

REPUBLIC OF VIET-NAM

PEACE AND BEYOND

OFFICIAL STATEMENTS AND COMMUNIQUES

on

PEACE AND POSTWAR DEVELOPMENT

July - September 1968

VIET-NAM DOCUMENTS SERIES IV

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THE PERSPECTIVE OF PEACE

STATEMENT

of

H.E. MR. TRAN CHANH THANH

FOREIGN MINISTER OF THE REPUBLIC OF VIET-NAM

30 July 1968

Mr. Chairman,
Distinguished Delegates,

The Vietnamese Delegation welcomes this opportunity to exchange views with the other members of the Council on questions that are affecting our region. Since the meeting of the Council last year, the tension in our area has increased. North Viet-Nam has suddenly accelerated the tempo of her aggression against the Republic of Viet-Nam, and against Laos. This has happened in face of the cessation of Allied bombing on most of North Viet-Nam's territory, and of the preliminary talks now underway between the United States of America and Hanoi in Paris.

On January 31st this year, the communist forces launched a series of coordinated attacks against Saigon and several other cities of South Viet-Nam, treacherously breaking their truce. These attacks marked a drastic change of strategy. Up to then, the communists directed their action mainly towards the rural countryside where most of our population live and where the bulk of our national wealth comes from. From 1959, when they started in earnest their armed aggression against the South, until the beginning of 1968, their aim was—in their own words —“to take over the rural countryside in order to encircle the cities”.

That strategy, pursued during nine long years, has proved to be a failure.

The Communists then concentrated all their efforts on attacking the cities. Having declared a seven-day truce on the occasion of the Lunar New Year, they treacherously broke it to launch their so-called “general offensive and general uprising.”

Captured documents and statements of returnees and prisoners of war showed that the enemy's intention was to create psychological conditions for eventual negotiations. By attacking the towns, he hoped to trigger a popular revolt and to create such a critical situation as to force our Government to accept his peace conditions.

In May there was a second communist offensive, timed to coincide with the start of the preliminary talks in Paris. Compared to the first, the second one was much weaker, but it had one notable feature: the indiscriminate bombing by rockets of populated areas.

Both offensives failed. The constitutional regime of the Republic of Viet-Nam, set up by last year's free elections, remained intact. Faced with its most severe trial, the Vietnamese Army had risen to the challenge and emerged from it stronger, more self-confident. The Viet-Cong never received the popular support they expected. Moreover, they have alienated the people. Their mass killings, as shown by the common graves near Hue, each containing hundreds of bodies; their murder even of foreigners like the three German professors of Hue University and their wives, or the five press correspondents in Saigon, the destruction of civilian areas by rockets; all this has been deeply resented by our people.

Our assessment of the actual situation is as follows: North Viet-Nam has changed her strategy of conquest at the beginning of this year because the former strategy has not succeeded. The new communist strategy, based on an intensification of hostilities directed against the cities is a short-term one. It has been very costly to the aggressors in terms of both men and equipment.

During the first six months of this year, they suffered about 100,000 fatalities. The kill ratio was 9:1 compared to our casualties.

It is unlikely that North Viet-Nam, with her seventeen million population, and her underdeveloped economy, can sustain this level of losses for very long, even with massive help from Red China and Soviet Russia. During the first half of this year 91,000 North Vietnamese troops have infiltrated into the South. The territory of Laos and Cambodia has increasingly been used as a corridor of infiltration and as a base of aggression. North Vietnamese now comprise over 70% of the communist main force battalions in the South, as compared to 26% three years ago. This huge expeditionary army must be supplied with munitions, equipment, food. This is the reason why in our assessment, the new communist strategy is, and can only be, one aimed at a short-term objective. If the objective cannot be reached soon, then the new strategy will have failed.

Over the last month, there has been a lull in the ground fighting, as well as in the rocket bombing of the cities. It is a fact that our forces have been successful in blocking the enemy's moves. But there are also indications that they are regrouping for a new offensive. Even if they have the capability to do so, our forces are ready to meet, and to defeat them.

The coming period will thus be crucial. To meet the new situation created by the increased aggression from North Viet-Nam, our Government has decreed total mobilization. Our Armed Forces will have reached 800,000 by the end of the year. In addition, there will be 200,000 men in the police and self-defense forces. Alongside the quantitative increase in manpower, the equipment of our forces will also be improved. . . . All the troops down to the self-defense forces at hamlet level will be supplied with the M-16 rifle during 1969. They will then be able to shoulder a larger part of the burden of the war.

The rural development programme has known some local setbacks because of the communist offensives. We are, however, rapidly recovering, and it is expected that the program will soon be back to pre-offensive level. There are at present 46,000 rural development cadres. An increase of 16,000 cadres is planned for the second half of 1968.

On the political field, an earnest effort is being made to consolidate our democratic regime by the formation of well-organized and broadly-based parties. Our constitution has expressed a preference for a two-party system. There is now a movement to merge the existing parties into two big groups, one supporting the Government and the other standing in opposition. The present phase of our struggle is one of resistance against armed aggression. However, the long-term challenge facing us is of a political character. And that challenge will be the establishment of a stable democracy so that ultimately we will be able to guarantee our own independence and freedom.

Now I would like to discuss the Paris talks.

By accepting to come to the conference table, the communists have shown that they have abandoned their hope to achieve outright military victory in Viet-Nam. They have changed their tactics, but their objective remains the same. What they have been doing in Paris for the last two months is to follow the familiar line of "talking while fighting". North Viet-Nam's attitude has been negative. She has not responded to the major limitation of the bombing on her territory. She has continued to deny the evidence of North Vietnamese troops fighting in the South. In this situation what is required from our side is to be vigilant, patient, and to keep up the pressure on the battlefield until the time when the aggressor will see reason.

Hanoi's attitude in Paris will depend on the outcome of the battlefield in Viet-Nam. It will also depend on the attitude of two countries, without whose help Hanoi could not have started its aggression: Red China and Soviet Russia.

Red China is opposed to all forms of negotiations. The cold reception given to Xuan Thuy in Peking on his way to attend the Paris talks,

as well as the reported attacks on the North Vietnamese consular missions in Nanking and Kwangchow, showed the hard line taken by Peking.

As for Soviet Russia, I think that she has a stake in the stability of our area. She could make North Viet-Nam more amenable to a peaceful solution. She has powerful means to do so. However, up to now there has been no sign showing that Soviet Russia is effectively working towards peace in Viet-Nam.

Many rumors have been circulating about the Paris talks, to the effect that the United States of America are going to unilaterally stop the bombing over the whole of North Viet-Nam, that they are going to accept a coalition government in South Viet-Nam. Statements made both by President Nguyen Van Thieu and President Johnson at their recent Honolulu meeting have shown that these rumors are unfounded. As a matter of fact, just to propagate rumors like these is to fall into the communist trap, for the communist propaganda has presented this war as the result of American intervention in the affairs of Asia. The truth is that this is a Vietnamese war. The United States of America, as well as the other Allies, are in South Viet-Nam only to help us fight aggression, in answer to our call.

The bombing of North Viet-Nam is not the cause of the war. It is only a reaction against aggression, a measure of self-defense aimed at reducing the flow of troops and materials from North Viet-Nam into the South. In spite of this, our side has made the first step and stopped the bombing on most of North Vietnamese territory. It is now North Viet-Nam's turn to deescalate. She could do so by respecting the status of the Demilitarized Zone, by reducing the infiltration, and by respecting the neutrality of Laos as stipulated in the 1962 agreements. The absence of rocket bombing on Saigon during the last month cannot be taken as an act of deescalation on the communist side, it is merely the result of more effective security measures taken by our forces.

The present talks in Paris are preliminary in character. Whenever substantial negotiations begin, the two principal parties must naturally be the two Viet-Nams. South Viet-Nam's leading role in the negotiations has been stressed by the U.S. President at Honolulu.

Moreover, we have appealed many times to North Viet-Nam to open bilateral talks in order to settle this conflict among ourselves. But Hanoi has kept silent.

At the Honolulu meeting, our President has set out the conditions of peace in Viet-Nam in the following terms:

—The reestablishment of the 17th Parallel as the demarcation line between South and North Viet-Nam, pending a determination, by the

free choice of all Vietnamese, on reunification;

—Respect for the territorial integrity of the Republic of Viet-Nam;

—Full compliance with the principle of non-interference between South and North Viet-Nam;

—The withdrawal from South Viet-Nam of all military and subversive forces from the North;

—An end to aggression and a complete cessation of hostilities throughout Viet-Nam;

—Effective international supervision and guarantees for the carrying out and preservation of the above measures.

There could be a cease-fire on the basis of these conditions and as part of a final settlement. We are prepared to meet immediately with representatives of Hanoi to discuss the arrangements for a cease-fire.

As for the internal affairs of South Viet-Nam, we subscribe to the democratic principle of one-man one-vote. All individuals and members of groups who agree to renounce force and to abide by our Constitution could fully participate in political activities.

The "National Liberation Front of South Viet-Nam" is, as its name indicates, only a front behind which Hanoi carries out its policy of conquest. It has no representative character. The Legal Committee of the International Commission for Supervision and Control has concluded in a report dated June, 1962, that the "Front" was led and controlled by Hanoi. There can be no question of us negotiating with the "Front", or entering into a coalition with it. Nor is there any possibility for the "Front" to be allowed to function as a political party in the South. The recently formed "Alliance for Democracy and Peace" is but an offspring of the "Front", created to deceive public opinion.

The internal problems of South Viet-Nam are for our people to decide. To put an end to the erroneous rumors made about us and our ally, the United States, on this subject, allow me to quote President Johnson: "The United States will not support the imposition of a Coalition Government, or any other form of Government, on the people of South Viet-Nam." (Honolulu Joint Communique)

Vietnam is not an isolated case. Other countries in our area, Laos, Thailand, Cambodia, Malaysia, Indonesia, are also threatened with overt or camouflaged aggression. This aggression comes from the same source, and not limited to any one country. Communism is trying to expand in Asia, through the strategy of "wars of national liberation." It is difficult for a small country to face it alone. A common threat must be met by common action. This is the reason why Allied troops are fighting in South Viet-Nam.

What we want is the end of aggression and the restoration of the *status quo ante*. Once peace is achieved, we are prepared to coexist peacefully with North Viet-Nam. Going even further, we would consider favorably the gradual development of relations beneficial to both South Viet-Nam and North Viet-Nam, subject only to the essential safeguards against renewed subversion. Such a course of action would lead to the ultimate reunification of our country, in peace, freedom and progress.

Mr. Chairman,
Distinguished Delegates,

I have taken much time in talking at length about Viet-Nam because I believe the developments of the war in Viet-Nam are affecting the whole ASPAC area. Thank you very much for your patience.

JOINT COMMUNIQUE

Third Ministerial Meeting

ASIAN AND PACIFIC COUNCIL

Canberra, Australia

30 July - 1 August 1968

§1. At the invitation of the Government of Australia, the Third Ministerial Meeting of the Asian Pacific Council, comprising Australia, the Republic of China, Japan, the Republic of Korea, Malaysia, New Zealand, the Philippines, Thailand and the Republic of Viet-Nam met in Canberra, Australia, from 30 July to 1 August 1968. An observer from the Kingdom of Laos attended all sessions of the Meeting.

§2. In his opening address, the Australian Prime Minister, the Right Honourable J. G. Gorton, welcomed the delegates. Noting that ASPAC included many important countries of the Asian and Pacific region, the Prime Minister emphasised that, although the organization was only two years old, it had made significant progress towards the attainment of its fundamental goal, namely, the creation of a relationship of practical co-operation and understanding in political, economic, cultural and social fields among member countries.

§3. The Ministers over a period of three days discussed a wide range of world and regional problems.

§4. In their exchange of views, the Ministers considered such subjects as the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, nuclear testing and disarmament; the politics of the major powers in relation to the region and relations between the major powers as they affect the region; the need for security as a foundation for political stability and economic progress; the world economic situation and its bearings on the economic development of member nations; and the political and economic problems of the region itself. The problems arising out of developments on the Chinese mainland were of particular concern to Ministers and they agreed that this situation was uncertain and should be closely followed.

§5. The Ministers expressed concern over the increased infiltration of armed agents into the Republic of Korea including the 21 January incident, and noted with satisfaction the efforts being made by the Government and people of the Republic of Korea to preserve their national independence and to continue the rapid development of the national economy.

§6. The Ministers noted with satisfaction the development of democratic institutions even during wartime in the Republic of Viet-Nam since last year's Meeting of the Council, and the increased efforts that this country is making in the military, rural development and political fields in order to defend itself better. They reaffirmed their sympathy for and support to the people and Government of the Republic of Viet-Nam in their struggle to defend themselves and to preserve their sovereign independence, territorial integrity and the right to decide their own affairs.

§7. The Ministers took note of the present talks in Paris between representatives of the United States and North Viet-Nam and expressed the ardent hope that these talks would open the way to negotiations, in which the Republic of Viet-Nam would naturally play a leading role, for a just, honourable and lasting peace.

§8. Looking ahead to the days when the war is over and peace and freedom are secured, they acknowledged the need for common efforts on a broad international basis to help in the rehabilitation and development of the Republic of Viet-Nam and other countries affected by the war.

§9. The Ministers considered the progress that had been made towards general and complete disarmament and noted particularly the agreement in the United Nations General Assembly this year on a draft treaty on the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons. The Ministers agreed that effective action to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons would be an important step forward. The Ministers considered the special problems which would be presented if all nuclear powers did not participate in the treaty for the banning of nuclear tests, and if they did not become parties to the treaty on the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons.

§10. In an exchange of views on the problems of the maintenance of peace, the Ministers reaffirmed their support for the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter. They recognised the value of regional arrangements for peace and security such as those envisaged in Article 52 of the Charter and also recognised the present existence of various arrangements of this kind.

§11. The Ministers expressed pleasure that ASPAC countries have continued to make substantial progress in agricultural and industrial development and in the expansion of their trade. They noted, however, that these gains had been made against a background of falling prices for many primary commodities, of a slowing down in the rate of growth of the trade of most of the economically more advanced countries, and of strains on international reserve currencies. They expressed

the hope that these adverse factors would not persist and that measures taken by the international community to provide opportunity for developing countries and to assist their economic and social advancement would be sustained.

§12. The Ministers reiterated their previously expressed view that ASPAC was not an exclusive group but an outward-looking organisation which was seeking to promote mutual understanding through frank exchanges of views, more than being concerned with reaching formal conclusions. ASPAC was not intended to be a body directed against any state or group of states. Its activities should be directed towards encouraging consultations and strengthening co-operation among the countries in the region. The Ministers welcomed the existence in the region of a number of organisations pursuing broadly similar aims. The fact that the organisations shared a degree of overlapping membership would help bring about close and harmonious co-operation between them. In this connection the Ministers noted that the Standing Committee of ASPAC had formally welcomed the creation of ASEAN.

§13. Recognising the contribution which ASPAC has already made to strengthening the bonds of solidarity among nations of the region and to accelerating mutual co-operation in economic, social and cultural fields; endorsing the need to strengthen further the valuable and effective system for consultation and co-operation existing among them; and, in the light of the Communiqués issued after their First and Second Meetings, the Ministers affirmed the determination of ASPAC countries to uphold the following principles and objectives:

(i) Mutual respect for national sovereignty, political independence and territorial integrity;

(ii) Attainment of equality, freedom and justice for all;

(iii) Pursuit of peace and settlement of disputes by peaceful means and respect for the rule of law;

(iv) Realism of a regional community where peace, order and progress are ensured;

(v) Emphasis upon self-reliance of the Asian and Pacific peoples based on their sense of a common destiny and regional solidarity;

(vi) Promotion of close co-operation in economic, social and cultural fields in order to further the development of a prosperous community of Asian and Pacific nations;

(vii) Strengthening of collaboration with other nations and existing international and regional organisations.

§14. The Ministers noted the report of the Standing Committee and expressed their gratification at the progress of the organisation as

recorded in the Report, and their appreciation of the work of the Chairman and members of the Committee.

§15. Recalling their decision in Bangkok that consultations between ASPAC members in international organisations should be further extended, the Ministers noted that in the last year the Standing Committee had arranged for informal consultations to take place between representatives of ASPAC delegations at more than twenty international conferences. The Ministers considered that these consultations had enhanced the value of their countries membership in ASPAC and their participation in the conferences in question. They considered that, as the practice of consultations in international organisations grew, the consultations would become increasingly valuable. They therefore decided that they should be continued and, where appropriate, extended in 1968-69.

§16. The Ministers formally approved the Draft Agreement submitted by the Standing Committee for an ASPAC Cultural and Social Centre to be set up in Seoul and agreed that the Agreement should be open for signature at the conclusion of their meeting. They noted that the costs of establishment and administration of the Centre would be met by the Government of the Republic of Korea and that the cost of operations of the Centre would be shared by participating governments. They also noted that Governments which are neither members nor observers of the Council were eligible for membership of the Centre.

§17. The Ministers expressed pleasure that the ASPAC Registry of Experts' Services, which had now been officially opened, had begun functioning. They noted that the Director of the Registry had visited member countries and that, on the basis of the cooperative working relationship being established between member governments and the Registry it should soon be able to make a real contribution to the development of the region.

§18. The Ministers commended the initiative of the Republic of China in proposing the establishment of a Food and Fertilizer Technology Centre for the Asian and Pacific region and recognised that such a Centre could help meet a real and pressing need in the region. The Ministers directed that the Standing Committee should, as a matter of urgency, give careful consideration to the scope, mode of operation, financing and administrative structure of such a Centre, with due regard to the avoidance of duplication with the work of other international bodies in the same field. The Ministers recorded their appreciation to the Republic of China for its invitation to convene a group of experts to assist the Standing Committee in its work. The Ministers requested that a detailed proposal for the establishment of the Centre be submitted

to them for their consideration at the Fourth Ministerial Meeting.

§19. The Ministers received with appreciation the proposal of the Government of Thailand for the establishment of an Economic Coordination Center for the Asian and Pacific region. They directed the Standing Committee to consider the proposal with due regard to the work of existing organisations in the region.

§20. The Ministers agreed that the Standing Committee should consider ways of appraising and processing existing and new proposals for consideration by the Council, including the proposal made by the Secretary of Foreign Affairs of the Philippines that the Standing Committee establish a non-permanent Study Group which would study the various economic or quasi-economic agencies and entities operating in the ASPAC region, their objectives, plans, programmes and projects with a view to determining precisely areas of activity in which ASPAC might engage; and the suggestion of the Government of the Republic of Korea that the Standing Committee arrange for studies of measures to expand and facilitate trade. In this connection attention was drawn to paragraph 9 of the Joint Communique of the Second Ministerial Meeting, Bangkok 5 - 7 July 1967 as follows:

“The Ministers noted the work being undertaken in other international organisations in such fields of regional economic integration and co-operation as the liberation of trade, the harmonisation and coordination of economic plans and payment arrangements, as well as the strengthening of economic infrastructures. The Ministers agreed that there would be merit in having the Standing Committee study such work on a continuing basis with a view to ascertaining what aspects are of relevance to ASPAC activities.”

§21. Ministers agreed that they should continue to meet annually. In response to an invitation from the Chairman, who was supported by other members of the Council, the Foreign Minister of Japan expressed the willingness of his Government to hold the Fourth Ministerial meeting of the Council in Japan in 1969. As a consequence of Japan's acceptance and in accordance with the established practice, the Standing Committee of ASPAC will meet in Tokyo under the chairmanship of the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan during the coming twelve months, and the Japanese Government will act as a clearing house and provide a working Secretariat pending and during the Fourth Ministerial meeting.

§22. Ministers expressed their warm appreciation for the cordial and generous hospitality of the Government and people of Australia for the meetings of the Standing Committee and the Council in Canberra.

THE NECESSITY OF A JUST PEACE

A TELEVISED ADDRESS

by

PRESIDENT NGUYEN VAN THIEU

August 23, 1968

(Excerpts)

We are longing for peace. But as I have stated many times, it should be a peace in honor and with justice. It will become a reality only when the Communist regime in North Viet-Nam realizes that its aggression, and the sacrifices it requires from the population under its control in North Viet-Nam in the pursuit of that aggression, are futile.

The Communists remain stubborn because they are still hoping that, by dragging out this war and by launching major offensives, they can break the will to resist among the allied nations. No expectations are more illusory, and such illusions will prove to be very costly to them.

The Communists must be aware that they can never win a military victory against the Allied Forces. The balance of power is too much to their disadvantage. On the other hand, the Communists have suffered very heavy losses since the beginning of the Lunar New Year.

However, as everyone knows, the Communists always subordinate their military activities to political aims. In an attempt to win the "battle of the headlines", as during their treacherous Tet attacks, and to foster defeatist movements among certain segments of public opinion in the allied countries, the Communists have been intensively preparing for another major offensive against various areas in the Republic of Viet-Nam.

Whereas, in an unilateral gesture of goodwill, we have stopped the bombings over most of the territory of North Viet-Nam, the Hanoi regime has not responded with any parallel restraint. On the contrary, they have taken full advantage of our partial cessation of bombing to increase very substantially their infiltration of troops and weapons into South Viet-Nam. In the past four months, the rate of infiltration of Communist troops from the North into the Republic of Viet-Nam is approximately 30,000 men a month, that is about four times the monthly rate of infiltration in previous months.

Through other indicators, such as enemy troop movements and concentrations, captured documents and enemy prisoners, we have known for some time now that the Communists are actively preparing another offensive.

Therefore the so-called lull in the past few months is not an indication of deescalation by the other side, it only reflects their preparations for another offensive, as well as the success of our spoiling operations against them.

In the past few days, the Communist aggressors have intensified their military activities and resumed their attacks in many parts of the country, especially in the western provinces of the Delta and in the Capital area. For political reasons, the capital city of Saigon seems to remain a major target for the enemy. Whether or not the enemy will effectively launch a large-scale offensive in the coming weeks depends on the extent to which they would be able to infiltrate additional troops and move them to targeted areas.

We stand ready for any eventuality.

We do hope however that the leaders of the Hanoi regime will soon come to reason, and will not create another futile blood bath.

In the past Communist offensives, the Armed Forces and civilian population of the Republic of Viet-Nam have shown in unmistakable manner how the next one will be met.

As for our Allies, they have also indicated in unequivocal terms their unwavering determination to resist and repel aggression. At the Summit Conference in Honolulu last July [1968], President Johnson solemnly stated that the pledge of the United States to help the Vietnamese people defeat aggression stands firm against all obstacles and against any deception.

A large majority of the American people, in a public opinion poll taken a few days ago, also take a strong position against the total unconditional cessation of bombing of North Viet-Nam, and against the formation of a so-called coalition government with the Communists in the Republic of Viet-Nam.

Other allied governments have conveyed to me the same assurances as the United States Government, and their peoples remain equally firm in the defense of freedom.

The Communist offensives during Tet and last May only turned international public opinion against them, and strengthened our determination to resist brutal force.

We do not want to expand this war, nor do we contemplate solving it by military means, except for those made necessary by our self-defense efforts. The Hanoi regime, for its part, must understand that it is utterly unrealistic for it to expect a military victory, or even a political victory based on brutal and treacherous attacks.

For the reestablishment of peace, the situation established by the Geneva Agreements of 1954 and 1962 has to be restored, pending the solution of Vietnamese political problems by and among the Vietnamese themselves.

In the Honolulu Joint Communiqué of last July [20, 1968], I have made clear the views of the Government of Viet-Nam on the essential conditions of peace, which reflect the basic dispositions of the 1954 Armistice Convention:

— The re-establishment of the 17th parallel as the demarcation line between North Viet-Nam and South Viet-Nam, pending the determination by the free choice of all Vietnamese on reunification;

— Respect for the territorial integrity of the Republic of Viet-Nam;

— Complete cessation of hostilities and subversion, and withdrawal from the territory of the Republic of Viet-Nam of all Communist military and subversive forces to the North;

— Full compliance with the principle of non-interference between North and South Viet-Nam;

— Effective international supervision and guarantees.

When peace and security are restored, there will be two major sets of problems which could be usefully discussed among the Vietnamese: the reunification of Viet-Nam, and the political questions that remain in the Republic of Viet-Nam.

On these two major sets of problems, I have also clearly stated the policy of the Government of Viet-Nam.

At the 1954 Geneva Conference, Free Viet-Nam opposed the partition of the country, which was advocated by the Viet-Minh, the present rulers of North Viet-Nam.

When peace is restored, the Government of Viet-Nam is ready to explore with the authorities in North Viet-Nam all the avenues which may lead to the reunification of the country by peaceful means, through the free and democratic choice of all Vietnamese in the North and in the South. Pending actual reunification, the gradual normalization of economic, cultural, and family relations between North Viet-Nam and South Viet-Nam can be usefully explored. This is an issue which can be decided only by a common accord between the Government of Viet-Nam and the authorities now in control of North Viet-Nam.

Another important problem relates to the political question remaining in the Republic of Viet-Nam. On this issue, I reaffirm the policy of the Government which is to seek an amicable, just and

peaceful solution. We seek no victory, no revenge over our misguided citizens, but only reconciliation with justice and under the law.

All of our citizens who are now on the other side, and fighting against us, have the choice between a criminal, destructive, and hazardous life, and a constructive life in peace and national brotherhood: as soon as they lay down their weapons, renounce violence, and abide by the law of the land, they will have the full rights of citizenship. They will enjoy exactly the same civil and political rights and assume the same responsibilities as the other citizens, and as such will be able to participate in our national life under the principle of one-man one-vote, in accordance with our national Constitution.

Rewards will be offered to those of the returnees who contribute to the shortening of this criminal war waged by the Communist aggressors, commensurate with the services rendered.

All the returnees, who come back to the national fold as peaceful and law abiding citizens, will find a deserving place commensurate with their talents and aptitudes.

They will also have the great moral satisfaction of really serving the best interests of the Fatherland.

Beyond Viet-Nam, we seek reconciliation and peace throughout Asia and the Pacific, in the spirit of the Honolulu Conference.

While hoping for peace with justice and honor, and the coming of an era of constructive cooperation in Southeast Asia, I cannot help but feeling concerned by the turn of events in Czechoslovakia in the past few days, and their portentous significance for the cause of freedom, and national independence everywhere.

We are fighting in Viet-Nam for the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of sovereign states, for the right for every nation to live in peace, and to choose its own way of life, and its own path to the future, free from coercion and subjugation. We also deeply believe that the respect of these fundamental rights is indispensable to a durable peace in the world. We therefore deeply deplore the brutal repression of the budding aspirations of the Czechoslovak people for freedom, independence, and human dignity.

After the Hungarian events and the peasants' revolt in North Viet-Nam in 1956, the recent efforts toward liberalization and democratization in Czechoslovakia show the deep aspirations for freedom among men everywhere. They also show that freedom is always ruthlessly repressed in a Communist society, because even timid expressions of freedom already represent a serious threat to Communist tyranny, a threat not only implied in the very nature of freedom, but also a threat

because of the effects they have as an example to others.

Another lesson to be drawn from the Hungarian and Czechoslovak events is that national independence in the Communist world is only a myth, especially when a small Communist country lives next to a big Communist neighbor.

These events reveal the emptiness and tragic irony of the Communist claim that they fight for the 'liberation' of the Republic of Viet-Nam as they attempt to impose on us a regime obedient to international Communism, all the while pretending to be the standard-bearers of Vietnamese national independence.

The Communist regime in North Viet-Nam has been trying to impose by force a political regime on the people of the Republic of Viet-Nam in invoking the pretext of helping the local Communists and pretending to have a right to do so, in the same fashion that Soviet Russia invaded Czechoslovakia under the pretense of aiding the Czechoslovak Communists. The Communist North Vietnamese do not realize that, should they succeed in their criminal attempts against the freedom of the Republic of Viet-Nam, they themselves would become an easy prey for their big Communist neighbor.

A free society therefore is not only the necessary framework for the progress and the happiness of the Vietnamese people, it constitutes also the best guarantee for the national independence of Viet-Nam, as it assures us the support of other free countries in the defense of our Free World.

Therefore our misguided citizens who have been deluded by Communist propaganda should ponder about the Government's policy on national reconciliation, and the recent events in the Communist world, to find the right path to the truth and to the salvation of the country.

THE OBJECTIVES OF PEACE

A LETTER TO U THANT

sent by

FOREIGN MINISTER TRAN CHANH THANH

September 4, 1968

Excellency,

On the eve of the Twenty-third General Assembly of the United Nations, I wish to convey to Your Excellency my greetings and appreciation for your repeated efforts to bring about an early end to the conflict in Viet-Nam and for your unending and dedicated search for peace in Asia and in the world.

Few people have experienced greater human suffering and material loss than the Vietnamese. And no other people certainly desire more peace and security than the 16 million residents of South Viet-Nam, so that we may heal the wounds of war and rebuild our country which has been devastated by a brutal aggression carefully prepared and imposed on us and which in fact had not ceased at any time since 1954.

The ink was hardly dry on the Geneva Agreements which they themselves signed in 1954 when the North Vietnamese leaders began to violate them systematically. Despite the main provisions of these Agreements which provided that forces on both sides be regrouped into one or the other side of the demarcation line drawn at the 17th parallel, the Hanoi authorities left in the South many trained political and subversive cadres as well as numerous caches of weapons and ammunition, for the obvious purpose of using them at the right time.

Then began a period of intense propaganda along with acts of terrorism so as to undermine the authority of the legal Government and intimidate the people. North Vietnamese politico-military cadres, weapons and ammunition were infiltrated at an increasing rate into the South.

With such reinforcements and supplies from the North, the Communists were in a position to add guerilla warfare to their propaganda and sabotage activities.

On September 5, 1960, a Congress of the North Vietnamese Communist Party—the Lao Dong Party—gave itself the task of “liberating” South Viet-Nam. Three months later, Hanoi announced the creation

of the "National Liberation Front of South Viet-Nam" entrusted with this mission. Thus there is an obvious correlation between the above-mentioned propaganda, acts of war and the creation of this Front.

The Legal Committee of the International Control Commission recognized the truth of these facts in its report dated June 2, 1962:

" . . . there is evidence to show that armed and unarmed personnel, arms, munitions and other supplies have been sent from the Zone in the North to the Zone in the South with the object of supporting, organizing and carrying out hostile activities, including armed attacks directed against the Armed Forces and Administration of the Zone in the South.

"These acts are in violation of articles 10, 19, 24, and 27 of the Agreements on the cessation of hostilities in Vietnam. . ."

Throughout these last 14 years, the people and Government of the Republic of Viet-Nam are therefore the daily victims of an immense campaign of subversion and aggression fomented, directed and ceaselessly supported by the Hanoi regime, with the assistance of countries of the Communist bloc. It consists of acts of indiscriminate terrorism often directed against the innocent population, systematic sabotage of the economic stability and social realization throughout the country, incessant infiltration of regular troops as well as trained cadres, open introduction of the most modern and sophisticated weapons of the Communist war arsenal, including heavy mortars, rockets, recoilless cannons. . .

The will of the Hanoi authorities to impose communism by force over South Viet-Nam has been affirmed more and more clearly and the clandestine subversion at the beginning is now an open war against the people and Government of the Republic of Viet-Nam, a situation which very seriously threatens the peace in this area of the world.

Faced with this well-prepared and massive aggression started by North Viet-Nam and assisted by the Communist bloc—the Chief of the North Vietnamese delegation in Paris, Xuan Thuy, recently claimed it actually started in 1959—the Republic of Viet-Nam has no other choice than to take up arms to defend herself. After having borne alone the brunt of the struggle for a long time, she finally requested the assistance of her Allies in 1962 to help defend her freedom, in legitimate right of self-defence. A call to world aid was reiterated in 1964. Forty-three countries responded to that call with their technical, economic, medical and humanitarian assistance so as to help rebuild the country, relieve the burden of sufferings of the people, improve their standard of living.

The aggressive policy of the Communists is given a new illustration in Czechoslovakia. The tragic events in Czechoslovakia and in Viet-Nam show that Communist countries act in a similar manner to stifle any aspirations of the people to independence and freedom. The precipitate approval of North Viet-Nam which hailed the invasion of Czechoslovakia as an operation to fulfill "a noble goal" is proof of its close dependence on the Soviet Union which has repeatedly and publicly stated that it was supplying North Viet-Nam with the major part of the war material being used against the Republic of Viet-Nam, therefore making possible the prolongation of the war and the daily holocaust in our country.

The Republic of Viet-Nam has the right to resist aggression to fight back violence, to repulse intervention by force into her national life. She only wants to save her independence and freedom, to defend her right to life and peace. Such is her only unique objective.

As far as she is concerned, the Republic of Viet-Nam wants to live in peace and has never nurtured nor is entertaining any hostile plan against North Viet-Nam or her neighbors.

In this spirit, the Republic of Viet-Nam has repeatedly appealed to the leaders of the Hanoi regime for direct discussions in view of a peaceful solution and an end to the innumerable sufferings of the people.

To emphasize our readiness for direct negotiations, we have agreed to a curtailment of the aerial bombardment of North Viet-Nam, although this actually represented an open opportunity for North Viet-Nam to accelerate the movement of its armed forces and war equipment toward the South.

The Communist regime in Hanoi has responded to this manifestation of goodwill by launching a second wave of attacks against Saigon and other cities in South Viet-Nam in May this year, by repeatedly and indiscriminately bombarding the civilian population of the Capital and other populated areas.

Under these circumstances, an unconditional and total cessation of the bombardment as claimed by North Viet-Nam, if it is not preceded by a clear-cut and positive manifestation of reciprocal restraint on their part, would only result in increased infiltration of troops and war material into South Viet-Nam and lead to further bloodshed and more casualties for both sides.

In the Honolulu Joint Communique of last July 20, 1968, the Republic of Viet-Nam has made clear its views regarding the essential conditions of peace, which reflect the basic dispositions of the 1954 Geneva Armistice Agreement and are in accord with the 1962 Agreement on Laos:

— The re-establishment of the 17th parallel as the demarcation line between North Viet-Nam and South Viet-Nam, pending the determination by the free choice of all Vietnamese on reunification;

— Respect for the territorial integrity of the Republic of Viet-Nam;

— Complete cessation of hostilities and subversion, and withdrawal from the territory of the Republic of Viet-Nam of all Communist military and subversive forces to the North;

— Full compliance with the principle of non-interference between North and South Viet-Nam;

— Effective international supervision and guarantees.

Concerning the presence of Allied forces in the South, the Government and people of South Viet-Nam have requested their support to resist aggression. However, as North Viet-Nam withdraws its forces to the North, ceases infiltration, and the level of violence thus subsides, the Republic of Viet-Nam will ask her Allies to remove their forces and evacuate their military installations, in accordance with the Manila Communique of October 26, 1966.

When peace is restored, the Republic of Viet-Nam is ready to discuss with the authorities in North Viet-Nam all the avenues which may lead to the reunification of the country by peaceful means, through the free and democratic choice of all Vietnamese in the North and in the South. Pending actual reunification, the gradual normalization of economic, cultural and family relations between North Viet-Nam and South Viet-Nam can be usefully explored by common accord between the Republic of Viet-Nam and the authorities in North Viet-Nam.

The objectives of the Republic of Viet-Nam are simple and reasonable indeed. They proceed from our deep aspirations for peace and human compassion and our respect for international law and order.

In their struggle for survival and their quest for peace, the people of South Viet-Nam have exerted their right to self-determination through general elections in 1966 and 1967 to select their Constitution, their Government and representatives at the Senate and House of Representatives, as well as local councils at the hamlet and provincial levels.

They reject solution proposals such as a "coalition government" of which Viet-Nam has had a bitter experience in 1946, or any overt or disguised territorial concession. Neither solution would bring back peace, it would simply lead to an inevitable communist takeover or a

larger war after a short period of disorder.

The people and Government of the Republic of Viet-Nam seek a genuine, just and lasting peace. It must not be a deceptive peace, and must be impervious to renewed hostilities. Such a peace would be on the basis of peaceful co-existence, non-aggression and non-interference in the internal affairs of both North and South.

For its part, the Republic of Viet-Nam rejects the principles of retaliation and revenge, in favor of national reconciliation, and is offering full participation to all individuals and members of groups who accept to renounce force and abide by the Constitution and laws of Viet-Nam.

We still hold that if North Viet-Nam leaders were genuinely interested in peace discussions, they should respond to our appeal for direct negotiations between South and North Viet-Nam, as the most logical and practical means to put an end to the bloody tragedy which has lasted all too long.

Please accept, Excellency, the renewed assurances of my highest consideration.

Saigon, September 4, 1968

SIGNED: TRAN CHANH THANH
Minister of Foreign Affairs
Republic of Viet-Nam

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1. INAUGURAL ADDRESS by President Nguyen Van Thieu, October 31, 1967.
2. PERSPECTIVE ON PEACE IN VIET-NAM by President Nguyen Van Thieu, January 15, 1968.
3. ON PEACE AND MANPOWER REQUIREMENTS by President Nguyen Van Thieu, April 10, 1968.
4. PEACE AND BEYOND, Official Statements and Communiqués on Peace and Postwar Development, July-September 1968.