

Unofficial Vietnamese Contacts In Paris Clarify Political Issues

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PARIS, Aug. 2—A series of unofficial contacts is taking place here among Communist and non-Communist Vietnamese, alongside the sterile official negotiations.

They have not produced any clear agreements so far. But, according to sources involved, they have provoked some clarification from the Communist side on the stages of a possible political settlement for Vietnam. This has led the non-Communists to say, "We have the impression that we are not very far apart."

The latest private non-Communist proposal was brought to Paris 10 days ago on behalf of a group said to have been formed recently in South Vietnam to try to end the war.

This non-Communist proposal was brought here by Nguyen Thai and his wife, Nguyen Thuyet Mai. Mr. Thai is a former South Vietnamese Government official who worked both for the late President, Ngo Dinh Diem, and for President Nguyen Van Thieu as Deputy Minister of Information and as a special adviser to Saigon's delegation at the Paris talks in 1969.

The main difference between the results of these unofficial contacts and the Communist position as stated in talks with the United States is the understanding that a non-Communist "transitional" government could be formed in Saigon to negotiate the next stage, a three-part coalition.

The South Vietnamese concerned said they believed there would be no special conditions imposed by the Communists on the composition of such a government, provided President Nguyen Van Thieu and Premier Tran Thien Khiem were replaced.

Thieu Is Main Issue

The main sticking point, com-

mon to the official peace talks and these private contacts, is that President Thieu must be ousted. The South Vietnamese who have been involved in these contacts oppose Mr. Thieu. They have been more than willing to agree that he must go, but they concede that they have no way of getting rid of him.

Only the Americans have the power to depose the President, they say. The American position is that Mr. Thieu will step down at an undetermined date after a cease-fire and release of prisoners, and one month before general elections in South Vietnam. Presumably he would be free to seek reelection under voting rules prepared before his resignation.

While the position of Mr. Thieu therefore remains a point of impasse, the unofficial soundings have produced the impression that non-Communist Vietnamese would not find it difficult to get Communist acceptance of a "transitional" government that they might assemble to replace him.

Mr. Thai brought a nine-point plan on behalf of the Movement of National Reconciliation, a group that he said was formed recently by non-Communists in South Vietnam. It represents civilian, military and major religious elements, he said.

The proposal calls for a cease-fire, without mention of international supervision, and for all arms to be "laid down" immediately afterward. Only patrols composed of "the representatives from both sides" would be allowed to carry weapons to maintain order.

Without specifying how a new South Vietnamese government should be formed, it calls for rapid execution of a program to satisfy "popular aspirations for peace and security as well as real freedom and democracy."

The only names attached to the proposal, however, were his own and that of Gen. Nguyen Chanh Thi, now in exile in the United States, as members of the movement's central committee. General Thi is a former commander of South Vietnam's northernmost military region and is widely respected as an incorruptible nationalist. He tried to return to Saigon early this year, but was not permitted to land there.*

'Repression' in Saigon Cited

Mr. Thai said that the movement "cannot operate openly in South Vietnam because of the prevailing political repression policies in Saigon." Therefore, adherents residing in their own country cannot now be identified, he said.

Another group in Paris, called the Committee for Peace and Renovation of South Vietnam, issued a somewhat similar proposal on July 7, over the name of Nguyen Van Con, a founding member of the committee. That group has had frequent contacts with the Communists, and feels confident that it could negotiate successfully if the problem of Mr. Thieu were solved.

Its statement said that an ad hoc committee of non-Communist, South Vietnamese, both inside the country and in exile, could designate "a transitional team capable of replacing the current leadership in Saigon."

Mr. Thai and his wife have returned to the United States. Their intention is to make their proposal public in the hope that it can gain some support from the American Administration

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