

Mrs. Binh: Our Plan for Peace

By NGUYEN THI BINH

PARIS—The Paris four-party conference on Vietnam has held over 120 sessions and, if counted in days, has lasted two and one-half years. In the meantime, the war is still going on in South Vietnam and has been expanded to Cambodia and Laos. The South Vietnam people still have to live in rains of bombs, destruction, and death. American youths continue to die on battlefields and to destroy themselves with drugs out of despair and frustration.

In order to get the conference out of deadlock and promptly end the war, on July 1, 1971, the delegation of the Provisional Revolutionary Government put forward a seven-point peace plan, the principal points of which are:

Regarding the military questions, the P.R.G. proposes that "if the U.S. Government sets a terminal date for the withdrawal from South Vietnam in 1971 of the totality of U.S. forces and those of other foreign countries in the U.S. camp, the parties will at the same time agree on the modalities of: (a) The withdrawal in safety from South Vietnam of the totality of U.S. forces and those of the other foreign countries in the U.S. camp; (b) The release of the totality of military men of all parties and of the civilians captured during the war (including American pilots captured in North Vietnam). These two operations will begin on the same date and will end on the same date.

"A cease-fire will be observed between the South Vietnam People's Liberation Armed Forces and the armed forces of the United States and of the other foreign countries in the U.S. camp as soon as the parties reach

agreement on the withdrawal from South Vietnam of the totality of U.S. forces and those of the other foreign countries in the U.S. camp."

Regarding the political question, i.e., the question of power in South Vietnam, it is proposed in the seven-point plan that the U.S. Government should stop its interference in the internal affairs of South Vietnam. In other words, it should cease backing and maintaining in office the bellicose group headed by Nguyen Van Thieu now holding power in Saigon, so as to let the South Vietnamese people settle their own affairs: for instance, to form a government of national accord proceeding to general elections, to deal with the aftermath of the war, and to solve the question of Vietnamese armed forces in South Vietnam.

The outstanding feature of the peace plan is its realism and flexibility. The plan stems from the South Vietnam people's aspirations for peace and independence, and meets the American people's longing for peace. Normally, in any war, the question of military captives or "prisoners of war" is only solved after the end of the conflict. However, responding to the American people's desire to see their children—whether they are on the battlefield or in captivity—promptly returned home among their dear ones, we have proposed a solution to this question in Point 1 of the plan.

To end a war like the one in Vietnam it is essential to settle both the military and the political problems. But as proof of our goodwill, we have clearly said that during the discussions of these two series of prob-

lems, if the political problems are not yet definitely settled, we can solve first the question of the withdrawal from South Vietnam of U.S. forces and those of the other foreign countries in the U.S. camp, as foreseen in Point 1, so that American soldiers in Vietnam can be repatriated. Then we can continue the debate on political problems.

We have also pointed out that the seven-point peace plan was not a take-it-or-leave-it proposal.

A number of people intentionally refuse to understand our proposals and view them as "preconditions" or "conditions" of surrender for the United States." On careful examination, any objective person may realize that our proposals and what many Americans have raised are not very far apart but, instead, very close.

A people like the Vietnamese—very determined to fight for their independence and freedom, knowing themselves and knowing their opponents, and reasonable—can never have the intention to compel the United States to surrender, let alone to humiliate it. The Vietnamese have taken up arms and fought for decades for the single purpose of having the right to love their country. In final analysis, what we have proposed is also aimed at helping President Nixon keep more easily his promise to the American people to end the Vietnam war and to repatriate rapidly the G.I.'s.

This is the way really to guarantee the South Vietnamese people's right to self-determination, often referred to by Mr. Nixon.

Moreover, the proposals of the P.R.G., particularly Points 2 and 5, will

open a new relationship between an independent and neutral South Vietnam and the United States, based on equality, mutual respect and mutual interest, in which U.S. legitimate interests will be respected. After so many years of war, that neither the Vietnamese nor the Americans want, the South Vietnam people have, at least, a better understanding of the United States, and have established with the American people relations that will be in the interest of both sides, if developed in good direction.

In brief, the "Vietnamization" of the war is not a safe and honorable way out for Mr. Nixon; it will sink the United States deeper in defeat and difficulty. On the contrary, the seven-point peace plan has brought great hope to anyone desiring an early end to the Vietnam war. It has opened the doors to peace. The Paris conference offers now most favorable conditions for the U.S. Government to end the war rapidly through negotiations, a war that has, for over ten years, caused human and material losses as well as conscience squirms to Americans.

Yet unilateral goodwill is not sufficient to make the Paris conference end the deadlock and promptly reach a correct political solution to the South Vietnam problem.

The whole world is longing for peace and is expecting President Nixon to take the straight and shortest way and not a tortuous and difficult one, i.e., to give a positive response to the seven-point peace plan of the P.R.G. at the Paris conference.

Mrs. Nguyen Thi Binh is Vietcong representative at the Paris peace talks.