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INDOCHINA

Vietnamese communist media highlight the PRG's "new initiative" calling on the United States to set a terminal date for withdrawal from South Vietnam in 1971 and proposing that all captured military and civilian personnel be released simultaneously with total withdrawal. The seven-point proposal introduced at Paris on 1 July parallels in many respects the PRG's 17 September 1970 eight-point "elaboration" of the NFLSV's 10-point solution of 8 May 1969. However, the second point on political settlement in South Vietnam notably singles out for attack only President Thieu--rather than the "Thieu-Ky-Khiem clique"--in reiterating that there must be a "new Saigon administration" which would hold talks with the PRG. The proposal also studiously avoids the term "coalition" government, referring instead to a "broad three-segment government of national concord" which would be set up following the talks between the PRG and a new Saigon administration.

Followup Vietnamese communist propaganda on the proposal stresses favorable world and U.S. public reaction and suggests that this has put the Nixon Administration into an increasingly isolated position. A 3 July Observer article in the party paper NHAN DAN says the seven-point proposal gives the United States the choice of "withdrawing in safety and honor or stubbornly continuing the aggressive war and suffering inevitable final defeat."

In striking contrast to Peking's coolness toward earlier peace proposals, PRC media promptly carried a virtual text of the PRG statement and followed up with a PEOPLE'S DAILY editorial on the 4th expressing the "firm support" of the Chinese Government and people "for the just stand and reasonable proposal of the Vietnamese people."

Moscow as usual reported the PRG proposal promptly and praised it in followup comment, including a 5 July PRAVDA editorial, as a basis on which to get the Paris talks out of the "impasse" and open the way for a political settlement. Commentators contrast the "skepticism" with which the Nixon Administration has received the proposal with statements by Congressional leaders, in the U.S. press, and by other spokesmen calling on the Administration not to pass up the opportunity to end U.S. involvement in Indochina.

NEW PRG PROPOSAL UPDATES MAY 1969, SEPTEMBER 1970 PEACE PLANS

Hanoi has handled the PRG proposal as it did the NFLSV/PRG's other major proposals at Paris. VNA, the radio, and the press departed

from the standard practice of covering the Paris sessions with only summary accounts: As in publicizing the 1969 and 1970 proposals, VNA followed its normal summary of the 1 July session immediately with transmission of the full text of both PRG Foreign Minister Mme. Binh's and DRV delegate Xuan Thuy's speeches. On 2 July the texts of the speeches were broadcast by both Hanoi and Liberation Radio and published in the Hanoi press.

There is more extensive followup comment than last September, with articles in both the party organ NHAN DAN and the army paper QUAN DOI NHAN DAN as well as routine radio talks. However, in line with general practice, communist media do not report the post-session briefings. Last September, in a rare move, VNA had reported some of the DRV and PRG spokesmen's remarks. The media to date have also ignored Mme. Binh's remarks to UPI on the proposals and Le Duc Tho's interview with the New York TIMES' Anthony Lewis. (Le Duc Tho had granted an interview to Murray Marder of the Washington POST on 22 June 1969--in the wake of the 9 May 1969 PRG proposal and President Nixon's proposal of 14 May.)

TROOP WITHDRAWALS & RELEASE OF PRISONERS

The PRG's call on the United States to set a terminal date for troop withdrawal dates back to December 1969,

when the PRG at Paris proposed that if the United States agreed to withdraw in six months there could be discussions on insuring the safety of the withdrawing troops. That call was repeated periodically during the next nine months--up until the release of the PRG's 17 September 1970 eight-point initiative.* Point one of the proposal last September paralleled the December 1969 call for troop withdrawal but set the time period nine months hence--30 June 1971--and added the new element that once the United States agreed to a timetable the question of the release of POW's could be "discussed" immediately. Recurrently since last September, the communists have suggested that if the 30 June date was not regarded as suitable, the United States should pick another reasonable date. The suggestion of an alternative date was raised with greater frequency as the 30 June deadline approached. And it was logical with the passing of that deadline that the PRG should set a new one.

* For a discussion of the September proposals and comparison with the May 1969 10-point solution, see the TRENDS of 23 September 1970, pages 1-6.

Much of the language of point one of the current proposal is identical with point one of the September proposal in calling for unconditional withdrawal of U.S. and allied troops and materiel from South Vietnam and the dismantling of U.S. bases there. However, it differs from the September proposal in saying that given a terminal date, the parties "will agree on the modalities"--rather than "hold discussions"--on the safety of withdrawing troops and the release of prisoners. And where the September proposal referred to the question of the release of captured military men, the current one speaks of the release of "military men of all parties and of the civilians captured in the war." The current proposal also specifies that the withdrawals and prisoner release "will begin on the same date and end on the same date."

Point one concludes with the declaration--introduced in a supplementary statement by the PRG's Mme. Binh at Paris on 10 December 1970--that a cease-fire will be observed between the PLAF and the United States and its foreign allies as soon as agreement is reached on total withdrawal.

SETTLEMENT IN SOUTH VIETNAM Point two of the current proposal deals with a political settlement and is titled "the question of power in South Vietnam." Point two in the September proposal was on the question of Vietnamese armed forces in South Vietnam; that issue reverts to point three in the current proposal--its position in the original 8 May 1969 10 points. In the September proposal the issue of a political settlement was discussed in points three, four, and five. The equivalent discussion in point two of the latest proposal is notable for its failure to repeat the usual diatribes against the Thieu-Ky-Khiem "clique" and the September formulation that an administration excluding all three must be formed. The current proposal says the United States "must cease backing the bellicose group headed by Nguyen Van Thieu at present in office in Saigon" And it goes on to say only that "the political, social, and religious forces in South Vietnam aspiring to peace and national concord will use various means to form a new administration favoring peace, independence, neutrality, and democracy."

The new proposal also avoids the term "coalition" government when it says that the first question to be settled by talks between the PRG and a new Saigon administration is the formation of "a broad, three-segment government of national concord" that

will assume its functions during the period between the restoration of peace and the holding of general elections. The September proposal had specified that a provisional coalition government would include three components: persons from the PRG, from the Saigon administration--"those really standing for peace, independence, neutrality, and democracy"--and from various political and religious forces and tendencies standing for these same goals.

Point two of the current proposal says that as soon as a "government of national concord" is established, a cease-fire will be observed between the PLAF and Saigon forces. As in the case of a U.S.-PLAF cease-fire, this assertion had its origin in Mme. Binh's supplementary statement at the 10 December Paris session. That statement had said that a cease-fire would be observed after the PRG and a Saigon administration "without Thieu, Ky, and Khiem" agree "on the formation of a provisional coalition government composed of three segments . . ." as provided in the 17 September 1970 PRG statement.* Point two says that in addition to settling the question of the government of national concord, the talks between the PRG and the new Saigon administration will be aimed at prohibiting reprisals against collaborators of either side, insuring democratic liberties, and releasing political prisoners; social and economic reconstruction; and agreement on measures to insure the holding of democratic, general elections.

SOUTH VIETNAM RELATIONS WITH OTHER COUNTRIES

Point four of the latest proposal discusses the question of relations between North and South Vietnam and eventual reunification, discussed in points seven and eight of the 8 May 1969 proposal and point six of the proposal of September 1970. The standard line that the two zones will reestablish normal relations pending unification is repeated, and the current proposal reiterates the proviso--separated out as point eight of the 10-points--that in keeping with the 1954 Geneva agreements provision, the two zones would refrain from joining any foreign military alliances or allowing foreign bases or troops.

Point five is on the foreign policy "of peace and neutrality" of South Vietnam and essentially repeats the provisions in the May 1969 proposal (point six). It says again that South Vietnam would establish relations with all countries including the United States, regardless of their regimes and on the basis of the five principles of coexistence, and that it would accept aid from any country if no conditions were attached. It adds a new element when it says that South Vietnam "will participate in regional plans of economic cooperation."

Point six says that the United States must "bear full responsibility for the losses and the destruction it has caused to the Vietnamese people in the two zones." In the 10-point solution this was included under point nine on "aftermath of the war," which also provided that the parties would negotiate the release of military prisoners.

Point seven uses language identical with point seven of the September 1970 proposal when it says "the parties will find agreement on the forms of respect and international guarantee of the accords that will be concluded."

* The September "elaboration" of the PRG position had dealt with the matter of a cease-fire in the eighth and final point: "After the agreement on and signing of accords aimed at putting an end to the war and restoring peace in Vietnam, the parties will implement the modalities that will have been laid down for a cease-fire."

ACCOUNT OF PARIS SESSION HIGHLIGHTS XUAN THUY'S ENDORSEMENT

In his formal statement at the Paris session Xuan Thuy declared the DRV's "full approval and support" of the PRG's seven-point proposal without repeating its specific details. Stressing communist efforts for a peaceful settlement, he recalled the DRV's four-point stand of April 1965 and the fact that the DRV had "wholeheartedly supported" the NFLSV's 10-point proposal of May 1969 and the PRG's eight- and three-point statements of September and December 1970.

Thuy reiterated the standard line that as long as the United States pursues its "aggression" the Vietnamese will continue their fight "until total victory." But he added that they do not like enmity and want to see "U.S. forces rapidly withdraw from South Vietnam in safety, so that every American serviceman participating in the war, including American pilots captured in North Vietnam, may promptly return to his home." He cited the Pentagon papers as proof that U.S. "pretexts" for entering the war "are utterly unjustified" and commented that therefore the United States cannot avoid total withdrawal.

Thuy echoed Mme. Binh in asking "the U.S. delegate" to "consider carefully the seven-point statement" and "give it a positive response." The VNA account of the session notes that Ambassador Bruce, "though promising to consider" the new initiative, "kept repeating Nixon's words proving that the United States still schemes to impose neocolonialism on South Vietnam."

VNA similarly notes that "the Saigon puppet administration's delegate also promised to consider the proposal, but in his prepared speech as well as his further comment he repeated Nixon's and Nguyen Van Thieu's erroneous allegations." The account says Mme. Binh, "speaking again," emphasized that the U.S. delegation "should consider carefully and respond positively to the above seven-point statement." (In September the VNA account did not carry the remarks by the allied delegates on the PRG's eight points. But accounts of the post-session briefings, which VNA did carry, reported some of their comments.)

HANOI, PRG MEDIA PRESS PROPOSAL, ATTACK NIXON POLICY

HANOI Vietnamese communist propaganda portrays U.S. public reaction to the proposal as favorable and says this has prevented the Administration from rejecting it out of hand. Hanoi radio reported foreign reaction promptly on 2 July, and on the 3d there was original comment from the radio, a NHAN DAN Observer (Nguoi Quan Sat) article carried by both Hanoi radio and VNA, and a QUAN DOI NHAN DAN Commentator (Nguoi Binh Luan) article. There was additional radio comment on the 4th and 6th.

The NHAN DAN Observer article of the 3d amounts to a detailed recapitulation of Hanoi's standard line on the Administration's Indochina policy. The article says Vietnamization can neither end the war nor U.S. participation in the war, but rather is a policy aimed at prolonging the U.S. presence. Observer claims that while the President pictures troop withdrawal as evidence of U.S. good will, in fact he was forced to withdraw some U.S. troops to assuage opponents of the war and to ease the economic burden. Obscuring the fact that the President had advanced a five-point peace proposal on 7 October, Observer says the Nixon Administration's "stubborn stand" is clearly reflected in its proposals on two basic problems--U.S. troop withdrawal and the South Vietnamese people's right to self-determination. The article goes on to denounce the demand for a bilateral troop withdrawal and U.S. backing for the Saigon government. It also typically scores the President's avowed intent to remain until all U.S. POWs are released and the Thieu administration is strong enough to cope with the war.

A 3 July radio commentary recalls that the 8 May 1969 10-point proposal had specified that the U.S. Government must withdraw from South Vietnam all U.S. and foreign troops and war materiel without posing any conditions, and it notes that President Nixon has persistently refused to set a deadline. It also denounces the President's efforts to relate a U.S. withdrawal to the demand for U.S. prisoner release and "maintenance of the U.S.-sponsored puppet regime in Saigon." It mentions that point one of the new proposal deals realistically with the problems of total withdrawal of U.S. troops and the release of U.S. servicemen captured in Vietnam. "Let us see," it says, "whether Nixon will continue to use the U.S. POW problem as a pretext to dodge and ignore the American people's urgent demand for the fixing of a timetable for total withdrawal."

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Both the NHAN DAN Observer article and the radio commentary spell out in full points one and two of the PRG proposal dealing with troop withdrawal and a political settlement in South Vietnam. But only NHAN DAN briefly lists the other five points. The 3 July QUAN DOI NHAN DAN Commentator article, unlike the NHAN DAN article and the radio broadcast, does not specify any of the seven points. Taking a different tack, it says that in the present situation in Indochina and the United States--it cites such things as the early May antiwar demonstrations, the Senate passage on 22 June of the Mansfield amendment calling for withdrawal of U.S. troops in nine months, and "serious defeats" experienced by the allies throughout the Indochina theater--the new proposal "provides public opinion with a sharp weapon to continue the struggle to demand that Nixon respond to the pressing demands of the American and South Vietnamese peoples." The PRG initiative, it says, "compels Nixon to answer before public opinion the questions that he has in the recent past sought by every means to dodge or to deceitfully hide from the American people."

QUAN DOI NHAN DAN's Commentator takes note of Press Secretary Ziegler's remarks on the proposal, saying that while U.S. "progressives" and world public opinion were warmly welcoming the proposal, Ziegler commented that it had both positive and unacceptable elements and that the United States would not agree to arrangements that forsake the South Vietnamese citizens. The paper cites AFP for the comment that the Nixon Administration "pretended to respond favorably" to the new PRG initiative, a "gesture aimed at appeasing public opinion" and "not necessarily showing that Nixon is ready to negotiate a U.S. withdrawal from Vietnam." Scoring the President for "maintaining an aggressive stand and a very stubborn attitude" since he took office, it says "Thieu's warlike allegations--that he is against coalition and neutrality and is determined to win a military victory--obviously reflect Nixon's real stand." Ziegler's remarks on the proposal are almost uniformly noted in other Hanoi propaganda, most notably his reaffirmation that the South Vietnamese citizenry would not be abandoned.

Hanoi repeatedly cites favorable reaction to the proposal from senators, including McGovern, Muskie, Javits, and Hatfield, as well as from former Defense Secretary Clark Clifford and other opponents of the war including spokesmen for peace organizations.