

DRN 72
10-27

PS
file subj.
date sub-cat.
10-72

TRANSCRIPT OF NGUYEN THANH LE 27 OCT PRESS CONFERENCE

[Following is transcript of invitation-only press conference hosted by DRV delegation spokesman Nguyen Thanh Le at Choisy-le-Roi on the afternoon of Oct 27]:

[Transcript begins in middle of sentence] you may ask questions also as you do at the press conferences, just as you like.

Question: Kalisher, CBS. Are you familiar with President Thieu's last statement in Saigon regarding a plebiscite to elect a commission to arrange general elections. Are you familiar with it, have you read it?

Answer: I read Mr Thieu's statement this morning only partially. But I read Mr Thieu's statement of the 24th very carefully. In the statement of the 24th, Mr Thieu naturally went over all the themes which are already well known, but he also used language unbecoming a political figure. First of all, regarding his positions, some of our journalist friends have said that Mr Nguyen Van Thieu approves the cease-fire. For my part, I have a different impression after reading this statement made by Mr Thieu, which is about 30 pages long. For example, Mr Thieu stated that there will be a cease-fire only when North Vietnam has withdrawn its troops and weapons not only from South Vietnam but from the other countries of Indochina, that is Laos and Cambodia.

Basically he went over the same themes which have been rehashed in past years by the U.S. and the Saigon administration concerning the alleged NVN presence in South Vietnam. Mr Thieu also demanded that the PRG and the liberation forces lay down their arms as a condition for a cease-fire. Basically, he brazenly called for the capitulation of the liberation forces, but this is an illusion on his part.

Another point, Thieu asked the Americans to continue bombing North Vietnam in order to destroy North Vietnam.

The line of reasoning put forward by Mr Thieu is the following: North Vietnam has been 80 percent weakened by American bombing, therefore, there is 20 percent left so why not finish up? His thesis is as follows: It is indispensable that the bombing be continued, to finish the job of destroying North Vietnam. Concerning the political question, Nguyen Van Thieu is still opposed to national concord. He has used language which is inappropriate, speaking of the PRG and not just of the PRG but also of the people belonging to the third component, the other political force. The epithets used by Mr Thieu to refer to the members of the third force stagger the imagination, I am embarrassed to quote this language for you--words like "punk" for example, in Vietnamese. He used the word "punk" to refer to these figures--those who are in the country and those who are abroad. In a word, one can say that Nguyen Van Thieu is seeking in every way possible to prolong the war. The explanation is simple. He was spawned by the war, he is living off the war, and if the war ends, it's easy to guess what his end will be.

Question: Bernard Valery: Mr Le, are you prepared to see Mr Kissinger once again for 3 or 4 days of additional negotiations, which he believes to be necessary, according to the statement he made yesterday?

Answer: I read Mr Kissinger's answers yesterday attentively. Moreover, as it was made clear in the statement which our government made yesterday, the two parties, the United States and the DRV, were in agreement on the overall contents of the accord, and the two parties agreed on the proposal put forward by the President of the United States, that is, that the signing would take place October 31st, and I want to make it clear once again that it is the President of the United States who proposed the date of October 31st. Dr Kissinger said that the date of the 31st was proposed by the Vietnamese. I am obliged to say that this date was, in fact, proposed by the United States.

During his press conference Mr Kissinger said there was no honest misunderstanding on the date of the signing, but I want to make it clear that for our part, we do not think there was a misunderstanding, because it is written down in the message sent by the American party to our side. Moreover, the President of the United States made this proposal on October 20th, the proposal of the date of October 31st.

The American party claims that there are still things which need to be worked out in discussions but we believe that these are unjustifiable pretexts. These are pretexts designed to delay the signing of an agreement which both parties have already accepted. But if Dr Kissinger would like to see Mr Xuan Thuy or Mr Le Duc Tho on the 31st, the day of the signing, I believe that Mr Le Duc Tho and Mr Xuan Thuy will be happy to see Mr Kissinger at that time. Of if Dr Kissinger wants to see Mr Le Duc Tho or Mr Xuan Thuy on the 1st or the 2nd of November, following the signature, to discuss interesting points between the two parties, I think that the reply would be positive also. Or, still another hypothesis, if, with the day of the signing being the 31st, Mr Kissinger wanted to see Mr Le Duc Tho or Mr Xuan Thuy on the 30th--or have a glass of champagne in anticipation of the signing, I believe that that answer would also be positive.

Question: [This and all further questions asked by unidentified journalists] But suppose it's not to sign. Suppose it's to ask for new discussions.

Answer: I repeat. Both parties reached agreement on the content of the accord, and there was agreement on the date of the 31st. The American party claims that there are still subjects to be settled before the signature, but I maintain that these are unjustified pretexts.

I'm going to tell you a secret--an example, and a secret at the same time--in his press conference yesterday, Mr Kissinger said that it was indispensable to have meetings to compare the texts in Vietnamese and English--that it was a question of language. I can tell you that this question has already been definitively settled. It should be said that in the private meetings since September, Mr Kissinger was assisted by a Vietnamese translator and expert co-worker who is very well qualified. When Mr Kissinger spoke in English, as he naturally did, the expert interpreter repeated what he said in Vietnamese. Moreover, for the October 11th meeting, which began at 9:30 and ended at 2:00 o'clock in the morning on October 12th--it was precisely during this meeting that the expert translators compared the texts in Vietnamese and in English. It was a purely linguistic session. Naturally, the session dealt with political matters, but it was also a technical session, and during the afternoon and the evening of the 12th, which also ran very late, during this meeting the experts on both sides worked on the texts in Vietnamese and in English.

Besides, I would like to tell you still another secret. The pictures published in the EXPRESS magazine were pictures of the experts who had compared the texts in Vietnamese and in English. That day, Mr Vy was not present. Therefore, at my press conference of the 18th I said that Mr Vy was not present at this meeting, and I told the truth.

Finally, on October 17th, there was a meeting between Dr Kissinger and Minister Xuan Thuy from 10:00 o'clock in the morning until 10:00 o'clock at night. Both parties studied the text of the accords, chapter by chapter, article by article, sentence by sentence, word by word. This is why we think that there are no more questions of language or differences between the Vietnamese and the English.

Question: Mr Le, in the text of the nine points which you transmitted to us, it is not clear who the signators of the accord will be. You said that the text would be signed by the foreign ministers of the two parties. Now, South Vietnam is a concerned party. What I want to know is, without calling into question the content of the accord, would the Democratic Republic of Vietnam agree that a representative of the Republic of Vietnam also sign the text?

Answer: We are very flexible on this question. During the discussions, the United States and the DRV agreed on the following procedure: The DRV and the United States will sign the agreement. Afterwards, the four parties will sign.

Moreover, during the discussion, the American party informed us that they were able to represent the Saigon administration. Besides, when Mr Kissinger was in Saigon, the American party informed us that the United States fully approved the draft accord.

Question: Mr Nguyen Than Le, in brief, are you accusing Mr Kissinger of having lied yesterday?

Answer: I believe that what I just said is clear as day. I leave it to you to draw your own conclusions.

But I can affirm that the American party has put forward unjustifiable pretexts to delay the signing of the accord and consequently, to prolong the war.

Question: Are you now preparing for the signing of the accord? Have you made any preparations for the ceremony already?

Answer: For our part, we are ready. Mr Kissinger said yesterday that peace was within reach. For our part, we might say the following: Peace is at the tip of a pen.

All the American party has to do is pick up the pen, and peace will become a reality. But if the American party continues to put forward unjustifiable pretexts to prolong the war and to prolong the suffering of the Vietnamese people, and the suffering of the American people also, the losses in life and property of the American people, it must bear full responsibility for this.

Question: Mr Nguyen Than Le, I have two short questions: Minister Xuan Thuy was asked a question yesterday. He was asked: "What would happen if there is no signing on the 31st?" I wonder if I might ask this question again.

My second question: Yesterday, Mr Kissinger cited what he referred to as "six or seven minor points." I would like to know if these questions are totally new questions which he plans to bring up.

Answer: If we do not sign on the 31st, that is, if the United States continues its maneuvers to delay the signing, it must bear full responsibility for this. And this will prove something that has already been demonstrated before now: The United States talks peace but makes war.

Regarding the questions brought up by Mr Kissinger, the example which I just cited a while ago, the language problem, no longer poses any difficulty.

Regarding the question on the international commission, in the draft agreement the two parties agreed on this also.

The question of where the troops of the different parties will be stationed after the cease-fire was settled. Therefore, we think that the questions brought up by Mr Kissinger are pretexts.

I repeat, on October 20th, the President of the United States sent a message to the Democratic Republic of Vietnam saying specifically the following: The text of the accord has been completed. Now the American party is putting forward one pretext after another. There is only one possible conclusion: The American party is not showing goodwill.

Question: But to whom was this message sent, exactly?

Answer: The message was sent by the President of the United States to the prime minister of the DRV.

Question: I have two very different questions to ask you--the first, regarding the immediate future, deals with the various signatures that you just spoke of. If the four parties sign, will this signing take place after the text has been initialled by the American party and the Hanoi party? Or will it be initialled after the official signing of the accord by your foreign minister and the U.S. foreign minister?

My second question is on a more long term basis and is perhaps more important: You have reached agreement with the Americans for setting up in the south a national council of reconciliation and national concord with three equal components. How will decisions be made within this body?

Answer: During the discussions, the question of signing the accords was discussed a number of times. For example, whether two parties would sign or four parties. But the American party informed us that in the discussion, it represented both the United States and the Saigon administration. Throughout the discussion we exchanged views and had regular talks with the PRG. All the questions which we discussed during these negotiations had been agreed upon in advance by the PRG and moreover, as it was noted in our government's statement yesterday, both parties had agreed on the date when the accord would be initialled in Hanoi--the United States and the DRV would initial the accord in Hanoi. On the 31st the foreign ministers of the United States and the DRV will sign the accord in Paris. The DRV will represent the PRG and the United States will represent the Saigon administration. Afterward, the four foreign ministers will sign this accord.

With regard to your second questions on the national council of reconciliation and national concord, I can tell you that the two parties were in overall agreement on this question, for example, with regard to the prerogatives, the functions, the procedures etcetera. Naturally, after the signing and the publication of the accord you will have all these details.

Question: And can you tell us nothing now on the manner in which decisions will be made--will there be majority decisions, or will there be unanimous decisions? Because this obviously changes a great deal.

Answer: You will have to excuse me, but for the moment, it's not possible to reveal the content.

Question: But this has been decided?

[Passage indistinct]

Answer: The two parties were in complete agreement on all these points.

Question: Therefore, your foreign minister will be here, present with Mr Le Duc Tho on Tuesday?

Answer: We are ready, if the American party respects its commitments.

If a signature is not possible on the 31st, I repeat, the American party will be responsible.

Question: Yesterday, the minister, for reasons which seemed very obvious to me, refused to specify what countries had been chosen to take part in the international control and supervision commission--which led one to believe that the two parties, the United States and the DRV had not yet reached agreement on this. Obviously, this reticence on the part of the minister suggested that there might be other questions--perhaps the questions that Mr Kissinger spoke of yesterday--without wanting to give undue emphasis to the minister's reply yesterday with regard to the international commission. It seems to me that this is an important point. If a cease-fire is to be signed, which is to go into effect 24 hours after the signing of the agreement the countries ought to have been chosen. It seems to me that the members of the commission should be known with certainty.

If you can't tell us the exact countries, could you tell us, at least, how many countries will take part in this commission, and how many people from each country will take part in this particular task?

Answer: I am very happy to reply to your question, Mr Randal. I can affirm that the American party and the DRV party agreed fully on the composition of the international commission, on its prerogatives and on its function. There was total agreement. There was not a single aspect left pending.

Question: There was total agreement on the international commission?

Answer: On its composition, on its prerogatives, on its functions. In a word, all questions dealing with the international commission.

As for the question of when the international commission will begin its work, this will take place after the cease-fire. I will give you an example. For the Geneva agreements of 1954, the signature took place on July 10th, 1954. Seven days afterwards, there was a cease-fire in a certain number of places in Vietnam--and 11 days later, there was a total cease-fire throughout the territory of Vietnam--and the international commission began its work 1 or 2 months, I'm not quite sure, after the cease-fire.

Question: Have the countries been notified?

Answer: For the moment, I am in a position to reveal only these aspects. But now I would like to tell you another secret. With regard to the international conference, the accord provided for this conference to be convened 30 days after the signature of the accord.

Another aspect on which the two parties agreed was the countries which would take part in this international conference. But you will understand that for the time being I am not in a position to tell you the names of these countries.

Question: Will this international conference take place in Paris, or elsewhere?

Answer: I am not in a position to reveal this either, but as far as we are concerned, Paris would be the ideal place.

Question: Would you accept Geneva?

Answer: Our thinking is as follows: At the present time, the present Paris conference is meeting at Avenue Kleber, and if the international conference could also take place in Paris, this would be the ideal because the French people and the French Government are very hospitable and have demonstrated this up to now.

Question: Could I go back to the question which I just asked?

Answer: Mr Randal, I will come back to your question, of a while ago, but for the moment, I would like to let others have a chance.

[Question indistinct]

Answer: I just said a while ago, the American party will sign for the Saigon administration, and we have the PRG's authorization to sign.

Afterwards, the foreign ministers of the four parties will sign to give the agreement a more solemn nature.

Question: Where will all this take place?

Answer: The signing will take place in Paris, including the second phase. The signing will take place on the 31st, and if the four foreign ministers also agree to sign on the 31st, that would be the ideal.

Question: I have several clarifications to ask for: To return to the cease-fire, as far as we know Mr Kissinger said yesterday that more arrangements were necessary so that during the period following the cease-fire, there would not be difficulties on one side or the other to know what it was that they were expected to abide by.

This leads to the second point: You disclosed several arrangements aside from the text which you issued. Have there been any agreements between the two sides not contained in the text--particularly in the military sphere.

Third, is this question on the dates--related to the American elections?

Answer: I think we should take a tea break at this point, and resume later.

[Passage indistinct]

Answer: Both parties agreed on all aspects of this question. This is the thickness of the agreement. This is the complete text.

Question: Does Hanoi have the full text?

Answer: No, Hanoi does not have it.

Question: Could you tell us the number of pages in the agreement, and let us take a picture of it?

Answer: I am not in a position to reveal the number of pages, but perhaps you can guess.

Question: These are the nine points which have been developed?

Answer: The nine points are a resume.

Question: Is it more than 50 pages?

Answer: There are more than nine points--nine points was an approximation. I have to keep this a secret until the day of the signing.

Question: Then this is the text that will be signed on the 31st?

Answer: Both parties were in agreement. It was made very clear in their agreement that there would be a cease-fire in place. Both parties would refrain from encroaching upon the territory of the other. There would be no reprisals, etcetera.

Question: Mr Lewis asked us why the American party postponed the date of the signing several times.

Answer: It is hard for us to answer for the American party.

Question: That was not my question. I wanted to know if in your opinion, the fact that the American elections will take place on November 7th, makes you think that the accords must be signed before, and not afterward, as Mr Kissinger suggested yesterday?

Answer: We came here to negotiate with the intention of reaching results as soon as possible, and with maximum goodwill. Naturally, we had hoped from the beginning of the negotiations that these could be concluded in 1968.

Perhaps you recall that in the PRG's proposals throughout the negotiations, for example, in the seven points, the time periods were always spelled out. Now in the last stages of the negotiations, on several occasions we specified a time lapse for this signing. For example, we proposed that the signing take place toward the middle of October, and it should be said that in reality at the beginning, we proposed that the signing take place towards the end of September or the beginning of October.

In regard to the last three dates, they were put forward by the American party. Up to now, we have always hoped for the negotiations to come to a conclusion as soon as possible to end the war and restore peace. For our part, we are refraining from interfering in the internal affairs of the United States and we think that if we managed to end this war in Vietnam, it will be in the interests of the Vietnamese people and the American people.

Question: Mr Le, I would like to ask two things: You spoke of the agreement reached on the different countries which would make up the international commission. As far as you know, have these countries expressed an opinion on this? Have some said, yes, have some said no? Is there still some question about whether these various countries agree?

My second question is: Is it satisfactory for these countries to arrive on the scene during the period immediately following the cease-fire, or will they come a month or 2 after the cease-fire as was the case in 1954?

Answer: I think that just awhile ago I was very explicit. I believe that the countries suggested by the two parties to the agreement will certainly respond affirmatively and with pleasure.

Question: If Mr Kissinger asks to meet Le Duc Tho before October 31st, would it be possible for him to arrive here in time?

Answer: I believe I already answered this question awhile ago, but I can sum up as follows: The two parties agreed on the date of the 31st therefore, on the 31st, we will be able to proceed to the signing. If, for example, Mr Kissinger proposes a meeting with Mr Le Duc Tho, Mr Xuan Thuy, and our foreign minister on the 30th of October to have a cup of tea as we are doing now, I think that this will be perfectly feasible.

Question: Would it be indiscreet to ask if Mr Le Duc Tho is already on his way?

Answer: If the American party respects its commitment, that is, the signing on the 31st, I believe that Mr Le Duc Tho will be present in Paris before the 31st.

Question: Mr Le, I would like to ask you a question which was asked yesterday. I am asking you because it was included in the points that Mr Kissinger brought up this morning. I will quote from the wire service dispatch.

Kissinger cited as an example, the necessity of being sure that the North Vietnamese understand that the national council of reconciliation and concord is an administrative structure and not a coalition government. Now what is your feeling about the national council? Is it an administrative structure, or coalition, according to the terms of the agreement which you have reached with the Americans?

Answer: I answered this question just awhile ago, and I believe that I was quite explicit. This is a very long article, and the two parties agreed on its overall contents--as was the case on the draft agreement in its entirety. And I repeat also that, both parties agreed on the terms to be employed in English and in Vietnamese.

Question: Mr Le, would you by any chance have the English words used by Mr Nixon in his October 20th message to Pham Van Dong when he said that the agreement was confirmed? Do you have this by any chance?

Answer: For the time being, I am not in a position to add anything whatsoever to what I have already said but I can tell you that the message sent by the President of the United States to Prime Minister Pham Van Dong was in English.

Question: According to these agreements, after the national council assumes its functions, both governments remain in place. Or does the national commission supercede them? And if it does, at what time would this take place.

Answer: This is made clear in the statement. After the cease-fire, the PRG and the Saigon administration will continue to exist. As a further clarification, there is this sentence: "The two South Vietnamese parties will reach an agreement on the internal questions in South Vietnam as soon as possible, and will do their best to accomplish this task within a 3-month period after the cease-fire goes into effect."

Question: Will they pass out of existence after this 3-month period? This is what we would like to know.

Answer: That will depend on the agreement which they conclude. The two South Vietnamese parties will discuss this question.

Question: Mr Le, this morning Mr Melvin Laird said in London that the United States would stop the bombing above the 20th parallel--don't you see in this a gesture on the part of the United States? And also perhaps, a way of putting pressure on the South Vietnamese.

Answer: I will reply first of all to the second part of your question: Everyone is aware and moreover, we stressed this in our statement yesterday, that Nguyen Van Thieu is a creation of the United States. "If the United States put an end to the aid granted his administration, he would resign". Which proves that Nguyen Van Thieu was set up by the United States and is maintained by the United States.

[Remainder of conference indistinct]

FOREIGN MINISTRY SPOKESMAN SCORES 30 OCT U.S. BOMBINGS

Hanoi VNA International Service in English 1603 GMT 31 Oct 72 B

[Text] Hanoi VNA October 31--The DRV Foreign Ministry spokesman today issued a statement condemning the continued U.S. bombing of Dong Hoi town and many other populous areas in North Vietnam. The statement said:

The U.S. imperialists on October 30 continued sending aircraft for savage raids on Dong Hoi provincial capital and many heavily populated areas in the Provinces of Thanh Hoa, Nghe An, Ha Tinh and Quang Binh and the Vinh Linh area. U.S. B-52 planes bombed a number of places in Quang Binh while U.S. warships wantonly shelled several places in Tinh Gia district, Thanh Hoa Province.

The statement urged the Nixon administration to end at once the bombardments in North Vietnam, the mining and blockade of its ports and all other encroachments upon the sovereignty and security of the DRV.

"The U.S. administration must bear full responsibility for the serious consequences of their acts of war in Vietnam," the statement stressed.