

September 10, 1964

**Note on a Conversation by Tarka, Jurgas and Milc at
the Soviet Embassy in Hanoi [Excerpts]**

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Summary:

A conversation between three Polish delegates in Hanoi, where they discuss American activities in and attitudes toward Vietnam. They note that the Soviets are not as optimistic about the military situation in Southeast Asia as the Poles.

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[...]

The conversation took place in the embassy of the USSR on 2 September 1964 at the initiative of the Soviet comrades, especially of the military attaché, General Major Ivanov. Apart from him, the embassy counselor Soloviev was present, as well as the assistant attaché, a colonel of the air force.

[...]

We provided information to the Russians on the situation in the south after 5 August, according to the instructions of Comrade Ambassador. On the request by our interlocutors we added information we possessed on the basis of our knowledge of the topic of economic, political, religious, individual, and social relations with the South. The [Soviet] comrades were interested in, as deep and comprehensive as possible, an understanding of the problems. We feel that the comprehensive information was even more necessary for the development of each other's opinion on the perspectives of the evolving situation in Vietnam, and on the fundamental prospects of the warring parties. They themselves provided us with the following opinions:

1. Friendly relations between the DRV and China are currently almost absolute, mainly as a result of pressure from China. At present, they[2] are conducting an internal party campaign accusing the Soviet Union of insincere relations to Vietnam. They propagate the thesis that just at the present, when the DRV and the NLF are a few steps from victory, the USSR put together a statement and protest against the US, just for the sake of creating for itself the opportunity to share in the fruits of their victory.

2. The Tonkin [Gulf] incident was a general test for the durability of political agreements and the strength in South East Asia. They [the Soviets] are convinced that the initiators of the incident were the Chinese.

3. The Soviet comrades in general do not share the optimism of the Poles. They consider that:

a) the military situation in the south is difficult for the NLF at the present, especially with regard to the shortage of military technology;

b) the losses of the Americans during the aerial attack of 8/5 [5 August] were a lot lower than the Poles were told [by the Vietnamese?] (according to the Polish side the Americans lost 11 aircraft shot down-the Soviet comrades thought 2-based on the anecdotal evidence and photographic material. The authorities of the DRV refused to provide details to Soviet correspondents: the number and types of aircraft as well as the last names of allegedly captured and killed pilots);

c) the Americans are [usually] in a position to settle, to their own advantage, every military conflict in this region, including the one in Vietnam. Cde. Ivanov expressed the opinion that for the Americans political victory is more at stake than military victory and that their aim in Vietnam above all is to achieve that. Ivanov claimed that both China and the United States avoid taking military steps [against each other] because both sides foresee the serious after-effects of such steps. According to Ivanov, China's military is currently not very powerful, owing to a complete lack of new technology, but its human potential has great significance.

Ivanov and Soloviev consider that the currently complicated situation will not allow the making of even a tentative estimate. The Soviet comrades predict that the

escalation of the military situation might lead the US to use tactical nuclear weapons. Americans currently need firing ranges for their weapons. We were given the understanding that this event is not likely if the USSR [threatens to] respond to [US] nuclear measures, such as to the introduction of atomic weapons to Vietnam or a direct [nuclear] attack on China.

A topic of interest for the Soviet comrades was the NLF as a political and military organization. We provided them with the little information we had concerning the quantity and kind of military formation on the NLF as well as on some of the latest military operations. The Soviet comrades were puzzled why until this time the NLF had not appointed a provisional government and if it was possible to predict that they would do this in the near future.

With regard to the internal affairs of South Vietnam, the Soviet cdes. think that in the end the present political crisis had its origins essentially in tyranny. They were interested in political parties and the possibility of their accession to power. It is possible that they [the Soviets] don't have an opinion about both the military situation in that region as well as on the weakness of these parties.

[...]

[1] The identity of Tarka, Jurgas and Milc is unknown. Since the document was written in Saigon, they probably were affiliated with the Polish delegation to the International Supervision and Control Commission on Vietnam. No information was found on Ivanov or Soloviev.

[2] Refers probably to the Chinese, since Mao had instigated recurrent anti-Soviet campaigns in the CCP since the early 1960s.