

**May 12, 1965**

**Note by the East German Embassy in Hanoi on a  
Joint Conversation with the Ambassadors from other  
Socialist Countries in the Hungarian Embassy on 4  
May 1965**

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**Summary:**

Soviet Ambassador Ilya Shcherbakov informs a meeting of Socialist Ambassadors of Soviet-Vietnamese talks in Moscow. He notes that the United States realizes it does not have the international support for Vietnam that it had expected, and that the Soviet Union will continue to support Vietnam in the struggle. He argues that there is still much anti-Soviet propaganda in Vietnam, which comes from the Chinese, and points out three positions of the Chinese that he does not understand.

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**Contents:**

Translation - English

Present: the ambassadors of the GDR, USSR, HPR [Hungary], MPR [Mongolia], PRP [Poland], PRB [Bulgaria]

Comrade [Ilya] Shcherbakov proposed to inform the ambassadors about the contents of the talks of the party delegation of the VWP with the Soviet comrades in Moscow.<sup>1</sup> He said the following:

After the comrades of the CPSU CC proposed some time ago in a letter to the VWP<sup>2</sup> to declare the position of the parties with regard to the Vietnam question with a trilateral declaration of the Vietnamese, Soviet, and Chinese comrades, because they [the Soviets] proceeded from the assumption that it was unlikely that all parties would agree to such a general statement in short time; the leadership of the VWP has declared its readiness for a general as well as for a trilateral meeting and statement. Le Duan especially advocated this. He expressed the opinion that one had to persuade and win over the Chinese first. At the moment, they are against multilateral, even bilateral declarations.<sup>3</sup> In the expectation that the Chinese comrades would express readiness to [sign] a bilateral declaration with the Vietnamese on the Vietnam problem, it was decided at the departure to Beijing of comrades Le Duan, Vo Nguyen Giap, and Nguyen Duy Trinh that space should be left in the central organ Nhan Dan for the bilateral declaration. No declaration was agreed upon [in Beijing]. Only then the Vietnamese comrades expressed readiness to fly a party and government delegation to Moscow, after the Soviet embassy in Beijing had been informed about this decision. In Moscow, agreements were reached, which led to [the publication of] a joint [Soviet-Vietnamese] declaration.

In these talks, the Soviet comrades emphasized the coordination of help from all socialist countries. They proceeded from the idea that the Chinese comrades have to be included as well. The Vietnamese comrades, who reported on the situation in Vietnam, explained that they were determined to lead the struggle to its victorious end with both military and political means. They hinted that they were ready for talks with the US, if the US imperialists terminated the bombing of the DRV. They were even ready for talks on South Vietnam, if the NLF would be included into the talks. The Soviet comrades supported this position, because they recognized that the Vietnamese comrades now took up a more realistic position regarding the solution of the Vietnam question.

In the talks following this report we assessed that Johnson's declaration<sup>4</sup> recently has revealed a certain retreat. Some circles in the US recognize that the continuation of the current policy of aggression can lead to serious consequences. They recognize that they don't have the unrestricted support of their allies, and that this policy meets greater and greater opposition even among those young national states that have followed the US in the past. The Vietnamese comrades see that as well. They don't condemn those states, which have signed the declaration of the 17 non-aligned countries.<sup>5</sup> Apparently they first awaited the [negative] position of the Chinese comrades, and now have to acknowledge that many leaders of these states feel disparaged because of the [negative] position of the DRV on this declaration, and express that they don't know if one can help the DRV [at all]. This situation provides the Vietnamese with food for thought.

Concerning the aid of the SU to the DRV, according to Comrade Shcherbakov's opinion it is extraordinarily comprehensive. The outfitting of the Vietnamese army costs many millions of rubles. This aid is not affected by the 100 million rubles of aid which [Politburo member] Comrade Le Thanh Nghi has requested lately. Now it is important that the military cadres learn to operate the modern weapons. In recent times, the number of Soviet military specialists has increased significantly. Furthermore, numerous [Vietnamese] military cadres traveled to the SU. But the measures taken will have no effect until fall. Due to the attitude of the Chinese and shortcomings, for which the Vietnamese are responsible, this aid will affect [the situation only] with delay. The Vietnamese relied too much on Chinese aid, but

eventually had to recognize that they could not rely on their neighbor. Now the Chinese exploit this situation and demand millions of rubles for the transit.

This development led the Vietnamese to estimate the situation in more realistic terms and to start to draw conclusions from the differences in opinion. Our [differences] with the Vietnamese started to shrink, so it is possible that things will get back to normal with the Vietnamese. But the propaganda apparatus is still completely in control of the pro-Chinese forces, which intensify their activities and at the moment spread rumors that the Soviet Union is delivering out-dated weapons. When the central organ Nhan Dan did not report adequately about the Soviet-Vietnamese negotiations, Comrade Pham Van Dong had to remind and even accuse the chief editor that he was implementing his own line, which contradicted the line of the party leadership. One also has to recognize that the Chinese render more pressure. Now, they suddenly want to increase their aid. They promise, among other things, food, consumer goods, chemical fertilizer, and electrical appliances.

In further talks it was determined that there are different reasons for our disagreements with the Chinese and with the Vietnamese. Now it is relevant to analyze these reasons. Le Duan told Comrade Kosygin that the Vietnamese comrades have waited for a long time for a high-ranking Soviet delegation. On my remark that [Soviet Presidium Chairman] Comrade Mikoyan had visited the DRV, Comrade Shcherbakov replied that at that time Mikoyan had not yet as high a function as he has now. He also hinted that Comrade Khrushchev did not pay the necessary attention to developments in Vietnam. Comrade Le Duan did not hide his dissatisfaction with the Chinese leaders in the talks. There are three questions, where he does not understand the position of the Chinese.

1st, why the Chinese reject so firmly a joint declaration of support for the struggle in Vietnam.

2nd, why they estimate the role of the national liberation movement higher than the role of the socialist camp.

3rd, why the comrades in Beijing and Tirana believe they are the only true Marxists.

In the further discussion we talked about the existing differences between the Chinese and Vietnamese opinions which should be examined even further. The following differences in opinion were determined:

The Vietnamese are against a continuation of polemics [against the Soviet Union],

they are for a joint declaration,

they are for meetings on the highest level,

they affirm the construction of communism in the USSR,

they are not against contacts between the SU and the US on a governmental level, but [insist that] one has to be careful,

they are not against contacts between the SU and Yugoslavia, but what concerns relations between the communist parties and the LCY [League of Yugoslav Communists], a conference like in 1957/1960 must decide [this question].

Comrade Shcherbakov remarked that Comrade Pham Van Dong mentioned that the

communists, in the interest of the unity of the communist world movement, must struggle bravely and decisively for the decisions of the two conferences in 1957 and 1960. One could acknowledge that the Vietnamese comrades on the basis of their complicated situation and in connection with the talks with representatives of the fraternal parties start to rethink their position. But one has to push them a little bit without hurrying them too much.

About the changes in the government [of the DRV] it was assessed that Pham Van Dong's central position was strengthened with the aim to coordinate better the organization of the struggle. Various circles had expected that [former DRV foreign minister] Comrade Ung Van Khiem would be moving into the foreground and [DRV Vice Premier] Truong Chinh would get another function. That this was not the case confirms that the pro-Chinese group still has strong positions. Comrade Truong Chinh at the moment seems to be the most pronounced representative of the Chinese line in the VWP. At the end of the 1950s, he walked down that path. The incorrect Chinese ideas in agriculture led to sectarian errors in the implementation of ground reform in Vietnam. At that time, more than a hundred rural specialists assisted him, but they disappeared from Vietnam with the replacement of Comrade Truong Chinh as party secretary.

The appointment of Comrade [DRV Foreign Minister] Nguyen Duy Trinh as foreign minister leads to speculations that Comrade Pham Van Dong wants to exercise more influence on foreign policy. After 1954, when Comrade Pham Van Dong served as foreign minister, Nguyen Duy Trinh as minister-at-large was for a long time the closest assistant to Comrade Pham Van Dong.

1. A Vietnamese delegation consisting of Le Duan, Vo Nguyen Giap, and Nguyen Duy Trinh was in Beijing on 8-10 April, in Moscow on 10-17 April, and in Beijing on 18-23 April.

2. Refers to identical letters written by the CPSU CC to the CCP CC and the VWP CC on 3 April 1965, see: SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/3610, 1-4, and AVP RF, fond 100, opis 52, delo 13, papka 220, 18-19, respectively.

3. Refers to the Chinese reply letter of 11 April 1965, see: SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/3610, 5-8.

4. Probably refers to Johnson's speech in Baltimore (7 April) when the President proposed negotiations without conditions while simultaneously pledging to defend the independence of South Vietnam.

5. 17 non-aligned countries, mostly from Africa, met in Belgrade from 14 March to 1 April 1965, demanding the start of immediate and unconditional negotiations to end the Vietnam War.