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PHAM DANG LAM, SAIGON AIDE, DIES

Leader of Delegation at the
Paris Peace Talks Was 57

PARIS, June 3 (Reuters)—Former Foreign Minister Pham Dang Lam of South Vietnam, leader of the Saigon delegation to the Paris peace talks, died last night in a hospital here at the age of 57.

Mr. Lam had been Ambassador in London until the Vietcong captured Saigon.

A Tough Bargainer

By MURRAY ILLSON

When Mr. Lam became Saigon's chief negotiator in Paris in 1968, he was known as a tough bargainer, and for four years he faced the Hanoi and



Camera Press

Pham Dang Lam

Vietcong delegations at the Paris talks, which ended in the peace agreements that were signed in January, 1973.

In the autumn of 1972, he warned that his Government would not bow to anything but the freely expressed will of the South Vietnamese, and that American help "in no way

diminishes South Vietnam's identity and independence."

And in a speech to diplomatic correspondents in Paris in what was termed the "final phase" of the negotiations there eight weeks before the peace accords were signed, Mr. Lam said: "Hanoi must cease its policy of interference in the affairs of other countries, particularly in those of South Vietnam. They must respect the rights of all and then there will be peace."

Mr. Lam, who spoke fluent English and French, had seen 19 years in his country's Foreign Ministry and abroad when he was appointed as Saigon's chief negotiator in Paris. He

participated in the Geneva conference on Vietnam in 1954 and that on Laos in 1961 and was reputed to know all there was to know about rival factions that refused to sit together in the same conference room, but eventually did.

Studied in Hanoi

He was born into a Buddhist family in the delta town of Vinh Long. He was sent by his family north to Hanoi, then the Vietnamese capital, to earn a law degree. A former fellow student at Hanoi University once said, "Lam was then already what he is now, a plodder."

However, he was also known as imperturbable, a technician rather than a politician. He entered the foreign service in 1949, advanced quickly and was named Secretary General of the Foreign Ministry under President Ngo Dinh Diem. After Mr. Diem's death in 1963, Mr. Lam served twice as Foreign Minister, for three months each time. He was Ambassador in Manila from 1965 to August, 1968, when Saigon named him chief of its Paris observer mission for the Vietnam talks.

For the representative of a regime whose members the Communist camp denounced as "puppets of Washington," Mr. Lam had shown what some observers regarded as remarkable toughness toward the United States. In his three months as chief of Saigon's mission in Paris, from August to November, 1968, he did not attend the bargaining sessions with Hanoi's delegation but conferred with members of the American team.

When the United States was putting pressure on the Saigon regime to send a bargaining delegation to Paris, Mr. Lam was known to have warned, "Don't drag South Vietnam to the conference table like a reluctant bride who doesn't want to go before the altar."

It was believed to have been in part, at least, because of his advice that Saigon delayed for five weeks before deciding to join the negotiations.

In September, 1971, Ambassador Lam wrote from Paris:

"The South Vietnamese understand that what the American people want to know is, 'When will American forces be out of Vietnam?' and, 'Was it all worth while?' Our people are working and fighting to make these two questions 'soon' and 'yes.' But we realize too that unless the Communists show some interest in negotiation—and they have shown non yet—for us the war goes on."

That war ended on April 30.