

April 7, 1967

**Discussion between Zhou Enlai, Pham Van Dong and
Vo Nguyen Giap (2), 3:30 - 6:30 pm**

Citation:

"Discussion between Zhou Enlai, Pham Van Dong and Vo Nguyen Giap (2), 3:30 - 6:30 pm", April 7, 1967, Wilson Center Digital Archive, CWIHP Working Paper 22, "77 Conversations." <https://wilson-center.drivingcreative.com/document/113075>

Summary:

Zhou Enlai reinforces his and China's commitment to the war in Vietnam, even though he is almost seventy years old.

Original Language:

Chinese

Contents:

Translation - English

ZHOU ENLAI AND PHAM VAN DONG, VO NGUYEN GIAP

Beijing, 3:30-6:30 p.m., 7 April 1967^[1]

Pham Van Dong: Some of the strategies we are adopting on the battlefield in South Vietnam follow what you suggested to us in the past. This demonstrates that our military strategies, as well as yours, are correct, and there are also new developments.

Zhou Enlai: Not only have your strategies had new developments, but also new creations. The latecomers become the first. This is what the Chairman has said. I have written a few words for you: The latecomers become the first. ... We have not fought a war for 14 years. All three of us are old. I am almost seventy. Comrade Ye Jianying^[2] is seventy. Comrade Chen Yi is sixty-seven. We still want to fight, but we do not have much time left.

Ye Jianying: This is the rule of the nature.

Zhou Enlai: Although I am old, my ambition is still there. If the war in the South does not end next year, I will visit you and look around.

Ye Jianying: The old horse in the stable is still dreaming of heroic exploits; the heart of a hero in his old age is as stout as ever.

Zhou Enlai: Chairman Mao quoted these [words] from a poem by Cao Cao^[3] in a letter to Comrade Wang Guanlan.^[4] A historical figure during the feudal age still had his aspirations, how about us proletarians?

^[1] This was the fourth meeting between the Chinese and the Vietnamese delegations. Vo Nguyen Giap started the meeting with continuing to introduce the military situation in North and South Vietnam and Vietnam's strategies.

^[2] Ye Jianying was vice chairman of the CCP Central Military Commission and a member of the CCP Politburo.

^[3] Cao Cao was a politician and warlord during China's Three Kingdom period (second to third century, AD).

^[4] Wang Guanlan was vice minister of agriculture and deputy head of the Rural Affairs Department of the CCP Central Committee. He suffered from chronic sickness in the 1950s and early 1960s, and Mao wrote a letter to advise him to be patient in dealing with his illness.