'The Americans betrayed us' from Der Spiegel (10 December 1979)

Caption: In an interview in December 1979 with German weekly Der Spiegel, Nguyen van Thieu, former President of South Vietnam, comments on the content of the memoirs of Henry Kissinger, former US Secretary of State, with regard to the Vietnam War.

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‘The Americans betrayed us’

Former South Vietnam President Nguyen Van Thieu on Kissinger’s memoirs and the Vietnam War

SPIEGEL:

Mr Thieu, for five years, from 1968 to 1973, the United States tried to negotiate peace for Vietnam. In his memoirs, America’s chief negotiator, Henry Kissinger, describes at length how you, as President of South Vietnam, undermined his efforts to bring peace in a war that had lasted for many years, cost millions of lives and, in his words, seemed destined to ‘break America’s heart’. Why were you obstructive?

THIEU:

That is complete nonsense. If I had been obstructive, there would have been no peace settlement in 1973 — although, as everyone knows, it was not a good peace, witness the consequences of the peace in Vietnam. Kissinger represented the policy and interests of the American Administration. As President of Vietnam, I had the task of defending my country’s vital national interests.

I frequently pointed out to President Nixon and to Dr Kissinger that abandoning a few unimportant positions in a little country like Vietnam might not mean very much to a great power like the United States. But for us, it was a matter of life and death for the entire nation.

SPIEGEL:

Kissinger does not deny that you eventually agreed to the peace settlement. But he does say that the main reason why it took so long was that you were so obstructive and the real reason why you never challenged America’s proposals was that you calculated that all of them would be rejected by Hanoi.

THIEU:

That is not true. It takes more than just two or three days, or two or three months, to end a war that has been going on for almost 30 years. I realise that this war, in which the United States had come to our aid, was the longest in its history. Perhaps that is why the Americans were in such a hurry. We, however, needed a lasting peace.

SPIEGEL:

Kissinger suggests that you did not really want a peace settlement and that you hoped that the North Vietnamese would be as stubborn as you were. He claims that it was for that reason that you agreed to many American proposals but never intended to abide by them because, at all events, you did not believe that an agreement would be reached. Did you bluff during the negotiations in the hope that you would never have to put your cards on the table?

THIEU:

No. A nation that had suffered so much over more than 30 years cannot be accused of seeking to protract the war. Kissinger wanted to move quickly so that US troops could be withdrawn and American prisoners of war released. And perhaps the US Administration also intended to get out in a hurry, to ‘cut and run’.

They could get out. We had to stay in South Vietnam.

We had every right to demand a comprehensive peace settlement — not just two or three years of peace and then another 30 years of war.

SPIEGEL:

So why did you anticipate the Americans, as Kissinger reports, by proposing the withdrawal of US troops yourself, at the meeting on Midway in the Pacific in June 1969?

THIEU:

Even before the meeting on Midway it was no secret that the US Administration intended to withdraw its troops. May I remind you that news of the plan to withdraw some US troops had been reported worldwide before the Midway meeting? Why? I suppose that the US Administration wanted to fly a kite, leak the story to the press and present us with a *fait accompli*.

SPIEGEL:

So you were already in the picture?

THIEU:

Yes. The Midway meeting served two purposes. It gave the two new Presidents an opportunity to get to know each other and discuss Vietnam. The second, clearly defined item on the agenda was the initial withdrawal of American troops. I was under no illusions, and I had a clear grasp of the situation. There was nothing to worry about, and I felt very confident.

SPIEGEL:

When you proposed the troop withdrawal, did you really believe that you could conduct and, eventually, win the war on your own — a war that more than 540 000 American troops and the mighty US military machine had been unable to win? That is hard to believe.

THIEU:

No, I did not in fact propose it. I merely acquiesced. I agreed to the *initial* withdrawal of American troops because President Nixon told me that he had domestic problems and that the withdrawal would be purely symbolic. He had to have public opinion and Congress behind him. But I also told him that he must make sure that Hanoi did not see the initial troop withdrawal as a sign of US weakness.

SPIEGEL:

And you didn’t think that it was the beginning of a complete withdrawal?

THIEU:

No. I could imagine that it might be the first step in a move to reduce troop numbers. I could never imagine that America would leave altogether and abandon South Vietnam. I told President Nixon that the reduction should be made gradually, as and when the strike power and consolidation of the South Vietnamese army permitted — depending on the military and economic aid that would enable Vietnam to stand on its own feet.

Even more important, I suggested that he might invite Hanoi to make a similar gesture in return. The Americans entirely agreed with me about a gradual and mutual …

SPIEGEL:

… and symbolic withdrawal?

THIEU:

I realised that the Vietnam War was also causing a domestic problem in the US. And President Nixon told me that he needed a symbolic gesture to solve it.

When I was in Seoul and Taiwan the week before, I told President Park Chung Hee and President Chiang Kai-shek that I hoped that the troop reduction that I was to discuss with President Nixon in our talks on Midway would be purely symbolic. But I did point out that we could not prevent the US from withdrawing altogether if it wanted to. So it would make much more sense to ask them to withdraw gradually and, at the same time, provide aid to enable us to build up a strong, modern South Vietnamese army to replace the Americans. I never supposed that US troops would stay in Vietnam for ever.

SPIEGEL:

American troops stayed in South Korea and West Germany.

THIEU:

But we are a very proud people. We told them that we needed aid and weapons but that we had plenty of blood in our veins and plenty of men.

SPIEGEL:

How would you describe your situation at that time? Only a few months earlier, the US Defense Secretary, Melvin Laird, had coined a new term: 'Vietnamisation'. The Americans had previously spoken of 'de-Americanising' the war. Didn't this new term alone make it clear that America intended to withdraw quite quickly?

THIEU:

When Mr Nixon came to Saigon in July 1969, he repeated that he had to have the American public behind him. I understood his position. But he never explained that withdrawal meant reductions on a systematic timetable and at America's initiative. He spoke only of his domestic difficulties in the United States and asked me to help him. He said: 'Help us to help you.' I replied: 'I will help you to help us.' At that meeting, we again spoke of gradual withdrawal.

SPIEGEL:

But not a definite timetable?

THIEU:

No. And Mr Nixon again promised that any withdrawal would be matched by similar measures on the part of North Vietnam, would be consistent with South Vietnam's defence capability and would be accompanied by further military and economic aid to South Vietnam.

SPIEGEL:

Did you realise at the time that America had already decided on unilateral withdrawal, if necessary?

THIEU:

Yes, I suspected it. But at that time I was still very confident and trusted our great ally.

SPIEGEL:

Perhaps you were right to do so. It is fairly clear from Kissinger's book that the Nixon Administration could not simply 'walk away from an operation involving two administrations, five allied countries and thirty-one thousand dead as if we were switching a television channel'.

The Americans clearly wanted a way out of Vietnam by negotiation. They did not want to withdraw unilaterally unless they had to. Did you make any demands in regard to the negotiations between Washington and Hanoi?

THIEU:

We had had enough of the war, and we were determined to end it by negotiation. We demanded that the forces that had invaded our country must withdraw, that was all.

SPIEGEL:

You have complained that South Vietnam's collapse in 1975 was attributable mainly to the fact that North Vietnamese troops were allowed to remain in the South even after the Paris Peace Agreement had been signed. You claim that you tolerated their presence only while the agreement was being negotiated and that they ought to have withdrawn once the negotiations were concluded.

But Kissinger claims in his book that you were well aware that the North Vietnamese would remain in the South and that you raised no objections to the American proposals on the subject until October 1972.

THIEU:

It is a most unmannerly lie on Kissinger's part to say that I agreed to North Vietnamese troops remaining in the South. If I had agreed from the beginning, as Kissinger claims, I would not have objected so strongly when he showed me the draft agreement, which included nothing about the withdrawal of North Vietnamese troops.

That was the most important point that I was fighting for, throughout the peace negotiations. Right to the very end, I asked Kissinger to demand that Hanoi withdraw its troops and made it clear to him that there would be no agreement unless it did so.

After days of heated discussion, Kissinger finally confessed to me: 'Mr President, it cannot be done. If it could be done, I would have done it. The question was raised three years ago, but Russia would not have it.' I then realised that the American Administration had yielded to Russian demands, and that was my greatest disappointment.

SPIEGEL:

Perhaps the Russians had no alternative, since the North Vietnamese refused to regard South Vietnam as a foreign country and, for a time, even denied that it had any regular troops in the country.

THIEU:

We were at war for more than 20 years, and we learned never to believe what Russia and North Vietnam said. North Vietnam had troops in Laos and Cambodia and South Vietnam, and I thought that even a blind man could have seen that. To end the war, we had to look at the facts and not listen to what the enemy was saying.

SPIEGEL:

Did you put these points to Kissinger?

THIEU:

Certainly, and also to General Haig. I asked him: ‘General Haig, you are a general and I am a general. Do you know of any peace treaty in history that allowed enemy forces to remain in the country that they had invaded?’ I asked him: ‘Would you let Russian troops remain in the United States and say you had reached a peace settlement with Russia?’

SPIEGEL:

What did he say?

THIEU:

He didn’t say anything. How could he — it was so absurd. What could he say?

SPIEGEL:

Kissinger gives an answer in his book. He says that the North Vietnamese could not very well be made to withdraw their troops, as Hanoi would not yield at the conference table what it had not been forced to give up on the battlefield. But he adds that the Paris Agreement included a clause prohibiting further infiltration and concludes that: ‘this would cause the North Vietnamese forces in the South to atrophy owing to natural attrition.’

THIEU:

When it comes to negotiating with Communists, it seems to me that the US Administration, and Dr Kissinger in particular, have learned absolutely nothing from France’s unhappy experiences with the Communists in 1954 or from the Korean War. They have learned nothing from the negotiations on Laos and Cambodia. They do not know how to deal with Communists or how to interpret their strategy and tactics.

So we come back to the problem of how Dr Kissinger, who represented a great nation and boasted that he was its best negotiator, could think that North Vietnamese troops would not infiltrate South Vietnam. How could he think that?

Could he keep a watch on every inch of the frontiers between Cambodia and Laos and South Vietnam? Even if we had had a million international monitors, we could never have proved that there was no infiltration. How could he believe what the North Vietnamese said. *He* might believe the Communists but *we* couldn’t. That was why I persisted in demanding that the North Vietnamese withdraw. If they really wanted peace, why did they want to stay?

SPIEGEL:

What did Kissinger say to that?

THIEU:

What could he say? What he and the American Administration actually wanted was to withdraw as quickly as possible and secure the release of the American prisoners. They told us they wanted an honourable solution, but they really wanted to be shot of the whole thing and to get out as fast as they could without being blamed by the Vietnamese and all the rest of the world for leaving us in the lurch. That was their problem.

SPIEGEL:

In his book, Kissinger writes that, immediately after the North Vietnamese Spring Offensive in 1972, the

roles seemed to be reversed. The North Vietnamese suddenly wanted to resume negotiations, while South Vietnam wanted to fight on until victory was won.

THIEU:

Absolute nonsense! What does Dr Kissinger understand by victory? North Vietnam had made war on South Vietnam. We wanted it to withdraw. Is that victory? I never demanded that the North Vietnamese be regarded as prisoners of war in South Vietnam. I never demanded that North Vietnam pay reparations for war damage. I never demanded that North Vietnam make territorial concessions. I never demanded seats in the government in Hanoi. So what does Kissinger understand by victory and total victory?

SPIEGEL:

On the issue of North Vietnamese withdrawal, 31 May 1971 is an important date. According to Kissinger, it was at that point in their secret talks that the Americans gave up the demand for mutual withdrawal. Dr Kissinger states at least three times in his book not only that you had been informed of this in advance but also that you had agreed.

THIEU:

I never agreed to unilateral withdrawal. After the Midway meeting, I always demanded gradual and mutual withdrawal. The US changed its position and employed its usual tactics in an attempt to force us to acquiesce — holding the Sword of Damocles over my head, citing public opinion in the US with remarks such as: ‘You have a very bad image in the US now!’ Or: ‘Congress will cut off aid.’ And so on. They used the same old tactics, leaking stories to the press and presenting me with a *fait accompli*.

If I refused, public opinion would turn against me: ‘He is demanding too much, he will never let the US withdraw, he will never let the American prisoners return home.’ So I always had to give in. Not willingly, but unwillingly. How could I resist, when they constantly said: ‘Your aid will be cut if you don’t play ball.’

SPIEGEL:

Kissinger says that you were always consulted in advance about every American decision, of whatever kind.

THIEU:

Yes, they consulted me, but they certainly didn’t want to hear me say ‘no’ when the decisions in question served American interests. In most cases, however, pressure got them almost everything they wanted.

SPIEGEL:

Kissinger is now bitterly critical of the 1971 Laos offensive. He says you thought a dry-season offensive was imperative. So whose idea was it, originally?

THIEU:

Theirs. We had wanted to mount such an offensive once, long before, but we could not do it alone. Now that the Americans proposed it, we gladly agreed in order to end the war more quickly. It was a joint Vietnamese-American operation, with very clearly defined roles: South Vietnamese troops were to conduct the operation in Laos, and US troops were to get supplies out of Vietnam and from the border to the theatre of operations.

SPIEGEL:

Why? Because the US Congress had expressly forbidden American troops to enter Laotian territory.

THIEU:

So I believe. But also because we had not the means to get supplies to our troops and, most important, to fly out our wounded. That could only be done by helicopter, and the Americans were the only ones with enough helicopters. Without them, we would never have agreed to conduct the operation in Laos.

SPIEGEL:

Kissinger says that your troops had problems in presenting requests for air support because Vietnamese units had practically no trained ground controllers who could speak English.

THIEU:

There were absolutely no problems with air support. It did not worry us if we occasionally had no air support; we had our artillery. The problem was that the Americans lost a great many helicopter pilots in the first three days of the operation. They were consequently reluctant to continue taking off on schedule and in the necessary numbers. That became a great problem for the South Vietnamese troops.

SPIEGEL:

Did morale break down?

THIEU:

We could not fly our dead and wounded out. That affected not only morale but also the conduct of the operation.

SPIEGEL:

Kissinger suggests a different reason why the operation failed. He says that you had ordered your commanders to be careful in moving west and to stop the operation altogether as soon as they had suffered 3 000 casualties. Kissinger claims that the Americans would never have approved the plan had such a restriction been communicated to them.

THIEU:

To a military man, the idea of setting a limit on casualties in advance is absurd. Dr Kissinger is being very imaginative when he says that. We could only move west as far as the evacuation helicopters could fly. Kissinger claims that we withdrew our troops without informing the Americans. How could we have withdrawn more than 10 000 men without the Americans noticing?

SPIEGEL:

So you did inform them?

THIEU:

Oh yes. And let me tell you a story. A picture of a South Vietnamese soldier clinging to the landing gear of a helicopter was published in *Time* or *Newsweek* at the time, with the caption ‘rabbit’. I just smiled. I found it appalling. One isolated soldier cannot be prevented from doing something like that. But the press was branding South Vietnamese troops as rabbits and, at the same time, completely suppressing the truth about the American helicopter pilots’ lack of fighting spirit in this operation.

SPIEGEL:

One serious bone of contention between the Americans and the South Vietnamese was the cease-fire. According to Kissinger, the US Administration had decided as early as summer 1970 to propose a cease-fire on the existing front lines. Kissinger claims that you not only agreed but approved it.

THIEU:

That is true. I also took the view that a cease-fire was an essential first step towards fulfilling the obligations of a peace agreement. But, on the question of an immediate — and I repeat: immediate — cease-fire, I never agreed with Kissinger. I said that we must consider it very carefully. A cease-fire could not be declared until there had been some careful thought about who was to monitor it, what was to happen in the event of a violation, where the troops were to be stationed, and so on.

SPIEGEL:

Kissinger writes: ‘We still thought we were operating in tandem with Thieu.’ The Americans did not grasp that you were applying to them the ‘elusive tactics Vietnamese reserve for foreigners’.

THIEU:

It never occurred to us that a small country like ours — which owed almost everything to a great ally and which was still asking for long-term aid — could play any tricks.

SPIEGEL:

But you must have thought the war was finally lost when the Americans withdrew and the North Vietnamese were allowed to keep their troops in South Vietnam?

THIEU:

Not necessarily, if we had only continued to receive enough aid from the United States, as the US Administration had promised when we signed the agreement. Even as we signed the agreement, I thought it was a *drôle de paix* — a phoney peace.

But we still believed that we could resist any North Vietnamese aggression, should they violate the terms of the peace settlement. We had two grounds for this belief: first, we had a written assurance from President Nixon that the USA would respond with full force should the settlement be violated.

SPIEGEL:

Although he never said how.

THIEU:

Second, we were to receive adequate military and economic aid for as long as we needed it to resist North Vietnamese aggression. Had the US Administration kept that promise, the war might still be going on, but the North Vietnamese would not have overrun South Vietnam.

SPIEGEL:

You and Kissinger are more or less agreed on this point. He writes that the whole strategy might have succeeded if the Americans had been in a position to act on every violation of the peace settlement by the North Vietnamese and to continue to provide South Vietnam with enough aid. What went wrong? Kissinger blames Watergate and the erosion of executive authority. Do you think that Watergate was really responsible for the debacle?

THIEU:

I am sorry, but I am not an American. It is not my business to clean up their front yard. But, if they had kept their promise, that would have been the best deterrent against further aggression on the part of the North Vietnamese and might have ended the war.

SPIEGEL:

If the USA had kept its promise, do you think that the agreement might have led to a successful outcome overall?

THIEU:

I believe it could.

SPIEGEL:

So, on the whole, the Paris Agreement was not so bad?

THIEU:

It was certainly not a good agreement for us. It was phoney. But it was a last resort. You must understand that we only signed because — as I have explained — we had an assurance from the American Administration and because the Agreement was guaranteed by twelve States and the United Nations.

SPIEGEL:

Dr Kissinger makes caustic comments in his book about a great many leading politicians. But he seems to have reserved his most withering scorn for you. Although he admires your ‘intelligence’, your ‘courage’ and your ‘cultural background’, he dwells at length on your ‘outrageous conduct’, your ‘insolence’, your ‘ruthless egotism’ and your ‘egregious, almost maniacal tactics’ in dealings with the Americans. These, he says, managed to generate in him ‘that impotent rage by which the Vietnamese have always tormented physically stronger opponents’. What do you say to all these labels in Kissinger’s memoirs?

THIEU:

I would rather not answer. I would rather not talk about him. He can think what he likes about me, good or ill. I would rather talk about what really happened between the United States and South Vietnam.

SPIEGEL:

Did you perhaps give him reason to write about you in this disparaging way?

THIEU:

Perhaps he was surprised at having to deal with people who were so intelligent and so capable. Perhaps it also has something to do with the superiority complex of a very vainglorious man. Perhaps he cannot believe that a Vietnamese interlocutor is equal to engaging with a man who thinks he is so important.

Let me tell you another story: I was amused on Midway because I could never have imagined that people like that would be so shabby. On that occasion, Mr Nixon, Mr Kissinger, my assistant and I met in the US naval commander’s house. There were three low chairs and one higher chair. Mr Nixon sat on the higher chair.

SPIEGEL:

Just like Chaplin's film 'The Great Dictator'? In that case, Hitler sat on a high chair so that he could look down on Mussolini sitting on a lower one.

THIEU:

But I fetched another, equally high, chair for myself from the dining recess, so as to be on a level with Nixon. After the Midway meeting, I heard from my American friends that Kissinger had never expected President Thieu to be the man he is.

SPIEGEL:

Kissinger complains in his book that you treated him badly in your personal dealings; that you missed appointments to go waterskiing. Nixon went even further. According to Kissinger, he called you a 'son-of-a-bitch' and said: 'Brutality is nothing. You have never seen it if this … doesn't go along'.

THIEU:

I am sorry, but I have nothing to say about that. I was well brought up, and I must decline to reply to such unseemly or vulgar remarks.

If I did not receive Dr Kissinger and Ambassador Bunker, it was simply because we had not yet reached a point where we could continue the talks with them. They had taken four years, so why should I be forced to give my answer in an hour. If the Americans can take their time, why shouldn't I? It would have suited them if we had been yes-men. But I am not a yes-man, and the South Vietnamese are not a nation of yes-men; our Congress is not a Congress of yes-men. I have to consult them.

SPIEGEL:

Dr Kissinger writes that your attitude towards him was ultimately determined by 'venomous hatred'.

THIEU:

No. I was just defending my country's interests. There were certainly some heated discussions, but my attitude was always governed by patriotic motives.

SPIEGEL:

Kissinger writes that he had some understanding for the 'near impossible position' in which you found yourself. Did you detect any signs of that understanding?

THIEU:

No. All I detected was pressure from the US Administration.

SPIEGEL:

Kissinger writes that you never engaged in a conceptual discussion. He says that you 'fought in the Vietnamese manner: indirectly, elliptically, by methods designed to exhaust rather than clarify, constantly needling but never addressing the real issue'.

THIEU:

Put yourself in my place. I agreed from the beginning that the US Administration should engage in secret

talks with Hanoi. Kissinger says that I was always kept informed. Yes, I was informed — I was told what he chose to tell me. But I trusted my ally never to deceive me, make deals over my head and secretly sell my country out.

But, can you imagine, only four days before he left for North Vietnam in October 1972, he presented me with the draft agreement that was to be initialled in Paris, in English? We had to consider the draft in English, point by point.

And the draft had not been produced by the South Vietnamese and the US but by the North Vietnamese and the US. Can you imagine that? The logical course would have been for the South Vietnamese and the Americans to agree on the conditions for a peace settlement first and for Kissinger then to come back to us if the North Vietnamese put forward any counter-proposals. He did not do that.

Instead, he drafted the terms of the agreement jointly with the North Vietnamese and presented them to me in English. This was the peace agreement that would decide our fate. Can you imagine how I felt when we could not even see the text in our own language?

SPIEGEL:

But you eventually received a Vietnamese version?

THIEU:

We insisted and insisted and insisted, and then, at the last minute, he agreed, though certainly unwillingly. And then we found numerous pitfalls. I asked Ambassador Bunker and Dr Kissinger: ‘Who produced the Vietnamese text?’ They replied: ‘A very capable American from the International Linguistics College in the United States, in collaboration with the North Vietnamese.’ But no American can understand and write Vietnamese better than a Vietnamese. And no American can deal with the Vietnamese Communists in the Vietnamese language better than we can. Was that honourable and upright conduct on the part of an ally?

SPIEGEL:

Senior government officials in the USA are said to have thought at one time that all Kissinger sought was a decent interval between American withdrawal and a final collapse of Saigon. Kissinger says in his book that that is not correct. What do you think?

THIEU:

Whatever the Americans say, I am convinced that the US Administration’s final aim was a coalition government in South Vietnam.

SPIEGEL:

Kissinger produces a great deal of evidence to show that that was not the case.

THIEU:

The American Administration tried to force us to agree to it. If we had, they could have prided themselves on getting shot of the whole thing with an ‘honourable agreement’. They could have told their people at home: ‘We are withdrawing our troops, and we are securing the release of our prisoners’. And they could have told the rest of the world: ‘We have brought peace to South Vietnam. Now it is up to the South Vietnamese. If a coalition government turns out to be Communist-dominated, that is their problem. We have reached an honourable solution.’

SPIEGEL:

Kissinger writes: ‘We had one principle in the negotiations: America does not betray its friends.’

THIEU:

Well, look at the position today in South Vietnam, in Cambodia, all over Indo-China. When we discussed the peace agreement with representatives of the American Administration, we often had the impression that they were not only playing the devil’s advocate, they really were the devil’s advocate in action.

SPIEGEL:

Did you ever feel any kind of gratitude for what the Americans did to help your country? Kissinger says in his book: ‘Appreciation for services rendered is not a Vietnamese trait.’

THIEU (laughing):

With regard to what Kissinger writes in his book, I think that only a man with a twisted spirit could imagine such a thing — only a man with an awkward temper. He implies in his book that he was afraid that the Vietnamese might take revenge on Americans who stayed behind after Washington had abandoned us. We would never do such a thing — not now, not ever.

SPIEGEL:

Did you personally feel any kind of gratitude?

THIEU:

I can honestly say that, if the American Administration had not betrayed us and stabbed us in the back, the Vietnamese people would have been eternally grateful. Once, after we had had a heated discussion with Kissinger about the wording of the peace settlement, some members of my government said it would have been a lucky day for us if Kissinger had done as much for South Vietnam as he had for North Vietnam. I told them that if he could negotiate a genuine peace with the North Vietnamese, he could have his own monument in South Vietnam just like the statue of MacArthur in Korea. Unfortunately it did not turn out that way.

In view of the consequences of the peace, I think that it is best that the Americans themselves judge what Mr Nixon and Mr Kissinger have done to South Vietnam: concentration camps, famine, torture, thousands of boat people lost in the Pacific Ocean and a genocide that is far more terrible, more planned and systematic than the genocide in Cambodia. Kissinger has no reason to be proud of the peace that he has brought. It is the peace of the grave.

SPIEGEL:

Thank you, Mr Thieu, for talking to us.