

HANOI SAYS P.O.W.'S WILL NOT BE FREED UNTIL WAR IS OVER

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On Television, Thuy Insists
That U.S. Must First End
Its Support of Thieu

ROGERS ALSO APPEARS

He Denies Assertion That
North Offered Release in
Return for Pullout Date
NYTimes

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North Vietnam says that American prisoners of war will be released only when the United States has withdrawn its support from the administration of President Nguyen Van Thieu in Saigon and the war has been brought to an end.

In a major clarification of Hanoi's position, Xuan Thuy, the chief North Vietnamese negotiator in Paris, made it clear at the same time that the setting of a specific date by the United States for the total removal of its forces from Vietnam would no longer be sufficient to secure the prisoners' freedom.

Answering questions from a panel of newsmen on "Face the

*Excerpts from the interviews
are printed on Page 12.*

Nation," a television program of the Columbia Broadcasting System, recorded in Paris on Friday and presented today, Mr. Thuy insisted that President Thieu's immediate resignation was the principal condition posed by North Vietnam and the Vietcong for a settlement.

During an interview held yesterday and printed in The New York Times today, Mr. Thuy had stated that Hanoi no longer would consider separately the political and military issues in the Vietnam war though it had been prepared to do so last summer.

Nixon Criticized

Asked specifically during the television program whether the fate of American prisoners would still depend on a political solution even after the departure of all United States troops and the cessation of all American military activity, Mr. Thuy replied:

"We should wonder why Mr. Nixon still uses the political problems for his aims. Why does he not make a statement: Now we stop any commitments to the Saigon administration: we will stop any support to the Saigon administration, and we will no longer maintain

Continued on Page 12, Column 3

Continued From Page 1, Col. 8

this administration. And then the Vietnamese problem will be very rapidly settled—both military questions and political questions. And then all prisoners, all American servicemen—will go home."

Mr. Thuy's assertion that last year Hanoi had "advanced" proposals for the release of the prisoners in return for the setting of a date for the full withdrawal of American troops brought an immediate and angry rejoinder from Secretary of State William P. Rogers that it "just isn't true."

Mr. Rogers, who appeared live in the second segment of the television program broadcast, after the Thuy interview, denied that North Vietnam had ever offered to free the prisoners in exchange for a troop withdrawal date, which would have separated the political and military issues.

"That just isn't true," Secretary Rogers said. "There was never any discussion of that kind. In every session that we had with the North Vietnamese, they made it clear that they would not talk about a military solution, except in the context of an over-all political solution. So what he has said is untrue."

The North Vietnamese refusal to consider releasing the prisoners in exchange for the setting of a date by the United States for the troop withdrawal — as set forth by Mr. Thuy — appeared to undermine the position on ending the war taken last week by Senator Edmund S. Muskie of Maine, the leading contender for the Democratic Presidential nomination.

In a speech here Tuesday Mr. Muskie said that "we must set a date when we will withdraw every soldier, sailor and airman and stop all bombing and other American military activity, dependent only on an agreement for the return of our prisoners and for the safety of our troops as they leave."

The speech prompted a public attack by Mr. Rogers Thursday accusing the Senator of interfering with the Administration's negotiating efforts.

Senator Muskie also urged the Saigon Government to "move toward a political accommodation with all the elements of their society," stressing that Americans would "not support an indefinite war."

At one point in the television interview, Mr. Thuy was reminded by a questioner that some aspirants in the American Presidential campaign believe that, "If the United States proposed a date for total withdrawal, the North Vietnamese would release all American prisoners."

Mr. Thuy's comments on television, as well as his declarations in the interview in The Times conveyed the motion that Hanoi had been willing to separate the war's military and political issues before President Thieu's re-election last October, but now would no longer do so.