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Congressional Record - Seven-Point Proposal of NLF (Vietnam)

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THE SEVEN-POINT PROPOSAL
OF THE NLF

Mr. MANSFIELD. Mr. President, over the past 10 days I have had a chance to study in detail the proposals made by Madame Binh, the chairman of the delegation of the National Liberation Front, which evidently have the full support of Xuan Thuy, the chairman of the North Vietnamese delegation. These proposals have been made with the obvious approval and, perhaps, at the instigation of Le Duc Tho, a member of the ruling committee in Hanoi who has returned to Paris after a 14-month absence.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the seven-point proposal as outlined in brief in the UPI dispatch dated July 1, 1971, be printed in the RECORD.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. ALLEN). Without objection, it is so ordered. The proposal, ordered to be printed in the RECORD, is as follows:

1. A cease-fire between Communist and American forces as soon as the two sides reach agreement on the withdrawal of non-South Vietnamese troops.

2. A cease-fire between the Communist and South Vietnamese forces as soon as the Vietnamese belligerents in the South agree on the creation of a provisional tripartite government in Saigon whose main task would be organizing general elections.

3. The problem of Vietnamese armed forces, clearly meaning the presence in the South of large North Vietnamese forces, will be settled by the Vietnamese themselves.

4. The Viet Cong said that following reestablishment of peace, the country's reunification would be negotiated by the two zones without outside interference, with both South and North refusing to join any military alliances with outsiders, or allowing them to set up foreign bases.

5. A pacified South Vietnam, before its reunification with North Vietnam, would set up relations with all countries including the United States.

6. The U.S. would be held liable to pay an indemnification "for the losses and the destructions it has caused to the Vietnamese people in the two zones."

7. According to the document "the parties will find agreement on the forms of respect and international guarantee of the accords that will be concluded."

Mr. MANSFIELD. Mr. President, it appears to me that the seven-point statement, for the first time, contains elements of a breakthrough in the impasse which had marked, previously, the 118 meetings in Paris. The statement calls for a cease-fire and a mutual agreement based on the phased withdrawal of American troops—which, in any event, has been the aim of this Government for the last two and a half years—and, concurrently, the release of U.S. POW's which is also the basic aim of the administration.

As for the problem of the Vietnamese armed forces, it is proposed that settlement be by the Vietnamese themselves. It is also proposed that Vietnamese alone work out the problem of reunification. The statement notes that after a U.S. withdrawal, South Vietnam would be prepared to establish relations with all countries including the United States, an indication that some form of independence is envisioned at least into the in-

determinate future. That point seems to be reinforced in point No. 7 which states—

Parties will find agreement on the forms of respect and international guarantee of the accords that will be concluded.

Proposal No. 2 in the seven-point statement is indeterminate as to meaning. It refers to the question of an interim tripartite government, and the organizing of general elections. Presumably, negotiations could serve to clarify the implications of this point.

Proposal No. 6 relative to U.S. liability to pay an indemnity for the losses and the destruction it has caused to the Vietnamese people in the two zones clearly, is open to question.

This is the matter which the distinguished minority leader earlier this morning addressed himself to primarily. If the Binh statement were transposed—this particular language—into a postwar effort at joint rehabilitation and reconstruction, however, it might well be subject to negotiation.

In any event, my overall reaction to Madam Binh's statement is that it constitutes, for the first time, a substantial proposal. The talks at Paris—there have been no negotiations as yet—have been moved off dead center. Indeed, we may be seeing, at last, a real possibility in the outworn phrase "light at the end of the tunnel."

I can appreciate the reserved reaction on the part of the White House, but I am glad that the door is being held open. In the same way Ambassador Bruce's request that he be given time to consider the seven-point proposal is also understandable, along with his initial "yes, but" response.

Nevertheless, I hope that this "straw in the wind" will not slip away as, I am confident the administration has no intention of permitting. It seems to me that the President's probes for peace over the past several months have created this stirring, this movement, in the first place and, hopefully, out of this latest proposal will come the ways and means to bring the war to a conclusion. The final decisions remain with the President, but all of us—the Congress and the people—are, I am sure, ready and willing to sustain the efforts which he makes to achieve a negotiated peace.

Insofar as South Vietnam is concerned, any commitments which we may have had to the government in Saigon have long since been discharged. We have given to the present government and to every predecessor government after the unfortunate and tragic death of President Ngo Dinh Diem whatever support could be given for the past 17 years. As for the election which is scheduled to take place in October for the presidency, that will be the business of the Vietnamese, not ours. If the outcome is based upon a free and open contest, the results can only be respected. Whatever the outcome, our principal concern, at this point, it seems to me, must center on the American POW's and the MIA's—the missing in action. It has been proposed that we consider the situation of these Americans in juxtaposition to a

phased withdrawal of U.S. forces and that these two matters be treated apart from the other considerations in the seven-point proposal. Why not? The U.S. withdrawal has already been in process for the past 2½ years. Why not speed up the withdrawal to full completion if it means, reciprocally, as indicated in the seven-point proposal that Hanoi will be willing to match it with a rapid release of all POW's.

Our primary obligation in this situation is to our own country and to our own people. That has been, is, and will continue to be the basic consideration which has underlain my own position as a Senator from Montana. In this case, the obligation has to do with the fate of the American POW's and the MIA's, as the administration has made clear many times.

There may well be in these proposals of the National Liberation Front some "light at the end of the tunnel" for these men. The proposals may also contain light for a final peace settlement. As I see it, the time to find out is now.

And, in conclusion, may I call to the attention of the Senate the latest casualty list under date of June 26, 1971:

Wounded, 300,510 Americans.

Combat dead, 45,321 Americans.

Noncombat dead, 9,622 Americans.

The total casualties in this second most costly of all the wars in which we have been engaged amount to 355,453 Americans as of June 26, 1971. Casualties, costs, drugs sum up the price we have paid. It is too much.