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Q: Mason, AP

Ambassador Lam said, as he was leaving, that both sides must agree on a concrete topic before a date can be set. I do not see this language in Mr. Porter's statement. He does not mention a concrete topic...

A: I do not remember exactly what he said, as he came out. He said that our side suggested a new working formula -- to get the meetings out of the deadlock. It is a question of centering the discussions around a concrete topic. At each meeting, it is very clear, that for this formula to work, both sides must agree on the subject to be discussed before setting the date of the meeting.

Q: Mason, AP

It is much more precise than.....

A: During the session, it was Ambassador Porter who, speaking for our side, stated this position. I do not believe that there is any difference between what was said by Ambassador Lam and Ambassador Porter. Ambassador Porter said that "we intend to suggest meetings to discuss particular points or subjects." Ambassador Lam spoke of 'concrete' subjects. It is the same thing. When we speak of concrete or particular subjects, what we have in mind is that there be no more of this sterile polemic at the meetings, and that it is a question of discussing all subjects which enter into peace negotiations, whether it be the political problem, or the military problem, or the problem of prisoners of war, any concrete or precise subject which bears on the negotiations.

Q: de Gunzburg, AFP

Mrs. Binh is en route to Paris. If she is bearing, as she has on previous occasions, a new general plan which does not deal with a specific subject, but which deals at the same time with the political settlement, troop withdrawal, the military problem, the prisoners of war -- a comprehensive plan... Would you refuse to hold a meeting for this purpose?

A: You say "if" she is bringing . . . we cannot say . . . this is not yet determined. In our proposal we said that we required some sign that the other side was willing to enter into serious discussions, and by that we mean that the essential is that there be a will to reach a negotiated solution and that this will must come ultimately from the nerve center of the Communist side, that is, the Hanoi regime.

Q: Randal, Washington Post

Then Mrs. Binh is not enough?

A: Mrs. Binh's presence is nothing new at the Paris meetings. What has it achieved up to now? Like the presence of Le Duc Tho, moreover. He was present at the Paris meetings, and what did it lead to?

Q: Randal, Washington Post

It led to secret negotiations which, apparently, had some chance of succeeding at a given time.

A: But what did it lead to from the point of view of the search for peace? What I mean is that this presence in itself does not mean anything. He could be present and not be prepared to negotiate seriously. It is not enough to propose, to put forward so-called peace plans. The Communists have done this for the past three years. Well, that is not enough. There must be a will, a desire to reach a negotiated peace.

Q: Goldsmith, AP

How do you propose to judge before a future meeting whether they have a will to negotiate seriously?

A: We have said there must be some communication. . .

Q: Randal, Washington Post

Before Mrs. Binh makes her speech, you want to know its content in order to know whether or not to agree to a meeting. I must say that you and the Americans present this plan as being crystal-clear, but no one among us understands it at all. What are the precise criteria for determining whether or not there will be a meeting? I do not want to hear about "some sign". What do you mean by some sign? Let's take the hypothesis of Mrs. Binh's return. Suppose that as in the past, Mrs. Binh arrives with a speech in her pocket, a plan -- and I am as cynical as you are as to its contents; we have had every possible plan and point imaginable. She arrives with a speech. She says in this speech that if the plan is accepted it will be a great step toward the solution of the problem. Before agreeing to hold a meeting to allow her to publish, to broadcast this plan, do you on your side, the American and South Vietnamese side, want to see the plan to be able to judge according to your criteria whether the speech and the plan are really . . . whether the content is interesting according to your criteria? No one here understands very well what you mean.

A: You see, you should understand, that no one wants to negotiate an end to this war more than we do. We have proved this by our attitude at the Paris meetings for the past three years.

Q: Randal, Washington Post

No one doubts . . .

A: I say this to show that if there is an indication that the other side wants to negotiate seriously, we will greet it with a very open mind. But having said this, an open mind must also be realistic. For after three years, we know where we stand with the Communists' promises and commitments. You ask what are the concrete criteria. I cannot answer you because that depends on the Communist attitude toward negotiation. It is very difficult to give a concrete example. For example, the fact that the Communists have been participating in the Paris meetings in our presence for three years should have implied agreement to negotiate with us. If not, why have they stayed for three years across from us, except to say that they refuse to negotiate with us. This is to illustrate that, with the Communists, you can never tell ahead of time. The fact that they have come here for three years and sat down across from us each Thursday and continue to call for the overthrow of our government -- is this a serious way to act? It is not serious, but these are the facts. One cannot foresee or judge beforehand the Communists' attitude.

Q: Randal, Washington Post

Do you think that in order to be able to judge the other side's seriousness -- do you not think that private negotiation would be better suited to meet this condition than public negotiation?

A: We have proposed private meetings, restricted meetings, any form at all, provided that there are serious negotiations. This is why we want to end the present formula for the meetings. To agree to come simply because it is Thursday and it is 10:30 in the morning, when nothing indicates that the Communists are willing to change their attitude. Well, that is finished, and it is well finished.

Q: Mason, AP

How can you know ahead of time, that is, before 10:30 each Thursday?  
That is the problem.

A: There are channels which are open, many channels. We said this in our proposal. There are many possible channels for them to tell us, and to prove to us that they are sincere.

Q: Sullivan, Baltimore Sun

Mr. Dan, I have a question which is perhaps a little naive and elementary, but I believe . . . Is it even conceivable that the other side, given its behaviour during the past three years, is it conceivable that they will comply with a new working formula, unilaterally spelled out by your side. I have a second question which is related: are we not witnessing, purely and simply, the cancellation of the Paris conference, over a more or less prolonged period of time?

A: This is not at all what is involved here. Another thing is that the proposal which we made today did not receive a reply during the session. Consequently, I do not want to say anything which would prejudice their reply. As for wondering whether the Communists, given that they have stayed here for three years and have not been willing to negotiate, are finally going to negotiate, this is the eternal question. When one is dealing with Communist "negotiators", perhaps all of a sudden they will be willing to negotiate. You can never tell. And that is why we are still here. Because we think that it is still possible to reach an acceptable solution, for them as well as for us, and that is the most rapid way to peace.

Q: de Gunzburg, AFP

From the standpoint of procedures, how, in your opinion, might they make

known a will to negotiate? Would a private meeting be necessary for that?

A: Through several channels. We do not restrict the possible channels. Either through the liaison officers . . .

Q: Goldsmith, AP

You do not impose the same conditions for a possible resumption of private conversations between the Americans and . . . .

A: We are not talking about private meetings here. We are talking about the Paris Meetings. About how we can prevent the Paris Meetings from being further depreciated, sliding further backward; how we can make them more worthwhile, make them, at last, useful to the search for peace.

Q: Goldsmith, AP

Then, in very specific terms, you are talking only about the plenary sessions?

A: Of the Paris Meetings.

Q: Goldsmith, AP

Then, these conditions do not apply to private meetings?

A: We are speaking here about the Paris Meetings.

Q: Goldsmith, AP

The plenary meetings?

A: At the Paris Meetings, there have been only plenary sessions. There have been no restricted sessions.

Q:

Would you please go back to the previous question: it would not be purely and simply a cancellation. This does not mean a suspension sine die since you set a pre-condition, that is, you must agree ahead of time on a concrete

subject or subjects. Now, if one party does not agree, can you still suspend the session? This does not mean a suspension sine die . . .

A: We never use the language of conditions. This is not a condition, it is a proposal offering a new working method.

Q: Mason, AP

But these are conditions . . .

A: Now it is up to the Communists to give their reaction.

Q: Sullivan, Baltimore Sun

But if this is not a condition, what then is a condition?

A: This is a new working method that we are proposing to the Communist side.

Q: Edith Lenart, Far Eastern Economic Review

Suppose that you now make an effort for four or five weeks to try to agree on a subject for plenary sessions here at the Hotel Majestic, and that in fact you are not able to, that nothing comes of it, that the Communists say "we do not agree to meet with you under these conditions", do you plan to return to the regular Thursday, 10:30 a.m. ritual?

A: That is going a little too far into conjecture. We made a proposal. They have not replied. Now you ask me to specify what if they say 'yes' -- what if they say 'no' . . . I cannot do this. This is a proposal. They have not replied. We are waiting for a considered response from them. This is not a matter of scoring points for one side or the other. What is involved is finding out whether the Paris Meetings are still useful in the search for a solution.

Q: de Gunzburg, AFP

Was the French Government, which sees to the material organization of

these meetings, informed ahead of time that these meetings might be . . . suspended for a considerable period of time?

A: I do not think that the French Government, in its role as host, expects to be informed in advance of everything we do, but we said in our proposal that in deference to our hosts, in the event of a meeting, there must be agreement sufficiently ahead of time.

Q: Goldsmith, AP

Would it be correct to consider this proposal of yours as an effort to bring pressure to bear on the Communists to resume the private dialogue with Dr. Kissinger?

A: We are not discussing private meetings here. All we have in mind is how we can find a new working method for the Paris Meetings to get the Meetings out of this routine, this deadlock.

Q: Mason, AP

One thing is clear now: the present formula is outworn. You are not willing to resume the present formula?

A: As we said, there is no question of meeting just because it is Thursday, just because it is 10:30, but only if the Communists are going to depart from their propaganda and their polemic.