

Saigon Official Calls Plan 'Surrender'

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Saigon

Foreign Minister Tran Van Lam of South Vietnam says acceptance of the latest proposal for a settlement of the war made public by North Vietnam and the United States would amount to a "surrender" for his country and is therefore "unacceptable."

In a 2½-hour interview

28 OCT
Saturday Lam said South Vietnam adamantly refuses to accept any cease fire agreement that does not include the withdrawal of all North Vietnamese forces from the south. He added that his country insists upon the re-establishment of the demilitarized zone between the two Vietnams.

Neither of the two provisions, he said, is included in the present proposal to end the war.

But he said that the South Vietnamese are fully prepared to accept a cease-fire which includes a guarantee that all North Vietnamese troops would eventually be sent home, leaving only South Vietnamese nationalists and Viet Cong standing on the territory they occupied when the guns fell silent.

Lam said the South Vietnamese object with equal vigor to the provision that deals with the nation's political future.

He said the solution spelled out by the North Vietnamese is a coalition government "in disguise" — something the South Vietnamese have consistently resisted on the grounds that it would inevitably be subverted by the Communists.

Lam indicated that the withdrawal of North Vietnamese forces is the most important obstacle for the South Vietnamese. Once that is agreed to, he said, a cease fire could be put into effect and the other two points

could be worked out later.

In the interview, Lam reiterated in detail the strong stand voiced by President Nguyen Van Thieu in a speech Friday.

In disclosing the nine-point peace plan Thursday, the North Vietnamese accused the United States of breaking an agreement to sign an accord on the war by October 31.

But Henry A. Kissinger, President Nixon's principal negotiator on the war, said in a Thursday news conference that the United States had made no firm commitment on when an agreement could be sealed. 26 OCT

The South Vietnamese see the North Vietnamese charges as an attempt to torpedo president Nixon's re-election. And despite assurances from Kissinger that the U.S. would not be "stampeded" into an agreement, Saigon officials are obviously worried that they may be sold out.

"We are much more concerned about your elections than you Americans," Lam said with a nervous laugh. He and other Saigon officials believe Mr. Nixon will be re-elected, he said, but they also believe that Mr. Nixon wants to win overwhelmingly, and they feel they would be finished should the Demo-

cratic candidate George McGovern wins the election.

When Kissinger's remarks Thursday that "peace is at hand, an agreement is in sight," were recalled, Lam said simply, "We don't see things like that."

Lam said he could not agree with Kissinger's statement that "what stands in

the way of an agreement now are issues that are relatively less important than those that have already been settled."

He admitted there had been some concessions from the Communists in the more than four years of negotiations. "But the important points remain the same," he

asserted. "They didn't change at all on those points."

He said he doubts that a cease-fire could be arranged before the American presidential elections November 7 and suggested the beginning of next year as a more likely time.

"There is no doubt about

our intent to end the fighting," Lam said, "but we want to have a lasting peace. To end the fighting and start again in a few months or a year would be tragic. What we are trying to do is maximize the conditions that would prevent war from returning to this country."