

February 19, 1968
Telegram from Pyongyang to Bucharest, TOP
SECRET, No. 76.047, Regular

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Summary:

The Embassy of Romania in the DPRK conveys the views of Le Thet Hung following the seizure of the USS Pueblo.

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I would like to convey the following notes I took during my February 19 conversation with Le Thet Hung, the Ambassador of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam to Pyongyang:

1. Two offensives are being carried out by the forces of the National Liberation Front in South Vietnam and are part of a tactical cycle which aims to continue the fight and gain the initiative while expanding the battlefield.

The main purpose of these large-scale offensive actions is to shatter to the ground the regime in Saigon and thus rally the entire people to take up arms, to counter all the actions of the Saigon army, to divide it and isolate it from the American troops.

Secondly, [the aim is to] simultaneously attack all American bases and inflict severe damages in terms of personnel, materiel, and military equipment; to create even more confusion; to disrupt the ranks of the American military and of its satellites; and to weaken their morale, which is already very low anyway.

These offensives offer the opportunity to fully resupply the troops in South Vietnam with weapons and ammunition, which are so needed to maintain and further the successes they achieved so far.

2. According to the Vietnamese diplomat, the United States of America will not dare and will not be able to use tactical nuclear weapons in South Vietnam. He pointed out that since South Vietnam was not an organized battlefield, without a front and a back, the use of tactical nuclear weapons would be more damaging for American troops and bases than for the national liberation forces.

Secondly, the United States would not dare to use tactical nuclear weapons fearing that the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China would retaliate.

Thirdly, the United States is also fearful of public opinion and the American people, which are increasingly opposed to the war in Vietnam.

3. When asked whether the upcoming elections in the United States would influence the resolution of the conflict in Vietnam, the Vietnamese diplomat said that the Democratic Republic of Vietnam and the National Liberation Front are not linking the matter to the upcoming elections. The future elections would only change the wolf at the helm of the United States with a different one.

4. My interlocutor then mentioned the fact that 'some' try to draw a comparison between the war and the revolution in South Vietnam and the war in Korea. He said that such a comparison did not make any sense, being completely unrealistic. It is imbued with wishful thinking, it denies the nature of the mass revolution of the Vietnamese people, and it does not recognize the efforts and successes achieved by the Vietnamese people (we believe that these references were made with certain North Korean personalities in mind).

5. When asked for his opinion on the timing of the Korean unification, the Vietnamese diplomat said that the North Koreans are intensively preparing for this action and it would be possible that when the United States is almost crushed in South Vietnam, the North Koreans will take advantage of this moment and pursue the liberation of the South.

6. As for the USS Pueblo case, the Vietnamese Ambassador said that the Americans were not interested in starting another war in Korea because they would be easily defeated there just as they are in South Vietnam.

It seems that the peaceful resolution of this case through direct negotiations with the Americans would also be to the liking of the North Koreans, who realize that they are not yet totally ready [for war] and that it is not a propitious moment to pursue such a large-scale operation in the South.

Signed: N. Popa