

September 1966

Information from the Communist Party of the Soviet Union Central Committee to the Polish United Workers' Party Central Committee

Citation:

"Information from the Communist Party of the Soviet Union Central Committee to the Polish United Workers' Party Central Committee", September 1966, Wilson Center Digital Archive, Archiwum Akt Nowych (Archive of Modern Records; AAN), Warsaw, Poland, KC PZPR, XI A/81, 530-538. Translated from Russian by Lorenz Lüthi.
<https://digitalarchive.umd.edu/document/117736>

Summary:

A record of a North Vietnamese delegation to Moscow, which affirmed their belief that they would be able to defeat the Americans. They raise a request for additional supplies in 1967, and it is noted that China has continued to refuse to unite with the other socialist countries, which has complicated matters.

Credits:

This document was made possible with support from Leon Levy Foundation

Original Language:

Russian

Contents:

Translation - English

Information[1]

On an especially entrusted order, [we hereby] inform [you] that, on the invitation of the CPSU CC and the Soviet government of the Soviet Union, a party-government delegation of the DRV, which arrived in the following composition, was [in Moscow] from 10 to 16 August of this year: Prime Minister of the DRV and Member of the VWP CC Politburo Pham Van Dong, Defense Minister and Member of the VWP CC Politburo Vo Nguyen Giap, Deputy Prime Minister of the DRV and Member of the VWP CC Politburo Le Thanh Nghi, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the DRV Hoang Van Tien, and Ambassador of the DRV in the USSR and Member of the VWP CC Nguyen Van Kinh.

As it is known from information which has been sent to the Polish friends at the time, meetings between the Soviet and Vietnamese sides have occurred repeatedly last year on the level of party-government delegations, and have dealt mainly with questions connected to the moral-political support rendered by the Soviet Union and to material aid to struggling Vietnam. In the current case, the new reason to invite a delegation was the question of providing the DRV with military and economic aid in 1967, which, as the Vietnamese comrades told us, they were prepared to discuss with the Soviet side.

Instead, this time the CPSU CC and the Soviet government had the aim to obtain information from the Vietnamese comrades on the situation in North and South Vietnam and to exchange opinions with them on questions which flow from the situation that has currently emerged in Indochina. Such an exchange, in our opinion, was required in view of the widening American aggression in Vietnam, of the statement by the Chinese leaders on their rejection of the Geneva agreements and of their respect for the 17th parallel, and, finally, [in view] of the lack of clarity in the position of the Vietnamese leaders themselves on some questions related to the lack of relevant information from the leadership of the VWP CC and the DRV.

The CPSU CC made the proposal to carry out this meeting on the highest level, and invited Cdes. Ho Chi Minh, Le Duan, and Pham Van Dong to participate. As a reply to the invitation, the VWP CC sent a delegation headed by the prime-minister of the DRV, Pham Van Dong, to the USSR. Cdes. [Leonid I.] Brezhnev, [Alexei N.] Kosygin, [Nikolai V.] Podgorny and other representatives of the CPSU CC and the Soviet government took part in all talks with the Vietnamese delegation.

During the negotiations, the Vietnamese comrades informed the representatives of the CPSU and the Soviet government on the situation in North and South Vietnam, [and] on their further plans to solve the Vietnam question. As before, they evaluated the situation in the north and in the south of the country optimistically, and stated that the Americans "constantly suffer defeat in military and political terms."

Like in previous meetings, the Vietnamese comrades think that the US imperialists are not successful in carrying out the task, which they took upon themselves, of unfolding an air war against the DRV. In their words, the Americans are unable to paralyze economic life in the [DRV]. Regardless of the destruction, communication links, which guarantee transport and are necessary for rendering aid to the South Vietnamese patriots and for the strengthening of the defense potentials and for the needs of the economy, continue to function. Regardless of the intensification of the bombardment, the number of victims among the population of North Vietnam and the soldiers of the NVA [Vietnamese People's Army] is not high; the number of killed and wounded stands at a little bit more than 20 thousand people.

"In their escalation [of the war] against North Vietnam," Cde. Pham Van Dong stated, "the American aggressors save special place [in their strategy] for strikes against Hanoi. The attacks on Hanoi, which is the capital of the socialist government, of

course have a special meaning. What concerns the destruction which could be inflicted on Hanoi, it does not cause us any insecurities. We don't fear if they destroy dwellings in Hanoi.

The Vietnamese comrades mentioned that the war potential of the Vietnamese People's Army grows in the course of repelling the American imperialist aggression. In that [struggle], aid from the socialist countries plays a big role. They underline the meaning of [their] statements, which had been sent to the congresses of fraternal parties [and] parliamentary sessions, and also of the statement of the Bucharest [Warsaw Pact] meeting.[2]

The delegation of the DRV was completely aware of the meaning of aid for the consolidation of the government of the country. "[...]Soviet aid has a very important meaning," Pham Van Dong stated, "your aid for the strengthening of the government is very valuable for the defense of North Vietnam. The forces of the government of the DRV rely on your aid, for the most part only on your aid [...] . We defend our own country-North Vietnam-and at the same time we continue to develop its economic potential. Given all of that, we are grateful for your aid.

Aside from Soviet military and economic aid, Soviet specialists who work in Vietnam make a very great contribution to our cause. These people participate together with us in our struggle, [some] among them were wounded and killed."

Reporting to the Soviet side on the situation in South Vietnam, the party-government delegation of the DRV stated that the American imperialists suffer defeats in their "special war," which they try to win using puppet soldiers. In the words of the DRV delegation, in recent times the US suffered military and political defeats in the local war, their losses grow incessantly and thus they have to intensify their aggression. The American imperialists are not successful in carrying out [their] basic task in South Vietnam: the destruction of the Liberation Army, the capture of the densely populated regions, and the stabilization of the Saigon regime. At the same time, the Vietnamese friends noted that the Americans intend to unfold a new offensive in the "dry season" and try to achieve some victory at the end of 1966 or the beginning of 1967 in order to compel the government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam and the NLF of South Vietnam to negotiate in conditions that are beneficial to the Americans. The Vietnamese comrades said that, from their own side, they also are ready to defeat the enemy in the period of the "dry season" in 1966-1967. They intend to destroy the forces of the occupiers and of the puppet army. Another goal consists of preserving liberated regions, ensuring still a greater range of movement among the city population, and also preserving the supply routes to the South.

At the same time, the Vietnamese comrades acknowledge that the patriotic forces of South Vietnam now meet significant difficulties. However, as they say, in the opinion of the VWP CC Politburo, these difficulties are not insurmountable and they cannot prevent the task of fulfilling the above goals.

Proceeding from the situation that has emerged in North and South Vietnam in recent times, and also from the analysis of the forces that take part in the war, the delegation of the DRV states that their strategic line of the implementation of war remains unchanged. Under these conditions, in the opinion of the VWP leadership, the following tasks stand before the DRV, the Soviet Union, and the other socialist countries:

"1. Fight to victory.

2. Mobilize the people of the whole world [and] world public opinion for wider and more powerful statements of protests against the American aggressors, in support of

the struggle of the Vietnamese people.

3. Take up principled positions on the solution of the Vietnam problem and at the same time adopt flexible and soft tactics."

Over the course of the talks, the party-government delegation of the DRV stated that the Vietnamese, while striving for the victory over the American imperialists, try to organize the war in such a way that the framework in which it is currently carried out does not permit it to grow into a world war. It [the delegation] emphasized that the line of the VWP in this question remains unchanged. "We prepare for the possibility of organizing the war within a small framework while at the same time we defeat the American aggressors," Cde. Pham Van Dong said. At the same time, the Vietnamese comrades do not dismiss the prospect of a widening of the war. They said that in this respect the American imperialists, who endure defeat in South Vietnam and do not achieve their goals with bombing the DRV, might try to take their military actions to the territory of North Vietnam and Laos. In the DRV, according to their words, they have prepared for such a change of events, and they think that in this case the defeat of the Americans is inevitable.

In response to the question of the Soviet delegation to explain what the Vietnamese comrades understand under "flexible tactics" in the problem of a political solution, Cde. Pham Van Dong said that the Four Points of the government of the DRV and the Five Points of the NLF SV are "very correct slogans;" they "correspond to the interests of the Vietnamese people, and also to the interests of the security of the world and the safety of all people of Southeast Asia This is sacred, this is unchangeable, this is impossible to break." Concerning the "flexible tactics," according to the words of Cde. Pham Van Dong, this means "establishing contacts for the time it will be necessary to carry out negotiations" with the representatives of a government that raises the question of a political solution. Time and again, he stated that "flexible tactics" in the DRV now stand for support of contacts with the adversary, and not for raising any new proposals that differ from the Four [Points] and Five Points. As to the confirmation of "flexibility" of its tactics, the delegation of the DRV talked on a general level about the talks with [Jean] Sainteny, de Gaulle's representative, with the Canadian [envoy Chester] Ronning, and also with the American emissaries in Burma, Algiers, and in France. As one can see from this information, the Vietnamese prepared for the repeated emphasis of the well-known Four [Points] and Five Points.

In reply to our question the Vietnamese comrades repeated that the conditions for negotiations for the solution of the Vietnam problem are still not ripe, since the US intends to talk with the Vietnamese "from a position of force." Under these conditions, the only conclusion, in the opinion of the leadership of the VWP, is the continuation of armed struggle with the aim to achieve a great military victory, which might change completely the correlation of forces.

In this regard, the Vietnamese comrades said that in the [currently] unfolding situation they need a further increase of Soviet military and economic aid.

They raised the request for additional supplies of Soviet armaments and equipment aimed at the strengthening of the country's government, in particular of anti-aircraft missiles and guns, fighter airplanes, coastal defense guns, various naval vessels, means of transportation, ammunition, etc.

Furthermore, they raised a series of requests regarding the supply of economic aid for 1967. The DRV requested the delivery of steel and metal structures, oil products, electricity generators, machine tools, automobiles, construction materials, transport equipment, fertilizer, food stuffs, etc. Attention was drawn [to the fact] that the Vietnamese request for aid for 1967 is the largest one the Vietnamese had addressed to the USSR at any time. In that respect, the Vietnamese side [also] presented a

request for urgent, additional supplies in 1966 of means for the storage and transport of fuel-based lubricants.

The delegation of the DRV was told by our side that all requests by the Vietnamese friends will be considered attentively and satisfied according to [our] capabilities.

Over the course of the talks with the Vietnamese comrades the Soviet delegation expressed its complete solidarity with the struggle of the Vietnamese people and informed it about the work, which we carry out in the USSR and in the international arena in support of Vietnam, underlining the usefulness of holding meetings and regular exchanges of opinion and of information on questions of mutual interest, and thanking the VWP CC for its high regard of Soviet military and economic aid.

Our opinion regarding three basic issues, which have been raised by the VWP Central Committee in recent times, was conveyed to the Vietnamese delegation.

The complete agreement of the CPSU CC with those positions which the Vietnam Workers' Party CC has raised was expressed. We agreed that it is necessary to continue the struggle and take it to the adversary with mighty blows. We agreed that it is necessary to make the effort to mobilize the world's public opinion in support of the just struggle of the Vietnamese people. We agreed that, while guarding one's own main, principled positions, it is good to publicize [more] the renowned Four Points of the DRV and the Five Points of the National Liberation Front, which we completely support, [and] it is necessary to use flexible political tactics.

The CPSU CC and the Soviet government, as before, raised the view to the VWP leadership that the war in Vietnam needs to be kept within a confined framework and the circumstance of letting it spill over into new regions or even more [of letting it] eventually grow into a world war should not be permitted.

The Soviet Union expressed its agreement with the first of the proposals that we render and will render military and other aid to the DRV. What concerns the second proposal, we have already talked time and again about the implementation of work by our Central Committee and the Soviet government with regard to the organization of a united front of those forces that stand up against American aggression. In the future, we will take all [necessary] measures in that direction.

What concerns the proposal raised by the Vietnamese comrades regarding the principled position in the question of solving the Vietnam problem and regarding "flexible and soft tactics," our side said frankly that they have not been used sufficiently, as it seems to us. We supported and support the idea, which was expressed by Cde. Le Duan, Pham Van Dong and other comrades in earlier talks, that, in the struggle against the aggressors, not only military but also political means should be exploited to a full degree. We are convinced that one should not give the Americans the possibility to trick the people. [But] the political struggle must be carried further to the point where the banner of peaceful negotiations, which [US President Lyndon B.] Johnson uses for the purpose of cheating [the people], is snatched from his hands so that it can lead him to the well-known fruits on the next stage.

We gave the Vietnamese comrades to understand that it is necessary to parry the political maneuvers of the American imperialists, for example, by publicizing [more] one's own positions, by raising the Four [Points] and the Five Points [with the aim] to start negotiations; or by entrusting some third country to carry out an exploratory mission [sondazh]; or by proposing to convene [a meeting of] all signatories of the Geneva agreements. Or else it should be demanded that negotiations start soon, [and one should] make one's own proposal for that point of time while [concurrently]

unmasking the true aims of the US.

The Vietnamese delegation refrained from making any judgment on this question, stating that this point of view of the CPSU CC and the Soviet government will be conveyed to the VWP Central Committee Politburo.

At the time of the talks, the Soviet side turned time and again to the question of the necessity of coordination and unity of the forces of all socialist countries in the supply of support and aid to Vietnam.

We touched upon [the issue] that the military-political situation would be somewhat more beneficial to the Vietnamese friends, if China would participate in the coordination of agreements of the activities by the socialist countries. All efforts by the CPSU and other fraternal parties to achieve unity with China have ended, unfortunately, without result. Now we are forced to deal with a situation not only of a lack of unity with China but also of openly hostile positions of the PRC in relation to the Soviet Union and other socialist countries. Such is the position of China that, given the circumstance that the USSR and socialist countries of Europe are far away from Vietnam, not a single fraternal country, including China, provides airfields and military bases close to Vietnam, [thereby] weakening its ability to use the necessary number of air force squadrons and other defensive means which would enable [Vietnam] to rebuff the American aggressors and to defend the DRV.

In the course of the talks with the Vietnamese delegation it was stated that the Chinese propaganda organs in recent times have embarked on an anti-Soviet campaign in relation to the war in Vietnam, [and] have slandered the Soviet military and economic aid to the DRV. The Soviet people do not understand why the Vietnamese comrades, who know that the attacks of the Chinese leaders are baseless, do not refute these slanders.

The Vietnamese comrades were told that the CPSU does not carry out polemics against the leadership of the PRC in any considerable way, because, taking into account the interests of Vietnam, it does not want to complicate the situation, in which heroic Vietnam carries out its struggle, even further. We strive to create conditions [beneficial] to the current effort of the socialist countries in support of the Vietnamese people.

The Soviet delegation mentioned that not long ago the Chinese officially provided us with the news that they cannot transport more than 9-10 thousand tons of our goods per month by rail through their territory to Vietnam, that means not more than 100-120 thousand tons per year; that means that our only ordeal ahead [for the remainder of the year?] is transporting 50 thousand tons, around 30 million projectiles, millions of bullets, 1000 missiles, tools and other military property and equipment. Furthermore, the aid from the socialist countries of Europe also has to be carried through Chinese territory.

Assuming that the Americans can completely incapacitate the harbor of Haiphong or blockade it with the forces of the [US Navy] 7th Fleet, the consideration concerning the value of having a reserve harbor in China close to the border of Vietnam, which in the first place [would serve] the unloading of oil products from ships, and which would deliver aid from the USSR and other socialist countries, was explained to the Vietnamese delegation.

The Soviet side proposed to the Vietnamese comrades that they themselves negotiate with the Chinese leaders on all these questions.

The attention of the [Vietnamese] delegation was also directed towards the unilateral

statement of the leaders of the CCP that the Geneva agreements ceased to exist, that the 17th parallel does not play the role of a demarcation line. The party-government delegation of the DRV stated in their reply that the point of view of the VWP on this question remains unchanged: as before, the DRV believes that the Four Points are the concentrated expression of the Geneva Agreements. Concerning the 17th parallel, the DRV replied that the Geneva Agreements regard it a "temporary line of demarcation," and opposes the aim of the government of the US to convert the 17th parallel into a state border between North and South Vietnam.

At the end of the talks, the communique of the 9th [11th] plenum of the CCP,[3] which, as it is well known, affirmed the complete agreement which was reached on the measures "intended for future action" in the support of aid to Vietnam against American aggression, was addressed and shown to the Vietnamese comrades. The Vietnamese comrades neither commented nor refuted it, and said nothing about the understandings [the DRV had] reached with China.

[...]

[1] Sent by the CPSU CC to the PUWP CC probably in early September 1966.

[2] The Political Consultative Committee of the Warsaw Pact met on 4-6 July 1966, in Bucharest, adopting resolutions on the Vietnam War and on Security in Europe.

[3] Took place on 8 August 1966.