

September 29, 1975

Minutes of Conversation between Deng Xiaoping and Le Duan

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Summary:

Deng Xiaoping recounts a meeting between Zhou Enlai and Ho Chi Minh, at which Ho Chi Minh accused the Chinese of attempting to intimidate the Vietnamese by stationing troops close to the Chinese-Vietnamese border. Le Duan states that he had never been briefed on that meeting. Excerpt.

Original Language:

Chinese

Contents:

Translation - English

DENG XIAOPING AND LE DUAN

Beijing, 29 September 1975

Deng Xiaoping: There have been some problems in the relations between our countries. Some of them emerged when President Ho was still alive. We have to say that we are not at ease when we get to read Vietnamese newspapers and know [Vietnamese] public opinion. In fact, you stress the threat from the North. The threat from the North for us is the existence of Soviet troops at our northern borders, but for you, it means China.

Le Duan: We did not say that.

Deng Xiaoping: I still recall a meeting between President Ho and Premier Zhou and myself in which President Ho mentioned this problem. At that time, we had several hundred thousand troops stationed in Guangdong and Guangxi. Vietnamese people and cadres used history in order to imply the present, mentioning the threat from the North. The Soviet question was also mentioned. Premier Zhou then told President Ho straight: "You are threatening us." For my part I asked President Ho whether you were concerned that we were intimidating you. If you did think so, we would withdraw our troops from Guangdong and Guangxi and place them in the North. The reason we had to have them there was to prepare for a scenario like the Korean War. We had to consider the possibility of an American attack. Did President Ho tell you about that meeting?

Le Duan: To tell you the truth, we heard nothing about it from President Ho. Yet, I was told about that theater play.

Deng Xiaoping: There were at that time some articles and public discussions that hurt our bilateral relations. We told President Ho about that for the sake of relations between us. President Ho immediately replied: "I disagree with you that we are threatening you." He also did not agree with the withdrawal of our troops from these two provinces. Later, as the situation changed, we withdrew [them] and placed them elsewhere.

For the last few years, such things have still occurred and they seem to be more frequent than before. The threat from the North is the main theme, even in your textbooks. We are not at ease with this. Our relations are very profound. We have not annexed a centimeter of your territory.