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VERSAILLES CONGRESS HAILED; U.S. POSTPONEMENT OF TALKS SCORED

VIETNAMESE
COMMUNISTS

Hanoi gave prompt and substantial publicity to the World Assembly for Peace and Independence of the Indochinese Peoples held in Versailles from 11 to 13 February, with Premier Pham Van Dong's greetings to the conclave released on the opening day. A QUAN DOI NHAN DAN commentary on the 12th and a NHAN DAN editorial on the 14th welcomed the gathering as strengthening support for the Indochinese struggle. In addition to speeches by the Indochinese delegates, Hanoi carried lengthy accounts of remarks by the U.S. delegation.

In a departure from its past practice with respect to such peace conclaves, Hanoi announced the arrival of its delegate in Paris before the sessions opened. On 9 February VNA reported that the Indochinese delegations had arrived on the 7th--the DRV's led by Hoang Quoc Viet, the NFLSV's by Dang Quang Minh, the Pathet Lao's by General Singkapo Chounlamany, and the RGNUC's by Thiounn Prasith. VNA observed on the 12th that 1,200 delegates from more than 75 countries were present and that the U.S. delegation was "nearly 100 strong."

The tone was set by Premier Pham Van Dong's greetings message, in which he described the conference as "a new manifestation of the ever broader and stronger international support for the hard but certainly victorious struggle of the three Indochinese peoples." Dong repeated the line that the so-called 'eight-point peace plan' disclosed in the President's 25 January speech is an effort to hoodwink public opinion in an election year.

Dong rejected the U.S. plan in standard terms, as designed to pursue Vietnamization, although he did not specify the details of the plan. The resolution adopted by the assembly, on the other hand, explicitly castigated the President's offer of a troop withdrawal and presidential elections in South Vietnam six months after an agreement, with President Thieu having resigned a month before the elections. Dong, in endorsing the PRG position, spelled out in full the 2 February elaboration calling on the United States to set a date for withdrawal and for President Thieu to resign immediately. The premier also duly endorsed peace proposals by the Pathet Lao and Sihanouk's government, and the assembly resolution registered support for the communist stands on settlement in all three Indochinese countries.

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The DRV and PRG delegations in Paris both issued statements on 10 February which "strongly criticized" the U.S. delegation for unilaterally postponing the 17 February session "under the absurd pretext that the Versailles World Assembly for Peace and Independence of the Indochinese Peoples is 'incompatible with the purposes of the Paris conference.'" But oddly, while the PRG statement was promptly reported by VNA and by the Hanoi radio and press, the only known Hanoi publicity for the DRV's statement came belatedly in a single broadcast on the 13th.

The PRG statement declared that the postponement "proves that the Nixon Administration does not want to seriously negotiate." It charged that the U.S. Paris delegation, in branding the representatives of more than 80 countries as a "claque" and a "horde of agitators," has "shown an intolerable contemptuous attitude toward peace- and justice-loving opinion the world over" and has demonstrated "U.S. fright in face of the ever stronger world condemnation" of the President for professing to desire peace while prolonging the war and sabotaging the talks.

The DRV statement also saw the postponement as evidence of the Nixon Administration's "fear of public opinion" and asserted that the assembly "is only aimed at voicing the truth" about the war. Unlike the PRG statement, the DRV's recalled the "three unilateral postponements" by the U.S. delegation during December when the Nixon Administration "intensified" the bombing of the North and war activities in South Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia. It asserted that the United States now "repeats this maneuver in the hope of undermining" the talks while intensifying military activities, stepping up Vietnamization, strengthening the air war, sending additional carriers to the Tonkin Gulf, and increasing the number of B-52's in Indochina.

Other Hanoi propaganda scoring the postponement of the Paris session included a Hanoi radio commentary on the 11th on stepped-up U.S. air strikes and military preparation and a QUAN DOI NHAN DAN commentary on the 12th pegged to the Versailles gathering. A Hanoi broadcast on the 13th reported that the U.S. delegation at Versailles issued a statement condemning Ambassador Porter's attitude and noted that members of the U.S. delegation and another group from the assembly went to the U.S. Embassy to protest Porter's action.