

Reds Testily Deny 'Peace Rumors'

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By Fora Lewis
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Paris

North Vietnam's spokesman at the Paris peace negotiations said yesterday that the talks are at a complete deadlock and no progress has been made.

Nguyen Thanh Le said in an interview that "unfounded rumors had been spread intentionally."

He issued a "categorical denial" that there has been any closing of the gap between the two sides and said the impression given in the west shows "the dishonesty of the Nixon administration."

It was the first direct, official and full North Vietnamese denial of the rumors based on recent publicized meetings with President Nixon's chief security adviser, Henry Kissinger, and North Vietnam's chief negotiator, Le Duc Tho.

Evidently, the North Vietnamese side is becoming increasingly irritated with the public aftermath of the secret talks.

CONTACTS

Le said his side would continue to keep the agreement not to speak about private

meetings. But it was clearly understood that his remarks referred to all contacts with the United States, including the secret ones.

"The form of negotiations doesn't matter," he said, "What matters is compromise."

There have been no concessions from the American side since President Nixon's eight-point proposal last January, the spokesman said. The Communist side

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stands on the National Liberation Front's latest statement, issued from Hanoi on September 11 and repeated here.

Its most important point, according to Le, is the assurance that the three segments in a "government of national concord" proposed by the front would have "equal rights, proportions, and mutual assurance of non-elimination."

"The Nixon administration is very obstinate, Le said. There has been increasing military pressure on North Vietnam in "recent days."

This extra military effort, intensified when Kissinger and Le Duc Tho are meeting, was taken by the North Vietnamese to demonstrate that "Nixon still pursues the illusion of a military victory."

"This is the stick, but not the carrot," Le said.

"President Johnson used

the stick and the carrot, so as to make the stick work better. Nixon uses above all the stick and the bluff."

VIEW

On the political front the spokesman said Washington is "still trying to maintain the Nguyen Van Thieu regime permanently. U.S. proposals would merely give President Thieu a "one month vacation," he charged.

According to Le, the United States is insisting that the National Liberation Front adapt itself to the Saigon regime with all its political apparatus and its institutions. This is tantamount to asking (them) to surrender in return for one-man, one-vote."

That was clearly a reference to a U.S. requirement that elections for a new government in Saigon be held under the existing constitution, which forbids the participation of Communists.

Asked how U.S. negotiators explain the apparent contradiction, Le said, "They don't and they can't explain the many contradictions in their position, because they are trying to maintain the whole political apparatus and institutions of the Saigon administration.

"That's why our position and that of the Nixon administration are still very far apart." Le, who preferred "for clarity" to speak in Vietnamese through an English interpreter, added to the translation at that point, "... and opposite."

ISSUE

The interview clarified to some extent the conflict on the political issue in current negotiations. In insisting on existing institutional arrangements in Saigon, the U.S. is, in Hanoi's view, insisting on the retention of a powerful president.

That would rule out the troika system of "equal rights, equal proportions and mutual non-elimination" which the National Liberation Front is seeking. Under the existing system, any president would obviously