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PRG Press Briefing - July 15, 1971
Duong Dinh Thao
Questions and Answers

Q. (? - AFP) - Could you recall for us the position of your Delegation on the need to convene an international conference on the Vietnamese conflict?

A. Concerning this point we have made statements that are very explicit. To date the Paris Conference has made no progress and even after we put forward our seven point peace initiative two weeks ago, the U. S. Delegate gave no answer. The question that arises is not the form of the Conference. The question that arises is that the U.S. Government must renounce its policy of aggression and neo-colonialism in SVN. This it has not done and that is why the Conference is still deadlocked. You may recall that in his speech of April 9 of last year, Mr. Nixon said what follows: I quote: "If the United States had to declare that it is withdrawing regardless of the nature of enemy activities, this would be tantamount to giving up a major trump in the bargaining for the release of American prisoners, it would be leaving aside the point which incites the enemy the most to negotiate to put an end to the war at the earliest possible moment, and it would supply the enemy command with the very data they need to organize attacks against our remaining forces at the time when they are most vulnerable." In September, 1970, we said that if the U.S. sets a deadline for withdrawal of all its forces, we will guarantee the security for those withdrawing forces and we will settle the matter of captured U.S. military. In our seven points of July 1, we have said that if the U.S. sets a deadline for withdrawal from SVN in 1971 of all the troops of the U.S. and of the countries in the U.S. camp, release of the military of all parties and of the civilians captured in the war will be carried out and completed at the same time as withdrawal of all U.S. troops. To date the U.S. Government has still not announced this position.

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conference that prevents the U.S. Government from answering.

Q. (Vila - AFP) - On the prospect of a conference broadened to all of Indochina and with respect to information received yesterday from Hong Kong from Mr. Whitlam who thought he understood that China would be favorable now to such a conference and would consider it.

A. I learned about this in the press, just like Mr. Vila. China has always firmly supported the patriotic struggle of our people, it has always firmly supported the correct position that we have adopted at the Paris Conference on Viet-Nam. Recently, after our delegation presented its seven-point peace plan, the People's Republic of China warmly supported it. I have nothing to add.

Q. (Valery - New York Daily News) - The spokesmen of the U.S. and of Saigon have said that they do not succeed in clarifying your position, more specifically about Point 1. Perhaps you can try to clarify it for us. They say that you tie prisoner release and withdrawal to a number of other points, such as end of Vietnamization, destruction of bases. I believe that last time, as I recall, you referred to commas and paragraphs. Could you clarify if the points on Vietnamization and bases destruction and everything else are tied to troop withdrawal or is this purely troop withdrawal versus prisoner release. With the date, of course.

A. If I am not mistaken, I think Mr. Valery has well understood what we mean in our Point 1. Since the delegates of the U.S. and Saigon raised the question again today, Mr. Valery gives me an opportunity to reiterate our position on this point, and I thank him for it.

Q. (Shub - Washington Post) - A more general question, the U. S. spokesman said a few minutes ago that statements made by you as spokesman or by

your leaders in press interviews, be it Mme Binh or Mr. Le Duc Tho, fall outside the framework of the plenary sessions, have less official status, and that he cannot deal with statements in the press but only with what is said at the plenaries. Do you see a way of getting into the record of the Conference everything that is said here to clarify it for us members of the press who hear one thing and then are told that it does not count.

A. First of all, I must say that the content of our seven-point statement of July 1 is clear. Statements made by Mme Binh on July 8 and 15, have made it more specific still. I do not want to waste your time and I will just recall our position on this point. If the U. S. Government declares that it is withdrawing from South Viet-Nam in 1971, all the troops of the U.S. and of the other foreign countries in the U.S. camp, the two following issues will be settled: First, guarantee for this withdrawal of the troops, and, second, release of all the military of all the parties and of all the civilians captured in the war. In today's statement by Mme Binh ~~she~~ said the following: I quote, "An agreement about the modalities of these operations is no difficult thing and can rapidly be reached." The U.S. Delegate asked why first we speak of the discussion on these things and now we speak of agreement on the modalities of these operations, and he wonders if we mean the same thing as before. It is clear that we are saying the following: As soon as a deadline has been set in 1971, announced by the U.S. Government, for the withdrawal of all its troops, these two operations can be carried out rapidly and easily. This proves our goodwill. The second question is that for an overall settlement of the war in Viet-Nam one must also settle the question of power in SVN. Because the U.S. sent its troops to commit aggression in SVN it must withdraw them. On the other hand, the U.S. has set up an Administration in its pay in Saigon, and it must abandon its support of it. These two points should have been settled at the same time, and

rapidly, but if in the negotiating process one cannot yet settle the question of the war in Viet-Nam in the overall but can settle the point on U.S. troop withdrawal, then let us settle that. As to power in SVN, the parties will continue to discuss this point in order to settle it. Concerning power in SVN, in a spirit of national concord we have proposed a logical and reasonable solution. If need be, please re-read our statements of July 1, 8, and 15. I would like to ^{make a parenthetical comment:} ~~open a parenthesis~~ every time we put forward a proposal that will be approved and supported by public opinion, the U.S. Delegate immediately seeks to distort it in one way or another and claims that what we say at these press conferences is worthless. This is a maneuver on his part. If you re-read Mme Binh's statement, it contains what I have said. I close the parenthesis. Are there any other questions?

Q. (Shub - Washington Post) - Of the seven points, perhaps the most puzzling, fascinating, sentence is "by various means" in point 2. The various means by which the various political, religious, social forces, etc. succeed in forming a government of national concord, I mean an administration standing for peace, independence, neutrality and democracy. Do you believe that General Ky's recent statements or General Minh's, or any other political figure in Saigon, could fall within these various means by which the forces in Saigon will come to a new administration?

A. I have repeatedly answered this question. General Minh, Mr. Ky, have recently made statements about the corruption of the Saigon regime, and stressed the fraudulent nature of the elections organized by this regime. The NLF and the people of SVN have been saying the same things for a long time. When we say "by various means" on the one hand, we show our goodwill and we are convinced that political, religious and social forces of SVN have all opportunities to

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choose adequate means to replace the present warmongering group headed by Thieu.

Q. (Belgian journalist) - Your delegation has stated that as soon as the question of U.S. troop withdrawal is agreed upon the discussion can begin on the political problems, and in another statement you say that political problems can only be discussed between Vietnamese. Can you tell us what are the problems of a political nature that you are prepared to discuss with the United States and what are those problems that you reserve for discussion between Vietnamese?

A. We are prepared to discuss with the U. S. all questions dealing with an end to the war and with the guarantee of the national fundamental rights of the Vietnamese people and with the right to self-determination of the South Vietnamese people. Among South Vietnamese, we are prepared to enter into discussions with a new administration in Saigon standing for peace, independence, neutrality and democracy on all questions raised in our seven points on July 1. I suggest you re-read them. Please re-read our Point 2.

Q. (Oriental journalist from Germany)

Last year you set the date of June 30th. Now this date has passed. Would you be prepared to postpone it once more?

A. After the U.S. Government failed to accept the date of June 30, 1971, that we proposed in September, 1970, we suggested that it set its own date for withdrawal of its troops in 1971. This proves our will to put an end to the war as soon as possible, which will be in the interests of the Vietnamese people, and the American people as well. The Vietnamese people - just as broad segments of the American people - want the war to end; the sooner the better. And if Mr. Nixon stubbornly pursues the war, and keeps the warmongering Thieu group in power to continue the war, he must bear full responsibility for it, not

only to the Vietnamese people but to the American people and to peace - and justice-loving peoples in the world.

Q. (Shub - Washington Post) - To follow up on my last question, General Minh specifically said in his recent statements, pronounced himself for peace, independence, neutrality and democracy. What is your reaction?

A. We are saying that the question that arises is that the United States must renounce maintaining the warmongering group headed by Thieu, so that a new administration will come into being in Saigon, it does not matter who heads it as long as it stands for peace, independence, neutrality and democracy, and we are prepared to engage in conversations with it.

Q. (Unknown) - You include General Minh when you say "It does not matter who heads it"? (Laughter)

Q. (Valery - New York Daily News) - On the basis of his statements, General Ky would then become persona grata and could enter such a peace government?

A. Please do not put words into my mouth. We said that a new administration, standing for peace, independence, neutrality and democracy must be formed in Saigon. Certainly whoever heads this must also stand for the same things. As far as we are concerned, we will engage in conversations with such an administration. In conclusion, I should like to quote from Miss Delehayé in L'Express of this week. She said that at a press conference, many questions were asked about the formation by political, religious and social forces of a new administration standing for peace, independence, neutrality and democracy by various means, and that I answered to a public that was trying not to understand. I do not know if this is true or not.