

February 2, 1973

Discussion between Zhou Enlai and Pen Nouth

Citation:

"Discussion between Zhou Enlai and Pen Nouth", February 2, 1973, Wilson Center Digital Archive, CWIHP Working Paper 22, "77 Conversations."
<https://digitalarchive.umd.edu/document/113120>

Summary:

Zhou Enlai reads a statement from Mao Zedong expressing approval of the US withdrawal.

Original Language:

Chinese

Contents:

Translation - English

ZHOU ENLAI AND PEN NOUTH[1]

Beijing, 4:50 pm, 2 February 1973

Zhou Enlai: Chairman Mao said: It is good that the Vietnamese-American agreement lets the American troops leave Vietnam. This agreement is a success. After the withdrawal of American troops, including American naval, air, and land forces, and after the withdrawal of American military bases, it is easy to deal with Nguyen Van Thieu. The troops of the allies [of the Saigon regime] will all leave. For example, the troops of South Korea have begun to leave. Why does the United States do this? For the purpose of getting out. It has dispatched so many troops to Indochina, and spent so much money there, and the problem has not been solved. And new problems emerge continuously. Finally the agreement has been reached. While the American troops will leave, the agreement does not formally and openly ask the North Vietnamese troops to leave. Nguyen Van Thieu made a really loud noise against the United States. It was because of Nguyen Van Thieu's opposition that the agreement was not signed last October. Of course, the rightists in the United States do not favor the agreement either. In addition, the Pentagon wants to ship ammunition and weapons to South Vietnam, and, with the signing of the agreement, the shipping will become impossible. Therefore, the signing of the agreement was delayed, and a large amount of ammunition was transported to South Vietnam. But Nguyen Van Thieu was not in a position to know how to use it. [North] Vietnam does not recognize its troops to be foreign troops. At this point, the United States made concessions. If there had not been victories on the battlefield, there would not have been gains at the negotiation table.

[1] Pen Nouth (1906-?) was Sihanouk's closest political adviser, serving as prime minister 1948-49, 1952-55, 1958, 1961-62, and 1967-69. He also headed the Royal Government of National Union, set up in Beijing in May 1970, and greeted Sihanouk when he returned to Cambodia in 1975.