

Thant Not Optimistic After N. Viet Talks

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From News Dispatches

RANGOON, Burma, March 4—U.N. Secretary General U Thant tonight said his talks with North Vietnamese representatives here were "useful and friendly" but that it is "difficult for anybody to be optimistic, at least for the moment," about peace in Vietnam.

Speaking at the airport before leaving for London and New York, Thant said that the Hanoi diplomats expressed their views on Vietnam, but that he had received no message from North Vietnamese President Ho Chi Minh.

He declined to go into details, saying, "It is difficult to do justice to these views in the space of a few minutes. I am sure their views are well known."

[During a five-hour stop-over in Calcutta, Thant said that "a lack of trust" was preventing the United States and North Vietnam from settling their differences.]

Thant said he was acting in a private capacity when he called on the Hanoi consul March 2. Two other North Vietnamese representatives were present. "I presented my own assessment of the situation and in turn they presented their own assessment," Thant said.

Asked if this was his first contact with representatives of Hanoi, Thant said, "It is not in the public interest to disclose the background of my efforts."

There was an abundance of rumors and secrecy before today about Thant's meetings with the North Vietnamese. When the two special representatives left for home early Friday, it was widely believed there had been no meeting. Consul General Le Tung Son broke the news that he had talked with Thant Friday night. The other two diplomats were Nguyen Tu Nguyen of the Hanoi Foreign Ministry and Col. Ha Van Lau, Hanoi's chief representative to the International Control Commission.

South Vietnam's Consul General in Rangoon, Nguyen Bich Lien, told newsmen the Saigon government did not send a mission to meet Thant here because it considered the Vietnam problem "too clear" to require a special mission.

Thant expressed gratitude to the Burmese government of Gen. Ne Win for the opportunity to visit his native Burma, where he saw his 84-year-old mother.

*Operation Junction City,
loaded for bear, snares only
rabbits in sweep through
Vietnam's War Zone C.*

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