

August 3, 1974

Discussion between Zhou Enlai and Le Thanh Nghi

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ZHOU ENLAI AND LE THANH NGHI

Beijing, 10 p.m., 3 August 1974

Zhou Enlai: In actuality, I have been sick for more than two years. This time I have been hospitalized since June 1. After attending the state banquet in honor of Prime Minister Razak^[1] [of Malaysia] on May 31 I have been hospitalized. My illness is probably much more complicated than Comrade Pham Van Dong's [illness] two years ago. If my illness were like his, I would probably need only two days' sleep to recover.^[2]

...

Since the beginning of your patriotic war to resist America, we have always placed the support to Vietnam as the top priority in our foreign aid affairs. We are still doing so today. Some of our aid is in the form of loans, but the majority is given gratis. The total monetary value of our economic and military support to Vietnam is equal to 48% of the whole of our foreign aid. When you are fighting a war, if we fail to support you, we disqualify ourselves as true proletarian internationalists. Under the leadership of Chairman Mao and our Party's Central Committee, I have fulfilled my duty as far as handling the support to Vietnam is concerned. Now, I am not in good health, and Comrade Li Xiannian is to take over this duty.^[3]

^[1] Tun Haji Abdul Razak bin Hussein (1922-76), prime minister of Malaysia 1970-76.

^[2] Premier Zhou Enlai was diagnosed with cancer in 1973.

^[3] In Beijing, on 18 April 1975, Mao Zedong commented further to Kim Il Sung on the health situation in the Chinese leadership:

"Comrade Dong Biwu has passed away. The Premier [Zhou Enlai] is sick. Comrades Kang Sheng and Liu Bocheng are also sick. I am sick too. This year I am 82 years old. I cannot hold on for very long. We will be depending upon you. I am not going to discuss politics [with you], but he will. [Mao points to Deng Xiaoping] His name is Deng Xiaoping. He knows how to fight a battle; he also knows how to fight against revisionism. The Red Guards purged him, but he is fine now. In those years several [of our leaders] were purged, and they have been rehabilitated now. We need them."