

Transcript of Le Duc Tho's News Conference

25, 1973

in Paris on Vietnam Accord

PARIS, Jan. 24 [Reuters]—Following, in unofficial translation from the French, is a transcript of Le Duc Tho's news conference today:

Dear friends, the struggle of the Vietnamese people for independence and liberty has lasted nearly 30 years. In particular, the resistance in the last 13 years with its many trials was the most difficult in the history of our people's struggle against foreign invasion over several centuries.

It is also the most murderous war in the history of the movement of national liberation of the oppressed peoples throughout the world.

Finally, this war has deeply stirred the conscience of mankind.

The negotiations between our Government and the Government of the United States of America for a peaceful settlement of the Vietnamese problem have lasted nearly five years and have gone through many particularly difficult and tense moments.

But we have overcome all obstacles and we have at last reached the agreement on ending the war and restoring peace in Vietnam.

This agreement will be officially signed in Paris in a few days.

The just cause triumphs over the evil cause. The will to live in freedom triumphs over cruelty.

The conclusion of such an agreement represents a very big victory for the Vietnamese people. It is the crowning of a valiant struggle waged in unity by the army and the people of Vietnam on all fronts, at the price of countless sacrifices and privations.

A Very Big Victory

It is a very big victory for the fighting solidarity of the peoples of the three countries of Indochina who have always fought side by side against the common enemy for independence and liberty.

It is a very great victory

for the Socialist countries, the oppressed peoples and all the peace-loving and justice-loving peoples throughout the world, including the American people, who have demonstrated their solidarity and given devoted assistance to the just struggle of our people.

The return of peace in Vietnam will be greeted with immense joy by our people. At the same time, it will answer the hope which has so long been harbored by the American people and the peace-loving peoples in the world.

With the return of peace, the struggle of the Vietnamese people enters a new period. Our people, lifting high the banner of peace and of national concord, is decided to strictly apply the clauses of the agreement maintaining peace, independence and democracy and heading toward the peaceful reunification of its country.

It will also have to rebuild its war-devastated country and consolidate and develop its friendly relations with all the peoples of the world, including the American people.

Big Tasks Lie Ahead

Heavy tasks still await us in this new period. But the Vietnamese in the North as in the South, at home as abroad, rich in their traditions of

unity and perseverance in struggle, following a just policy, strengthened by the close solidarity of the peoples of Laos and Cambodia and benefiting from strong aid from the Socialist countries and all the peace-loving countries of the world, will be able to smooth out all difficulties and victoriously accomplish their tasks.

At a time when peace is dawning on our country, in the name of the Government and people of Vietnam we wish to address our warm

thanks to the Socialist countries, to the governments of many countries and to the peoples of the entire world for the sympathy they have shown toward the just struggle of the Vietnamese people and for the active help given in all fields.

In the past years, how many fighters for peace in many countries have known repression and prison, and certainly even sacrificed their lives in the fight they carried out to support the resistance of the Vietnamese people. These noble internationalist feelings and these sublime sacrifices occupy forever a place in our hearts.

The signature of the "Agreement for the Cessation of War and the Re-establishment of Peace in Vietnam" is only a first victory, because the task of strictly applying the agreement is important.

Application of Agreement

Anxious to maintain peace, independence and democracy and heading toward reunification of the country, the Vietnamese people will act in a unified manner to insure the correct and serious application of the clauses of the agreement which will be signed in a few days, and at the same time it will show vigilance towards reactionaries who try to sabotage the agreement.

But we must say that the situation in our country and in the world is developing in an extremely favorable way for the cause of the Vietnamese people.

We have the conviction

that the dark designs of the reactionary forces in the country and abroad to obstruct the application of the agreement, or to sabotage it, can only fail.

The Vietnamese people has, therefore, every reason to believe in the victorious accomplishment of its tasks in the new period. No reactionary force will be able to slow down the march forward of the Vietnamese people.

I have finished my statement and I now reserve 20 minutes for questions and replies.

Questions and Answers

Q. I have two questions to put. First, what role did international solidarity in the struggle of the Vietnamese people play in the success of the negotiations? Second, do you think that the Vietnam war will be the last war in the world?

A. The victory of the Vietnamese people is due, above all, to the Vietnamese people's own efforts in its resistance for independence and true freedom. But this victory cannot be separated from the powerful and vigorous help brought by the Socialist countries, by the working class of the whole world and by the oppressed peoples in the whole world.

I will now reply to your second question. I am a Communist, and according to

Marxist-Leninist theories so long as imperialism persists in the world there will still be wars.

Q. Where will the scheduled international conference take place? Have the Americans dropped their objections to your proposals to hold it in Paris?

A. As regards the international conference and the location of the conference, the American side and our side are in the process of discussing this question and we have not yet reached a final decision.

Q. Is the January agreement different from the October agreement?

A. Basically, as regards the agreement we reached in the month of October, 1972, and the agreement we reached in the month of January, 1973, the contents are the same.

You can make the comparison in comparing the texts of the agreement of the

month of October, 1972, and the agreement of the month of January, 1973.

'No More Problems'

Q. Aside from the conference site, after the signature of the agreements, are there other subjects for discussion between you and the United States?

My second question is, I note a difference between the

résumé of the agreements of October and those you have shown us and the fact that you talk of negotiations between the concerned South Vietnamese parties. Is there a date fixed for this?

A. After the end of the negotiations, the completion of the agreement and the annex protocols between the American side and our side there are no more problems to be solved. Everything has been completed. That is to say the only thing we will have to discuss will be the site of the conference of international guarantees.

But according to the agreement, the guarantees conference will be called one month after the signature of the agreement. We still have time to solve this question.

After the start of the ceasefire, the South Vietnamese sides will immediately meet to settle the internal questions of South Vietnam. Naturally the two South Vietnamese sides will meet and fix the first dates for the start of their work.

Q. Aside from the four protocols you have just handed to us, are there other protocols which have not been published and are there other tacit annex agreements which have not been published?

A. There is one agreement and four protocols—all the documents which have just been distributed to the press—And these are complete



Associated Press

Le Duc Tho, at right, special adviser to the Hanoi delegation, speaking at a news conference in Paris. Other North Vietnamese officials with him are, from left, Tran Thien Can, Nguyen Minh Vy, and Nguyen Than Le. Mr. Tho was the principal Hanoi negotiator at the recently concluded talks.

documents covering everything which was negotiated between the two sides.

'What Will Happen?'

Q. You said earlier that the agreement would be initiated by the P.R.G. as a government. President Thieu as well as Mr. Tran Van Lam said yesterday that they would refuse to sign a document on which they found the signature of the P.R.G. as a government. What will happen exactly?

A. The situation in South Vietnam can be characterized in the following manner: There is the existence of two administrations, two armies, two controlled zones and three political forces. No one can deny this truth. Those who deny this truth pass themselves off as blind men. Anyway this truth is well reflected by the agreement which will be signed between the Government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam and the United States and in the document which will be signed by the four sides at the Paris conference, by the four foreign affairs ministers, on January 27.

Q. Last night President

Nixon said the United States continued to admit the Saigon Government as the only true Government of South Vietnam. Does the Government of the DRVN agree with this point of view and if not what will it do?

A. As I answered earlier, the situation in Vietnam is characterized by the existence of two administrations, of two armies of two differently controlled zones and of three public forces, and this idea is well reflected in the clauses of the agreement and in the course of the negotiations.

You can refer back to the document, the document signed by the two sides, the document signed by the four sides, that is, by the DRVN, the Provisional Revolutionary Government, the Government of the United States, the Government of the Republic of Vietnam, and you will see that this idea is well represented in this agreement.

This idea comes out well in the first paragraph of the agreement on the end of the war and in Article 23 of the agreement—the agreement signed by the Democratic Republic of Vietnam and the United States of America, the bipartite agreement.

And, besides, you will

have the chance of attending in a few days the official signature of the agreement by the four foreign ministers and naturally this will be an event which will concretize this situation existing in South Vietnam.

On Hanoi's Troops

Q. [in English]. On the status of North Vietnamese troops in South Vietnam—?

A. [Translated into English by interpreter]. Regarding the question of the so-called North Vietnamese forces in South Vietnam, we have been discussing this question for over five years now, and during the scores of private meetings between Dr. Kissinger, Minister Thuy and myself we repeatedly discussed this question.

We have completely rejected the allegation about the so-called North Vietnamese forces in South Vietnam. We have completely rejected this question because, politically speaking, as well as legally speaking, this allegation has no point—is pointless.

And finally, the United States side dropped completely this proposal of theirs. Therefore in the agreement you can find no word, not a single word implying the presence of the so-called North Vietnamese troops.

Q. The negotiations have been held in France. What do you think of the role of France?

A. The negotiations have lasted for nearly five years and during this period of time I can say that the French Government has made an appreciable contribution.

Reunification Situation

Q. (In English, on whether the reunification situation in Vietnam could be compared with that in Germany or Korea.)

A. [Translated by interpreter into English.] The conditions in Vietnam are quite different from those in Korea and Germany.

Moreover, the 1954 Geneva agreement recognized the independence, the sovereignty, the unity and territorial integrity of Vietnam and stipulated that the 17th Parallel is only a provisional military demarcation line.

It can in no way be interpreted as a political or territorial boundary.

Moreover, the Geneva agreement of 1954 provided that general elections should be, would be, organized with a view to reunifying the country.

But these provisions have

not been implemented over the past years.

As to the historical causes of this nonimplementation of the general agreement which we repeatedly expounded to you, I think it is unnecessary to repeat here.

Now in the current agreement, there is an explicit provision that the United States,

as are other countries, should respect the independence, sovereignty, the unity and the territorial integrity of Vietnam.

The current agreement also stipulates that the 17th Parallel is only a provisional military demarcation line. It is not a political or territorial boundary.

Therefore, it is also stipulated in the agreement that the two zones of Vietnam should consult each other as soon as possible to reunify the country.

Therefore, undoubtedly our people, the Vietnamese people, will advance to the reunification of the country. There is the necessary advance of history. No force can prevent this advance. Moreover, in the agreement there are explicit provisions in this connection.

On Elections in South

Q. [in English.] Despite your hopes, do you really believe that the Thieu Government will allow free and democratic elections in the South. Can the Thieu regime allow the possibility of a Communist Government?

A. [Translated by interpreter into English.] Undoubtedly, as I said, the Vietnamese people will advance to reunification of the country. But under what regime the country will be reunited? It depends on the decision of the people in North and South Vietnam.

Q. [On possibility of disagreement between Saigon and the Provisional Revolutionary Government in consultations on setting up National Council of Reconciliation and Concord.]

A. We are firmly convinced that the will for peace, reconciliation and national concord will triumph in South Vietnam. This is why, if there are difficulties, it will always be possible to settle the question of forming a National Council of Reconciliation and Concord.

Q. If, as you have just said, the agreement which you have signed and the December agreement are more

said, the agreement which you have signed and the December agreement are more or less the same, then why the breakdown in December and why the American bombings?

A. It must be said that, at the time, the negotiations were in the process of developing and I had returned home to report to my Government. The first waves of bombings took place a few hours after my arrival in Hanoi.

And it must be said that these bombings failed completely.

As regards the reaction in the world from the peoples, the organizations, the governments, I believe that you journalists were certainly aware of this reaction.

And naturally these bombings in no way helped the negotiations. On the contrary, they contributed to delay the negotiations. Besides, I already had the opportunity of discussing this subject with you the last time.

But in the end, our side and the American side reached agreement. It is a very great victory for our people.

Vietnamese-American Ties

Q. (On future relations between the United States and North Vietnam and on the October draft agreement.)

A. On this subject, Article 22 states that the cessation of the war, the re-establishment of peace in Vietnam as well as the strict application of the present accord will create conditions for the establishment between the Democratic Republic of Vietnam and the United States of new relations of equality and mutual advantage on the basis of mutual respect, independence, sovereignty and reciprocal noninterference in the internal affairs of each country.

As far as the draft project of October is concerned, we have already given extracts of its main points.

Q. What will be the fate of Saigon's political prisoners?

A. The fate of Saigon's political prisoners is clearly dealt with in Article 8(c) of the agreement. It is certain

that the sides should free all political prisoners.

Q. Could you indicate the zones controlled by the Saigon Government and the P.R.G., and the number of residents in them?

A. When the cease-fire becomes effective, there will be very clearly indications on

this question of the zones controlled by the two parties.

Q. What is the number of inhabitants of the zones?

A. It is difficult to establish the population in one zone or the other now. There will have to be a control after the cease-fire.

Naturally, one must beware of hazardous forecasts, for example, that such and such a population in such and such a zone follows such and such party, etc. It is difficult to evaluate the exact figure of the population behind such and such a party in a mechanical fashion.

U.S. Aid for Reconstruction

Q. Can you tell us categorically if there are any additional secret understandings or agreements in addition to the published accords and protocols, and if the answer is yes, can you tell us what general subjects might be covered by these additional agreements?

A. (translated into English by interpreter.) The answer to this question has been given.

Q. (on what specific agreements have been reached concerning the amount and form of United States aid for

and reciprocal nonelimination.)

The four ministers of foreign affairs will sign the agreement and three protocols, and the two sides—the Democratic Republic of Vietnam and the United States of America—will sign four protocols, the fourth protocol being a protocol which concerns the U.S.A. and the D.R.V.N. only since it is a protocol dealing with mine-sweeping in North Vietnam.

Q. (on the agreement on the National Council of Reconciliation and Concord.)

A. In the end, we reached an agreement not to use the term "structure of power" or "administrative structure" but to call it directly the National Council of Reconciliation and National Concord, for the importance of the body lies in its way of proceeding in its work. The council has three equal components, therefore the unanimity principle is indispensable so as not to allow one party to eliminate or bring pressure to bear on another party; therefore, the principle does not at all weaken the power of this council. On the contrary, this principle responds to the very nature of the council.

The 60-Day Period

Q. (concerns the immedi-

ate events expected to take place in Vietnam within 60 days.)

A. [translated into English by interpreter.] The 60-day period is determined for the complete withdrawal from South Vietnam of United States forces and of those countries allied with the United States. This is also the trial period for the dismantling of U.S. military bases in South Vietnam, and this is also the trial period for the total release of captured military personnel of the parties. All these things can be done within 60 days.

Q. (On the third force.)

A. The two South Vietnamese parties will start consultation to fix the composition of the National Council of Concord.

Q. Have the four countries of the International Control Commission agreed to participate?

A. (Translated into English by interpreter.) They have accepted to be members of the I.C.C., and the commission begins operating immediately after the cease-fire comes into effect.

Q. Have Canada, Poland, Hungary and Indonesia agreed to participate in that commission? A. They have.

Q. (On possible difficulties of talks in October being due to controversy over number of members of the Interna-

tional Control Commission.)

A. As far as the October difficulties are concerned, there were several reasons, not only the reason concerning the International Commission. Concerning the number of personnel of the International Commission, we have arrived at an agreement—1,160.

Vietcong in the South

Q. (on contacts between Vietcong and Saigon.)

A. At present, Madame Binh is in Paris. Naturally we await the signature by the four foreign ministers. Naturally after the re-establishment of peace the parties will enter into consultation and there will not be any difficulties about movement.

Q. Has the Provisional Revolutionary Government established a capital in South Vietnam?

A. (translated into English by interpreter.) After the restoration of peace, of course the P.R.G. will have its government machinery and mechanisms and its location in South Vietnam. You

will know about that. The reason why we cannot tell you the location of the P.R.G. before is because if it is known then the U.S. will bomb it.

Q. How many U.S. Military personnel will be based in North Vietnam to supervise the mining operations in the rivers and estuaries?

A. (translated into English by interpreter.) We have come to an agreement on the removal of mines. The U.S. will play the principal role in this removal of mines and we are now discussing such questions with the United States.

Q. How many will be based in North Vietnam?

A. (translated into English by interpreter.) We have not decided on that question. This question, technical questions, are being discussed now. But in any case, there will be a number of Americans admitted to cooperate with us on the removal of the mines.

Mr. Tho: Thank you to you all. During our long resistance and during the long years of negotiations our journalist friends have closely followed the situation, and I can say you have contributed in part to the re-establishment of peace in Vietnam.

In the name of the Government and the people of Vietnam, I wish to thank you. I have accomplished my task and I will be returning very

soon to my country. I wish to take the opportunity to say goodbye and thank you, and since the Vietnamese Tet is close, I wish you a good Vietnamese New Year.