

A Hard Look at Vietnam Peace

By RENNIE DAVIS

When Mme. Nguyen Thi Binh, representing the Provisional Revolutionary Government (PRG) of South Vietnam, put forward an 8-point program to end the war a few weeks ago, it was shrugged off here as "nothing new."

Of course, the PRG plan differed from President Nixon's 5-point proposal in at least one critical respect: America would no longer control South Vietnam after June 30, 1971. But it was far more specific and workable than the Nixon plan and contained the cease-fire suggestion Mr. Nixon is praised for initiating.

Perhaps the failure in this country to acknowledge the enormous significance of Madame Binh's program stems in part from a national ignorance of Vietnamese history since the days of Lyndon Johnson. I spoke with Madame Binh in Paris, shortly after her proposal had been reduced to a wine and bottle joke by the United States negotiator, David Bruce. From lengthy conversations with her and Xuan Thuy, head of the North Vietnamese delegation, and Paris journalists close to the popular opposition movements developing in South Vietnam, a perspective emerges that is dramatically different from the "intelligence reports" of the Pentagon or the twisted perception of a Nixon, heaven-bound and determined not to be remembered in history as the "President who turned Asia over to Communism." Here is the outline of that perspective and the reasons that the Vietnamese responded to the Nixon "peace initiative" by comparing it to the works of Dr. Josef Goebbels, the Nazi Propaganda Minister:

(A) They believe Mr. Nixon's performance in Indochina has shown him to be more deceitful than Mr. Johnson. He talks peace while stepping up the forced induction of Vietnamese into a puppet army that aims to exterminate the people's resistance in South Vietnam. Some combat troops are being withdrawn, but not America's ambition to control South Vietnam.

(B) The Vietnamese, unlike the American public, understood Nixon's intentions because of the repression and terror in their own lives. Revulsion to Vietnamization is creating massive, urban opposition movements that draw strength from all classes of South Vietnamese society. This opposition to Mr. Nixon's Vietnamization now penetrates the highest levels of the Saigon Administration, the National Assembly, "Government-controlled" newspapers and the Army.

"While, in my belief, Madame Binh's proposal could be accepted by most Americans, the Nixon plan is a fraud, a clever package designed to tantalize people's honest hopes . . . The American anti-war movement rejects his plan. Our task in the coming weeks and months is to bypass Mr. Nixon and negotiate a peace treaty directly with Hanoi."

Conditions for the overthrow of the Thieu government are seen as more favorable this fall than in 1966 when Diem was assassinated.

(C) The 8-point program is put forward at a time when the PRG feels the strength of its position, not its weakness. They believe the program sooner or later will be carried out by the South Vietnamese themselves. Madame Binh stresses that the PRG does not demand a military victory or seek the humiliation of the United States. She sees her proposal not as a plan to overthrow the existing Saigon regime but only to sever the Thieu-Ky-Kheim umbilical cord with the United States.

(D) The PRG position begins with the assertion that the people of South Vietnam must govern themselves and that the United States must abandon its design to control their country. All outstanding issues, they say, could be quickly resolved once the United States showed its sincere intention on this central point. This can be done by stating a specific deadline for withdrawal. The PRG and North Vietnamese are prepared to negotiate the release of all prisoners of war, even while U.S. troops are in South Vietnam, if Mr. Nixon will commit the United States to a complete pullout by a fixed schedule, the guns can be silenced and a cease-fire reached immediately, if and when Mr. Nixon says he will let go of Vietnam. There is no demand by the PRG to dismantle the Saigon Government or the Arvin. Saigon officials will be recognized as a legitimate force to help form a new government if the United States offers a departure schedule.

(E) The PRG supports free and open elections as the way to establish a new Government in South Vietnam. These elections would be organized by the widest possible coalition of political groupings and personalities including the Saigon regime—except for Thieu, Ky and Premier Kheim who would be ex-

cluded from a Provisional Government as "despicable traitors." Madame Binh put it: "We have fought 25 years to exclude three individuals. This is not unreasonable." The PRG are prepared to participate in a Provisional Government in which it would play a minority role, leaving control to Independent and Saigon forces. Such a Provisional Government, it says, can be organized while U.S. troops are still in South Vietnam. But no election can take place under American bayonets. The U.S. must pull out completely before the election.

While, in my belief, Madame Binh's proposal could be accepted by most Americans, the Nixon plan is a fraud, a clever package designed to tantalize people's honest hopes. What a tragedy that Mr. Nixon's proposal has been a signal to the Goodells and Churches and Establishment Doves to fill the pages of world propaganda with their support.

The American antiwar movement rejects the Nixon peace plan. Our task in the coming weeks and months is to bypass Mr. Nixon and negotiate a peace treaty directly with Hanoi, the PRG and independent political movements inside South Vietnam. Delegations representing various American constituencies can go directly to Vietnam and be received for the purpose of reaching agreement on the conditions for ending the war.

Time has run out for the Kennedy, Johnson and Nixon "peace initiatives." We are going to Vietnam to sign our own peace treaty.

And, if by May 1, one year after the Cambodian invasion, the June 30 deadline for total withdrawal is not accepted, Mr. Nixon is going to face a worldwide move to pull all stops to defeat Vietnamization, bring the troops home, and halt American imperialism in Vietnam.

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