

February 21, 1969

**V.A. Zorin, Memorandum of Conversation with the
head of the DRV delegation and the head of NLFSV
delegation at the Paris negotiations**

Citation:

"V.A. Zorin, Memorandum of Conversation with the head of the DRV delegation and the head of NLFSV delegation at the Paris negotiations", February 21, 1969, Wilson Center Digital Archive, SCCD, F.5, Op. 61, D.460, LI. 56-60. Translated by Mark H. Doctoroff.
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Summary:

Zorin, the USSR ambassador to France, summarizes a meeting in Paris in February 1969 with representatives of North Vietnam and the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam (NLFSV) to discuss the on-going peace negotiations with the United States. Xuan Thuy and the head of the NLFSV delegation Comrade Tran Buu Kiem

Credits:

This document was made possible with support from Leon Levy Foundation

Original Language:

Russian

Contents:

Translation - English

FROM THE DAYBOOK OF ZORIN, V.A.

Secret, Copy # 2

"28" February 1969

Initial #203

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

with the head of the DRV delegation Comrade Xuan Thuy and the head of the NLFSV delegation Comrade Tran Buu Kiem at the Paris negotiations

21 February 1969

Today I visited the residence of the DRV delegation, where a talk with Comrades Xuan Thuy and Tran Buu Kiem took place.

1. I briefly informed the Vietnamese comrades about the latest statements of the American representative, C. Vance, during the conversation with the Advisor-Envoy of the Embassy Comrade Oberemko, V.I. on February 15 of this year and about French perceptions, expressed by the acting head of the Asia department of the French Foreign Ministry, Delayer (sic) (without direct reference to him) during a talk with Comrade Utkin, the counselor at the Embassy, on February 18 of this year, about questions related to a settlement in Vietnam. The Vietnamese comrades thanked me for this information, which they received with great interest.

2. Referring to the fact that within the next few days I plan to pay a return visit to C. Lodge, the head of the USA delegation at the Paris negotiations, I tried to find out if my interlocutors thought we should, before President Nixon's arrival to Paris, ask C. Lodge some questions which would be interesting to the Vietnamese comrades, in order to push the U.S. toward a political settlement. I also asked if the Vietnamese comrades had any questions for the French, taking into consideration that De Gaulle is likely to discuss the Vietnamese question with R. Nixon.

In response to this, my interlocutor made the following observations:

a) Having remarked that the U.S. does not now want to consider serious issues at the negotiations, Comrade Tran Buu Kiem said that Richard Nixon is trying to strengthen the Saigon regime and its army and only then to work toward the resolution of essential questions. But the situation in South Vietnam will change and the U.S. will not realize its goals. Now the USA is taking measures to provide security in the cities. The Americans have to face new difficulties now, caused by the growth of the movement of various strata of the urban population. This movement has not only a nationalist character, but appears to be broader, with its main aim being the restoration of peace in the country, the dismissal of Nguyen van Thieu, Nguyen Cao Ky, and Tran van Huong from power, and the creation of a "Cabinet of Peace."

The delegations of the NLFSV and the DRV, he went on, have already put forward the proposals which are necessary to discuss in order to come to a political resolution of the problems, and had clearly expressed their positions on political and military issues, but the USA is trying first of all to solve military questions, to improve its position in South Vietnam in order to conduct the negotiations from a position of strength.

b) Comrade Xuan Thuy, having agreed with the ideas expressed by Comrade Tran Buu Kiem, stressed that R. Nixon, like Johnson, wants to solve the Vietnamese problem from a position of strength, and that the U.S. is continuing to strengthen the puppet regime, intending to stay in Vietnam even after its troops are withdrawn in order to carry out its neo-colonial policy, using the puppets.

The Americans don't yet have a concrete plan for settling the Vietnamese problem. The concrete suggestions which they put forward during the first meetings (I mean C. Lodge's proposal to start discussing problems connected with the demilitarized zone, withdrawal of foreign troops and exchange of prisoners of war) are aimed at talking, not at actually solving the problem, at putting off its decision. The Americans understand that if the questions which they have put forward are not resolved, they will have a chance to strengthen the Saigon regime. The USA is forcing consideration of military questions in order to put pressure on the DRV and NLFSV.

As for the position of France on the Vietnam question; the French, according to Comrade Xuan Thuy, want the USA to leave South Vietnam and France to return there, but not in the same role which it played before. Obviously the French, during their negotiations with R. Nixon, will somehow push him in this direction.

Then Comrade Xuan Thuy said that the following could be said in the talk with C. Lodge:

- The DRV and NLFSV want to solve the Vietnam problem on the basis of the achievement of true independence, not on the basis on which the U.S. wants to solve it.

- Should the U.S. continue to act from a position of strength, the Vietnamese people will not agree with this, and will go on struggling against U.S. aggression.

- If the U.S. wants to solve the Vietnam problem, it has to start talking with the NLFSV. If it doesn't happen the Vietnam problem will not be solved. So far the USA and Saigon speak only with the DRV at the negotiations, and don't want to talk with NLFSV.

- If the USA doesn't agree to a complete and unconditional withdrawal of its troops from South Vietnam and continues the war, it will suffer even greater military losses.

As for concrete questions and approaches to their decision, in the opinion of Comrades Xuan Thuy and Tran Buu Kiem the proper time to discuss them with the Americans still hasn't arrived.

3. During an exchange of opinions on certain aspects of the Vietnam problem, some questions were raised on our initiative (to find out the position of the Vietnamese comrades). These included "the Peace Cabinet," the gradual withdrawal of American troops, the elimination of American bases and the cessation of military operations.

In this respect the Vietnamese comrades expressed the following ideas:

a) Comrade Tran Buu Kiem explained that participants in the opposition movement to the Saigon regime treat the Thieu-Ky-Huong government as a war government, capable only of serving the war. This movement and its demands confirm the NLFSV idea about the creation of the "Cabinet of Peace;" therefore the NLFSV supports this movement. The NLFSV also supports people whom this movement puts forward as candidates to be included in the "Cabinet of Peace." These candidates are worthy people and among them there are some who formerly were connected with the Americans, but who now maintain progressive positions.

b) Comrade Xuan Thuy added that the present-day Saigon government doesn't want peace and continues the policy of support for the aggressive American war. That's why the population of Saigon and other cities, and districts occupied by the Americans, demand the overthrow of Thieu, Ky, and Huong. This is not the demand

of the DRV and NLFSV but a demand of the people, a demand coming from below, and the DRV and the NLFSV support it.

The DRV and NLFSV do not have concrete proposals regarding the creation of the "Cabinet of Peace," he went on, but we will welcome all people who will join a new government and who express the desire to conduct negotiations with the NLFSV. It would be very good if the population of South Vietnam demands that the government include NLFSV members. But if the readiness to conduct negotiations with the NLFSV is expressed, rather than a wish for the NLFSV to be represented in the "Cabinet of Peace," the DRV and NLFSV will accept it. The main task is for a national union of different strata of the population to be created in this "Cabinet of Peace," for it to include representatives of the "Union of National, Democratic and Peace-loving forces." Later, when a "Cabinet of Peace" like that has already been created, a temporary government may be created on the basis of the NLFSV political program.

c) In connection with my remark, that in order to solve military questions it might be reasonable for the DRV and NLFSV to put forward some concrete proposals—for example, on the limitation of the scale of military operations in some districts, or on the gradual withdrawal of American troops and liquidation of American bases within definite periods of time, Comrade Xuan Thuy said that the time for discussion of military questions hadn't come yet. The Americans want to conduct negotiations from a position of strength and want to use this strength. The DRV and NLFSV demand a quick, and complete—not gradual—and unconditional withdrawal of American troops. The Americans think that the power of the NLFSV and DRV has trickled away, and that they are incapable of effective actions. That's why, if the DRV and NLFSV would put forward some concrete proposals now—for example on the limitation of military actions—the Americans will interpret it as a revelation of DRV and NLFSV weakness.

In this connection Comrade Tran Buu Kiem added that "we'll fight the Americans eagerly and we believe in our strength."

Having said that this question shouldn't be mentioned in talks with Americans, Comrade Xuan Thuy said that the DRV and NLFSV delegations will discuss it and then have an exchange of opinions with the Embassy.

d) In the course of the discussion I suggested to the Vietnamese comrades that, to make the Americans talk with the NLFSV, the NLFSV delegation to the Paris negotiations could propose a concrete program—which could be supported by the DRV—based on the four and five points.

The Vietnamese comrades treated this idea with interest, and Comrade Xuan Thuy said that this suggestion will be considered by the delegations.

DRV delegation members Comrades Ha van Lau, Mai Van Bo; a member of NLFSV delegation Nguyen van Tien; Comrade Nguyen Ngoc Thuong, a colleague of the NLFSV delegation; Embassy Counselor Comrade Zelentsov, V.A.; the Second Secretary of the Embassy Goritskii, V.A. were present at the talk.

The talk was translated by Counselor Comrade Zelentsov, V.A.; the talk was recorded by the second secretary Goritskii, V.A.

The USSR Ambassador in France (signed)

V. Zorin

6 copies sent to:

1-Comrade Kozyrev, S.P.

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No. 256, February 24, 1969