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**Note No. 2/65 on Conversations with Comrade
Shcherbakov about the Developmental Tendencies
in the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, on 22 and 28
December 1964**

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<https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/117710>

Summary:

Conversation between the East German and Soviet ambassadors to Vietnam, on the Sino-Vietnamese relationship. Shcherbakov expresses his belief that China is increasingly using Vietnam as a pawn, and that, as a result, the Chinese are pushing the Vietnamese towards talks of negotiations with the United States.

Credits:

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German

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During my [GDR ambassador to the DRV, Wolfgang Bertold] conversation with the Soviet ambassador at the reception of the 20th anniversary of the Vietnamese People's Army, Comrade Shcherbakov explained that some changes in the DRV have been felt since 15 October. In the past 2 months, approximately 20 Soviet delegations were in the DRV, and at this time 6 Soviet delegations are in Hanoi. That was unthinkable some months ago. Even in the speeches and articles in recent times, new tones are being heard. That does not mean that the VWP has moved away from its position. In this respect, I referred to the fact that Comrade [Vo Nguyen] Giap has made comments, more wide-ranging than usual, in his speech on the German question, and that the GDR again is ranking ahead of the national liberation movement in his text. Comrade Shcherbakov replied that such new tendencies can be discerned everywhere. In this respect I added that we observed that the possibility of negotiations with the US is mentioned more often in articles, and talked about some articles in the central organ. Comrade Shcherbakov thanked [me] for the reference, and we agreed on a meeting in the Soviet embassy in order to talk about some problems, and stated that we should exchange our opinions more often. Comrade Shcherbakov asked for permission to include some other ambassadors in these talks.

During the next conversation on Monday, 28 December, to which the ambassadors of the MPR [Mongolian People's Republic], Bulgaria, the CSSR [Czechoslovak Socialist Republic], and Hungary showed up (the Polish ambassador had not come despite an invitation), he [Shcherbakov] picked up on the comments above and said approximately the following: Among some Vietnamese cadres, doubts about the sincerity of the Chinese leaders and the possibility of aid have occurred. Some start to think about the possibility that the Chinese only use the Vietnamese as a tool for their own, Chinese policy. Such doubts have emerged, among other issues, as the consequence of the events in August and of the related, insufficient aid from the People's Republic of China and also of the general, insufficient aid in the economic sphere. While the Chinese assert that they are ready to support the DRV ("Four Chinese can stand on each square meter of the DRV"), they demand from the Vietnamese to focus on the South. Such comments have caused some Vietnamese to ponder [about the situation], and especially the South is disappointed, so that the NLF is again returning to carrying out individual actions, since it is not in a position to carry out larger military actions without efficient aid. One can view the [Vietnamese] readiness to negotiations with the US in that context. They are even ready to talk about the neutralization of the South. In that respect, they think about a transitional solution in the form of a coalition government. In that respect, they mentioned two steps: 1. withdrawal of US troops from South Vietnam and subsequent negotiations, 2. unification of the country on the basis of the Geneva agreements. That means, they move away from the adventurist plans of the Chinese leaders. On the other hand, they carry out trilateral talks with military delegations from China and the DPRK. These talks probably had been prepared during the visit of [Korean Workers' Party General Secretary] Kim Il Sung a few weeks ago and now are carried out by the Korean defense minister. They assume that, in case of an aggression by the US, joint actions will be implemented, and that those will be coordinated, so that in this given case the Koreans start actions in the south of their country. Furthermore they believe that the Koreans can gather experience here [in Vietnam] for the implementation of a guerrilla war.

The Chinese try hard to build up a similar front, consisting of the countries of North Korea, China, the DRV and including Laos, Cambodia, and Indonesia, opposite to the front of the US in East Asia, which stretches from South Korea to Taiwan, South Vietnam, Thailand, the Philippines and Malaysia. In this context, it is interesting to observe the attempts by the US vis-à-vis Great Britain to get pledges from the English imperialists to participate in the struggle in South Vietnam.