

February 21, 1979

Cable from the Foreign Ministry, 'Vice Premier Deng Xiaoping Discusses the Vietnam Issue with a Foreign Guest'

Citation:

"Cable from the Foreign Ministry, 'Vice Premier Deng Xiaoping Discusses the Vietnam Issue with a Foreign Guest'", February 21, 1979, Wilson Center Digital Archive, Fujian Provincial Archives, 222-12-287, 1-3. Translated by David Cowhig.
<https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/290999>

Summary:

Comments made by Deng Xiaoping regarding Vietnam, or the "Cuba of the East."

Credits:

This document was made possible with support from The Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars

Original Language:

Chinese

Contents:

Translation - English

Fujian Province Telegram Received

From: Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Precedence: Especially Urgent

Device No. 73

Serial No. 21

Principal agency responsible: Foreign Affairs Bureau

Already transmitted to Provincial Party Standing Committee, department and committee offices, Fuzhou Military District, Provincial Military District

Vice Premier Deng Xiaoping Discusses the Vietnam Issue with a Foreign Guest

To the foreign affairs bureaus of all provincial, municipal, and autonomous region revolutionary committees with copies to all regional military districts and to provincial military districts:

On February 19, Vice Premier Deng Xiaoping met Organization of American States Secretary-General Alejandro Orfila and discussed the issue of our self-defense counter-attack against Vietnam. Below is a summary of the meeting for the purpose of internal study and understanding and to understand the spirit in which the discussions were held. The original text should not be quoted for external propaganda purposes.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs

February 21, 1979

Vice Premier Deng said, the Soviet Union has planted a Vietnam in the East. We call it the Cuba of the East. One must recognize that the Cuba of the East is more powerful than the Cuba of the West. Vietnam has a population of 50 million and is known to have an army of one million men. If Vietnam's attack on Cambodia were to stand, the effect that would have would be hard to estimate. At the very least, several of the SEATO countries would be affected. Today the Soviet Union is using Vietnam to, on one hand, constrain China and, on the other hand, to accomplish its vision of an "Asian Security System".

Vice Premier Deng pointed out that during the past two or three years, Vietnam has made provocations on the PRC border almost every day. This is making our border areas very insecure. That is why I said in the USA, and I said in Japan, why doesn't the West teach Cuba a lesson? Why don't they teach Cuba a lesson? They don't approve of that. Perhaps some of the people are willing to say so but they would approve it in their hearts. Others perhaps really don't approve, fearing that chaos would result.

Vietnam boasts that it has the third strongest military in the world, seemingly not considering China at all. We really can't stand that anymore. No matter whether one talks about the Cuba of the West or the Cuba of the East, if you take a soft attitude towards them, that will only make them more arrogant. It would just go on and on. Matters would keep getting more and more serious and more and more complicated.

We criticize the feckless manner that the West keeps pushing Cuba around, so how could we ourselves be so feckless towards the "Cuba" that is right under our nose? We believe that they must be taught a lesson. That lesson has just begun. It will be a limited one, confined to a battle in the border region and we are not preparing for a major war. Our objective is a simple one. We want our opponent to understand that bullying is not allowed. The border struggle we have with Vietnam is a border clash that is a limited engagement. It will conclude once we have achieved our objective.

This is our view: we are not afraid of global hegemonists and we are not afraid of regional hegemonists. Being afraid is of no use; the more afraid of them you are, the stronger they get.