

zozc sag

yy ljp

thieu 1 (normass/deepe)

SAIGON, April 2--President Nguyen Van Thieu, today, gave his "most decisive hour" answer to President Lyndon B. Johnson's so-called "finest hour" decision.

*with* While President Lyndon Johnson left the impression impression to the Vietnamese some Vietnamese of "leaving the battle unfinished, the war half-won, the peace half-sought," as one explained, the "other President" governing the ~~the~~ Allied effort here gave the impression of waging two wars simultaneously.

*Presidential* Few observers, however, believed the press conference, however, was President Thieu's "final reuter final hour of decision, as the worst appeared to be in store for the Vietnamese government in the coming weeks.

--more reuter



2020 sag

yy ljp

thieu 2 (normass/deepe)

In the light of President Johnson's bombshell address,

President Nguyen Van Thieu's remarks were news; but in the light of

President Thieu's past remarks, his press conference was not new.

The same hawkish, hard-line, anti-Communist, anti-coalition government statements were expressed in his strongest, most articulate terms.

The diminutive President pictured the Vietnamese <sup>PEOPLE</sup> peace as well

willing to sacrifice their utmost for both peace and anti-Communist

freedom, the victims of Communist aggression on the one hand and

Americans "seeling" "selling the Vietnamese down the river," on the

other hand.

--more reuter



2020 sag

yy ljp

thieu 3 (normass/deepe)

PERIOD

APPEARED

THE COUNTRY

Thieu characterized this time as "an extremely difficult moment in history," but based on journalists' questions, this seemed an understatement, as the Vietnam seemed to totter between global war bigger war or bitter peace—and as it dangled so did the big power bloc, and the outside and the Thieu government inside.

--more reuter



yy ljp

thieu/3 (normans/deepe)

In short, President ~~Lyndon~~ Thieu, in commenting on President Johnson's moves towards peace, simply answered with President Johnson's previous statements on war and freedom, and defending American ~~commitment~~ <sup>Saying, Mr. Johnson once said,</sup> commitments, and that American troops in Vietnam were defending not only Vietnam, but also southeast Asia and the American mainland. <sup>PRO-Vietnam Statement</sup> The past which President Johnson ~~who~~ sought to forget in his ~~prayers-for-peace~~ prayers-for-peace speech on Monday (Saigon time) Monday morning ~~(Sag~~ (Saigon time), President ~~Thi~~ Thieu's choice to remind him of exactly twenty four hours later.



2020 sag

yy 1jp

thiou 3 (normass/deepe)

Before North Vietnam has ~~announced~~ announced its decision ~~whether~~ whether or not to accept President Johnson's peace bid, the option for President Thieu was clearly to continue to press on with the war, attempting to keep his troops in the field fighting, with only the promise of more draftee and perhaps more American support, attempting to keep the anti-Communist fabric of the society—and the government—glued together long enough to appear united until the fate of Vietnam is signed in Geneva, if <sup>ev</sup> anywhere.

President Thieu acknowledged that he agreed with President Johnson in his policy for peace, and that he would gladly meet with his direct enemy—~~aggressor~~—North Vietnam—but he would not ~~meet~~ meet with ~~that~~ his southern "servant" of Hanoi—the National Liberation Front, *HS Coalition* nor would he allow them into his government.

*man bers.*

--more reuter



yy ljp

thieur 50 (normass/deepe)

The press conference was held in the ballroom of the elegant Presidential Palace. ~~Under French-imported made crystal chandeliers,~~ Western and Vietnamese journalists mingled in business suits, paratrooper unit uniforms, typical journalists' "great white hunter" outfits amid the half dozen television cameras and their floodlights. Vietnamese security guards ~~guards~~ and fatigue-clad Presidential aides lounged in the golden brocade chairs lining the glassed-in verandah-ed ballroom. This stateroom, ~~used~~ in the past for formal diplomatic receptions, had seen its more elegant ~~on~~ a more elegant atmosphere occasions, but hardly one more decisive.

--more reuter



2020 sag

yy ljp

thieu 67 (normass/deepe)

Befoo

Before ~~the~~ the arrival of President Thieu, a government interpreter requested through voiced in the microphone: "Ladies and Gentlemen, we have all the time you want to ask all the questions you want. The President asks you to take your time, stand up and identify ~~yourself~~ yourself and your newspaper. We have plenty of time."

"I wonder if they'll serve us lunch and dinner," a Western journalist chided.

In the back of the room, a Vietnamese journalist vociferously argued with the French journalist about who ~~got~~ <sup>was first</sup> to use the sole telephone <sup>first.</sup> A small crowd gathered to referred referee. "We'll resume the Indo-China War all over ~~again~~ again," an American ~~journalist~~ <sup>journalist</sup> mused.

--more reuter



zczc sag

yy ljp

thieu 8 (normass) deepe)

At 10 a.m.--twenty four hours after President Johnson's  
~~ndre~~ address was radio broadcast here--President Thieu walked in, and  
sat at a long table covered with green baize cover. He was flanked  
by more than a dozen ministers of the government, and some took their  
seats on green embroidered chairs in the rear, while some, including  
Vice President Nguyen Cao Ky and Prime Minister Nguyen van Loc flanked  
Thieu on both sides.

For an hour and forty five minutes the questions machinegunned  
at Thieu, who gave no opening remarks and who requested no verbal help  
from his Cabinet. Dressed in a navy blue suit and conservative necktie,  
Thieu appeared calm, confident, articulate and directly forward.

more reuter



2020 226

yy ljp

thieu 87 (normans/deepe)

"Had President Johnson consulted him about reducing the bombing over the North and what would the results be? a Vietnamese journalist asked.

Yes, President Thieu responded, President Johnson <sup>had</sup> had consulted the Vietnamese government two days before making his speech, the Vietnamese government had agreed to the move to its good we will. The Vietnamese government policy had long been for peace.

But, <sup>in</sup> for the benefit of his countrymen who value strength, Thieu pointed out that the bombing <sup>red</sup> deescalation did not indicate weakness on the part of the Allies, <sup>but</sup> but was intended to show the ~~good will~~ their good will in bringing both belligerents together. He reminded the press that the last bombing pause during Tet had only brought Communist offensive into the cities.

<sup>Now</sup> "This is the last time we want to do this (a bombing pause)," Thieu said. "Although North Vietnam is the aggressor, we want to show our good will to move towards peace....I would like to reiterate, this is the last time we want to show our good will to North Vietnam."



2020 sag

yy ljp

thieu 9 (normase/deepe)

And, he warned, if North Vietnam did not reverse it's stand, the Allies would be forced to review all its strategy and tactics. The Communists want 1968 to be the decisive year and we can not allow the Communists to have the initiate, he said.

An American journalist: Is there a fear in your mind the American government may seek peace at any price and pull out of Vietnam?

No, the President & Thieu said, he had no concern whatsoever about that because President Johnson and the American government had often repeated their determination to fight the Communists. He warned Hanoi not to mistake the Allies good will for weakness nor to mis-identify the democratic processes during the election year in the United States. He pointed out that President Johnson, while searching for peace, was also sending more American troops to Vietnam and that he had promised to finance and equip more Vietnamese troops.

--more reuter



2020 sag

yy 13p

thieu 10 (normassa/deepe)

"I don't see any change in the stand of the American government, and I do don't see any change in the determination of the Americans," he said.

Another American journalist asked if his government could work with a future American admin administration advertt advertising the policies of Senator Robert Kennedy.

Thieu evaded the reference to Kennedy Kennedy, but answered forcefully in general terms.

"I have said many times this is a war of aggression by the Communists in an effort to take over South Vietnam. Vietnam. We are defending the freed9 freedom not only of Vietnam, but also we are an outpost of freedom for the whole world. The stand of the Vietnamese government is not to run against out ideals....

"The American government can change; the American policy ~~can~~ regarding Vietnam can change, but the ideals of the Vietnamese people and the stanf o stand of the Vietnamese government will never change."

"This is a Vietnac Vietn mes Vietnamese war before ay anything else; the Allies have born been asked to help, but the Vietnamese will take final responsibility and make the main committment to the war."

--more reuter



2020 sag

yy 1jp  
12

thieu H (normass/deepe)

"We are determined to maintain our stand--~~that is~~ the stand of the Vietnamese people--which is to fight the Communists and not to "Coalesce with the Communists."

President Thieu, using President Johnson's arguments of another time-alice, repeated that the Allied presence in V here was not merely a presence in Vietnam, but also a presence in all of South East Asia, and defending the mainland of America. If the Americans withdraw from Vietnam they would be deserting the free world, but Vietnam would continue to pursue in fighting the Communists. *Anyway*

--more reuter



yy ljp

y

thieu <sup>13</sup> (normass/deepee)

He said the Vietnamese people were <sup>grateful</sup> ~~gratefully~~ for all the help they received from their ~~Allies~~ <sup>Americans</sup>, especially the lives of the troops, but in this common fight, if the American can not contribute more troops, he would seek help from other Allies--the South Koreans, Australians, Thais and Filipinos.

"If we have more troops, the war will end faster and peace will come sooner," he said, still alluding to the hope of a military defeat over the Communists.

About his invitation from President Johnson to visit the United States, he said he had just received the invitation this morning and the matter was under consideration.

An American television correspondent asked President Thieu to state in English ~~before the American~~ <sup>at home</sup> for the benefit of American tv viewers, his attitude towards a coalition government with the Communists, especially in the light of President Johnson's prediction that all South Vietnamese could soon settle their own matters.

==more reuter



ZCZC SAG

YY 1JP

thieu <sup>14</sup>~~13~~ (normass/deepe)

Thieu said--his eyes flashing, his hands folded calmly:

~~we will~~

"Many times I have stated we will never accept a coalition government under any form. We accept former combattants from the other side who lay down their ~~arms~~ weapons and who come back to be law-abiding citizens. They will have the full rights of Vietnamese citizens. There are already 75,000 who ~~are~~ accept to do so, because they have seen clearly the bright future of the Vietnamese people. I hope the others still on the other side can soon follow them as soon as possible for their highest interest of their country."

--more reuter



zczo sag

yy ljp

thieu ~~14~~ (normass/deepe)

As the world waits for word from Hanoi--and dangles  
in a ~~pinwheel~~ like an historic pendu pendulum--only President Thieu,  
of all the ~~combatt~~ <sup>LEADERS</sup> ~~combattant~~ has voiced <sup>thus far</sup> a straight-line, if not  
not a lone, lonely, course, <sup>towards a VANISHING</sup> ~~of a fleeting hope for victory.~~

(Hank: Appreciate time check on if you're getting my copy  
earlier enough. We have so many briefings, I'm filing later than usual.  
Your urgent cable about british reaction arrived here noontime. Officially,  
British reaction regarding President's <sup>Refusing</sup> ~~not accepting~~ renomination:  
"This is an American affair." Embassy has had not guidance or instructions  
from London on <sup>his</sup> ~~his~~ and are playing it very cozy and discreet until  
they do because of co-chairman <sup>position</sup> ~~position~~ with Russia. Like everyone here,  
British a British also surprised and flabbergasted, I've cancelled  
my ~~refugee~~ refugee zeepager idea, but still planning to go to  
Bien Hoa over ~~weekend~~ weekend. Regards Bev).

= = END Renter.