

July 8, 1966
**Telegram from East German Deputy Foreign
Minister Hegen to Ulbricht, Stoph, Honecker, and
Axen**

Citation:

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Summary:

Telegram from the GDR ambassador to China, Bierbach, assesses the Chinese position in the Vietnam conflict. He states that China aims to exacerbate the conflict for its own gain; by pushing the DRV to action in the South, it focuses its efforts in the North, with minimal risk of conflict with US troops. Specifically, Bierbach believes China is attempting to instigate a conflict between the US and the USSR.

Credits:

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German

Contents:

Translation - English

Dear comrades,

Enclosed I am sending you the copy of the telegram from our ambassador in Beijing, Comrade Bierbach, for your information.

With socialist greetings,

Hegen

Enclosure

During a stay of Comrade Ho Chi Minh in the PRC,[1] the Chinese side rejected a political solution [of the Vietnam War] and stated that this problem can only be solved by the crossing of the 17th parallel. The troops of the DRV should advance more actively into South Vietnam while Chinese troops in the DRV will be strengthened ([China] has already made preparations for [the next] four years). US aerial forays against Chinese territory are possible, but a great war on land is unlikely. The PR China in any case will be a reliable hinterland for Vietnam.

[The Chinese side continued that] the Soviet Union should attack the 7th US Fleet and other US bases with missiles. Furthermore, Comrade Ho Chi Minh was assured that the PR China will not take any steps in South Vietnam behind his back [über seinen Kopf hinweg].

Evaluating remarks:

The facts mentioned above as well as the Chinese statement of 3 July and the corresponding editorial[2] in the People's Daily [Renmin Ribao] reveal the [Chinese] effort to exacerbate the Vietnam conflict in order to exploit it for [its own aims] in foreign policy and domestic affairs.

The DRV is being pushed to [undertake] actions in the South, while the Chinese side is able to station more troops in the DRV (there is no line which delineates the war), in order to strengthen its positions in the DRV and eliminate elements [there] it does not like. [The possibility of] a direct conflict [of China] with the US also would be [thereby] eliminated. As before, a political solution of the Vietnam problem is rejected.

The principal Chinese ambition is to provoke a confrontation between the SU and the US. The Chinese leadership seems to be ready, as the most recent developments in relations between the PR China and the Soviet Union reveal, to play up border questions with the Soviet Union and to exploit the theory of "SU-US cooperation" as a justification for the prospect of lesser help for Vietnam, etc.

The Chinese declarations on aid supplies, which we consider necessary, reveal that the Chinese leadership reserves for itself any decision [that is] in its own interest.

[signed] Bierbach

[1] CCP Central Documents Research Office, ed. [Zhonggong zhongyang wenxian yanjiushi bian], A Chronicle of Zhou Enlai's Life: 1949-1976 [Zhou Enlai nianpu, 1949-1976], volume 3, 37.

[2] The Chinese condemned the US bombing of Hanoi and Haiphong on 27 and 28

June 1966, and announced that these acts would free China from any constraints to aid Vietnam. See: NYT, 4 July 1966, 1, 2.