

December 15, 1980

**Speech Given by Comrade Le Duc Tho to the
Leaders of Public Security's Departments, Bureaus,
and City and Provincial Offices during the
Conference to Discuss the Three Specialized Drafts
and to Implement Politburo Resolution 31 [Excerpts]**

Citation:

"Speech Given by Comrade Le Duc Tho to the Leaders of Public Security's Departments, Bureaus, and City and Provincial Offices during the Conference to Discuss the Three Specialized Drafts and to Implement Politburo Resolution 31 [Excerpts]", December 15, 1980, Wilson Center Digital Archive, Những Vấn Đề Trọng Yếu Trong Công Tác Đấu Tranh Chống Gián điệp Trung Quốc, Gián điệp Mỹ và Chống Địch Phá Hoại Tư Tưởng [Key Issues in the Struggle Against Chinese Spies and American Spies and in the Struggle Against the Enemy's Ideological Attacks] (People's Public Security Forces Document, Printed by the People's Security University, Hanoi, 12 September 1981), 136-190. Contributed and translated by Merle Pribbenow.
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Summary:

A speech given by Party Politburo Member Le Duc Tho during a three-day conference of the Ministry's top Public Security officers along with the Directors of Public Security of all of the nation's provinces and major cities, where the attendees received instructions on three new Ministry of Interior Party resolutions - one on "the struggle against Chinese spies", one on "the struggle against American spies", and one on "the struggle against the enemy's ideological attacks." At the time of the speech, Le Duc Tho was viewed as Vietnam's second most powerful leader, second only to Party General Secretary Le Duan.

Le Duc Tho commented that while recruiting Americans would be easy, requiring only "money, women, and drinking and carousing", recruiting Chinese would require a careful process of political education of the target

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Original Scan

Translation - English

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**Speech Given by Comrade Le Duc Tho, Member of the Party Politburo, to the Leaders of Public Security's Departments, Bureaus, and City and Provincial Offices during the Conference to Discuss the Three Specialized Drafts and to Implement Politburo Resolution 31
15 December 1980**

(Comrade Le Duc Tho has not yet reviewed this transcript)

Comrades!

Today you have come here to attend this conference on the three specialized draft resolutions and on implementing the Politburo resolution on protecting our political security and maintaining order and safety [law and order] in our society. You have sent me your draft reports and policy guidelines for your operations in the future. Although I have not yet had a chance to carefully study them, in order to give you all a better understanding of this issue, I will give you all a number of my thoughts on this subject.

I-The Class Struggle in the World and in the Three Nations of Indochina

[...]

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II-The Alliance between the Beijing Expansionists and the American Imperialists In Attacking Our Nation's Revolution

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III-We Must Understand the Differences between American Spies (the CIA) and Chinese Spies

1) -Here I will only speak about things to a certain level and will leave it to all of you to conduct studies to better understand the situation, to conduct investigations and interrogations, etc. because only then will you be able to obtain a deep and accurate understanding of this issue. We cannot view these two different types of targets as being one - instead we must clearly differentiate between them because these two targets are very different in many ways, and if we are not able to differentiate between them we will not be able to come up with the appropriate policies to deal with each of them. Today we talk about them together in general ways, but although they have a number of commonalities between them - they recruit agents, develop contacts and sources, use various means of communications, use the singleton agent system, etc., the important thing for us is that there are differences in their goals and objectives, in their political character, in the directions of their attacks against us, in their attack methods [tactics], in the targets [individuals] they use, in their areas of operations, in their spy networks, etc. ...

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IV-Public Security's Operational Methods [Tactics]

We can conclude that with regard to the operational methods that Public Security has used in the past in the battle against imperialist intelligence agents and spies, there are two methods that have been more effective against them than all of the others - those methods were using the masses [the people] and using spies. ...

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[after long section on the use of "the masses" to detect and identify suspected spies]

...With regard to our experience in using intelligence agents, here I would like to say that there are two types of intelligence agents [đặc tình]: those who are recruited from the other side's own people and used against them, and those that we train and prepare and then insert into the enemy's ranks. These two types are totally different from one another because their political foundations are completely different, and when they are operating inside the enemy's camp to attack the enemy, there are differences between Chinese targets [agent candidates] and American targets. Therefore the way that we educate the intelligence agent psychologically and

politically must also be different. If we try to give them all the same kind of education we will get the worst kind of intelligence agent. In Cambodia, I can tell you all that when we used intelligence agents who were Cambodian citizens to operate among their people, there were a number of issues that we had to pay special attention to, because we knew that if our [Cambodian] friends used their own people that would be no problem, but if we used an intelligence agent who was a member of their ethnic group [a Cambodian] that would be very different, because that would adversely affect their nationalistic feelings. If we want to use someone like that, then we will have to devote a great deal of effort to the work of educating and convincing them, because if we do not do this the operation will not produce positive results.

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When we use intelligence agents against China, they will have the same kinds of emotions and feelings as their targets - they have their own political thoughts, so when we use intelligence agents against them we will have to use a different kind of education, and when we use intelligence agents against the U.S. we will again have to give them a different kind of education. This means that being able to use an intelligence agent effectively is not a simple matter. With regard to this issue in Cambodia, initially our people did not clearly understand this, so they used material incentives to entice and bribe agents. As a result the operations did not produce results. We had to use very strong politics [political persuasion] in order to achieve positive results. After we carefully educate the agent, when we insert the agent it will take time, we must have the right timing - we cannot just send in and use the agent in at any time that we want. Timing and opportunity is an important factor. We must recognize the opportunity and then send the agent in at the most appropriate and most advantageous moment. ***For example, the evacuation [of South Vietnam in 1975] was a most advantageous opportunity.*** [Emphasis added by the translator]

Today we see that the most widespread method that our opponents use against our country is by sending intelligence agents in under the cover of being journalists, because journalists are able to travel around, they can have contacts with the highest levels and the lowest levels, they can even sit down in an alley to watch the markets - this means that they can go out to search for information anywhere, because they are overt. However, our side does not yet know how to use this tactic, which is a weakness for us. I can definitely tell you that 90% of the imperialist, capitalist journalists who enter our country are intelligence agents or spies. On our side, our journalists are just "journalists" and are not both journalists and intelligence agents. Journalists who are also intelligence agents are extremely effective because they are able to collect a great deal of information.

The second type of intelligence agent is a citizen of the target country who we use against that target. This type of agent is also very effective and useful, but we must understand that the tactic we use against Chinese agent candidates will be different than the tactic we use against American agent candidates. The tactic for obtaining intelligence on the imperialist countries by recruiting and using their own citizens against them is an easy one - it is primarily to use money, women, drinking and carousing - that is all it takes. With regard to Chinese targets, however, we must first give those targets a very careful, intense political education. This will be very difficult - it will not be a simple matter. Because they will be using the enemy's own name, and that is the method we will have to use to get through that door. Today, if we want to obtain strategic intelligence, we must be bold and take the risk of using this type of agent.

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We can say that in all of our past attacks [our efforts to insert spies into the enemy's ranks], including during the resistance against the Americans, we never obtained strategic intelligence [Emphasis added by the translator]. On the other side, the imperialists have a very powerful strategic intelligence network. This means that we must have someone who can go in to discover the enemy's plans - how the enemy plans to attack us, how the enemy plans to use politics against us, and where the enemy plans to attack us. Most recently, the enemy attacked us across our Northern border but we did not have any advance warning, and when the enemy attacked us across our southwestern border [from Cambodia] we also did not have advance

warning. As for the U.S.'s use of their special war strategy, and their limited war strategy, we only knew about this through our collation and analysis of information - because we did not have this type of strategic intelligence agent.

Today we are a nation with 50 million people, making us the third or fourth-ranking country in Southeast Asia, and we are surrounded by enemies on all sides, because this is one of the "hot spots" in the world today. In this situation if we do not have intelligence agents able to spread out more widely, how will we be able to discover the enemy's plots and schemes in order to be able to take measures to block them? This is a very dangerous situation, because now, as I told you in my earlier analysis, the class struggle has become very ferocious and we cannot predict how the situation will develop. The Soviet Union has sent troops into Afghanistan, we have sent troops into Cambodia, and soon the Soviet Union, the German Democratic Republic, and Czechoslovakia may be forced to send troops into Poland. Therefore we cannot exclude the possibility that China will send its troops into our country to attack us. We must take bold action to dispatch intelligence agents, and we must realize that we may lose 40% of them. However, those losses do not matter - we should not be worried about that; we could even lose more than 50% of them and we still should not be afraid of that. The important thing is to obtain the key information, which is strategic intelligence.

With regard to investigating, verifying, and interrogating targets - investigating them and verifying [obtaining evidence] that they are spies are difficult tasks. The issue of investigating and verifying that we are talking about here is internal investigations and verification - that is very difficult, because if we do not do this well it will cause us all kinds of problems.

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Many times we have put together a list with a great number of different categories [of suspects], that is very messy and unhelpful. Therefore, from now on, when we work to verify one type of target we must clearly state our goals and requirements, and when we do that we must do it not just as a paperwork exercise; instead we must conduct a careful investigation. And in order to conduct a verification investigation [to verify someone's guilt] we must coordinate closely with the Party organization. We cannot avoid coordinating closely with the Party organization because if our verification investigation is not conducted carefully, it will cause all kinds of terrible internal problems for us.

As for interrogations, we can see that with regard to the issue of American spies, we have captured a tremendous quantity of the enemy's files but we have not yet been able to obtain a lot of information about their contacts within our own ranks and out in society, so we must provide additional personnel to interrogate them. As for Chinese intelligence agents that are sent into our country, we have not captured very many of them, so we must bring them all together in one place in order to interrogate and exploit them. At this point I would like to tell you all something that I learned from experience. I told our people in Cambodia that when we capture enemy agents we should only focus our preliminary interrogations on a few points involving the enemy's plans in relation to us and what they are planning to do in the immediate future (we do not need to ask them questions about their communications channels or their organization). We should ask each of the spies that we have arrested these questions, and then we should combine and collate the information in order to find out the enemy's plans so that we can prepare our own plans to counter the enemy's plans. For example, we should ask them what was their plan during the past rainy season and what are their plans for the coming dry season? Only if we interrogate them like this can we learn the enemy's plans so that we can take timely countermeasures. Currently we have arrested almost 60 Chinese intelligence agents who have been infiltrated into our country to investigate our economy, so we must find out what they are trying to learn about our economy? How were they planning to obtain this information? Then we put the information together, collate it, and come up with the proper countermeasures. This means that we should first focus on a few primary, basic points to resolve an individual subject of interest, and only then move on to other subjects. We must question the captured enemy agents closely about each of their individual plans and goals, and then we must collate the information to figure out the enemy's overall scheme so that we can take countermeasures.

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Or, if the agent's plan was to conduct investigations to identify possible contacts and recruitment targets, we must ask the agent what type of person they planned to contact and recruit? Where did they plan to make these contacts and recruitments? How did they plan to do it? We cannot just ask general questions, questions that are not concrete and specific.

Therefore I say that Public Security operations must be very concrete, very detailed, but also very strategic. Because only strategic intelligence will help the Party to develop plans and guidance to counter the enemy's schemes, but if we do not have concrete details, we cannot exploit them further to supplement and update our strategic information about the enemy.

Now we see that the U.S. has left a lot of its documents behind and that we have a lot of American intelligence targets that we are currently detaining in prison, and we also have captured a number of Chinese agents, so we need to concentrate on interrogating these captured agents in order to learn their plans and objectives. Today we still do not understand what their intelligence agents and spies who have been sent into our country are doing. Therefore we must focus on resolving individual issues once and for all, and then only move on to other issues.

Now I will talk about the technical side. I believe that technical methods are important - they supplement the work of the other fronts and can be combined with the other types of work, but technology cannot replace the use of the human brain. If we want to combat the enemy effectively, we must have intelligence agents and reconnaissance forces - they are the fundamental, essential factor for us. That does not mean that we should neglect technical methods or underestimate the value of technical methods - instead we should view technical methods as an important component of our efforts, something that supplements our other methods and enables our battle against the enemy to achieve positive results. However, having one reconnaissance officer, one intelligence agent who is operating inside the enemy's ranks is something that is very dynamic and flexible, something that no machine can possibly replace. I believe that the direction that the Public Security has taken in the past has been wrong. That is because we placed too much focus on building up our technical side while we allowed our organization responsible for attacking the enemy through the use of intelligence agents and spies to become too weak - that was a mistake. We must take the affirmative position that if we want to do a good job of fighting the enemy, our intelligence organization and our intelligence agent organization must be stronger than our technical organization, especially since our country's technical skill level is still weak while at the same time our country has tremendous political skills and organization.

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We have the just cause while the imperialists do not have a just cause, so they must rely on technical methods. However, their technology cannot replace humans - the human factor still plays the most basic, the most fundamental role. If, when we are conducting Public Security operations we pay more attention to technical reports than to the information that we obtain from intelligence agents and reconnaissance forces, that would be wrong. Therefore, from now on we must focus on building, training, and strengthening our forces that attack the enemy through the use of reconnaissance, intelligence agent, and interrogation operations - those three forces are linked together in a very basic, fundamental way. Technology is important, but it must be combined with the efforts of our other two forces.

I do not say this to make those of you who are conducting technical operations wonder about or question your own efforts, because technology provides very important contributions to our operations by providing things such as tape recorders, or listening devices, secret writing [invisible] ink, and other types of equipment - these are things that we cannot do without. However, we must clearly recognize the thing that is basic and fundamental, the thing that is decisive. If we do not have the correct understanding then our investments and force-building will be misguided - we must see that the human side and the technical side work together, but the human side is decisive; it is very dynamic and flexible.

The struggle against Chinese spies and American spies must be combined with the

struggle against common [regular] criminals - I will soon request that the Ministry conduct a summary review of the struggle against common criminals because this is also a very rich and complicated subject. It is a category of targets that involve many different aspects of society, because this category is the group that intelligence agents and spies utilize to carry out their operations. ...