

(Borchgrave's article in Newsweek of 30 Oct 72.)

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N. Vietnam Says Talks Moving Toward Truce

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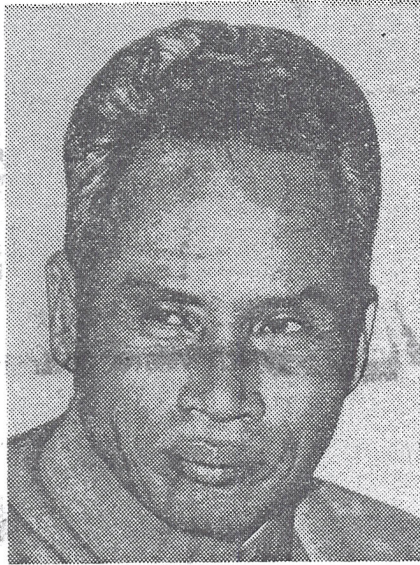
North Vietnamese Premier Pham Van Dong is quoted as saying that secret talks with the United States are in "evolution" toward a cease-fire, the release of prisoners and American withdrawal from the war.

"In the wake of the American withdrawal" from the conflict, the premier said, the Saigon regime and the Provisional Revolutionary Government of South Vietnam (Vietcong) would negotiate "a three-sided coalition of transition . . ." About six months after the cease-fire, he said, there would be "general elections" that would be "guaranteed" to be "really free elections."

Release of American prisoners could take place when "a general agreement has been reached," without waiting for complete withdrawal of remaining U.S. troops from South Vietnam, he said.

"This is the present evolution, and it is a positive one," the North Vietnamese leader said in an unusual interview with Arnaud de Borchgrave, a senior editor of Newsweek magazine. The interview was made public by Newsweek last night.

The premier's remarks were the first disclosure of North Vietnam's basic bargaining position in the present sequence of secret talks between U.S. presidential envoy Henry A. Kissinger and North Vietnamese Politburo member Le Duc Tho in Paris, and the linked negotiations in Saigon between Kissin-



PHAM VAN DONG
... 'free elections.'

ger and South Vietnam's President Nguyen Van Thieu.

The interview with Pham Van Dong took place in Hanoi on ^{18 Oct} Wednesday, Newsweek said, and was submitted the next day to the premier for his approval. Thursday was the day that Kissinger began his current talks with Thieu. The South Vietnamese president has insisted he will never agree to any form of coalition with the Communists, and that has been reiterated

publicly by the Saigon government since the Kissinger-Thieu talks began.

"Thieu has been overtaken by events," Pham Van Dong was quoted as telling correspondent de Borchgrave, "and events are now following their own course."

"Now is the time for both sides to dare and forge ahead," said the premier, referring to his country and the United States.

"Negotiations are in an extremely important phase," Pham Van Dong was quoted as saying. "We have done everything humanly possible for a successful conclusion."

Asked if he thought a negotiated settlement and an end of the war is near, he replied: "I hope so."

Although the North Vietnamese government chief said President Thieu "has been overtaken by events," the present pattern of events would indicate that Thieu is fiercely determined to prove that assessment wrong.

Pham Van Dong's interview appears to have been intended to put pressure on Thieu, and on the United States to bargain over Thieu's head. North Vietnam, like other Communist nations, normally does not disseminate negotiating positions simply for the sake of providing information, but rather to

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White House adviser Kissinger met again yesterday with officials in Saigon. Page A10

Hanoi Premier Sees 'Evolution' Toward Cease-Fire in Vietnam

PHAN VAN DONG, From A1

enhance the prospect of reaching a conclusion to serve its interests.

The North Vietnamese leader said, early in the interview, "we will do nothing to jeopardize a happy conclusion at this stage by talking out of turn."

Nevertheless, he proceeded to say more about the negotiations in the interview than any other official on either side has done, even though many of the key connecting factors and specific details required for the many stage settlement he outlined are missing from the version he supplied.

U.S. officials appeared startled that the North Vietnamese premier had made such a public presentation, but they declined to make any public comment on it, or to verify if his account conformed to the actual state of secret bargaining.

The White House reportedly was shown a copy of the Newsweek interview on Friday, and refused to discuss it with newsmen. As a result, there was no immediate indication what impact the interview may have on the negotiations.

DeBorchgrave, summarizing his own interpretation of what Pham Van Dong told him, wrote: "The Premier confirmed that a peace settlement would involve three stages: First, a standstill cease-fire followed by a total American military withdrawal; second, direct negotiations between two administra-

tions—Communist and Saigon loyalists—leading to the establishment of a three-part interim coalition government; and third, national elections to choose a new South Vietnamese legislature."

The forces on the Communist side of the struggle in South Vietnam are represented by the Provisional Revolutionary Government of South Vietnam, in which the main component is the National Liberation Front. Pham Van Dong in answer to de Borchgrave, it was noted, referred to "the front's policy" in South Vietnam.

Despite American talk "about a bloodbath," he said, "it is inconceivable that the front would allow reprisals after a settlement," because that "would jeopardize everything."

Pham Van Dong reiterated, however, the longstanding North Vietnamese-Vietcong demand for war reparations, saying "America is responsible for all material damages inflicted on us."

He also said that North Vietnam has "not even begun to think about such details" as its fundamental goal for reunification of North and South Vietnam. There is "lots of time" to consider that later, he said.

Missing from the premier's formulation were such critical details of a war settlement as how a cease-fire would be enforced and the political implications of the enforcement systems; the method of selecting a transitional regime to replace the Thieu government;

when and under what terms U.S. support for the present regime would stop, and perhaps of most immediate interest, how close the negotiations are to producing any accord before the Nov. 7 presidential election in the United States.

The formula for a settlement in stages that Pham Van Dong sketched out in the interview conforms to some of the most recent speculation that a potential compromise would be a mixture of proposals on the allied and Communist sides.

President Nixon, on May 8, publicly proposed an American military disengagement from the war, with an Indochina-wide cease-fire, plus a release of American prisoners of war, to be followed within four months by a total U.S. troop withdrawal. Earlier, the United States and South Vietnam offered a combined military-political settlement, stating that President Thieu would step down one month before a presidential election.

North Vietnam and the Vietcong, however, constantly have insisted on a military political settlement with not only the election of a new president, but a total replacement of the entire Thieu government structure.

The only thing said in the Newsweek interview about the other nations involved in the Indochina war—Laos and Cambodia—was Dong's remark that these matters must be "resolved separately."