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PEACE THROUGH THE BALLOT BOX

On July 11, 1969, in its relentless search for peace and an honorable settlement to the Viet-Nam Conflict, the Republic of Viet-Nam has put forth another major peace proposal, which was subsequently officially submitted to the other side at the Paris Meetings (session of July 17, 1969) for consideration. Despite the extreme reasonableness of this last proposal, the Communist side has maintained its adamant attitude of rejection of every constructive proposal that might be set forth by the allied side.

We therefore print here both the official proposal made by President Nguyen Van Thieu on a nationally televised Address to the Nation on July 11 and the subsequent press conference which the President held with the Foreign press in Saigon at 10:00 A.M. July 19 (Saigon time), which represents an elaboration on the original proposal, so as to make available to the readers of our bulletin these two crucial texts which demonstrate the extent of the RVN's goodwill for peace.

Peace Through Elections

President Thieu's Offer

July 11

Following is the final text of President Nguyen Van Thieu's speech delivered at 9:00 A.M. July 11, 1969, Saigon time:

When I took office as President of the Republic, I pledged before the nation that I would devote my efforts to the restoration of peace.

The Vietnamese people from North to South long for peace after so many years of war and destruction.

All of Viet-Nam has not known real peace for over two decades.

A quarter of a century after the end of World War II and fifteen years after the Geneva Armistice, Viet-Nam is still at war.

War is unnecessary and cannot solve any problem in today's world.

The people and Government of the Republic of Viet-Nam stand for peace, independence, freedom, sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity. The authorities of North Viet-Nam profess that they are pursuing these same goals.

The major question is how best to achieve these goals.

We do not believe that any difference should be solved by means of aggression. After so many years of hostilities, North Viet-Nam should realize that it cannot impose its rule by force. On the contrary, North Viet-Nam's attempts to impose its domination by the use of force have brought destruction and suffering to the people in both parts of Viet-Nam, and nobody can predict the turn of events if this aggression continues much longer.

Our country is very richly endowed by nature. Our people are dynamic, courageous, and hard-working. The brightest future awaits the whole Vietnamese nation if only this fratricidal war could be brought to an end.

In the context of the balance of power in the world today the basic objectives of peace, independence, sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity which North Viet-Nam professes to pursue can be fully attained only if, first, peace can be achieved among the Vietnamese.

Toward that end, as President of the Republic of Viet-Nam, I have made relentless efforts and repeated acts of goodwill.

I can reveal now that, even before the beginning of the preliminary Paris conversations, I had requested the good offices of important international personalities and governments not involved in this conflict to bring about peace negotiations between North Viet-Nam and South Viet-Nam. These efforts did not bring concrete results because of the negative attitude of Hanoi.

Subsequently, on March 31, 1968 we agreed with the United States Government on the cessation of bombing covering most parts of North Viet-Nam, in order to bring about the preliminary Paris conversations.

Later, in November 1968, we concurred with the United States Government on the total cessation of bombing over North Viet-Nam with the understanding that North Viet-Nam would begin serious talks with the Government of the Republic of Viet-Nam. At that time, it was made clear that such talks could not be productive in an atmosphere where the cities were being shelled and the DMZ was being abused.

The acceptance by the Government of Viet-Nam of Hanoi's having the "NLF" on its side at the Paris talks is another important gesture of goodwill on the part of the Government of Viet-Nam.

Later, the continued participation of the Government of Viet-Nam in the Paris talks despite the violations by Hanoi of the understandings relating to the total cessation of bombing of North Viet-Nam, constitutes another indication of our goodwill and sincere desire for peace.

Our acceptance of the formula of simultaneous withdrawal of Communist aggressors and allied troops is another manifestation of our goodwill for peace.

On March 25 this year, I made the offer to the "NLF" for private talks, without preconditions, toward the solution of the internal political problems of South Viet-Nam in a brotherly spirit. This offer still stands.

On April, I presented the Republic of Viet-Nam's six-point program for peace which is comprehensive enough to constitute a sound basis for discussions toward a peace settlement.

At Midway on June 8, with President Nixon, I expressed the intention to seek a just settlement to this conflict in a spirit of patience and goodwill.

President Nixon and I also agreed on the reduction of US troops in Viet-Nam. Further replacements of American troops will be considered at regular intervals.

Communist propaganda has distorted the facts, and reversed the roles in portraying the allied countries in Viet-Nam as aggressors, while they picture themselves as "liberators." The fact for all to see is just the reverse: Communist aggression had started many years before the allied nations began to participate actively in the common defense of freedom.

A few days ago, allied troops have begun to be reduced. Allied troops came

to Viet-Nam after Communist aggression had started, and are being reduced before the Communist aggressors accept to leave the scene. These are facts, and show clearly who, in this conflict, are genuinely for peace.

In contrast to our repeated acts of goodwill for peace, the Communist aggressors have continued to infiltrate troops and war materials into South Viet-Nam and to violate the DMZ, and the neutrality and territorial integrity of Laos and Cambodia. They continue their indiscriminate shellings against the civilian population, and their acts of terrorism. Recently, the Communists' desperate and futile attacks against Tay Ninh and Benhet, their attacks against Muong Suoi in Laos, and their repeated violations of Cambodian territory amply demonstrate the continuation of their aggression, and their desire to seek military victory instead of a peace settlement.

The Communists also persist in refusing to hold serious talks in Paris and in maintaining their absurd demands for the overthrow of the legal Government of the Republic of Viet-Nam, and for the unconditional unilateral withdrawal of allied troops.

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However, this war cannot be permitted to last indefinitely. It should be ended one way or another. We, the peace-loving people, would like to solve this war by way of reconciliation.

To move the negotiations forward, I feel that a major initiative is needed. To that effect, we are willing to make, as another act of goodwill, a comprehensive offer for the political settlement of this conflict.

Both sides in this struggle have said that the internal affairs of South Viet-Nam should be decided by the South Vietnamese themselves, in a free and democratic fashion.

The only way for the people of South Viet-Nam to exercise their right of self-determination, to participate in public affairs, and to determine the future of the country, is through elections in which they can genuinely express their choice, free from fear and coercion.

In this spirit, free elections can be based on the following principles:

- 1) All political parties and groups, including the "NLF" which is now bearing arms against us, can participate in the elections if they renounce violence and pledge themselves to accept the results of the elections.
- 2) To make sure that the elections would be conducted in all fairness, an electoral commission could be set up, in which all political parties and groups, including the "NLF" now fighting against us, could be represented.

The electoral commission will assure equal opportunities in the campaigning to all candidates.

It will also enable all political parties and groups to participate in watching the polls to see that people vote absolutely freely, and in watching the counting of the ballots to see that they are honestly counted.

3) An international body is to be established to supervise the elections, and to make sure that the elections are held under conditions fair to all.

4) We are prepared to discuss with the other side the time-table and the modalities under which the elections will be held.

5) There will be no reprisals or discrimination after the elections.

6) The Government of Viet-Nam declares that it will abide by the results of the elections, whatever these results may be. We challenge the other side to declare the same.

The other side claims that it controls 80 percent of the population of South Viet-Nam. We say that they dominate by force only a small portion of the population. Let these claims be put to test of elections. If the other side really believes its own claims, and really stands for the right of self-determination of the Vietnamese people, there can be no reason for it not to accept our offer of genuinely free elections, in which they can participate without discrimination, not only in the voting but also in the control of the counting of the votes, with international supervision.

To be meaningful, elections should be conducted under conditions under which the South Vietnamese people can exercise their choice, free from fear and coercion.

Thus, there is an obvious connection between free elections, supervised withdrawal of non-South Vietnamese forces, and an end to violence and terrorism.

Today I renew the offer of private talks with the "NLF", without preconditions, to discuss the above and any other questions, toward the restoration of peace and national reconciliation.

The other side should not misconstrue our desire for peace as a sign of weakness. It should not be induced by our repeated acts of goodwill into believing that it has only to remain adamantly negative for us to accept eventual surrender.

We are fighting for a just cause and in self-defense, and we are becoming every day stronger. We shall not grow tired in this struggle. In fact there is a point beyond which we shall get tired of making unilateral acts of goodwill. Hanoi will then have to bear all the consequences of the protracted war, and it has to assume full responsibilities for the sufferings that it imposes on the people in both parts of Viet-Nam.

* * *

Dear Fellow Countrymen,

The fact that today we make another initiative of peace, after many initiatives of peace in the past, clearly demonstrates to public opinion everywhere that the Republic of Viet-Nam once more has maximum goodwill for peace, in contrast to the negative attitude of Hanoi and its auxiliaries. It shows that we never neglect any opportunity to take positive actions for peace.

These are correct actions, and it is our duty, as peace-loving people, to

undertake them even when we are the victims of aggression and are determined to struggle until the aggression is ended.

Besides, initiatives of peace indicate also our real strength. Today, everybody has seen that militarily the Communists cannot defeat us because they have become weaker and more disorganized, while in contrast we become stronger every day and can assume an increasingly larger share in the defense of our country. Politically, we can challenge those who are fighting against us to accept the test of the free choice of the people through elections.

We can do so because we have self-confidence, and because we are convinced that, when the Vietnamese people are given a free choice, they always choose freedom.

For a long time, we the peace-loving people have put forward the policy of national reconciliation, suppression of hatred, and national union. We have sincerely carried out that policy. Today, we continue that policy. Therefore, we do not require those who are fighting against us to surrender. On the contrary, if they renounce violence and terrorism, and sincerely accept the democratic procedures, we shall be most glad to have them cooperate with us in the reconstruction and development of this country, with all the rights and obligations of regular citizens.

As far as I am personally concerned, with the responsibility and conscience of a leader in the face of a war which has been ravaging this country for so many years, which has caused the death of so many brave soldiers, cadres and innocent civilians, which has seen women and children daily killed by the Communists and the destruction suffered by our countrymen, although we have no other choice than to fight to defend our independence and our freedom, I have constantly, every day, searched for possibilities to restore a just peace which can spare the lives of the population, end the sufferings and mournings, and preserve this beloved land from Communist domination.

The country needs peace. We have to rebuild South Viet-Nam to make it strong and prosperous, and prepare for the day when the entire country can be reunified. I cannot go against these national aspirations, which are the aspirations for peace. Therefore, I have constantly devoted all my thoughts and efforts to serve these aspirations of the whole population.

The Communists always pretend that they stand for peace, but have never demonstrated goodwill and are always adamantly negative. They have only one objective, that is, the conquest and enslavement of South Viet-Nam under Communist rule. Therefore, they obstinately pursue this goal by every means, direct or indirect, immediate or long-range actions.

The Communists, in their propaganda, clamored for a so-called "peace government" in South Viet-Nam to negotiate with them. I have declared, and I repeat today, that the present Government under my leadership, which represents the peace-loving people of South Viet-Nam, is a peace government. This I have proven not only by words but also by deeds, through many acts of goodwill and positive initiatives of peace, and the repeated request which we have made to the other side to negotiate seriously toward the speedy restoration of peace.

Today, I make another initiative of peace because I feel that it is my

duty toward the people to do so, and because I place the interests of the Fatherland and the aspirations of the people above everything else.

My personal position and interests do not count in the face of the supreme interests of the Fatherland and aspirations of the people.

Therefore I trust that the initiative of peace which I make today will be approved and supported by all the strata of the population, all the members of the Armed Forces and cadres. It provides a peaceful and rational solution to terminate this war.

I am also confident that, at any time when the circumstances materialize for the people to exercise the right of self-determination through free and democratic elections for the restoration of a just and guaranteed peace in our beloved country, this will have your approval and support.

I am strongly convinced that all the Vietnamese who love freedom and democracy will triumph when they exercise their right of self-determination and free choice. I am sure that all of the 17 million of our countrymen will choose freedom and democracy.

Because of our patriotism, our pride, our self-reliance and our determination not to bow to brutal force, our just cause will prevail and we shall overcome Communism.

Then, I shall consider that I shall have fulfilled my personal aspirations as well as the aspirations of all of you for the establishment of just peace in our beloved country.

Elaboration : President Thieu's Televized Press Conference

With the Foreign Press, 10:00 A.M. July 19

Good morning, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I think you have devoted much of your time to following that great event, the Apollo 11 mission. I too, I have spent many hours at night listening to the radio, and during the daytime watching television. My wife and I also have prayed for the success--the complete success--of the Apollo 11 mission, and I hope that my message to the Moon, like the other messages of the other chiefs of state, would reach the soil of the Moon, for this is a great event in history. We very much congratulate the United States for this success and we pray for the full success of the mission.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As you know, on July 11, I made a major proposal towards the termination of the Viet-Nam war by peaceful and democratic means.

In this war, both sides have said that the purpose of their struggle is the right of self-determination of the people of South Viet-Nam. We therefore feel that the only way for the people of South Viet-Nam to exercise their right of self-determination is through elections in which they can genuinely express their choice, free from fear and coercion.

To that effect, I have made concrete proposals. If the other side renounces violence and accepts, as we do, the results of free elections, whatever these results may be, we are willing to have the National Liberation Front in the elections and in an electoral commission set up to make sure that all the candidates enjoy equal opportunities in the elections. An international body is to be established so that the conditions of fairness under which the elections will be held could be scrutinized by impartial observers.

In Point Four of my proposals, I stated that we are prepared to discuss with the other side the timetable and modalities under which the elections would be held.

I also renewed to the NLF my offer of private talks without preconditions leading toward national reconciliation.

I believe that with these proposals, we have made great efforts and performed a significant act of goodwill in the pursuit of a just and honorable peace, considering the interests of both sides.

Two days ago, at the Paris talks, the other side again formally rejected these proposals. We deeply regret their continued negative attitude in response to our goodwill. We hope, however, that their recent response was not a final one, and that the Communist aggressors will revise their attitude once they understand that our major act of goodwill was not a sign of weakness and that, here I repeat again, they will gain nothing by waiting.

Now, Ladies and Gentlemen, we go to the questions and answers.

* * *

The current lull

Question: Mr President, as you are aware, in the past few weeks, the fighting has been very quiet. Do you think that there is the possibility that Hanoi has tried to signal us that the reduction of the level of the fighting will have to follow the replacement of some American troops. Is there any significance to the reduction of the fighting?

Answer: First, this decreasing of activities--military activities--has happened many times in the past years, and also three or four times this year. Every time after they launch a major attack which they call an offensive, the Communists have to reduce their activity, to take rest, to retrain, to re-equip, to refill their ranks, to wait for the new ammunition, new weapons, and a month or two later, they would renew the attacks. So this time also, I believe they are applying the same tactics.

Secondly, if really they are interested in showing their goodwill by reducing the activities, why don't they come out clearly, speaking officially and loudly, for they stand to gain by letting world opinion and everyone know that they have goodwill for peace.

Replacement of American combat troops

Q. One more question, Mr President, how quickly do you think the South Vietnamese army will be ready to replace all American combat troops. For example, do you think that 100,000 American troops could be removed from Viet-Nam this year, and all combat troops by the end of the next year, as former Secretary Clifford proposed?

A. I cannot give you today the figures--how many--but I can tell you that even though we are determined and will do our best to replace to the maximum number, and as fast as possible, the American combat troops--I mean, the infantry combat troops, we still do have some restrictions, restrictions regarding equipment and funds. So we can do that only gradually. I should say that we will not be able to replace all the combat troops by 1970, but if the US government helps us with enough equipment and enough funds, we can say that we will replace a very important amount of American combat troops by 1970. However, the rate, the speed of the replacement depends also upon many factors. It depends on the speed and the rate of American aid in regard to ammunition, weapons and funds.

Q. Did you say that you cannot replace all the troops by the end of 1970?

A. No, not the totality of the combat troops by the end of 1970, but I would say a great amount, but it depends...

Control of electoral commission

Q. Mr President, could you clarify two points. First, who would control the electoral commission which you proposed? Second, what levels of elections will be held? Presidential? National Assembly?

A. You said, Who will control the electoral commission?

Q. Which side will control the electoral commission?

A. You say, Who will control the electoral commission? Indeed, to make it clearer, who organizes and controls the elections, or who controls the electoral commission?

Q. Who controls the electoral commission which organizes the elections?

A. I say, we have laid out the principle that an electoral commission will be organized in which the various political groups and parties could participate, and the NLF could participate also. Now who controls the electoral commission? I think I have two answers to give. First, I know what I meant in my speech, and I believe that the Communists understand well what I would like to mean in my speech. Thus I said that the electoral commission has the right to control, to give equal opportunity to the candidates, to verify the counting of the votes and to watch the polls. It means that the elections will be held under the Vietnamese government. It is very clear.

Now what levels? I say that we are ready, now we have many levels of elections, but in my Point Four, I said that we are ready to discuss with the other side "the timetable and the modalities under which the elections would be held." So I say that it is negotiable. But I repeat to the other side that in Point Six of my speech, I also said--this again very clearly--that the Government of Viet-Nam would insist on only one principle, the principle of free elections. As for all other issues, I say we are prepared to discuss with the other side the timetable and the modalities under which the elections would be held. So, on the one hand is the principle on which we cannot compromise, on the other hand we stand ready to discuss anything.

NLF can participate

Q. Mr President, on the 12th of July, explaining your 11 July speech, the Minister of Foreign Affairs suggested that Communists "as such" could not stand for election as you sought. Was that a correct interpretation of your statement, and if it was, how could elections be free and democratic?

A. We said very clearly that the NLF could participate in the elections. It depends on you to understand whether the NLF is Communist or not. They say that they are not Communist, we say that they are. Nonetheless, we say that the NLF can participate in the elections. That is the whole problem.

Q. Would you accept Communist candidates as such? Declared or undeclared?

A. The members of the NLF--when I say NLF, I mean the members of that organization--can, as members of the NLF. With our proposal, they are granted the right to do so.

Q. Mr President, do you intend to make new peace proposals now that the Communists have rejected your proposal. Do you intend to stand on your proposal or will you make another one?

A. We said that we have shown our best will for peace and we regret deeply that they have once again rejected our proposal. We cannot therefore do otherwise than to continue to fight. Meanwhile, we keep the peace door open and we hope that they will revise their present attitude. Nonetheless, once again I say, it is not to their advantage to wait.

No free elections possible in an atmosphere of violence

Q. Mr President, you have said that the other side must renounce violence. Could you clarify this point? Do you mean by that statement that the other side must lay down their arms before the elections can take place?

A. The first thing we said is that there can be free elections only when the people have the right to express freely their choice without fear or coercion. By that I mean without war and without atrocities. Certainly it could be that at that time, there will be a cease-fire to end the hostilities. At any rate, they have to renounce violence by ending the atrocities and sabotage and acts of violence if we are to respect the principle of free elections. The people can never express freely their choice without fear or coercion, if we should continue to have a war going on, if we continue to have violence and atrocities.

Q. Mr President, on Saturday the Foreign Minister suggested the possibility that you might call a referendum on the political settlement negotiated in Paris. All I would like to ask you is: Would a referendum of all the South Vietnamese people voting Yes or No to a settlement, negotiated in Paris, which would presume and include a cease-fire and provisions for organizing general elections, would such a referendum conform to your idea of respecting the self-determination of the Vietnamese people?

A. I consider that the problem of peace and war is a very important question. It is more important to settle the war by peaceful means, by a peaceful and political settlement, which I visualize as of supreme significance. As President, I should ask not only the opinion of the Government, the political parties, the National Assembly, it is also of extreme importance that I should ask the opinion of the whole people, to get the agreement of the whole people. Now you ask me what kind of questions I would put in the referendum, I cannot answer you as yet because we haven't yet any settlement.

No threat or ultimatum

Q. Mr President, in your speech today, you said you did not want to make any threat or give the other side an ultimatum. Besides that, were there any other form of threat issued in private talks by the Government of Viet-Nam and the US?

A. First, I do not intend to make a threat or send an ultimatum to the other side today, and like before I never like to do that. I repeat what I said, and that is, I deeply regret that the other side continues to observe a negative attitude and again rejected my offer, but I sincerely hope that they will not maintain that attitude. By the same token, I would like to say to them that they have noth-

ing to gain by waiting. This is not an ultimatum, this is an appeal to their conscience, a call for them to reflect and think.

Now, concerning the second part of your question, I can tell you that we have had no secret talks whatsoever with Hanoi or the NLF. They still maintain their negative attitude.

Q. Mr President, if the NLF rejects all your offers for peace, do you think you can go on fighting indefinitely, and do you think the US will support you in an indefinite struggle?

A. I think we have done more than enough to express our goodwill for peace. We have offered very concrete proposals for a just and honorable settlement of the war. So if the other side continues to reject our offer, they reject--mind you--not specifically one or two items of our offer but the whole package, then it's very clear they don't want to negotiate. They intend very clearly to pursue the war with the intention of winning it militarily in South Viet-Nam and to impose upon the South Vietnamese people their form of government. This much is clear, so I say we cannot do otherwise.

Now you ask me whether the US government and people will continue to help us if we continue our fight for the right cause here, to defend the right cause, I can only answer that we are fighting for the right cause. I cannot answer on behalf of the US government and of the US people regarding their future attitude. I hope that they will continue to play their role of leader of the Free World, and to help our small country defend freedom as you have done since. Because ours is the right cause, it is a good cause.

Vice-President Ky's remarks

Q. Mr President, Vice-President Ky spoke to the National War College and was highly critical of the American involvement here in Viet-Nam, and thinks that the Paris talks are a waste of time and money. How many of those views expressed by Vice-President Ky reflected official opinion?

A. After he delivered the speech, Vice-President Ky has met with me two days ago. He repeated to me that it was his personal opinion, which seems to him logical. So, as you see, it is first the personal point of view of Vice-President Ky, secondly, we have to understand that he delivered the speech to the National War College, in a very particular circumstance--it was a particular occasion. At any rate, he said it himself that it was his personal point of view, but here in Viet-Nam, it is the President who decides.

Q. Mr President, some people say that the speech of Vice-President Ky reflects some differences of opinion in the GVN. Do you agree?

A. No, I have said that to you very frankly. In a democratic nation, anybody can express his point of view, but at the same time, in a democracy it is also clearly defined who has the authority to decide.

Q. Mr President, there were reports that corps commanders and officers in the ARVN might have reacted to your proposal of July 11. What is your opinion on that?

A. I have discussed with them before I delivered the speech. After that, several days later, after July 11, I have been to the I Corps, I have had the opportunity to talk with the generals, the province chiefs, the senior officers, and nobody has reacted, and up to today I have yet to see anybody react because they all understand the significance of my gesture, and they also would like to show their goodwill for peace. Meanwhile, they continue to fight the war, meanwhile, they continue to do their job as military men.

General elections in North and South Viet-Nam under international supervision

Q. Mr President, yesterday, on the occasion of the 15th anniversary of the signing of the Geneva Agreements, the Government issued a declaration which asked or proposed general elections in North and South Viet-Nam under international supervision. Was it a serious offer, or do you think that it will lead to serious talks?

A. Sure, it is very serious. I would like to have a reunification of the country. We do not want to let the Communists have the monopoly of that, the monopoly of patriotism, the monopoly of the reunification of the country. Now, as soon as the people of North Viet-Nam can express freely their choice under democratic procedures, and as soon as we have the assurance that free elections could be guaranteed, we would like to, and we challenge North Viet-Nam to do just that. We challenge them to hold free elections in which the whole Vietnamese population would vote, both in North and South Viet-Nam, under international supervision. We challenge the North Vietnamese authorities to do that, even tomorrow, if we have the guarantee that the people in North Viet-Nam can freely express their choice, like they are able to in South Viet-Nam. This we have said since many years. I don't believe North Viet-Nam dares accept that, because if they do let the North Vietnamese people have their free choice, there would no longer be any Communists.

Q. Mr President, you said that you proposed an international body to supervise the elections. Which country might be invited to form that body?

A. First, we have to ask for voluntary countries. What country do you come from?

Q. Japan.

A. Japan can be invited to participate.

Q. Mr President, do you have any regrets that the war should be conducted in another way? Or should it end sooner?

A. I cannot express my opinion when I do not have in hand all the information that I need.

Q. Mr President, some senators this week have expressed their opposition or their discontent with your latest peace proposal. Are you happy generally with the reactions among the parliamentarians?

A. First, I am happy because that proves that nobody can say that in Viet-Nam we have no democracy. But also, I am not happy because some senators have felt the need to criticize me, though very lightly.

Q. Mr President, can you tell us whether or not you expect further American troops withdrawn this year and if so, how many do you expect to be out of Viet-Nam by the end of the year?

A. We said at Midway, President Nixon and I, that after August we would have to reconsider the problem. Also, we have to reconsider that under the criteria that we have agreed upon, President Nixon and I. Maybe, this will come up in a future discussion.

The presence of American troops and the elections

Q. Mr President, in their official declaration, the other side indicates that the presence of US troops in South Viet-Nam might be an obstacle to the free elections in South Viet-Nam. Would you like to see the American troops leave before the elections are carried out and before the electoral commission is set up?

A. Do you remember, President Nixon's proposal was that after twelve months, a majority of US troops would leave Viet-Nam, and a majority of non-South Vietnamese troops would have to leave South Viet-Nam. Then, when we get an international body which acts very efficiently, the elections will be held. That is, when the circumstances permit, meaning the South Vietnamese people can express their free choice, free from fear and coercion, and with effective international guarantees, then there will be elections. We have further determined that when such circumstances are obtained, then, and only then, can the elections by the South Vietnamese people be said to represent a free choice, without fear or coercion.

One last question on this side.

Q. Mr President, would you accept Communists in the elections?

A. We have said very clearly that what we have been fighting for is a non-Communist South Viet-Nam. We will never let the Communist ideology have the right to make propaganda here. Up to now, it is anti-constitutional.

Thank you.

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