

DRV Press Briefing - July 1, 1971
Nguyen Thanh Le
Questions and Answers

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Q. (Giniger - New York Times) - Is there a causal relationship between Mr. Le Duc Tho's arrival and the presentation of the peace plan today or is this mere coincidence?

A. Mr. Giniger, I want to tell you very sincerely that Mr. Le Duc Tho made the purpose of his coming to Paris perfectly clear when he arrived last Thursday. Concerning Mme Binh's statement of today, as far as we know she was instructed by the PRG to present her statement at today's session. But before presenting her 7-point statement to today's session, Mme Binh had previously requested an exchange of views with him. For our part, we warmly applaud these seven points and it was in that spirit that Minister Xuan Thuy drafted his declaration of today.

Q. (Shub - Washington Post) - Mr. Le Duc Tho continues to carry the title of special advisor to your delegation. Mr. Henry Kissinger, who is the principal advisor of the President of the United States, will arrive in Paris next week. Would Mr. Le Duc Tho be ready to meet with him?

A. If for instance Mr. Kissinger were to suggest a meeting with Minister Xuan Thuy or Mr. Le Duc Tho, for our part, we will be agreeable. But we have also said repeatedly, right here in fact, that the format of the meeting -- official or private -- matters little, what does matter is to know that Mr. Nixon is

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prepared to settle peacefully the Vietnamese problem and also to know if Mr. Nixon will give a positive response to the 7-point plan presented today by the PRG.

Q. (Cohler - Westinghouse) - Concerning the portion of today's proposal which concerns you most directly, that is to say captured pilots who may be released, does today's proposal mean that all pilots would be released, or does it mean all men whose names appear on the list distributed last December?

A. It is said in point 1 of Mme Binh's peace plan that if Mr. Nixon sets a deadline for withdrawal of U. S. troops from South Viet-Nam, as well as troops of the American camp, in 1971, the parties will come to an agreement on procedural arrangements for the release of all captured military of all parties and of all civilians captured during the war. Speaking for the DRV, we agree with the PRG. That is to say that if Mr. Nixon sets a deadline for this withdrawal, the two operations, i.e., troop withdrawal and release of the captured military, will begin on the same date and will be completed on the same date. We have already published the complete list of American pilots captured in North Viet-Nam, and naturally, after an agreement concerning point 1, we will release all American pilots captured in the North in accordance with the precedures contained in this point. Also, let us assume that Mr. Nixon sets a date: August 1 or September 1, for withdrawal of all American troops and of all the troops within the American camp

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then on that date all captured military will be released also.

Q. (Prevost - AFP) - Concerning point 4 of Mme Binh's plan on reunification, "the reunification of Viet-Nam will be carried out step by step through a . . . on the basis . . . etc." I seem to recall that the 1954 Geneva Accords had contemplated reunification through free elections. Is this new that the idea of elections between the two zones is abandoned or what?

A. As you know, in the 1954 Geneva Accords, there is a provision that general elections aimed at reunification of Viet-Nam will be organized on July 20, 1956, but the American administration at the time had done everything to sabotage this provision and thus Viet-Nam reunification has not been carried out up to now. The Vietnamese people is one and the Vietnamese nation is one. This is very simple and clear. But under the present circumstances marked by sabotage by the United States Government of the Geneva Accords and of the national fundamental rights of the Vietnamese people, Viet-Nam continues to remain provisionally divided into two zones. In point 4 of the 7-point statement of Mme Binh, it is pointed out that pending peaceful reunification of the country, the two zones will maintain relations in various areas, economic, cultural, etc. And that reunification will be effected step by step and through peaceful means. These questions will be discussed by qualified representatives of the two zones. Pending reunification

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North Viet-Nam respects the right of the South Vietnamese population to self-determination. As Minister Xuan Thuy said today, "the population of North Viet-Nam respects the aspirations of the South Vietnamese population to peace, independence, neutrality and democracy."

Q. (Goldsmith - AP) - Mr. Ziegler has just told the press in Washington that Mme Binh's plan contains positive elements as well as clearly negative elements. I would therefore like to ask if Mme Binh's plan, and particularly point 1, must be accepted as such by the United States, or if it is proposed as a basis for discussion?

A. As I said earlier, the 7-point plan presented by Mme Binh reflects a perfectly just position, goodwill and flexibility. Concerning point 1, we have repeatedly said that we are the victims of the aggression of the United States and we have paid with our blood for our struggle. Recently several American newspapers published excerpts from the Pentagon secret reports and it appears that the United States has been drawing up plans for aggression and intervention against Viet-Nam for many years, one might say for about 30 years. Since the United States is the aggressor, it must put an end to the aggression. Since taking office, Mr. Nixon has made quite a few statements to the effect that he also wants peace and rapid return of American troops. But Mr. Nixon's deeds give the lie to these words. If Mr. Nixon really wants peace, an

end to the war, rapid repatriation of U. S. troops, and wants captured American soldiers to come home soon, then he should respond positively to the seven points of Mme Binh, including point 1. The sooner he sets the deadline for withdrawal of U. S. troops, the sooner U. S. soldiers, including those captured, will go home. Actually, we can say that the United States has a number of means available for a very speedy repatriation of U. S. troops, General David Shoup has said that 15 days would suffice to bring all the troops home.

Q. (Lenart - Far East Review) - In Mme Binh's 7-point program, point 7 refers to international guarantees for the agreements that would be reached, and at the same time, there is a new Pathet Lao/^{proposal} to find a solution to the conflict in Laos. In reading your statement, and particularly point 7, and in considering the Pathet Lao statement, can we say that you would display a little more flexibility about Mr. Nixon's proposal of last October for a broadened conference on Indochina?

A. Concerning Laos, please refer again to the 5-point declaration of March 6, 1970, of the Pathet Lao, Prince Souphanouvong's message of April 27, 1971, and his latest message of June 22 to Prince Souvana Phouma. Concerning point 7, as I said earlier, there are new elements compared to what has been said before, that is to say, compared to the ten points. Naturally, the parties will come to agreement on observance and international guarantees of the

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agreements reached.

Q. (Giniger - New York Times) - You have almost answered my question, I wanted to know if the search for agreement on international guarantees could take place at a conference of the Geneva type?

A. The Paris Conference on Viet-Nam, as the name indicates, discusses the Vietnamese question. In point 7, the parties will come to agreement on observance and international guarantees of the agreements reached, and naturally, the parties will discuss these questions.

Q. (Dutch journalist) - Most newspapers which published the Pentagon report refer to the operations of U. S. troops against North Vietnamese forces in Laos, Cambodia and South Viet-Nam. Concerning the presence of your troops in those countries, are the Pentagon reports based on accurate data or not?

A. On this point, the Pentagon documents revealed part of the truth. Have you read all the press excerpts published by the New York Times, the Washington Post, and other newspapers on the evolution of the American aggression for some 30 years against Viet-Nam? We suggest you read them; recently, we released the White Book of the Foreign Affairs Ministry of the DRV on that aggression for the last 20 years. Last Thursday, we also released a document telling the truth about the so-called Gulf of Tonkin

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incident, as well as a White Book of the Lao Patriotic Front on intervention by the United States in Laos for many years. You certainly know that yesterday Senator Mike Gravel disclosed a number of documents about the American aggression. The United States is the sole aggressor in Viet-Nam and Indochina.

Q. (Villa - AFP) - Somewhat on the fringes of the conference, this is a question which is very important to all of us, it's about the fate of our 17 colleagues missing in Indochina, and particularly in Cambodia. You have replied that this is up to Prince Sihanouk's government, but there is a dispatch quoting the Minister of Foreign Affairs of GRUNK as saying that Prince Sihanouk's investigations have established that no journalist is in the hands of FUNK. Would the release of all civilians lead us to hope that we could have information about their fate?

A. I will answer Mr. Villa on the following points. First, the Paris Conference on Viet-Nam has as its goal settling the Vietnamese problem, and the 7-point plan presented by Mme Binh today falls within this framework. Concerning Mr. Villa's question, let me tell you a secret: For many years I was a journalist myself, I understand them very well and I have great respect for them. Concerning journalists missing in Cambodia, Mr. Villa and our colleagues must certainly know that there have been up to now journalists who were camping in the liberated areas under GRUNK control. As you also know, the individuals who had penetrated these

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liberated areas have been freed, including some Frenchmen as well as the American journalists who have been freed by the GRUNK presided by Prince Sihanouk. You may know that the Lon Nol group slanderously asserted that some journalists had been liquidated by Cambodia's liberation front. But shortly afterwards, the liberation forces and the GRUNK succeeded in discovering these journalists and freeing them as it did with the U. S. news woman, Catherine Webb. It appears from Mr. Cho Sang, one of the leaders of Prince Sihanouk's GRUNK, that all the journalists who had been captured in Cambodia have already been freed. About those still missing, the GRUNK bears the responsibility in their case, however, it has done everything to look for them and will continue to do so.