

February 10, 1966

**Note on a Meeting of Minister Erich Mielke with
Nguyen Minh Tien on 1 February 1966**

Citation:

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Summary:

Notes from a 1966 meeting between Erich Mielke, Nguyen Minh Tien, and several other East German officials. Tien summarizes the results of recent East German/North Vietnam collaboration, including laying the groundwork for the establishment of a Technical Operations Department in North Vietnam and makes several requests, including assistance with training of cadres. Mielke expresses East Germany's intent to help North Vietnam, indicates that East Germany will buy advanced technology for North Vietnam, and proposes sending OTS (Operational-Technical Sector) and other specialists to Vietnam to learn more about the conflict.

Credits:

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Translation - English

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Note

on a Meeting of Comrade Minister with the Vietnamese comrades on 1 February 1966 from 15:00 until 17:00.

Participants:

Comrade Minister [Mielke]

Comrade Lieutenant General BEATER[1]

Comrade Lieutenant General WOLF[2]

Comrade Lieutenant Colonel SCHMIDT[3]

Comrade Captain HANEWALD[4]

Comrade Lieutenant Colonel DAMM[5]

Comrade TIEN:

Please allow me to report on the results of my mission.

Comrade Minister:

You don't have to report to me, you have to report to your [own] Minister. You only have to tell me whether you are satisfied or whether you have any wishes or whether there are any issues in our common work and where we go from here. I am convinced that you have done your job. Your Minister has to check the results when you are back in Hanoi.

Comrade TIEN:

After this work we still have to work in the embassy, namely with the comrades in charge of student affairs. We also have to clarify a few things in the trade mission. These comrades will decide how much time that will take.

Comrade Minister:

Please let us know when you leave.

Please allow me to give a summarized account so that you are informed about the working results. At the same time I also want to make some requests.

During the time while we were here with you we have achieved the following results:

1. Your comrades have shared some precious experiences with us; for example with regard to the establishment of the OTS [Technical Operations Sector] we have clarified a few terms and [we have learned] how to equip the technical operations sector. In technical matters we have got to know some new technical equipment and have assessed how to make use of this technique. We have realized that you have good technical equipment to carry out the struggle.

2. The leading comrades of the OTS and the comrades of various departments have given us recommendations on how to build a technical department in Vietnam. The comrades have given us suggestions and recommendations for the structure, the setup and the personnel of our organs. The comrades have prepared a list of articles that is necessary for the order in the Ministry of Foreign Trade. We have received

these lists and as we have agreed with leading comrades of OTS we will work through them and in case there are still some issues we will clarify them with the comrades.

3. The comrades have informed us that Comrade Minister will probably agree that some cadres come here [to East Germany] for training and we will be given some special devices.

4. This trip has deepened our action group (Kampfgemeinschaft?) and the cooperation between the technical departments of our two ministries. We think that during this trip we have achieved good results. [...]

The leading comrades of the OTS - SCHMIDT and HANEWALD - and the other comrades department heads and other comrades have invested a lot of time shared many experiences on the structure and organization of the OTS with us. Therefore, at this point I would like to sincerely thank the direction of the OTS and the various other comrades with whom we have cooperated.

We still have the following requests:

The establishment of the technical basis is of utmost importance for our security services, because now we have to fight against the American imperialists who make use of very modern technology. This struggle is not only difficult now, but will also continue to be difficult in the future. The fight against the imperialist agents and secret services is already tense in peacetime, during war, however, it is much more tense. We have prepared different options for the establishment of the technological basis.

a) in case peace will come.

b) in case war continues.

In any case we have to build our institutions quickly to cope with the fight. When building up we have to carry out various tasks and solve various problems.

+ in financial terms

+ construction of buildings

+ training of cadres

The financial problem has been solved with the help of the government of the GDR, our ministry will receive part [of it]. Therefore, we now have to correctly use the money to purchase the right equipment, construct the buildings in an appropriate way and to train the cadres correctly, therefore I ask for help in the following issues:

1. Our order.

The comrades of the Mdl [Ministry of Interior] have prepared an order list. The OTS as well. The Mdl will send its lists to the MfS, the complete lists will then be sent to the Ministry of Foreign Trade. As I have told the comrades SCHMIDT and HANEWALD we are interested in receiving this equipment completely with due regard to the tropical conditions. Moreover, we would like to receive spare parts, so that later we would not have any problems. I also ask for operating and assembly instructions, that means the technical documentation.

As we have discussed I ask to talk with the comrades for foreign trade, in order to get the prices and time of delivery to adjust the list of orders in case that the financial means do not suffice. If there is a chance, I would ask to talk to the Minister of Foreign Trade so that he will carry out our orders well. I have received a telex from [our] Minister saying that we still have to solve the following problems: the issue of prices, the time of delivery and the issue of transport. Only then [after solving these

problems] we should return home. Therefore, I ask you to help me solving these problems.

2. Planning of the buildings.

We receive the equipment – machines and devices – from the GDR, therefore it would be the best if you would also help us with planning [the construction of the building]. If this is not possible, we ask you to give us the technical documentation so that the Vietnamese architects can prepare a design [of the planned building].

3. Training of cadres

If we have the equipment and the buildings we also need trained cadres. Therefore, we ask you to help us training cadres. We will choose good cadres. We also frankly have to ask you to cover the expenses for the cadres. If there is a possibility that you train cadres for us then please tell us also when the comrades could come and which formalities have to be made so that they can come here.

The American imperialists are intensifying their war in Vietnam. They say that they want peace, but actually intensify the war. As you know lately the Americans have started a large-scale peace offensive, in reality, however, they have intensified the war. They do it like the Hitler fascists and the Japanese imperialists – they pillage and kill. They have started bombing North Vietnam. The Americans always say that they want unconditional negotiations, in reality [however] with condition that mean our people should surrender and that American troops stay in South Vietnam so that they can support the puppet government there. [...] We cannot accept these conditions; our whole population is determined to keep on fighting until the end. We will not allow that they can continue their aggressive policy. We also know that they will also attack the other fraternal countries [meaning Cambodia and Laos] if they prevail over us. In this complicated struggle our state security institutions [also] have military tasks, but their main task is to fight against the imperialist security services.

As I have told you during our first meeting, our situation is very complicated, therefore we ask you to help us in our fight – in particular in terms of technology. Your assistance will be very important for us, because it will reinforce our fighting capacity and so will spare the sacrifice of our people

At the end, I would like to sincerely thank you that you have given me the opportunity to meet you and express our wishes.

Comrade Minister:

We have tried to help you – as much as we could – for two reasons:

We fight together with our Vietnamese comrades against American imperialism. Our proletarian duty requires us to do all to support this struggle, particularly in the current situation when the Americans have continued their bombardments. As Communists we have a strong interest in the victory of the Vietnamese comrades. Of course you can only fight if you have a certain combat power. As the American imperialists are a dangerous and strong enemy, our party and government have decided that the GDR does all it can to support the struggle of the Vietnamese people. This is in line with the attitude of our party and our government on the ideas of Marxism-Leninism and with the attitude of all its cadres.

When we provide assistance we provide it as a contribution and an expression of our proletarian internationalist duty. Our strength is not that [big] that we can provide help to say that tomorrow we can defeat the American imperialists. I think if every socialist country and the other friendly countries provide such assistance it will make a contribution to victory. We are aware of the seriousness of your fight and know that you have to carry the main burden and have to fight. The support is useful and good,

but the Vietnamese people have to carry the main burden on its own, because it has to fight for its life, although in the GDR there are quite a few who are prepared to risk their lives in Vietnam.

Our support is based on our unanimous attitude, on the socialist idea and our struggle.

Therefore we have tried to do all to meet your requests in accordance to the letter of your Minister. Therefore in conclusion I would like to say with reference to this main question - I have studied what has been done and therefore have also told Comrade TIEN that he should tell his Minister what he has done and that my comrades have to report to me.

Based on my study of the work results I can say that we have honestly tried to show what we have, except a few issues that could not be shown solely because of the secret deployment uses of the devices. Otherwise everything has been shown. We have not shown those things that are still being developed because we still do not know yet what significance they might have.

Perhaps it is not important, perhaps it will be important in one or two years when you come back. We have already handed over a part of the requested equipment, [and] part of the documentation as well. A part of the technology that we obtain and purchase ourselves with West Mark has been handed over. We have bought these things with convertible currency. We will also continue to provide technical equipment that the MfS [Ministry of State Security] can produce itself according to its production capacity. We have received your lists, I have two comments. A part of the requests can only be met if we know that there are people who can master this technology. Therefore, we are expecting your cadres who will take over this technology, so they can tell us whether this technology can also be used under the conditions in Vietnam. The second comment is that the technology is not necessary in the previous extent. Technology only becomes outdated if it is not used. Apart from that nobody can possibly provide such a quantity. The best [security] apparatus cannot make use of so much technology. We are prepared to give everything in every respect on the following conditions:

- a) availability of the respective cadres
- b) applicability [of the technology] under its conditions

We will give you the technology that is bought with foreign currency as a present. If you have ordered only a few [devices], it is your business. We will send you the technical instructions as soon as we have got them and as far as it is our technology.

We will merge the lists of the Mdl [Ministry of Interior] with our lists so that our Ministry of Foreign Trade delivers quickly. Of course, I am not always sure how many capacities we have, we will check this and will help in any case. The one or other good might undergo a change. It must not be necessarily a bad good, such cases can also occur.

We agree with sending cadres about whom we have already discussed [for training] in certain fields. It is also possible to send two or three comrades [for training] in metal working. You already know the length of the training [courses], I agree. The GDR will cover the expenses of the training courses. Don't be angry with me, but it is your fault that we only train so few [cadres]. I have to declare that we have lost six years. Exactly six years ago I had forwarded a proposal to your Minister that we want to train specialists, as [Ministry of] State security we were prepared to help in time. We will check carefully when we can deliver, the means of shipment, the shipment of

spare parts etc. and will send you the respective information.

For me the questions of project planning are difficult [to answer]. We prefer to provide you with the information so you plan yourself in Vietnam. It is done this way because one cannot plan here without knowing the place.

Another comment on cooperation: Comrade TIEN said that you have gained valuable experiences. I thank you for this assessment also on behalf of our staff members.

We have the following proposal which we would ask you to assess. I would be very thankful for an early reply. If it is possible we would like to send two cadres of operational departments [to Vietnam] in order to learn more about this difficult struggle of the Vietnamese people, to gain experiences and to be able to improve our work further, to gain experiences in the field of operational and military activities of [the Ministry] of State Security. Furthermore, we would like to send two OTS-specialists [Technical Operations Sector] to study local conditions, so that we can help in a better way. They should study on the spot which technology can be used best. That would be very useful for us. We ask you to reply soon. We ask you to convey our greetings to your Minister and to submit this proposal. I am convinced that then we can provide even better and more efficient assistance.

I share Comrade TIEN's opinion that your stay here has intensified our fighting community.

A military delegation from the DRV will soon arrive in the GDR coming from Warsaw. In this field assistance is provided as well. We are involved because we organize all shipments

The following example shows how the comrades of our Ministry see the issue of support for Vietnam: two days ago there was concert for Vietnam broadcast over radio. The collective population [of the GDR] donated 272.000 Mark 23.000 Mark from members of the MfS [alone]. This shows how our comrades live and sympathize with the struggle of the Vietnamese people. The announcer started the program by thanking the members of the MfS especially for their commitment and their struggle which they wage daily against the enemies of the workers' and farmers' power. This shows the close relationship with your struggle against American imperialism.

The American and imperialists in Bonn want to swallow up the GDR the sooner rather than later. The socialist camp is so strong that with the deterioration of the situation the balance of power has developed in our favor. We know that the American imperialists are deeply committed in Vietnam; nonetheless we as State Security are quite busy every hour and every day. It is not an open war like in your case, but as a communist who is fighting for peace I have to admit that for me this war is enough. In our struggle against imperialism in West Germany against various secret services we try to support the struggle of the Vietnamese comrades.

Although there is no war here our comrades are so eager to fight that many hundreds have volunteered for the mission in Vietnam. I have to mention this so that Comrade TIEN and [name redacted by BSTU] can tell which commitment the staff members of State Security are showing. That is why I mentioned half in earnest half in jest the last six years because our people are so committed although sometimes we cannot do as we would like to. Therefore I thank comrade TIEN for his kind words. Between us I would like to tell that even people from West Berlin came to the state border and have handed over 20 Mark as a solidarity support for Vietnam. This is only meant for you [as a member] of State Security, not for the [North Vietnamese] embassy. That was an IM [unofficial informant] of ours from West Berlin. We have organized that intentionally so that the propaganda also encourages others to do similar things.

When I now say that we will take over the foreign currency that our IM in West Germany has donated for the Vietnamese people you can see how we finance our technical support. We cannot talk about this in public. You can only tell this to State Security, the Party and the government.

So we have many people who are prepared to any kind of assistance.

[...]

Please convey our thanks to Comrade Minister for his presents for me, the deputies, and other staff members. I ask you to convey our battle wishes. We will do all to further support your struggle.

Comrade TIEN

Please allow me to make a few remarks. First thank you for the encouraging words! We have already held the GDR and the state security services in high esteem for a long time and still do so now, because Germany is the home of Marx, Engels, Thälmann and many other leaders of the working class. At home we often said that the socialist camp and the Democratic Republic of Vietnam exist because of the great ideas of Marx and Engels. We have already wanted to get to know the experiences of our fraternal GDR for a long time. We think that in the GDR and the DRV share many common features and many similarities.

Vietnam and Germany are both split into parts. Therefore we believe that as divided states we can understand each other well. We know that you do not only defend the borders of the GDR, but of the whole Socialist camp. That means you also defend the DRV. Therefore, our Party and government still support the struggle of the fraternal GDR. We know that here you face many dangerous enemies. Here you face the West German and the American imperialists and other enemies. We know that you are fighting night and day. We understand that you face many difficulties because West Berlin is located in the middle of the GDR. Therefore, your struggle is ceaseless and very tense though not in open sight. We appreciate the struggle of the comrades of the State Security and also know that this struggle is a huge contribution to the preservation of peace and of the system in the GDR. At home we often say that the GDR - especially the comrades of the MfS - are working very well and hard to fight successfully against the enemy.

We also know that the comrades of the State Security can thwart many provocations of the imperialists. [...]

It is our ardent wish that we could also fight in peace times. However, the imperialists have forced us to wage an armed struggle. We both are fighting for the defense of the Socialist camp - ourselves by waging an open struggle and you by waging a covert struggle. We know that you always follow our struggle and are willing to support us. We have heard that many comrades in the army [the GDR National People's Army] have donated blood.

Comrade Minister:

These donations not only came from the army, but from all parts of the population. Donations come from all parts of the population [,] especially from elder people as well for whom it is certainly a huge sacrifice. That is important. This shows how far the proletarian internationalism is developed in the hearts of the people in the GDR. If we called to arms tomorrow we would have a brigade available that would be prepared to fight just like we were fighting in Spain or as partisans in the Soviet Union.

Comrade TIEN:

In 1959, we already stated that the support of the GDR population is very strong [during his first visit in the GDR].

In 1959, we heard here that the population had collected more than one million Mark within a few days. Now this [support] is even broader and stronger. Every day the embassy receives parcels from the population. We know that the comrades from State Security are heavily involved in these aid programs.

[...]

Comrade Minister:

Once more our sincere thanks for the kind words and the battle wishes. We will analyze these battle wishes and let our IM [unofficial informants] know. We are convinced that this will make them fight even better.

We ask you to convey our battle wishes to the Minister and all members of the security services of your country. We wish you good success in your struggle. We ask you to forward that we here fulfill our proletarian duty and that we are convinced of the unity of our opinions [and] ideas that we will fight successfully and will achieve victory.

[Please] greet the whole Vietnamese people from the comrades of State Security. Your embassy here in the GDR now knows how [the GDR population] stands [with regard to Vietnam].

We will try to clarify the other issues. Comrade Damm will keep contact with you. Please notify us of your departure so we can say goodbye once more.

As personal presents comrade TIEN received from comrade Minister

Comrade TIEN

1 complete photo equipment
[model] Exacta Varez

Comrade [REDACTED]

1 complete microscope

[1] Bruno Beater (1914-1982), Deputy Minister of State Security.

[2] Markus Wolf (1923-2006), Deputy Minister of State Security and Head of the Main Department Intelligence (foreign intelligence division).

[3] Günter Schmid (1929-), Deputy head of the Technical Operations Sector, since 1968 head of the sector.

[4] Manfred Hanewald, Deputy head (?) of the Technical Operations Sector.

[5] Willi Damm (1930-2012), Head of Department X (International Relations).