

February 26, 1971

**From the Journal of M.G. Podol'sky, 'Record of a
Conversation with R. Berthold, Counsellor of the
GDR Embassy in Hanoi, 18 February 1971'**

Citation:

"From the Journal of M.G. Podol'sky, 'Record of a Conversation with R. Berthold, Counsellor of the GDR Embassy in Hanoi, 18 February 1971'", February 26, 1971, Wilson Center Digital Archive, RGANI, fond 5, opis 63, delo 520, listy 27-28. Contributed by Sergey Radchenko and translated by Gary Goldberg.

<https://wilson-center-digital-archive.dvincitest.com/document/300606>

Summary:

A Soviet official in Vietnam recounts a meeting with an East German diplomat. The two sides discussed the nuclear threats from the United States in the Vietnam War, as well as relations with China.

Credits:

This document was made possible with support from Carnegie Corporation of New York (CCNY)

Original Language:

Russian

Contents:

Translation - English

FROM THE JOURNAL
OF M. G. PODOL'SKY

Secret Copy N^o 2
26 February 1971
Outgoing N^o 80
[stamp:
CPSU CC
08777
1 MARCH 1971
Vietnam]

RECORD OF A CONVERSATION
with R. Berthold*, Counsellor of the GDR Embassy in Hanoi
18 February 1971

I visited R. Berthold on a return protocol visit.

The following from the conversation with the counsellor deserves to be noted:

1. Some days ago in accordance with instructions GDR Ambassador Cde. Willerding asked for a conversation with Cde. Le Duan in order to present him with a letter of Cde. W. Ulbricht in which SED CC proposals about stepping up inter-Party ties are presented. The German friends, in the words of the counsellor, proposed to exchange a number of Party delegations, invited DRV leaders to vacation and treatment, and also [invited] a VWP CC delegation headed by Cde. Le Duan to the next SED Congress, which will be held in June of this year.

Cde. Le Duan could not receive the ambassador due to the press of work. The conversation was held with Cde. Nguyen Duy Trinh.

2. In a telegram received from Berlin it was reported that some days ago the DRV ambassador in Peking had visited the GDR chargé in China and reported that the VWP CC Politburo was extremely worried about rumors which had been spread and official statements in the US about the possible use of nuclear weapons in South Vietnam. The Chinese press had also devoted several articles to this question.

* Before arrival in Hanoi R. Berthold worked in the GDR MFA. He was chief of the China sector. He knows Chinese and Russian well. He gives the impression of a well-trained diplomat.

[stamp at the bottom right side of the first page:

The material is informative [[and has been sent] to a CPSU CC department.

[[illegible word, probably a name]] 15D/13 30 March 1971]

[[illegible word, probably a name]

[in the bottom left side: "to the archives" and a probably name. 30 March 1971]

The Vietnamese ambassador, in the words of the counsellor, allegedly asked the chargé what the almost simultaneous spreading of rumors in the US and China might mean about the possibility of the use of tactical nuclear weapons, was there was any connection here?

The GDR Embassy in Hanoi, as the counsellor said, maintains the opinion that the Americans, in brandishing [*razmakhivaya*] atomic weapons, would like to show the Chinese and the Vietnamese that any activity of theirs in South Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos might run into serious resistance and be doomed to failure. At the same time the Germans do not exclude the possibility that with the commotion about an atomic threat Peking also would like make some from the Vietnamese leadership more servile to Peking and to also achieve a further strengthening of their influence on the Indochinese peninsula [Translator's note: the last sentence was highlighted in the left margin].

I noted that such a way of thinking is not excluded, however Peking, which in recent days has markedly stressed attention on the fact that with its 700 million people China is a powerful rear area of the three Indochinese countries, and that it fulfills its international duty with respect to Vietnam, [while] far from actually fulfilling its promises. Most likely, in keeping up the hype about nuclear weapons, Peking is pursuing an incendiary goal, and striving to pour oil on the fire and complicate the situation in Indochina.

I informed the counsellor that the CPSU CC has invited a VWP CC delegation, and also delegations of the NFOYuV [National Front for the Liberation of South Vietnam] and the NRP [Popular Revolutionary Parties] of Cambodia and Laos to the 24th CPSU Congress.

The assignment with respect to the VWP was accomplished by Ambassador Cde. I. S. Shcherbakov in a conversation with Cde. Nguyen Din Trinh. In connection with his great workload, as stated by the Vietnamese, Cde. Le Duan did not receive the Ambassador concerning this question.

MINISTER-COUNSELLOR
OF THE SOVIET EMBASSY IN THE DRV
[signature] (M. PODOL'SKY)

One copy printed

1 - OYuVA [[MFA]] Department of Southeast Asian Countries]

2 - the CPSU CC Department

3 - to file

25 February 1971

MP N° 216

sb.

[handwritten: N° 362/[[]]s

1 March 1971]