

N. Viet Trip Plans

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Hope Asks Hanoi OK on POW Deal

BANGKOK—(UPI)—Comedian Bob Hope said today he had requested a North Vietnamese visa so he could go to Hanoi and try to negotiate the release of American prisoners of war in a deal involving \$10 million.

Hope made a surprise visit today to Vientiane, the capital of Laos, and conferred for an hour and 20 minutes with Nguyen Van Tranh, first secretary of the North Vietnamese Embassy there.

Hope said he asked Tranh if he would "arrange a visa for me."

The comedian, whose personal fortune is estimated at \$450 million, said Tranh told him "he would have to get together with the Foreign Minister and he would let me know."

He made the statement in an interview today in his hotel room in Bangkok after his plane returned from Vientiane.

Asked what he would do in Hanoi, Hope said:

"I think I could make them a proposition."

He was asked what sort of a proposition.

"A financial proposition," Hope replied.

Asked how much money

would be involved, he said:

"I was thinking in the neighborhood of \$10 million."

Hope said he suggested that perhaps he could raise the money for a charity for children in North Vietnam by putting on a show.

"I suggested this charity thing, that I'd like to make some sort of a deal," Hope said.

Asked how Tranh received this suggestion, Hope replied:

"He didn't give me anything definite about it. But I feel pretty good about it right now. I just might get lucky. We're going to find out in a couple of days."

Hope and his 75-member Christmas show troupe are staying in Bangkok and making daily shuttle flights to South Vietnam to entertain American GIs.

The comedian said the idea to visit North Vietnam was his own and he had not previously discussed it with any U.S. government officials.

Hope said Tranh commented during their talk that he had once seen a movie in which Hope befriended a Vietnamese child.

"I think that had something to do with my getting to see him," Hope said.

He said that during his meeting with Tranh "there was not one bit of villification."