

Thieu Insists That a Cease-Fire Hinges on Hanoi Troop Pullout

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SAIGON, South Vietnam, Oct. 27 — President Nguyen Van Thieu insisted today that his "minimum demand" before accepting a cease-fire was the total withdrawal of all North Vietnamese troops from South Vietnam.

Mr. Thieu's statement, in an often emotional talk to a rally of 500 National Assembly deputies, senators and provincial councilors, appeared to be much firmer than the position he took in a speech Tuesday. At that time he was vague about whether he would accept a cease-fire without North Vietnamese withdrawal.

The proposed settlement worked out between Washington and Hanoi calls for a cease fire in place.

Informed Vietnamese and American observers here see President Thieu's continuing public objections to a cease-fire in place more as a delaying tactic rather than an attempt to impose a veto, but the Americans are clearly worried that delays could cause problems with the North Vietnamese, who have not given Henry A. Kissinger a date for another secret meeting in Paris.

Mr. Thieu's public speeches and delays appear designed in part to embarrass the Americans and to put the burden of the allied concessions on them, although so far there has been no sign of a major break between the Americans and the

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South Vietnamese.

Nevertheless, many Vietnamese and Americans here believe, Mr. Thieu's constant exhortations to Vietnamese audiences to stand with him in opposing any form of three-part coalition government are largely a smoke screen to conceal the fact that the draft agreement reached by Mr. Kissinger and the North Vietnamese does not call for such a coalition.

It calls instead for the Thieu Government to continue, alongside a Communist administration and under a three-part National Council of Reconciliation and Concord to help supervise a cease-fire and elections.

Mr. Thieu's fear, according to persons close to him, is that this council and other councils to be set up at lower levels would serve as a wedge for the Communists to get in and take over, as he has always feared that they would do in a coalition.

Mr. Thieu's government has been issuing confusing and contradictory statements about the acceptability of a cease-fire. This morning, for instance, his Foreign Ministry said that South Vietnam was "ready to accept a cease-fire," but in the afternoon the President himself told a group of political figures who came to the palace that "our minimum demands are that North Vietnamese Army troops should pull back to North Vietnam."

He was also vague in his speech to the nation Tuesday, saying that a cease-fire was "close" and that the government was getting ready for it but again insisting on withdrawal provisions, which are not in the draft agreement made public yesterday by Hanoi and Mr. Kissinger.

As one Vietnamese observer put it, "He is getting ready to change course, but he is doing it with a slow turn rather than an about face."

In the meantime, he is having more success rounding up political support for his position than he has had in years of war. Even the opposition has been easier on him in the past few days. Tonight at a gathering of opposition Buddhist senators and deputies at the An Quang Pagoda there were no strong attacks on the President and no accusations that he stood in the way of peace.

Coalition Feared

Actually, most middle-class South Vietnamese—and almost all non-Communist politicians here are from that social stratum—fear a coalition with the Communists as much as President Thieu does.

Many of them are nervous, somewhat fearful, and less than ecstatic about the possibility of admitting the Communists to a share of power in the South. They are wondering what he is giving away—since Mr. Thieu has not yet told them the terms of the draft agreement and has said only that "a cease-fire will only come when I myself append my signature to the agreement."

The Americans, who have the most to gain from achieving a cease-fire and getting out now, are even more nervous and apprehensive that the two Vietnamese sides might refuse ever to come to each other's terms and wreck the whole draft agreement.



Associated Press

President Nguyen Van Thieu wiping perspiration from his face as he talked to reporters yesterday in Saigon.

But taking an optimistic view of the situation, they agree with Mr. Kissinger that the remaining problems can be worked out in one last negotiating session with the North Vietnamese.

How accurate a view this is is impossible to tell, since neither the Americans nor the Vietnamese are talking about exactly what went on during the five days of discussions between President Thieu and Mr. Kissinger last week.

It seems that the discussions

were difficult and even heated at times. But Mr. Kissinger left, it is said, with a clear understanding of what additional clarifications and changes Mr. Thieu wanted in the agreement and with full confidence that he could get the North Vietnamese to agree to them.

How well founded is that confidence is also impossible to know, since Mr. Kissinger did not reveal all the specific problems that Mr. Thieu raised. They apparently are concerned with detailed military aspects of a cease-fire and with the composition of the committees and commissions that would be working out the political future of South Vietnam after a cease-fire.

He Insists on Role

Speaking today in the packed and stiflingly hot reception room of the Presidential Palace, Mr. Thieu insisted that "any cease-fire without our signature will not be valid," and added, "so far we have not agreed on anything." He was loudly applauded by the politicians, who had marched to the palace from the National Assembly in a carefully organized demonstration of support.

The march, complete with placards in English, plain-clothes police guards and barricades to hold back curious spectators, was the first political demonstration in recent memory that did not end with the police using teargas on the demonstrators.

One placard read, "Coalition with the Communists means suicide." Another said "All political solutions for South Vietnam should be decided by the people of South Vietnam."

Press Admitted to Palace

The demonstration also marked the first time in the memory of foreign newsmen that they were allowed in the Presidential Palace as a group. They eagerly crowded around the usually distant President. Mr. Thieu, dressed in a sand-colored safari suit, was smiling but tense.

Mr. Thieu's demands were underlined by Hoang Duc Nha, the President's chief aide and press secretary, who told foreign newsmen after the President's talk that South Vietnam had "three major objections" to the proposed peace plan which would have to be resolved before Saigon would sign.

Mr. Nha said that it failed to call for North Vietnamese withdrawal, that it did not re-establish the demilitarized zone between North Vietnam and South Vietnam, and that it would impose a three-part coalition government on the South.

Earlier the lower house of the assembly voted 125 to 4 in favor of a resolution that would reject any cease-fire without a North Vietnamese withdrawal and any political settlement that involved a coalition or three-part government. The lower house has 159 members.

The vote appeared to reflect the widespread concern here over the proposed settlement, which many Vietnamese fear is being forced on South Vietnam by the United States.

As one pro-Thieu deputy, Le Van Dien, said during debate over the resolution, "The South is about to fall into Communist hands through a prefabricated solution. I appeal to the President to accept death, not not surrender."

In addition to Mr. Thieu's demand that all "North Vietnamese troops should pull back to North Vietnam," he proposed that a referendum be held under United Nations supervision to choose members of an electoral commission. Under the peace agreement worked out by Hanoi and Washington, one-third of such a commission would be appointed by the Communists, one-third by the neutralists and one-third by the Saigon Government.