

October 8, 1973

Discussion between Zhou Enlai and Le Thanh Nghi

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ZHOU ENLAI AND LE THANH NGHI

Beijing, 8-10 October 1973

Zhou Enlai: I would like to comment on the second point about the government in Saigon. I have to make it clear that to have an early withdrawal of American troops, we did not demand the resignation of Thieu and, moreover, we proposed that internal affairs in South Vietnam be solved by the South Vietnamese people themselves. We calculated that a ceasefire, withdrawal of American troops, and exchange of prisoners of war are the conditions for the US to get out of Vietnam. The internal affairs in South Vietnam should be solved by the people of South Vietnam themselves. That you recently dropped the demand for Thieu's resignation has deprived the US of reasonable arguments and created more favorable conditions for the US to withdraw its troops from Vietnam. The following argument should be consistent: we will not impose the Communist system in South Vietnam, but we will not allow the maintaining of the neocolonial system there.

Negotiations in Cambodia are not suitable for the time being. Sihanouk is against negotiations. So is the internal faction of FUNK.^[1] They want to prolong the fighting for some more time. Therefore, if you see any possibility for talks, please tell them. We are not in a position to do so because we have talked with them a lot about fighting and encouraged them to fight. We suggest that the Vietnamese Workers' Party find a suitable moment to tell them.

^[1] National United Front of Kampuchea—the Sihanouk-Khmer Rouge alliance. The "internal faction" is a reference to the Khmer Rouge.