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**NAME:** David K. E. Bruce, Chief of the US Delegation  
**OCCASION:** Remarks at the 121st Plenary Session of the New Paris Meetings  
**DATE:** July 15, 1971

Last week our side proposed a restricted session in the hope of creating a better atmosphere for serious negotiation at these meetings. We regret that you did not accept this approach. Our task here is made more difficult, and the cause of peace correspondingly suffers. We urge you to reconsider our proposal.

In the meantime, let me try another approach which might make our deliberations here more useful. At the last session, your side raised four questions directed to us on the subject of your latest proposals. I should like to answer them now and ask you some questions in turn. Perhaps through this means we could begin a useful dialogue between our two sides which could make these meetings productive.

First, you asked whether we agree to consider your seven points as a basis for negotiation. Our answer is that we are willing, as we have often said, to consider for negotiation any proposals that have been or may be put forward here by your side, as well as by our own. This is why we have been and are studying your latest proposals carefully and seeking to explore them further with you to ascertain whether they might contribute toward a negotiated settlement. We expect you to take a similar attitude toward the points and proposals raised by our side. This, it seems to me, is the essence of any serious negotiation.

Second, you ask which of your seven points we agree with and which we do not, which points we consider positive and which are unacceptable to us. In order to make a full response, we will need much more explanation from you as to what your various points actually mean. For instance, we note what seems to be a greater willingness on your part to commit yourselves specifically to the release of prisoners of war in conjunction with troop withdrawals. However, you deal with this complex issue in a highly superficial and misleading manner. You gloss over the fact that you still seem to be asking acceptance by us of the same fundamental objectives you have always sought here -- the total, unconditional withdrawal of U. S. forces without any previous negotiation on the subject, and our acquiescence in your demand that we impose a government on the South Vietnamese people. This is an example of why there is doubt whether your proposals are reasonable and why further explanation and clarification by you is necessary.

Third, you ask whether we are prepared to set immediately a date in 1971 for the total withdrawal of our forces from South Viet-Nam. The answer is that we have long been ready to negotiate a timetable for complete withdrawals as part of an overall settlement. But the fixing of a withdrawal date must be the result of a genuine negotiating process, not a price we must first pay just for negotiations to begin or a unilateral action we must take because you so dictate.

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Fourth, you ask about our intentions regarding the Government of The Republic of Viet-Nam. Our answer to this has always been perfectly clear. I repeat it once again today. The South Vietnamese people must be allowed to determine themselves their own political future. The United States will not impose any government on South Viet-Nam, nor will it be a party to any such imposition. You should be under no illusions on this score.