

**April 25, 1965**

**Note by the East German Embassy in Hanoi on a  
Conversation with Ambassadors of the Other  
Socialist States in the Soviet Embassy on 2 April  
1965**

**Citation:**

"Note by the East German Embassy in Hanoi on a Conversation with Ambassadors of the Other Socialist States in the Soviet Embassy on 2 April 1965", April 25, 1965, Wilson Center Digital Archive, Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amtes, Bestand: Ministerium für Auswärtige Angelegenheiten (Political Archive of the Office for Foreign Affairs, Files: Ministry for Foreign Affairs; PAAA-MfAA), Berlin, Germany, VS-Hauptstelle, Microfiche G-A 331, 77-79. Translated from German by Lorenz Lüthi.  
<https://wilson-center.drivingcreative.com/document/117713>

**Summary:**

During the conversation, it is said that the United States is increasing its attacks and overall involvement in the Vietnam conflict. Additionally, Soviet Ambassador Shcherbakov tells Pham Van Dong how the Chinese continue to evade giving aid to Vietnam because they fear attack from the Americans.

**Credits:**

This document was made possible with support from Leon Levy Foundation

**Original Language:**

German

**Contents:**

Translation - English

The latest developments in Southeast Asia were deliberated in the conversation, during which Comrade [Ilya] Shcherbakov reported on some talks with leading Vietnamese comrades. He was informed by Comrade Pham Van Dong that the CC would convene, as well as the minister council and the national assembly. In that conversation he said that the situation will intensify further if the US increases its attacks, [and] that the DRV has to react. Hence developments could spin out of control. He [Pham] had already told Kosygin [in February] that the DRV has no interest in expanding the war. The struggle is carried out by the NLF, but the DRV has to support its fellow citizens in the South. In its statement, the NLF has declared its right on the struggle against the US and its right to ask for aid in other countries and to ask for volunteers.[1] The government of the DRV has not replied to this appeal. Instead, the CC of the Fatherland Front[2] of the DRV has promised its support in a statement.

It was asserted in the talk that the new aspect of the situation rests in the fact that the US increases its war material and troops in the south, and intensifies the attack. Apart from the amplification of bombing attacks, it increasingly also includes its own troops in battle action. One can say that the US participates in equal parts in the operations of the South Vietnamese government troops. New is also the statement of the NLF and its right to accept aid from all sides. At the moment, the Vietnamese comrades state that it is not yet necessary, for example, for volunteers from other countries to join in. But it is necessary that the struggle is coordinated. Vietnam is a homogenous country and the Vietnamese nation is a homogenous nation, that's why the Vietnamese have the right to carry out this war jointly and to help each other. This attitude has not been that openly stressed by the Vietnamese in the past. Cde. Shcherbakov remarked that Cde. Giap has explained in a talk that "now the raids in the South have to be increased, regardless if the US is going to increase its attacks on the DRV." Since neither the NLF nor the DRV at the moment is ready [to carry out] major actions, [because], for example, the deliveries from the Soviet Union have not yet arrived, all measures now must be decided here. The enlarged Politburo meeting, which will deal with the new situation and the tasks for the party that will derive [from it], serves this purpose. The mobilization of youth and the declaration of a state of war will be debated. The national assembly will also take the necessary decisions. The 2nd Five-Year Plan will be discussed in this context as well. On the surface, it is supposed to be kept as it is, but for the first three years it will be altered into a Three-Year Plan for defense. All means, which have been set aside for the Five-Year Plan, will be subordinated to the interests of defense. Defense is now first priority. Cde. Shcherbakov added that the Vietnamese comrades will probably approach the fraternal parties in the near future with a request for material aid. Furthermore a decision is being prepared [requiring] all South Vietnamese living in the DRV to go to the South.

The question of negotiations was estimated in the talks as follows: There are signs in the US that they attempt to establish contacts for future negotiations. Such tendencies could be seen in the speeches of [US President Lyndon] Johnson, [US Defense Secretary Robert] McNamara, and [US Secretary of State Dean] Rusk. If the Vietnamese reject contacts, one has to reckon with a broader bombing of the DRV. With each day, one can expect the bombing of Hanoi. In that respect, the bombing of military targets and transportation routes will stand in the foreground, but next industrial centers in the North could be attacked as well. The near future will determine if it is possible to establish contacts.

Thus the following situation is unfolding:

The DRV has the right to defend its motherland. The Americans see that the DRV has not yet received aid. The attacks thus unfold without impunity. The situation is growing more and more complex, and if the Vietnamese lose their head, as Comrade Shcherbakov said, "it will be difficult for us to help." If the Vietnamese make decisions, they should inform the Soviet comrades and they should consult with them

more often, so that we all know what we should do. One should expect that they speak openly, and that they don't hide their positions. Even Pham Van Dong has said only general things on the CC session and provides no concrete information. He told Pham Van Dong that the Vietnamese comrades should inform us regularly and comprehensively, so that we know which measures could be taken on our side. "They probably say more to the Chinese, who slander us [saying] that the Soviet Union pursues only its own interests with weapons deliveries, and [that the Soviet Union] wants to draw the PR China into the war." The Chinese comrades supposedly said that if they allowed the transport of supplies through the PR China, the US had a reason to attack China. When Cde. Shcherbakov told this to Pham Van Dong, the latter was completely dispirited and only shook his head. Cde. Shcherbakov told him that the Vietnamese people suffer the most from these differences in opinion. The Vietnamese had asked for weapons and the Soviet Union had been ready to help, while the Chinese refused to transport them through Chinese territory with the slander that the Soviet Union wants to subjugate the Chinese people. On the other side they claim that the Soviet Union is making a pact with the US. If it comes to a joint statement on support [for Vietnam] with the Chinese, one could talk about a new [level of cooperative] quality. Pham Van Dong replied that one had to convince the Chinese. One has to have patience. Unfortunately, the Soviet Union is far away. "What shall we do?"

Pham Van Dong did not state [that he was] against negotiations, but one needs to have guarantees that the US disappears from Vietnam. Since this is not possible, one cannot reckon with peace in the current moment. The situation of the US is difficult, and if the Vietnamese continue to fight, it will be more difficult for the US.

[1] NLF statement made on 22 March 1965. Text can be found in: Peking Review 14, 2 April 1965, 15-20.

[2] Umbrella organization uniting all pro-government mass organizations.