

# Reds Offer to Free POWs If U.S. Pulls Out Completely



AP Wirephoto

MRS. NGUYEN THI BINH, THE CHIEF VIET CONG DELEGATE

## 6-Month Deadline Specified

*N.Y. Times Service*

Paris

The Vietnamese Communists offered yesterday to release all war prisoners they hold in the north and south by the end of this year in exchange for total American military withdrawal by the same date.

The offer was made as part of a new eight-point peace plan presented at the peace talks here by Mrs. Nguyen Thi Binh, head of the Viet Cong delegation.

The plan maintained the two basic Communist demands — for total American withdrawal and the removal of the present Saigon government — but it wrapped them in the most detailed and attractive package presented at this conference since the four parties first began to meet in January, 1969.

The biggest attraction came in the offer for liberation of American prisoners simultaneously with the withdrawal of American troops.

"The two . . . operations will begin at the same date and will finish at the same date," the proposal said.

Until now the Communist side had merely offered to begin immediate discussions on prisoners as soon as the United States set a reasonable date for withdrawal.

The commitment on the Communist side, made in September, 1970, had appeared so vague as to provoke a stream of questions ever since by varied groups of Americans in official and unofficial positions. Until yesterday neither north Vietnam nor the Viet Cong had been willing to specify exactly when the American prisoners would be freed.

The Communists, in effect, set a six-month deadline for withdrawal in return for which they said they would respect the same deadline

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Bearded Americans in Paris cheered the arrival of Mrs. Nguyen Thi Binh at the peace talks

UPI Telephoto

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for releasing the men they hold.

The sudden movement in the long-stalled talks came a week after the arrival here of Le Duc Tho, a senior member of the ruling group in Hanoi and officially a special adviser to Xuan Thuy, the North Vietnamese chief delegate here. At the time, Tho denied that he had any new proposals with him.

When Nguyen Than Le, the

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chief spokesman of the Hanoi delegation, was asked about the connection between the two events, he said Mrs. Binh had gotten instructions from the provisional revolutionary government in South Vietnam. He added that she had "consulted" with the North Vietnamese.

"Le Duc Tho had some-

thing in his pocket after all," remarked Stephen Ledogar, the American spokesman. "But whether the matter is of substance or is designed to confuse debate remains to be seen."

In the session David K.E. Bruce, the chief American delegate, had no direct comment other than to say the proposals would be studied. The session was a short one as Mrs. Binh agreed with Bruce's proposal to adjourn

to next week to allow as much time as possible for consideration of what she had to say.

The first two points took up the military and political aspects of a settlement. But it was much more clearly indicated than before that the execution of the double military program of withdrawal and liberation of prisoners did not depend on a resolution of the political problem in Saigon.