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PRG Press Briefing - July 8, 1971
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Questions and Answers

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Q. (Valery - New York Daily News) - Are we to understand that the negotiation on the overall content of the 7-point plan cannot begin as long as Mr. Nixon has not set a deadline for withdrawal before the end of 1971? And my second question, you said that it is only after a date has been set that you would accept to discuss the format of the meetings, restricted meetings, does this also apply to secret meetings, in other words, would you agree to secret meetings before Mr. Nixon has set a date for withdrawal?

A. The U. S. has unleashed a war of aggression, has introduced troops into our country to occupy it and has set up an administration in its pay. That is why in order to settle in a radical manner the problem of the war in Viet-Nam and restore a lasting peace in our country, the question of withdrawal by the U. S. of all its troops and the question of forming in SVN a new administration which represents very broadly the aspirations of all strata of the population must both be settled. Normally, these two questions would have been discussed simultaneously and settled at the same time. But with our good will we have said that in the process of negotiation if we can settle the question of U. S. troops withdrawal, let us

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settle it, and we will continue to settle the other questions. Such a way of setting the problem, asking the Nixon Administration to set a date for withdrawal of all troops, is done to create the best conditions permitting the conference to make progress. And if Mr. Nixon refuses to set a deadline in 1971 for the withdrawal of all U. S. troops, it will be he himself who is keeping the conference from making progress. As for the second question asked by Mr. Valery, for us the format of the meeting is important but most important is the substance of the discussion and the serious attitude of the participants at this negotiation. Mrs. Binh has repeatedly declared that we are prepared to have private meetings with the U. S. delegate; our attitude has not changed. If we have rejected the U. S. delegate's proposal concerning the holding of restricted sessions, it is because this is a perfidious maneuver as we said earlier.

Q. (Lenart - Far East Review) - If my understanding is correct, Mrs. Binh said today that if the U. S. sets a date for total withdrawal before the end of 1971, you agree to discuss the type of meetings to be held. Does it mean that you also agree to discuss the framework of restricted sessions as defined today by the U. S. delegation?

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A. I would like to repeat first of all that in the present circumstances Mr. Bruce's proposal of today concerning holding restricted sessions is a mere maneuver and we reject it. Furthermore, we state that once Mr. Nixon has set a deadline for total troop withdrawal in 1971, we shall be prepared to have discussion on the format, the procedure of the conference aimed at insuring that agreement is rapidly reached concerning withdrawal of U. S. troops and release of military prisoners. If we reject Mr. Bruce's proposal concerning the holding of restricted sessions, it is because we don't want him to use this as a maneuver to deceive public opinion and prolong the conference. As soon as Mr. Nixon has set a deadline for U. S. troop withdrawal, we shall be prepared to examine all procedures concerning the conference.

Q. (Redmont - Westinghouse) - I am asking you a hypothetical question. If by chance the U. S. delegate had said today I accept point one and U. S. troop withdrawal in 1971, would there have been an immediate cease-fire between the popular armed forces of liberation (PAFL/SVN) and the troops of the U.S. and of the other countries in the U. S. camp and the assurance of the return of all the troops and of all the military captured and could we then leave point two to seven for subsequent discussion?

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A. The PRG 7-point statement is explicit on the point raised by Mr. Redmont. If today Mr. Bruce had set a deadline for the withdrawal of all U. S. troops from SVN in 1971, the parties would have immediately come to an agreement about the modalities concerning the following two operations: withdrawal of all the troops of the U. S. and of the other countries of the American camp and release of all military of all parties and of all civilians captured in the war. For our part, we have repeatedly said that once a deadline in 1971 has been set for withdrawal of all U. S. troops, the question of the agreement on the modalities of the two operations mentioned above is not a difficult problem. As we said, once agreement has been reached on U. S. troop withdrawal, there will immediately be a cease-fire between the PAFL/SVN and the U. S. forces and those of the other countries of the American camp. Concerning release of military prisoners, just raised by Mr. Redmont, I repeat once again that if Mr. Nixon sets a deadline for withdrawal of all U. S. troops from SVN by September 30, the last military prisoner will be released on September 30, and if he sets October 31 as a deadline, the last American military prisoner will be released on October 31. And in this case, all American military who are in Viet-Nam whether fighting or captured, can spend Christmas at home. Concerning Mr. Redmont's third question on settlement of the

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other questions, I said earlier we shall continue to work at settling them. So after withdrawal of all U. S. troops and release of captured civilians and military have been settled and the ^{Thieu} / warmongering administration is still in Saigon, the U. S. will have the responsibility to continue to settle this question with us because without the support of the U. S., the warmongering group headed by ^{Thieu} / cannot remain in power.

Q. (Vila - AFP) - You said earlier that "if Mr. Nixon sets a date we shall be prepared to hold discussion on the format and the procedures of the conference in order to insure that the parties reach an agreement, etc." to follow up, in your reply you alluded to all the military of all parties captured during the war. If this includes South Vietnamese military of the present Saigon administration, does it mean that you will be prepared, if President Nixon sets a date, to discuss in restricted sessions with the Saigon administration also, who is already a member of this conference after all?

A. There are two different things here. I have already said last week that in settling the matter of release of military and civilians captured during the war, the U. S. government which directs the Saigon administration must assume the responsibility in settling these questions. Reading the Pentagon secret documents

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leads to the conclusion that the Saigon administration is but a creation of the U. S. Time magazine this week states that in Saigon a large majority of the population believes that the U. S. controls the administration of Saigon. And when we say that the U. S. government must assume full responsibility for what takes place in South Viet-Nam, this is not a slander directed at it.

Q. (Kalischer - CBS) - When you speak of prisoner release, specifically what prisoners will be released, the prisoners in the South, or in the North, in Laos or in Cambodia?

A. I have already replied several times to your question. I have said that this conference is designated Paris Conference on Viet-Nam. That is why the question of the release of military captured in the war that we mention includes military of the aggressor countries, be it the U. S. or the other foreign countries in its camp, puppet soldiers captured ^{the} in/South and in the North of Viet-Nam. As to soldiers of our side who have been captured they come under the PAFL/SV.

Q. (Duth Journalist) - You are tying prisoner release to U. S. troop withdrawal. Does this also imply withdrawal of advisors to the Saigon government and eventually an end of aid to that government? That is to say, that U. S. prisoners will be released only when the U. S. withdraws all its advisors and ceases all aid?

A. I believe that you are going back to a question which has already been asked. Let Mr. Nixon set a deadline for the withdrawal of all U. S. troops and the parties will come to an agreement on the modalities for withdrawal of U. S. troops and release of military and civilians captured. These two operations will begin and end on the same date Period (sic) and we will then take up another question. The U. S. has set up the warmongering group directed by Thieu to implement its policy of Vietnamization and it must therefore abandon this warmongering group. This is in the interest of the Vietnamese people and of the American people. We have time for one last question.

Q. (Sedbon - Reuters) - You demand withdrawal of U. S. troops and war equipment, of course, but what will become of the war equipment which is already in the hands of the Saigon government. Who becomes the owner of this equipment?

A. We demand withdrawal of all U. S. troops, dismantling of all U. S. bases and withdrawal of U. S. war equipment from SVN, so do the people of the U. S. and of the world. As for the question of the armament of Saigon troops, this question comes under item of "Vietnamese Armed Forces in South Viet-Nam" mentioned in point three.