

SAIGON AWAITING SPEECH BY THIEU

DEC 12 1972

Leader Expected to Tell of
Progress at Peace Talks
NYTimes

By FOX BUTTERFIELD

Special to The New York Times

SAIGON, South Vietnam, Tuesday, Dec. 12— President Nguyen Van Thieu met with his National Security Council yesterday on the eve of a scheduled address to a joint session of the National Assembly that most Vietnamese expect will be of major significance.

It was widely believed in Saigon that President Thieu would announce progress in the Paris peace talks favorable to South Vietnam as well as make public a Cabinet shuffle. He was also expected to request an extension of his special six-month emergency powers to rule by decree. The previous measure expires Dec. 28.

Earlier yesterday Mr. Thieu canceled a speech he was to make at the opening session of the seventh annual Ministerial Conference for the Economic Development of Southeast Asia, apparently in order to meet with his Security Council. A notice on the bulletin board of the conference, which is being attended by the representatives of eight Southeast Asian countries and Japan, said tersely, "President Thieu has a more important appointment."

Paris Accord Expected

The Security Council meeting was the eighth in the last 10 days and reflected what many officials here, both Vietnamese and foreign, feel is the inexorable approach of a final agreement in the Paris talks.

Even the quasi-official newspaper Tin Son, which has repeatedly criticized the draft peace accord and denied that peace was imminent, noted that Vietnamese throughout the nation expected an agreement soon. Tin Son reported that papers in many areas were being sold out as people sought to learn the latest news.

In a separate development, the Japanese Foreign Minister, Masayoshi Ohira, in Saigon to attend the economic conference, denied that Japan had drawn up plans for postwar economic aid to North or South Vietnam.

"We have not been approached directly by the parties concerned," Mr. Ohira said at a news conference. Mr. Ohira turned aside all questions about Japan's possible role in postwar Indochina.

Chira to Meet Thieu

Well-informed Japanese sources said, however, that the main purpose of Mr. Ohira's visit — he is the only Foreign Minister attending the conference — was to discuss Japanese-South Vietnamese relations after a cease-fire. Mr. Ohira was to meet with President Thieu early today before returning to Tokyo, the sources reported.

Although the three-day conference is intended to enact several specific projects of regional economic cooperation, including a Southeast Asia College of Engineering to be built at Dalat in central South Vietnam, Vietnamese officials also said that they would concentrate in their talks with the Japanese on postwar aid.

"We know the ropes on how to get American aid," one Vietnamese economist said, "but we don't yet understand the complexities of the Japanese Government or the names of the key figures in the bureaucracy."

There had been speculation here that the Premier in a new more broad-based cabinet to be named by Mr. Thieu would be retired Gen. Tran Van Don, but it appeared that General Don had been having difficulty lining up support from opposition religious and political groups.

General Reported Rebuffed

According to knowledgeable Vietnamese sources, General Don, who is now a deputy, had been rebuffed in visits to Thich Tri Quang, the head of the anti-Government An Quang Buddhists, and to Catholic and Nationalist party leaders in central Vietnam. General Don had reportedly been trying to win support for a new Government that would include some opposition figures and that could compete with the Communists under a cease-fire.

With the apparent failure of General Don's effort — he had also been to Paris last month to talk with Vietnamese exile leaders there — it seemed likely that any new Cabinet would be even more closely associated with Mr. Thieu and even more hard-line anti-Communist.