will reduce them further; the President will make an announcement prior to that time.

But we would hope that my premise is wrong. We would hope it is possible the other side will realize that they cannot succeed to achieve their total objective, which is a takeover of South Viet-Nam by the Communists, and will attempt to work out some negotiated settlement.

New Elements of U.S. Proposal

Let me say in this connection that the President's proposal contains several new elements which are worthy of consideration. I think sometimes because there has been so much said about this matter of Viet-Nam that we lose sight of whether this is the same proposal or not.

First, we have indicated a readiness to

set a fixed date for total withdrawal of all U.S. and allied forces from South Viet-Nam. Six months from the date of the agreement in principle, we will withdraw all U.S. and allied forces from South Viet-Nam.

Second, our withdrawals would be unilateral in a settlement of military issues alone, if they prefer that.

Third, a new presidential election in South Viet-Nam within six months of an agreement.

Fourth, an independent election body, including the NLF, would completely organize and run this election, starting on the date of the agreement and for the entire six

months period until the election. President Thieu and the Vice President would resign one month before the election, and a caretaker government would take over, except for the election responsibilities, and those election responsibilities would be conducted by the independent election body that I have just referred to. All U.S. and allied forces would be out of South Viet-Nam before the election.

The United States is willing to accept limitations on military and economic assistance to South Viet-Nam if North Viet-Nam will accept limitations on aid from its allies.

South Viet-Nam has indicated that it is

willing to adopt the non-alignment provisions of the 1954 Geneva Accords.

Finally, the United States is prepared to undertake a massive reconstruction program in Indochina of several billion dollars, in which North Viet-Nam could share.

Now, these are very far-reaching proposals, which show that we have gone the extra mile, which show that President Nixon has done everything that we can to work out a settlement that is fair to both North Viet-Nam and South Viet-Nam.

We would very much hope that they will consider seriously thinking about a negotiated settlement.

★ U.S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE : 1972 486-292/14

Department of State Publication 8629
East Asian and Pacific Series 205
Released February 1972

For sale by the Superintendent of Documents
U.S. Government Printing Office
Washington, D.C. 20402 - Price 15 cents