

E-Dossier Series Nr. 7.

Documentary Evidence

**ON THE HUNGARIAN
MEDIATION EFFORTS BETWEEN
THE U.S. AND THE DEMOCRATIC
REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM
(1965–1967)**

VOLUME V

Post-Mediation Events – Part Two
(September, 1966 – December, 1966)

Edited by

Csaba Békés, James G. Hershberg, János Kemény
and Zoltán Szőke

COLD WAR HISTORY RESEARCH CENTER

BUDAPEST

2020

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About this E-Dossier series

The E-Dossier series presenting the Hungarian mediation efforts between the U.S and the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV) started in 2017 with the aim of shedding light on this still little-known piece of diplomatic history. The first volume, with the subtitle *The Early stages of the Mediation 1965* was published at the end of 2017, containing eight documents, describing the genesis of the diplomatic efforts.

The second volume was published in two parts at the end of 2018, because the amount of material made it advisable to split it into two: *Mediation Efforts Part One* and *Mediation Efforts Part Two*. Part One contains a short report about an ambassadorial meeting and two lengthy documents about the Hungarian efforts, one written to the foreign minister of the Hungarian People's Republic, János Péter by the Hungarian charge d'affaires in Washington, János Radványi, the other being the minutes of the HSWP Politburo meeting covering the issue. Part Two contains 12 documents, covering Hungarian Foreign Ministry documents about communications with the Vietnamese, Polish and U.S. counterparts, as well as reports and minutes covering the issue.

The third volume was published at the end of 2019. It details the post-mediation diplomatic activities of the Hungarians, including some of the exchanges with the Vietnamese, Polish and Soviet partners. The volume contains documents of the Hungarian Foreign Ministry and the leading bodies of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party, detailing communication between the Hungarian and North Vietnamese, the Polish, and the Soviet leadership, as well as Hungarian communication with US officials. It contains information provided to the Hungarian side by the Soviets about their dealings with the DRV, so the volume provides a valuable insight into Hungarian and Soviet Bloc thinking about the Vietnam War.

The current document selection, covering the the second part of the post-mediation efforts (October, 1966 – December, 1966) was completed in 2020. It contains, like the earlier volumes, documents of the Hungarian Foreign Ministry and HSWP documents. For a more detailed overview see the Contents of the Current E-Dossier.

Contents of the current E-Dossier

The current e-dossier contains 10 documents, originating from Hungarian Foreign Ministry and Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party (HSWP) sources. Most prominent among them are reports from the Hungarian Legation in Washington and the Hungarian embassy in Hanoi, which were at the forefront of Hungarian diplomatic efforts.

Document 1 is a rough transcript made by the Hungarian charge d'affairs in Washington, János Radványi about the meeting between Hungarian Foreign Minister János Péter and the US Foreign Secretary Dean Rusk. In it, Foreign Minister Péter makes several statements, in which he tries to give reassurance to his US partner, that he knows the position of the DRV and that there is a possibility for compromise.

Document 2 is a report by the Hungarian charge d'affairs in Washington, János Radványi, forwarded to the Hungarian embassy in Hanoi to be presented personally to Le Duan. In it, Radványi, using also information probably gathered through confidential channels in Washington, provides an overview on the US government's views concerning the planned escalation of the Vietnam War. A striking claim in the report is Washington's alleged willingness to recognize the Oder-Neisse border in case the Soviet Union refrained from increasing its support for the DRV as a retaliation for the escalation.

Document 3 is a rough transcript about a meeting between Ambassador at Large Llewellyn E. Thompson and the Hungarian charge d'affairs in Washington, János Radványi, compiled by Radványi. In it, the two speak about Hungarian Foreign Minister János Péter's press conference, in which he repeated many of the points which he earlier made to Foreign Secretary Rusk, causing much media interest.

Document 4 is a report on the conversation between Ambassador Thompson and charge d'affairs Radványi.

Document 5 is a report from the Hungarian Legation in Washington about the press reactions in the US to the press conference of Foreign Minister Péter. In it, the articles of major newspapers and broadcasts of the biggest networks are detailed.

Document 6 details Soviet information given to the Hungarian Ambassador in Hanoi by the Soviet Ambassador in Hanoi, about the meeting between a high-level Vietnamese delegation and the Soviet leadership in Moscow. The report details some aspects of the Vietnamese–Chinese relationship from the Soviet perspective, as well as Soviet perceptions about the nature of the Vietnamese requests for support, and the analysis of the information provided by the delegation.

Document 7 is a report by Polish Ambassador Lewandowski, who played a major role in the Polish diplomatic efforts parallel to the Hungarian mediation efforts. As a former ambassador to the International Control Commission, he had good contacts to all sides, and thus was an important source for the Hungarians as well. The report describes the Ambassador's views on the military situation in the Republic of Vietnam, the US efforts, as well as his thinking on the coming military action.

Document 8 is a short Foreign Ministry report on the visit of Le Duc Tho to Budapest, in which the Hungarian official in contact with him reports on and tries to interpret some of his comments about the Chinese.

Document 9 is an excerpt from a report about Soviet–Polish talks, in which the topic of Vietnam was also covered.

Document 10 is a HSWP document about the DRV delegation's participation at the 9th Congress of the HSWP, covering the information provided by the delegation. The document details Vietnamese perspectives on the relations with the Chinese Communist Party, the Cultural Revolution, as well as some criticism of the Soviet support to the Democratic Republic of Vietnam.

ABBREVIATIONS

AP	Associated Press
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CC	Central Committee
CCP	Chinese Communist Party
CPSU	Communist Party of the Soviet Union
DRV	Democratic Republic of Vietnam
HSWP	Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party
ICC	International Control Commission
MNL OL	Hungarian National Archive (Magyar Nemzeti Levéltár – Országos Levéltár)
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NBC	National Broadcasting Company
NLF	National Liberation Front
POW	prisoner of war
RVN	Republic of Vietnam
SAM	surface-to-air missile
UN	United Nations
UPI	United Press International
WPV	Workers' Party of Vietnam

DOCUMENT 1

Memorandum on the meeting between Hungarian Foreign Minister János Péter and US
Secretary of State Dean Rusk, 10 October, 1966

340/1966. SC.

Strictly confidential!

Washington, 10 October, 1966

For Comrade JÁNOS P É T E R
Minister of Foreign Affairs
B U D A P E S T.

Subject: Memorandum on the meeting
between comrade Foreign Minister János
Péter and Foreign Under-secretary Rusk

I attached the memorandum on the meeting between comrade Péter and Rusk on the 6 October, 1966.

/János Radványi/
charge d'affaires

MEMORANDUM

On the meeting between comrade
Foreign Minister János Péter and
Secretary of State Rusk.

On 6 October, 1966, after preliminary discussions, the meeting between comrade Foreign Minister János Péter, and Secretary Rusk took place in the building of the American mission operating next to the UN. At the meeting, from the American side Nils, the secretary of Rusk, and from the Hungarian side comrade Radványi were present. /During our meeting last week Goldberg said, that he also hoped to be present at the discussion./ The memorandum was compiled by comrade Radványi, and he coordinated it with Nils for full clarity.

After exchanging a couple of general pleasantries at the beginning, the following conversation took place:

Rusk: I would like to ask, how long are you planning to stay in the United States this time?

comr. Péter: I do not exactly know it yet, I am preparing for my speech at the General Assembly, which I will foreseeably give sometime in the next one and a half to two weeks.

Rusk: If your schedule allows you to look around in the United States, it would be a great pleasure for me, if you as my guest, in a strictly informal way, would take a trip in the United States, of course, only in case your time and other commitments make this possible.

comr. Péter: Thank you for the invitation. I would like to revisit this later, as my schedule depends on multiple external circumstances.

Rusk: I would like to express our appreciation and gratitude for your interest in the issue of Vietnam, and the actions of your government related to that. At this point, I would like to ask you for your perspective on the settlement of the issue.

comr. Péter: I would also like to ask you for your thoughts on the solution, your way out of this difficult and increasingly dangerous situation.

Rusk: I would prefer, if we agreed right at the start of this conversation, that we will talk completely openly and honestly, so that we can clearly understand each other's thoughts, and everything that is behind them.

comr. Péter: I agree. /Note: During the conversation, Rusk returned to this remark twice, and emphasized, that on his part he will speak completely openly and honestly, which may sound a bit harsh sometimes, but he believes, that due to the seriousness of the issue, using the most accurate phrases is a must, in order to assess the situation, to recognize the real intentions, and to avoid misunderstandings. Comrade Péter agreed with this./

Rusk: We acknowledge, that the socialist world is interested in the security, and prosperity of North Vietnam. There is no disagreement between us, and the socialist bloc in this area. At the same time, it is necessary for the socialist world to acknowledge, that the United States is interested in the security of South Vietnam. The separation line has to be at the 17. parallel. However, due to our commitments, we cannot accept, that North Vietnam interferes in the matters of South Vietnam. We accept the principles of the 1954, and the 1962 Geneva Agreements, the declaration of the Warsaw Pact related to Vietnam made in July, but we can only accept a settlement based on reciprocity. However, we cannot

accept the infiltration from the North, and that North Vietnam wants to force its will onto South Vietnam. The suggestion, that the United States wants a solution that would allow them to save face, so they can leave Vietnam, is false. There's no talk of that. Please, do not take this as a threat, but as a statement of actual facts.

We do not want to bomb North Vietnam, or to occupy it militarily, or to change the political system there. At the same time, our goal is to create a situation, where South Vietnam can decide its own fate. But currently, there are 19 North Vietnamese regiments in South Vietnam, the location of which are completely known to us, by the way, and numerous of them have been captured as prisoners of war. These 19 regiments have to return home, otherwise the war will continue. Hanoi has got to understand this. The resupply, and the infiltration also has to stop.

If the flow of people and war material from the North to the South stops, the issue will be resolved immediately, as we are also prepared to withdraw our troops from South Vietnam. I would like to emphasize, that we do not wish to force our will onto North Vietnam, but neither should North Vietnam wish to force its will onto South Vietnam. We accept the principles of 1954 and 1962 as a basis for negotiations. We are trying to understand the delicate situation of Hanoi, and our assessment is, that the Hanoi government is afraid to meet and negotiate with us because of Beijing. I believe that you, Mr. Péter, are also unable to speak on behalf of Hanoi.

comr. Péter: What makes this issue fundamentally problematic, is that even the minimum amount of trust is lacking, which would be required to start negotiations, and Hanoi has every reason to be suspicious about the intentions of the United States. Moves related to the United States happen constantly, which increase the suspicion again and again, like the conference in Manila, and the current Far East trip of the President of the United States. This will increase the tensions between the Far East nations and continue to deepen the distrust.

Rusk: The Manila Conference is not going to be a war-council. Anyway, Hanoi gets visited by the delegations of the socialist bloc and has meetings about the issue of the Vietnam War, so a coordinating meeting by the Americans side is not objectable.

comr. Péter: The US conference in Manila will give the impression of a war-council, that it wants to establish a system in South Vietnam like it did in South Korea for example, or the ones in the other visited countries. Incidentally, the situation has worsened in my opinion compared to the past, and the perspectives of evolution have weakened.

Rusk: Hanoi wants to establish a government, or system in South Vietnam, that is suitable for them, but would not allow the creation of a coalition government in North Vietnam, that would be friendly to the West. Hanoi's stance is that it can force its will onto the South, but the South does not have a say in North's business.

comr. Péter: Hanoi is under constant attack and threats, under both military and political pressure. The bombings have intensified, and they delay and make any kind of solution harder. At the start of the last bombing pause, the matters looked good. The military actions in the South were also starting to decrease. However, simultaneously with the suspension of the bombings, the American troop deployments increased. The American propaganda campaign was also harmful.

Rusk: Which propaganda campaign do you have in mind?

comr. Péter: Harriman's "well publicised trips", for example.

Rusk: We were forced to send troops, because our intelligence reported that during the suspension, the infiltration of men and material originating from North Vietnam has doubled, and it had to be countered. Hanoi has to understand, that it cannot get South Vietnam by force. It can take it for granted, that the United States will prevent it by every tool at its disposal, whatever happens. They can also be certain, that if the North Vietnamese go home, meaning withdrawing their troops, we will do so as well.

comr. Péter: I am sure, that North Vietnam is not interested in conquering South Vietnam by force. At the same time, it is interested in the future of South Vietnam.

Rusk: This is an incredibly important statement. I have not heard this before. This is an incredibly essential moment. We understand that Hanoi is really afraid of Beijing, and therefore does not want to negotiate directly with us. We, from the American side understand it, this is life. Therefore, we suggest, that a third party,

or person, should negotiate in the name of Hanoi in a really confidential manner, or mediate, so that Beijing can be circumvented¹.

comr. Péter: The situation of Hanoi is by default special, but in my opinion, it is in a position to negotiate, if it deems it necessary.

Rusk: We constantly try to keep up contacts with Hanoi, and once we sent them a message, that we are ready to negotiate about the so-called 4 points, but suggested to replace the third of the 4 points, that says, that the matters of South Vietnam should be regulated based on the program of the Liberation Front, with one that says that the future of South Vietnam should be decided based on the aspirations of the South Vietnamese people.

comr. Péter: I am certain that Hanoi agrees that the future of South Vietnam should be decided by the people of South Vietnam. The South Vietnamese Front is talking about a coalition government, in which all ideological layers of the population are represented.

Rusk: We also agree with a neutral, non-aligned South Vietnamese system, if that is the result of the elections. But why does Hanoi want to have a say in what kind of system will take shape in South Vietnam?

comr. Péter: It is understandable, that the Democratic Republic of Vietnam is not indifferent as to whether South Vietnam has a system, which serving as a base for the US, could threaten the DRV any time. In this context, the Democratic Republic of Vietnam and the US are using the same phrases: independence, neutrality. But their interpretation differs. The US means a neutral government friendly to the West, the Democratic Republic of Vietnam means a government that sympathizes with them.

Rusk: The problem is that Hanoi is unwilling to negotiate. We did not get an answer to our proposal about the third point. We suggested to have free elections in the South. We will accept the result of the elections, even if the people of South Vietnam elect a communist government, which I personally do not believe they will.

comr. Péter: Hanoi thinks the same. It accepts free elections, but not in the presence of American troops.

¹ emphasis in the original

Rusk: We are also prepared to negotiate about this. If they withdraw their troops, we will follow suit. This should be negotiated.

comr. Péter: As long as the bombings continue, it is inconceivable, that Hanoi would negotiate. It would be capitulation.

Rusk: The US side has not bombed North Vietnam for years, later the bombing was suspended multiple times. Every time it happened, and at other times as well, they asked the question, what will happen, if the bombings stop? What is going to be the next step? No one has answered that question yet. It would be a great help, if someone could get Hanoi's opinion on this.

comr. Péter: The cessation of bombing could pave the way towards the solution of this issue, by improving the atmosphere.

Rusk: During the previous 37-day long pause, Hanoi increased the infiltration efforts, not only at night, but during daytime as well. Hundreds of trucks were transferring men and war material from the North to the South.

comr. Péter: The Americans also increased the military transfer of both men and war materials during the pause.

Rusk: Today we have reached a point, where Hanoi is sending its troops and war material through the demilitarized zone, and it operates two of its divisions inside the demilitarized zone. North Vietnam has crossed the 17. parallel, we have not, but if we did it would mean war. It is a one-way street. De-escalation is only possible on a bilateral basis. I would like you to understand our position perfectly. Out of military necessities, we are forced to bomb the resupply lines, so our troops can fight the North Vietnamese units from a more favourable position. We are responsible for the life of our men, who are also under constant attack. Every government that feels responsible for the security, and life of their own troops, would do the same as we do in Vietnam.

comr. Péter: And what will happen, if the escalation continues?

Rusk: De-escalation is also a possibility. We proposed it to Hanoi, but we got no reply.

comr. Péter: The bombing pause cannot be considered as a one-sided concession. If there were no US troops in Vietnam, no one would attack them. Anyway, arguing about the past and the present is pointless. No solution can be found that way. We should look forward. Last week I asked Ambassador Goldberg, if there was anything new in what he said at the General Assembly meeting, he said no. I also

ask you, Mr. Secretary, if you have any new proposal regarding the solution of the issue? From our part, we are ready to look into it in the most serious way.

Rusk: It is really hard to propose anything new. But somehow, in the most discreet way possible, we should find a solution, so our representative can negotiate with Hanoi's representative, or with someone who can talk on behalf of Hanoi. If we could at least see any sign, that Hanoi wants a peaceful solution. An example would be, if our aerial reconnaissance would detect the cessation of supply runs by truck from North to South.

comr. Péter: The first step has to be made by the United States. The key to the solution is in your hands. You have to end the bombings. Hanoi has to be given a guarantee, that the United States has honest intentions, it has to be guaranteed, that the United States will withdraw its troops from South Vietnam. The negotiations regarding Algiers could also only commence after France gave a guarantee in advance, about granting independence and the withdrawal of its troops.

Rusk: Guaranteeing the withdrawal of our troops is easy, we have already done so, President Johnson offered a timetable for the withdrawal of US troops in a public speech. We are willing to consider making the first move, but someone has to tell us with great certainty, what will be the answer from Hanoi. The central question is whether Hanoi is ready to come to an agreement based on respecting the 17. parallel, or not. This is essential.

comr. Péter: I am convinced that Hanoi is ready to respect the 17. parallel.

Rusk: This is incredibly important. This is the first time I hear this. This is really important, and new. Due to the importance and the gravity of this issue, I would like to – if you allow – ask if it is your own opinion, or Hanoi's?

comr. Péter: I am convinced, that this is the opinion of Hanoi.

Rusk: In this case, Hanoi has to withdraw its troops towards the North, and we will ship out to the East, towards the Pacific Ocean.

comr. Péter: The first step has to be made by the United States. A new situation would emerge, if the United States would cease the bombings, and started to withdraw a few of its divisions from South Vietnam.

Rusk: Alright, but would Hanoi be willing to sit down to negotiate?

comr. Péter: In my opinion, this could pave the ways towards that.

Rusk: It would be really important. However, unfortunately, Beijing is not interested in the peaceful solution of the South Vietnamese situation neither on theoretical, nor on practical grounds.

comr. Péter: Maybe under certain conditions, Beijing would be interested in a solution.

Rusk: If Beijing is concerned because the American bases in South Vietnam are affecting its security interests, we understand this, and we can assure them, that we do not pose a threat to them. But if they want to dictate the internal political system of South Vietnam, and control the situation, that we categorically oppose, and will not allow it to happen.

comr. Péter: What kind of guarantees could the United States provide, that it will in fact leave South Vietnam, and give up its military bases there?

Rusk: To give guarantees like that is easy, if North Vietnam is also willing to withdraw its troops. We made this pledge publicly as well. We are willing to take the risk of withdrawing our troops. But what would happen if we withdrew some of our units, and stopped the bombings?

comr. Péter: The possibility of the start of negotiations would occur.

Rusk: The infiltration would continue.

comr. Péter: I do not think so.

Rusk: The US government is under the impression, that North Vietnam was promised in 1954, that if it signs the Geneva Accords, it will later get South Vietnam anyway. Hanoi now feels that it has been deceived.

comr. Péter: Who promised it?

Rusk: Certain socialist countries. Hanoi may also be afraid, that if it starts to negotiate, the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam will collapse, or the morale of the Viet Cong may decrease. We cannot help with that however, that is their problem.

comr. Péter: Hanoi would like to know your take on the development of the future events.

Rusk: It would be great to negotiate with Hanoi, primarily, that on what grounds could the independence of South Vietnam be guaranteed. If South Vietnam's independence could be granted based on the respect of the South Vietnamese people's right to self-determination, a peaceful solution could be reached.

comr. Péter: Hanoi also wishes to settle the issue on the same basis.

Rusk: As long as there are 19 Northern Vietnamese regiments in the South, this is not possible. Let us leave together. This has got to be negotiated.

comr. Péter: The US presence is a good deal bigger.

Rusk: This is due to the nature of the guerrilla warfare.

comr. Péter: Hanoi cannot be expected to react positively to the offers of negotiation, until the bombings are ongoing. Before the bombings, the US did not offer negotiations.

Rusk: We had to face disappointment in the case of Laos as well, because, together with North Vietnam and Beijing, we have signed the treaty guaranteeing the neutrality of Laos, but North Vietnam still has not, even to this day, withdrawn its 6 thousand troops stationed there, it does not allow the International Control Commission to supervise the territory controlled by Patet Leo, because it uses this territory as a base for resupply-network for the men and war material sent to South Vietnam.

We have not even got any empty, meaningless proposals from Hanoi, neither during the 5 days, nor during the 37 days long bombing pauses. After the 34. day, Hanoi recognised the 4. and 5. points.

comr. Péter: The 37 days long bombing pause had a good effect initially. We wanted to take it seriously.

Rusk: We value greatly your immense support during this time, and we know, that several socialist countries also made efforts to reach a peaceful settlement.

comr. Péter: I am authorized to inform you, that if you have a serious new initiative, my government is ready to look at it seriously.

Rusk: It is really hard to make new offers, especially, if the other side is not even willing to negotiate. At the same time, the United States is obligated to support South Vietnam based on the SEATO Treaty from 1955. Subsequent to this, North Vietnam openly declared, that it will attack South Vietnam, and it followed through. The infiltration of troops commenced.

comr. Péter: It is really hard to tell who is Northern and who is Southern in Vietnam.

Rusk: That is true, but Hanoi knows whom it sent to the South.

comr. Péter: As long is Vietnam is under pressure, it cannot negotiate. Solving the Vietnamese issue is really important, because it affects, and overshadows the whole international political climate.

Rusk: That is completely true. The solution may be the 17. parallel, if the North Vietnamese also agree with that.

comr. Péter: You can be certain of that.

Rusk: What you just said is exceptionally important, if this is Hanoi's position. Are you aware of the gravity of this issue, and the seriousness of possible consequences of any misunderstandings regarding it?

comr. Péter: I am speaking under the full weight of personal, and official responsibility. I am aware of the kind of impactful decisions, which depend on you.

Rusk: We are afraid, that Hanoi is miscalculating the American determination. They mistake us for the French.

comr. Péter: Hanoi is not miscalculating.

Rusk: We are afraid that Hanoi misunderstood the election campaign of President Johnson in 1964, and believed, that we will not honour our commitments regarding South Vietnam. The 325th regiment infiltrated South Vietnam prior to the start of the American bombings. This is why I think that North Vietnam misunderstands our determination.

comr. Péter: I'm convinced, that there is no such misunderstanding.

Rusk: Our main problem is that the American public opinion is very impatient. They want the President to do more, to deploy more troops to Vietnam, to finish the war as soon as he can. President Johnson has been able to resist bravely so far, so it is important that Hanoi evaluates the American domestic situation accordingly.

I do not wish to embarrass you with unpleasant questions but knowing whether what you told us is your personal impression, or the position of Hanoi, would be really important for us.

comr. Péter: I am speaking with deep personal and official responsibility, based on appropriate information.

Rusk: You should not be possibly misleading us right now. Our grave problem is, that if we stopped the bombings yet again, but nothing else would happen in response, it would have serious consequences. President Johnson has been able to control the situation so far, but if nothing would happen after the bombing pause, the wrath of the American people would blow him away, and it would have unpredictable consequences. So, we need to know, that after the bombing pause, something will happen.

comr. Péter: I am certain the American public and the whole world would welcome an honourable end to the war.

Rusk: Yes, that is true. As I said last year, I am going to take into the most serious Presbyterian consideration what you just told me.

comr. Péter: Please, accept my deepest condolences regarding the unexpected death of your charge d'affaires to Budapest.

Rusk: Thank you for expressing your condolences.

comr. Péter: I was informed of his death just as I was leaving. I knew that he had problems with his heart, but I did not know his condition was this severe.

Rusk: We also have to talk about bilateral relations. The most important thing in this respect is the improvement of trade. Unfortunately, the House of Representatives was not willing to introduce the Most Favoured Nation bill due to the legislative elections, but it looks likely, that after the elections, the bill can be approved by both houses of Congress.

comr. Péter: When will this practically happen?

Rusk: Mills, the Chairman of the House of Representatives' Ways and Means Committee, made a promise in the last few days, that he is going to put the bill forward after the elections, and the debate on it can take place early next year. Until then, the Administration is trying to facilitate East-West trade. Unfortunately, Vietnam is influencing the atmosphere around this topic negatively as well. However, I hope, that our efforts will yield results, even if only limited ones. But in general, the atmosphere between the two countries has improved.

comr. Péter: Mr. Rusk, do you want to send an Ambassador, or a charge d'affaires to Budapest?

Rusk: I cannot answer right now, the Mindszenty issue is causing a bit of a problem. We should get rid of this old bone stuck in our throat. Namely, the Ambassador has to be approved by the Senate, and until the Mindszenty issue exists, that will be hard to achieve in the Senate. This issue should be solved by the Vatican.

comr. Péter: We are ready to take the matter into consideration, but our impression is that it is not in the interest of the Vatican to solve this issue right now, because the current situation suits them best. It would only cause confusion in Rome. We are in contact with the Vatican, and we think that the US should put the Vatican under pressure.

Rusk: I promise that I will re-examine the whole Mindszenty issue.

Note: At the end of the conversation, Rusk returned to the issue of Vietnam, and said the following:

Rusk: The following would be really important: that the representatives of Hanoi and Washington should meet confidentially and clear the issues through a direct conversation.

comr. Péter: Once the bombings stop, such an option is a conceivable possibility.

Rusk: The reason why we need confidentiality, is that in our opinion, Hanoi is not free to act, as it fears Beijing. Anyway, I would like to ask your opinion as to what is actually going on in Beijing?

I know that something very important is happening there, but I do not know what exactly.

comr. Péter: The issue is really complex. But you would know more, if you had diplomatic representation in Beijing.

Rusk: We are in a more intensive diplomatic dialogue with Beijing than any other country.

It would be really important now, to facilitate a secret, direct negotiation between the representatives of the United States and Hanoi.

Note: At this point comrade Péter stood up, thanked for the conversation, Rusk assured comrade Péter that he will take into careful consideration all the things he told him, that he thought were really important. After this, Rusk accompanied Péter from his office room to the elevator and said goodbye.

[Source: MNL-OL XIX-J-1-j-USA-IV-135-005244/1966 (15.d.),

translated by Dániel Kocsis]

DOCUMENT 2

Report by János Radványi on the American evaluation of world politics and on a series of high-level meetings in the White House on the main thrust of American policy until the summer of 1968
October 16, 1966

Strictly Confidential

005140/1966.

Forwarding the letter of
comrade Komócsin to
comrade Le Duan

Embassy

To be opened personally by comrade Pehr,

HANOI.

ccc Attachment: 2 items

We are sending attached comrade Komócsin's letter addressed to comrade Le Duan and the accompanying information sheet.

Sadly, we haven't had time at the Department for the translation of the material. Therefore, we ask comrade Ambassador that they translate the letter and the accompanying text into French and to attach it to the original text.

If possible, comrade Pehr should personally hand over the letter of comrade Komócsin to comrade Le Duan with the information sheet.

Budapest, 4 November, 1966

/: Sándor Pataki :/
Acting Head of Department

Report by János Radványi on the American evaluation of world politics and on a series of high-level meetings in the White House on the main thrust of American policy until the summer of 1968

According to my sources the period of the past seven weeks was crucial in US politics, because while earlier it has been for months a characteristic that the Johnson government “was biding for time”, delayed decisions on the main issues, and that it could often be heard that everything depends on how the Vietnam War progresses, in this period a series of important decisions were made. This period on the surface was characterised by a singular intensification of contradictions. On the one hand the so-called Asia group got a dominant position in this period which surprisingly was coupled with the US government suddenly beginning to voice the importance of Europe. Concrete plans were made for the expansion of the Vietnam War while simultaneously stressing, time and again, the US government’s dedication and “sincere intent” to mend relations with the Soviet Union. The contradictory nature of the situation is well illustrated by the fact, that the celebratory speech had already been prepared in which President Johnson at the UN General Assembly announces a bombing pause against the DRV for the month of October in order to contribute to the creation of a peaceful settlement, that is, to achieve a propaganda victory, when suddenly everything was withdrawn and the suspension of bombings was linked to conditions in a speech delivered by UN Ambassador Goldberg such as that “the other side” put an end to infiltration from the North and withdraw their “regular units” from South Vietnam. What can explain this stubbornness of the US position, and the overtures to the Soviet Union and East European countries seemingly contradictory to this stubbornness, which in turn seem inconsistent with the fact that the Asia group, intent on achieving military victory in Vietnam by all means possible, has assumed control over US foreign policy?

Parallel to the rise of the Asia group, the report of the State Department to the president on world politics has been completed. This report is ordinarily prepared by the State Department in November at the earliest, and before the comprehensive report is put before the president, a meeting of departmental leaders discusses it and makes recommendations on what foreign policy steps they advise for the coming year. After this the Department of Defense’s department responsible for military planning discusses the recommendations and the foreign policy advisers of the President voice their opinions too. On this occasion, however, the planned

Manila conference, the urgent requests of the military command in Vietnam for larger troop deployments, as well as the developments following the opening of the UN General Assembly, the pressure from US allies, the American efforts for a peaceful settlement in Vietnam, the several international meetings in the White House /the Johnson–Erhard, Johnson–Couve de Mirville and the Johnson–Gromyko discussions/ have necessitated in the opinion of the President the setting aside all previous formalities and accepted “procedures” and that the 1966 report of the State Department be put before the National Security Council directly. Johnson argued when he made this change that on the meetings of the National Security Council, the Secretary of Defense and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff are present anyways, as well as the foreign policy advisers of the President, and the director of the Central Intelligence Agency /CIA/. This way this document of crucial importance can receive an operational discussion at the “necessary level”.

The report on the state of world affairs was presented by Secretary of State Rusk at the National Security Council. This report, which at the National Security Council meeting was supplemented by Rostow, the president’s special advisor, on the matters of US–Soviet and Sino–American relations, and by McNamara on the military aspects of the Vietnam War, consisted of several chapters. The main thesis of the report was that the decisive nature of the United States response in 1966 in repelling the Vietnamese “communist aggression” was correct. The US policy of escalation, during every step of which, with the necessary firmness, South Vietnam was supported in “repelling the communist threat”, had the following effects:

1. Enhanced the standing of the United States globally and showed that the US government is not afraid to use its military force in service of fulfilling the obligations it took on itself. A decisive turn has been achieved in Asia, where under the Eisenhower Administration the advance of communism had been a real threat, and it had seemed that it was the most disadvantageous terrain for the United States in the global struggle against communism. The consolidation of this position, as well as the further expansion of the US influence in Asia at the Manila conference is to be expected.
2. Successful execution of the US escalatory policy in Vietnam, and the fact that both Beijing and Moscow are deterred from confronting the US challenge and their inability to provide effective protection to the DRV against US air strikes had several consequences.
 - a. As a consequence, the Asian footholds of the communist world movement have been visibly shaken.
 - b. Disturbances and confusion have taken hold in North Vietnam.

- c. Among the forces of the Viet Cong the belief in the absolute victory of communism has decreased, the number of deserters from the communist forces has increased.
 - d. The Saigon regime's position and prestige have been strengthened reflecting the increase of US prestige. Their most characteristic manifestation is the success of the South Vietnamese elections in September and the fact that broad sections of the population participated in these elections despite all the terroristic acts of the Viet Cong.
 - e. Disturbances and confusion have taken hold of the European "communist countries" as well, and this presents an opportunity for the acceleration of nationalistic desires and the strengthening of tendencies towards independence / Romania etc. /
 - f. The Sino-Soviet rift has widened as a result of this issue.
3. There have been no improvements in the US relations with the Western European allies. The revival of Western European nationalisms which manifests itself primarily in anti-Americanism will be counterbalanced by the battlefield successes in Vietnam of the near future, and in this improvement the consolidation of US leadership in Western Europe must undoubtedly be reflected.
 4. There has already been a turn in favour of the United States in the Vietnam military situation. It is merely a question of time and sending reinforcements of men and material before this success becomes self-evident. This victory will be achieved when following the congressional elections of this year, the military leadership receives everything in terms of manpower and material support, which are necessary for the victory, and US diplomacy works to support the US military inasmuch as it is creating the international conditions of this victory.

The report was later discussed at several high-level meetings in the White House, and after McNamara's eighth visit to Vietnam had taken place and the discussions had been conducted with Erhard, Couve de Mirville and Gromyko and the date for the president's Australia and Asia trip had passed as well, a final discussion was held in the White House in which agreement was reached about the principal theoretical and practical direction of American policy until the summer of 1968. The end date is summer 1968 because the campaign for the presidential elections will start in that year, in which, as it stands, Johnson will stand for

re-election. On the other hand, they are anticipating the “victory” in Vietnam by this date, so that the presidential campaign could be fought under the slogan of this “victory”.

The main line states that in the current situation the Vietnam War has to be pursued until final victory, because the other side cannot be expected to give up the option of achieving its aims on the battlefields in favour of nonviolent concessions or capitulation. US policy has to be stiffened in the following period, because the fortunes of war are on their side, and can only enter negotiations about a peaceful settlement following a complete surrender. According to this, bombings can not be paused, at most agreeing to

1. widen the roughly 30 mile tacitly created zone “exempt from bombing” on the China–North Vietnam border to avoid the risk of direct clashes with China.
2. It will be possible to concentrate bombings on the territory of the DRV around the demilitarized zone as a “concession”, since “infiltration” has slowed on the previously used Ho Chi Minh trail and shifted gradually to the demilitarised zone through which it continues.
3. A complete bombing pause can be ordered only if the DRV stops infiltration into South Vietnam and the US government receives proof that the DRV has initiated the withdrawal of regular units which have earlier infiltrated South Vietnam.

The main argument is that in the current situation, knowing of the previous behaviour of Beijing, the position of Hanoi and the restrictions on Soviet policy, “the communist aggression” is impossible to repel in any other way but by military means – as stated by the principal argument. – In this situation the only possible exit is through winning a military victory. In order for the Department of Defense of the United States to be able to make the full military efforts necessary in the following one and a half years:

- a. China must be assured that the United States does not intend to threaten the security of China. Accordingly, to make a friendly gesture towards China, President Johnson has snubbed the invitation of Chiang Kai-shek [Jiang Jieshi] to extend his current Australia–Asia trip to Taiwan.
- b. Efforts have to be made meanwhile to uphold the status quo in other parts of the world. Accordingly, friendly relations with the Soviet Union have to be pursued and through it the security of the United States must be ensured in a very delicate situation where the bulk of its forces are tied down in Asia, so that no surprises come from the direction of Europe. It would be applaudable to reach an agreement on “reciprocal withdrawals” which on the one hand would enable the United States to redeploy a part of its forces

tied down in Western Europe to Vietnam. If an agreement could be reached on this with the Soviet Union, mutual withdrawal of Soviet troops would be desirable for the US, also because that would certainly contribute to the growth of independence desires in Eastern European countries.

The government of the Soviet Union would, on the one hand, have to be assured for the sake of achieving this

- a. that the bombing of the DRV serves the sole purpose of interdicting the paths of infiltration from the North and that the US government, if the Soviet government so desires, is prepared to commit itself in a solemn declaration that it does not intend to topple the socialist political system of the DRV, nor attack North Vietnamese sovereignty. And it is prepared to affirm the inviolability of the airspace of the DRV the moment Northern infiltration ceases, and the Northern regular units are withdrawn from the South;
- b. that the Vietnam War is one thing, and the efforts of the United States to constantly improve its relations with the Soviet Union is a separate issue. That despite the Vietnam War there could be issues – stopping the proliferation of nuclear weapons, peaceful use of outer space etc. – in which the Vietnam War cannot be an obstacle to agreement. Indeed, perhaps agreement on these issues would help create the environment which moves a peaceful settlement in Vietnam forward;
- c. that the American government is ready to make concessions too, elsewhere, if for the sake of military victory in Vietnam the level of Soviet involvement could stay at current levels or decrease. If the Soviet government takes no countermeasures in response to further escalation, during which the US side guarantees the restriction of intensified bombing only to South Vietnam and the DRV regions neighbouring the demilitarized zone, accepting even the cost of loosening and destabilizing NATO alliance, as well as sending their relations with the Bonn government to a nadir. They are prepared to make the following two concessions:
 1. they would recognise the Oder–Neisse line;
 2. they would narrow the West German participation in the right to dispose over nuclear weapons in the NATO framework to a symbolic participation in the McNamara committee.

There can be further talk of concessions of an economic nature as well. This was hinted at in the president's speech and press conference.

This "insurance" would enable execution of a military plan code-named Operation Victory until the summer of 1968, in which until March 1967 the number of US soldiers fighting in the Vietnam War would be increased to 415,000 and would block infiltration from the north. Then until 15 September, 1967 the number of US soldiers in South Vietnam would be increased to 615,000, and in this period would secure the Mekong Delta region, rich in rice fields. Then in the summer of 1968 the final pacification operation would commence, destroying the remnants of the freedom fighters.

According to my sources these plans have been generally accepted at a series of discussions at the highest level in the White House, and decisions regarding only details and scheduling remain to be worked out.

Washington, 16 October, 1966

[Source: MNL-OL XIX-J-1-j-Vietn.-IV-43-005140/1966 112. d.]

DOCUMENT 3

Memorandum on the Thompson–Radványi Meeting

24 October, 1966

Strictly confidential!

5 copies made

Memorandum

on the Thompson – Radványi meeting.

On the 24 October, 1966 the secretariat of Ambassador Thompson called the Legation by phone. They asked comrade Radványi that if the proposed schedule was suitable for him, to visit the office of Thompson in the State Department on the same day at 11:30 am.

During the discussion the following was said:

Thompson: Is there any new information since Secretary Rusk last spoke with Foreign Minister Péter? UPI's latest report on the official position of Beijing and an Eastern European journalist's interview with Pham Van Dong show that there has been no change in the position of either Beijing or Hanoi.

Radványi: I have no new information, nor a new message from the Foreign Minister Péter.

Thompson: I would like to enquire about the circumstances under which Foreign Minister Péter's press conference took place.

Radványi: It was the UN journalists themselves who invited Foreign Minister Péter to the UN's regular press luncheon, who had accepted the invitation and afterwards answered the questions of the journalists.

Thompson: The journalists have found the press conference of extreme interest. But how can we interpret what has been said there? Within the State Department only four of us have known of these matters. We ordinarily treat such matters confidentially.

Radványi: My experience differed sometimes.

Thompson: When did Foreign Minister Péter leave New York?

Radványi: On Friday evening.

Thompson: Did he travel directly home?

- Radványi: Yes, and he has since arrived home.
- Thompson: If there is any new message in the future, please, inform me.
- Radványi: Do you have any questions or any special messages?
- Thompson: No, I do not. We would be absolutely and seriously interested in any signal from North Vietnam about what would happen if we would stop the bombings. Especially given that Beijing continues to take an unwavering position.
- Radványi: Is there any sign that Hanoi denies what has been stated by Foreign Minister Péter?
- Thompson: No, there isn't. – I was filled with sorrow about the case of our charge d'affaires in Hungary. To my best knowledge he had suffered heart attacks before.
- Radványi: We have found that Mr. O'Shaughnessy was always correct and objective. – We are sorry that we will be without you here in Washington, but at the same time in Moscow you will be closer to Hungary, since as a result of time-differences the "flight time" from Moscow to Budapest is a mere 10 minutes.
- Thompson: I have asked Secretary Rusk, to allow me to undertake trips from Moscow more often. I would like to visit your country as well.
- Radványi: We would be sincerely delighted. I assume, however, you will be very busy in Moscow. We have heard that Mrs Thompson herself is also interested in our country. I'd like to ask, whether we succeed in creating a common language on the topic of proliferation?
- Thompson: There are further efforts made to create the common language. – By the way, I travel to Moscow only on 4 January of next year.
- Radványi: The information you give me, as well as any other messages I am ready to transmit authentically, word-by-word to my superiors at any time.

During the discussion, conducted in a correct atmosphere, Mr Tihanyi, the State Department's referent on Hungarian affairs was present from the American side, and comrade Kerekes from the Legation. Following the discussion Mr Tihanyi and comrade Kerekes compared and harmonised notes. Tihanyi invited comrades Radványi and Kerekes to his room for that purpose. On the occasion of note-comparison, Tihanyi said the following:

- a. On the background of the Thompson–Radványi discussion: Thompson received an instruction by wire from Secretary of State Rusk that he learn whether there was any new message or development.

- b. If the North Vietnamese really do not want to conquer South Vietnam by force and if the Viet Cong is not viewed as the sole representative of South Vietnam and if there could be an agreement about observing the 17th parallel – said Tihanyi – then why fight on, why would we not immediately end the war.

Comrade Radványi responded in the sense that the question poses more complex problems.

Washington, 24 October, 1966

[signature of János Radványi]

[Source: XIX-J-1-j-USA-IV-135-005255/1966. (15. d.)]

DOCUMENT 4

Memorandum on the Thompson–Radványi Meeting October 28, 1966

Strictly confidential!

Memorandum

On the Thompson – Radványi meeting of 28 October, 1966

On the instructions of the Center, I requested a visit at Ambassador Thompson on 28 October, 1966. They named 3pm the time of the meeting.

After reciprocal greetings I went straight to the subject of my visit and accurately, word for word delivered the message sent by the Centre. Thompson received the message gratefully and in connection with it said that he continues to remain at our service.

He agreed with the content of the message because he expressed no contrary opinion, and further, when I arrived at the part voicing the importance of continued discretion he reacted with a nod and the comment “yes, naturally”.

Thompson – who received me privately – wanted to record the message word for word. I politely offered to repeat the message to his secretary – if he would like. The ambassador gratefully accepted this, and called in his secretary, to whom I recited the following message: (Continuing in English) “At the press-luncheon Hungarian foreign minister Peter took good care of being discreet, he even did not mention his meeting with Secretary Rusk, not in the least the subject of the conversation. Communication agencies in the United States nevertheless referred partly to the conversations of this year, – mainly after the Manila Conference, – moreover they referred to exchange of messages connected with Mr Harriman’s trip to Budapest. Our position is to be discreet further on as it was previously agreed.”

(Reverting to Hungarian) Thompson later posed no questions regarding the message. Until the secretary arrived, he mentioned other topics. He stressed that they have a lot of work, since a new team was put to work in the State Department (he mentioned the names of Rostow, Bovie, Kohler, Katzenbach). Responding to my question he said that his successor in the State

Department will be Ambassador Kohler, although Kohler, unlike him, will deal not only with the Soviet Union and the socialist states. He briefly mentioned that Secretary of State Rusk will arrive home from his trip abroad only on 3 November, because he is accompanying the president on his trip in the Far East.

The discussion, in which from the Legation comrade Kerekes participated – took place in a friendly atmosphere and lasted a mere 8–10 minutes.

The above memorandum was put together by comrade Kerekes.

Washington, 28 October, 1966

signature of János Radványi

[Source: MNL-OL XIX-J-1-j-USA-IV-135-005255/1966. (15. d.)]

DOCUMENT 5

Memorandum on the repercussions of János Péter's press luncheon on 20 October, 1966, 5 November, 1966

Presented by: Ernő Bernát

Typed by: Törökné

Strictly Confidential!

5 copies made

Attachment: 1 envelope

M e m o r a n d u m

Subject: the echos of Comrade János

Péter's 20 October press luncheon

We report the following on the repercussions of comrade Péter's 20 October press luncheon in the American press:

The first echoes of what has been said at the lunch appeared in the New York Times's issue of the following day, in the issue of 21 October. The paper reported in a short item that according to a Hungarian source the North Vietnamese government attributes great significance to some kind of guarantee to be made by the United States as regards the withdrawal of forces.

Philippe Ben's article which appeared on 22 October in Le Monde was the first which reported in detail what has been said at the lunch and about the background of the views detailed by comrade Péter. In essence this article may be viewed as the publication of the Péter-speech. The opinion of journalists here is that both the reporters of papers not represented at the lunch and the State Department recognized the significance of the lunch based on this article.

On 23 October it was Secretary of State Rusk himself who reacted to the speech during the opening of the Manila Conference. NBC Radio reported in its 5 o'clock news bulletin that according to Rusk perhaps new sings of commitment to a peaceful resolution from the DRV

are showing. According to Elly Abel, the NBC's correspondent in Manila, the participants will make the Hungarian information originating in UN circles the subject of thorough review, meaning the issue of Vietnam may be approached from the basis of both sides respecting the 17th parallel as the dividing line between the North and the South.

Throughout the evening NBC has reported repeatedly and in ever increasing detail about the news item, and in its 21:30² broadcast aired a telephone interview with their Manila correspondent Charles Murphy, who confirmed the news that the Hungarian information made at the UN about the respect of the 17th parallel as the basis of negotiations has gained attention in the conference.

On 24 October Stanley Karnow the Washington Post's correspondent sent to Manila covered in detail the news coming out of New York, according to which Hungarian Foreign Minister János Péter said, Hanoi is prepared to accept the 17th parallel as the dividing line and they aren't sticking to the demand of the acceptance of the programme of the Liberation Front in South Vietnam. He raises the point: it cannot be known for certain, whether the speech of János Péter reflects the position of Hanoi or only his own opinion.

In the same issue of the paper appeared the article of Chalmers Roberts – not an analysis of the situation, but in which a mention is made of a slight signal which shows a possible change in North Vietnam's position and which came from a Communist diplomat who is in direct contact with Hanoi.

The Philadelphia Inquirer's and the Chicago Tribune's issues of the 24. also reported the news coming from Hungarian sources.

On the 24 October press conference of the State Department spokesman Bartch stated that the State Department will closely analyse what has been said by Hungarian Foreign Minister János Péter, but since Hanoi has thus far made no official statement which indicated a change in its position, official circles are in an expectant position. The news was reported in the afternoon and in the evening by several radio and television stations.

² 9:30 PM

On NBC's usual afternoon foreign affairs report of that day correspondent Huntley covered the new ideas floated by comrade Péter, which he deemed rather worthy. He noted that their ultimate value could be judged only having come to know the North Vietnamese position.

On 25 October: the Washington Post published the article of the Los Angeles Times' UN-reporter Louis Fleming, in which for the first time could one read that comrade Péter has recently visited Hanoi. According to the article János Péter in his speech at the UN hinted that Hungary is in direct contact with North Vietnam and the Liberation Front. Since then, the hints from unofficial Hungarian sources are unequivocal that János Péter intended his speech as a peace offer. Eastern European sources on 24 October, however, stated that North Vietnam is currently incapable of making any obligations. The Eastern Europeans who urge suspension of the bombings have, according to these sources, not been asked by Hanoi to make these proposals. Well informed diplomats have rendered worthless guessing work in Manila according to which the Hungarians have shown new grounds for a ceasefire with their activities at the UN last week.

The Baltimore Sun's issue of that day published the AP's long article on this topic. They report that in Washington the Hungarian information is under serious analysis, but at the same time official figures urge caution given that there is no tangible signal from Hanoi of their wish to negotiate. The Administration would like to know whether what János Péter said was at the instruction of North Vietnam, or whether it was his own opinion. Referring to the comments of comrade Péter the author writes that these views were not aired at the Péter–Rusk meeting. János Péter claimed in his speech at the UN that he talks in full knowledge of the positions of North Vietnam and the Viet Cong. Officials have no reason to doubt the truthfulness of these claims. The article recalls that János Péter had a role in the previous year too with his careful peace initiative.

On 26 October Stanley Karnow wrote in the Washington Post that the 6-month withdrawal deadline proposed by the Manila Conference was created based on the latest signals about that Hanoi seemed perhaps interested in a real peace proposal. American officials devoted great attention to reports about Hungarian proposals for a solution in Vietnam.

The Christian Science Monitor's edition of that day writes that Washington is starting to doubt that Hanoi is inching towards peace negotiations. Official circles have given great attention to

the reports concerning Hungarian Foreign Minister János Péter's views. They do not view the statements of the Foreign Minister as a serious basis based on which they could think that Hanoi's position is changing.

In the Evening Star's issue of the 26. the paper's UN correspondent, William Frye reports how the statements of János Péter were interpreted, who asserted he spoke in full knowledge of the positions of Hanoi and the Liberation Front. UN diplomats have reservations about the reliability of the claim that János Péter spoke as spokesman for Hanoi. He deems it understandable, that Eastern Europeans sincerely desire a settlement in Vietnam, because this region has much to gain from a Soviet–American warming of relations. He noted that Hungary is a better disciplined member of the Soviet Bloc than Poland or Romania and that therefore it is unlikely that János Péter spoke without Soviet authorisation on this subject. If therefore he expressed his wishes regarding the matter of views on Hanoi, Moscow is party to these wishes.

In his article published in the Washington Post on 27 October Murray Marder wrote that the 6–month withdrawal timetable was created at the Manila Conference because Communist sources had previously urged an expression of American goodwill. He cites the statement of János Péter at the UN, according to which “for the sake of negotiations and peace the US should adequately guarantee its withdrawal of its personnel and termination of its bases.”

The Washington Post in the same issue published an editorial, in which they write that interestingly the 10–year anniversary of the “tragic uprising” in Budapest and the Hungarian peace initiative for a Vietnam settlement coincide. Independent of whether there will be further developments to this Hungarian step from Hanoi, this gesture may create a deeper connection between Washington and Budapest.

Washington, 5 November, 1966

signature of János Radványi

[Source: MNL–OL XIX–J–1–j–USA–IV–135–005255/1966. (15. d.)]

DOCUMENT 6

Report on the Vietnamese party and government delegation's negotiations in Moscow, 17 November, 1966

005522/1966

Strictly Confidential!

Nr. of Copies: 4

Sent to:

1. Comr. Zoltán Komócsin
2. Comr. Frigyes Puja
3. Comr. Sándor Sárközi
4. in the file

C o p y

On the Hanoi embassy's 17 November, 1966 report.

Subject: On the Vietnamese party and government
delegation's Moscow negotiations

The Soviet comrade ambassador – on his return from his holidays, at the end of October – informed us in detail about the interparty and intergovernmental negotiations which have taken place in Moscow in August and in which he himself had taken part.

Although the report sent by the Center on the aforementioned negotiations goes into great detail and in its content is wholly consistent with what was said by comrade Shcherbakov, I believe that my report can serve as an addition to the previous one, especially in its evaluation of the situation.

The circumstances leading up to the negotiations.

The leaders of the CPSU and of the WPV last met and exchanged ideas on the situation in Vietnam on the occasion of the XXIII. Congress. The events which occurred since then and the developments in the situation in Vietnam have compelled the leaders of the Soviet Union to

invite a high-level delegation to the Soviet Union with the aim of reviewing the situation in Vietnam and discussing the forms and extent of aid.

The most important events and developments were:

- In May Ho Chi Minh held discussions with the Chinese leaders in Beijing in which the Chinese communicated their position on the expansion of the war beyond the 17th parallel, with which Ho Chi Minh disagreed. When Ho Chi Minh detailed the severity of the situation in Vietnam, the Chinese stated categorically that the war must be continued and that without them the DRV cannot decide on negotiations of any form.
- The situation in the DRV has gotten more difficult, bombings against Hanoi and Haiphong have taken place, the continually intensifying bombing raids inflicted serious damage on the economy, road traffic and transportation have become difficult, economic conditions have deteriorated and with it providing basic services for the population.
- The events transpiring in China, the “Cultural Revolution” the activities of the “Red Guards” which are conducted primarily under the banner of an anti–Soviet campaign have by now rendered the prospects of unity of action for the purposes of helping the Vietnamese people and creating the unified position of the socialist camp entirely hopeless.

In this situation the Soviet party and government leadership invited the DRV’s highest level delegation headed by Ho Chi Minh. Instead, however, the DRV delegation was headed by Pham van Dong. Its members were: Giap, Minister of Defense

Le Thanh Nghi, deputy prime minister

Thien, deputy Foreign Minister

The Soviet delegation consisted of comrades:

Kosygin

Brezhnev

Malinovsky

Gromyko and

Shcherbakov /the Ambassador in Hanoi/.

The Soviet comrades proposed that the meeting should be made public, that a joint statement be issued, but the Vietnamese comrades insisted on the confidentiality of the discussions, which they have otherwise not justified. This tendency is a new trend – inexplicably – in the other interparty and intergovernmental negotiations as well. Whereas the Soviet comrades intended

the discussions to be primarily of political nature, the Vietnamese – which was a logical consequence of the composition of the delegation too – side-lined the political issues and made it their main task, by detailing the situation, to request significantly larger amounts of aid than previously.

The most important issues which emerged during discussions and the evaluation of these.

Comrade Phan Van Dong held a briefing on the

- military
- economic and
- political situation.

Evaluating the military situation – wholly neglecting any objectivity – he said nothing new and in essence repeated what had been already said during previous discussions and what the press had published. The essence of this was that the Americans suffered heavy defeats in the South, the NLF wins a series of victories, and the bombings against the DRV cannot break the will of the people and its faith in final victory. They will do everything to bring the war to an end soon, but if needed, they will fight for years to come, even at the cost of the destruction of major cities – Hanoi included. They see the guarantee of victory in the “people’s war” character of the war; in a protracted war guerrilla warfare will play a large role. He emphasised the improvement of air defenses, the casualties of US airmen, saying that in a protracted war there will eventually remain fewer pilots than required.

The DRV’s position is that the war must be kept within its current limits and under no circumstances do they wish to extend the war beyond the 17th parallel. They have set themselves three principal tasks:

- The military struggle must be continued until final victory,
- Initiating political operations by which world public opinion has to be influenced and won over to the cause of the Vietnamese people,
- In coordination with the military struggle, political and diplomatic activity has to be intensified.

On the economic situation comrade Pham Van Dong sought to prove, using statistical data, that although industrial plants have sustained damage, these are not too severe and both industry and agriculture can roughly fulfil the yearly plans, and he deemed the supply of the population to be satisfactory. But he admitted that rail and road transport routes have suffered rather serious damage which makes transportation rather difficult.

In his political analysis of the situation comrade Pham Van Dong emphasised that the people's ethico-political standards are constantly improving, that the entirety of the people supports the war with unbounded enthusiasm and that the party leadership and the entire party membership is united on the issue of the continuation of the war until final victory.

Request for military and economic aid in the year 1967.

After the briefing on the general situation Phan Van Dong gave a short brief on their request for military, economic and other aid for the year 1967. Although in his introduction he admitted that the DRV receives significant aid from the Soviet Union, the Soviet comrades have concluded from the manner of stating the request that the DRV is not satisfied with the aid received thus far. He explained that for the continued fighting and to achieve final victory they require continued and even larger amounts of aid from all the socialist countries, but that they expect especially much from the Soviet Union. His manner was demanding and on multiple occasions he emphasised the obligations of the socialist countries vis-à-vis the DRV.

The request submitted during the discussions significantly exceeded the value of the request submitted beforehand. The preliminary request /military and economic/ had a total value of 400 million roubles, but during the discussions they requested aid in the value of 1 billion roubles. The amount of materiel requested exceeded all previous but knowing the DRV's capacity to absorb and process these, as well as their technical capabilities, the Soviet comrades have concluded that most of the materiel requested was put in the request on Chinese orders, for their use. For instance, they requested

- 150 000 tons of aluminium,
- a rather large amount of bullet cartridges,
- a number of military communications equipment sets, which almost equals the entire stock of the Soviet Army,
- for every towed artillery piece 3 trucks /on top of the 1000 trucks they have already received/,
- an amount of steel plates, and especially of bridge components which equals the annual output of Soviet industry.

When the Soviet comrades explained that this request borders on the impossible, even neglecting for a moment that they have obligations towards other countries as well, comrade

Pham Van Dong replied that they should reduce their supplies to others and should say that the DRV requested it, and everyone will accept this. Otherwise, they should conduct more widespread agitation amongst the workers that they produce extra for the DRV.

In the end the Soviet Union for the year 1967 granted aid worth 400 million roubles, consisting of 300 million worth of non-repayable military component and 100 million roubles worth of long-term loans as the economic component. They have entirely halted the supply of complex technological items – because under the present circumstances – it is pointless.

The Soviet comrades' analysis of the information provided by Phan Van Dong, which is at the same time the Soviet opinion about and position on the situation in Vietnam.

On the military situation.

The theory of military struggle to the bitter end is an unsustainable position. The DRV and the NLF are preparing for a long war which they cannot sustain even despite all the aid they receive. Using the strategy of the people's war and of guerrilla warfare they cannot achieve military victory over US forces deployed to South Vietnam. There is no organized force in the South which could successfully mount an attack against the ever more fortified US bases. Partial successes can be achieved, but not a conclusive military victory. Guerrilla warfare, considering the current balance of forces, means in essence a defensive – passive – war. In the last wet season, they have achieved no significant results, and in this early phase of the dry season they are preparing for the defensive, to protect themselves from the coming Americans offensive.

In the course of this year, they have lost territory too and according to estimates the current ratio is 50–50%, but cities are under the control of the Saigon government. In this form indeed a protracted struggle is possible as guerrilla fighters in the Philippines, Burma and Malaysia have shown.

The DRV leadership believes that the socialist camp supports their current strategy materially, morally and politically, and that this is enough to win a moral victory over the US forces. Their aim is to force the US to publicly admit its inability to achieve a military victory and that therefore it should be forced to negotiate from a position of moral defeat, accepting the DRV's position and conditions.

A peaceful resolution has not even been mentioned, arguing that the situation is not yet ripe for negotiations. In this respect they have a totally passive position, because

- they are afraid to sit down to the negotiating table, because they neither have the dominant forces, nor the military victories behind them and therefore negotiations would seem like capitulation,
- they are afraid of the Chinese who have stated categorically that they cannot negotiate without them,
- negotiations bring compromise, and they are afraid of those too.

They say that they do not want to expand the war, but at the same time a significant DRV force /250 000/ is stationed in the South and their reinforcement is ongoing. This is one of the main reasons that the US intensified its bombing campaign against the DRV. It must be recognized that in this situation the laws of war prevail.

In theory there could be an agreement with the objectives set in the three points, but the Soviet leadership believes that the Vietnamese comrades underestimate the political initiative. Their actions thus far do not merit the name of political initiative, those so-called contacts brought no results and make no sense. International organizations must be utilised in a more effective manner, even the UN. Various delegations have made a number of recommendations, and these do not have to be accepted but must be entertained. The 4-point plan has to be expanded, explained; let them create if necessary – without changing the basic demands – 20 points out of them. This way its support would become more widespread from the part of the Afro-Asian countries too.

The Soviet leadership thinks the economic evaluation of the Vietnamese comrades is too optimistic. It must be recognised that industry has sustained serious damage, rice production in the current year will not reach 50% of the previous year's. Coal mining because of the damages and power outages operates on a 40% capacity and instead of the 5 million tons extracted in the previous year may perhaps reach 2 million tons in 1966. It is pointless to swipe difficulties under the carpet. Human casualties are significantly bigger too than they admit and can be estimated at around 100 000.

The analysis of the political situation too is contentious. Neither in the party leadership itself nor in the party membership is there a uniform position, nor on the analysis of the situation.

The people's fighting spirit is declining, dejectedness and pessimism are on the rise, especially in the country's bombed out south. Dejectedness is fuelled also by inadequate basic services. The diseases typical of war are starting to spread, and the health situation of the population is deteriorating.

In summary we can conclude that the evaluation given by the Vietnamese comrades is fraught with contradictions, does not reflect the realities of the situation and there are significant differences between their analysis and that which rests on objective facts. Given such a discrepancy in analysis it is rather difficult to work out a common position for the resolution of the situation. We must not, however, give up on this and in the future too, all military, economic and political support must be given to the DRV.

The other questions covered during the discussions.

The Chinese Issue.

Comrade Brezhnev raised the Chinese Communist Party's anti-marxist, unity breaking and anti-Soviet activities and the unashamed incitements sharply. He told the Vietnamese comrades that if they have kept their silence and endured it thus far it has only been for the sake of the DRV. He pointed out that the Chinese Communist Party's activities inflict incalculable loss and suffering on the Vietnamese people and on the entire workers' movement as a whole. The Soviet Union could provide even more support, but the Chinese interfere with this support and will continue to do so in the foreseeable future. On the Chinese issue sister parties have taken positions too and the Soviet Union will not stay silent in the future either, since the CCP's XI. Plenary Meeting announced an open attack against the Soviet people, and this must be discussed openly in front of the people. Comrade Brezhnev during the discussions – while he made his remarks – handed over to Pham Van Dong the documents of the XI. Plenum, asking him whether he agrees with their content, primarily with regards to the Soviet Union. Pham Van Dong responded neither on this occasion, nor later when the question was repeated.

Pham Van Dong reacting to what was said by Brezhnev explained that the DRV is against all manner of dispute, and from its part will do everything not to deepen the differences, but in the current situation they cannot do anything make them disappear. In his opinion the CCP's activities are an internal matter and no other party has a right to interfere, neither do they. He stated rather categorically that everyone should accept that the Vietnamese people view the

Chinese people as their great friends from whom they receive all kind of support, to whom they are bound by common ties of history and to whom they have grown so close like lips and teeth.

He would judge it wrong if the sister parties sought to separate the DRV from China. Comrade Brezhnev explained that this was out of the question and everyone understands their situation, but they too should understand that everything has a limit. They must see what difficulties the Chinese create for the transfer of military aid and he supported this with a number of particular examples, e.g., last time an entire SAM-regiment was blocked from passing through Chinese territory, they have obstructed the transport of fuel as well, etc.

Interparty cooperation and exchange of information.

The Soviet comrades brought up that they do not find the current flow of information between the parties satisfactory. This process is for now merely one-sided, where the CPSU informs the WPV of everything, while from the WPV's side, because of excessive secrecy or other reasons, they do not experience this. He would have deemed it appropriate e.g., if they had briefed the top leadership of the sister parties in detail about Ho Chi Minh's Beijing trip in May and the discussions conducted there. The Vietnamese comrades acknowledged this remark and said that in the future they will strive even more to inform the sister parties' top leadership about the most important events.

In summary:

In the analysis of the Soviet comrades the Vietnamese comrades are still rather distrustful towards the sister parties, are still hesitant, aren't honest enough when explaining their problems and plans and this— particularly what concerns the resolution of the issue of Vietnam — creates difficulties for the creation of a common position. During the discussions there was no agreement in a range of questions — especially in the analysis of the general situation — and differences of opinion have remained.

Despite this they deem the discussions useful, because they think that exchanges of views and the exchange of positions are in and of themselves useful, even if they do not reach common ground. The Soviet comrades have the impression that because of various hindering and limiting factors the leaders of the WPV think one way, talk another, and act in a third way.

Concerning the perspective of the issue of Vietnam their opinion is that developments will come rapidly, the situation will become tenser, and more and more serious. The events which transpired around the 17th parallel lately – the use of 175mm artillery – bring us to conclude that we must seriously take into account the use of nuclear weapons by the Americans, which they even may use in order to protect their prestige. The intensification of air attacks against the territory of the DRV – primarily the big cities – has to be taken into account, and perhaps with the establishment of a blockade against Haiphong. Depending on the turn of events, a further meeting is to be expected between the leaders of the CPSU and the WPV at the end of this year or in the beginning of 1967.

Dr. Imre Pehr

Ambassador

[Source: MNL-OL MK-S-288f-32.cs./1966/9. ōe.]

DOCUMENT 7

Hungarian Report on Lewandowski's Briefing to Soviet Bloc
Diplomats in Hanoi, 29 November, 1966

The Embassy of the Hungarian People's Republic
Hanoi

TO COMRADE FOREIGN MINISTER

Budapest

153/top.sec./1966

TOP SECRET!

Issued in 3 copies

2 to Headquarters

1 to Embassy

Hanoi, 13 December, 1966

Subject: The account of the
Polish Commissioner
General of the International
Control Commission in
Saigon on the situation in
South Vietnam

As we have already informed you through other channels, on 29 November Lewandowsky, the Commissioner General of the ICC in Saigon, briefed us on the military and political situation in South Vietnam. The information was secret, only the Polish, Czechoslovakian, Bulgarian,

Mongolian and [East–] German ambassadors, and the Hungarian chargé d'affaires were present. The briefing concerned the developments up to mid November.

I.

In his introduction the Polish Commissioner General outlined the results of combat during the 1965/66 dry season and the 1966 monsoon period. According to his account the dry season was more favorable for the Americans, whereas the rainy one gave advantage to the NLF. During the dry season the Americans managed to stop the advance of the Liberation Front and occupied several new posts. The NLF had planned to liberate zone “A” during the monsoon in order to make possible the undisturbed infiltration of DRV forces. The American forces successfully prevented the NLF from executing this plan.

Until the beginning of this year’s dry season neither of the parties could achieve significant military success. In this fall three major offensives started:

- 1) In zone “A”, for the possession of the most important points of South Vietnam’s northern part, where two US divisions and a brigade started maneuvers. The purpose of this operation is to occupy the key positions and prevent the penetration of Northern units.
- 2) In zone “B”, in the central plateau region of South Vietnam, where two US divisions operate. The purpose of this maneuver is to cut across the central part of South Vietnam and Laos along the main roads as far as Thailand, thus, to prevent the support arriving through Laos.
- 3) In zone “C” north–west from Saigon, to the Cambodian border. Here, two American divisions, two brigades and a motorized regiment took positions. This operation is the most important, because it is intended to completely separate zone “D”, the region south and south–west from Saigon including the Mekong Delta, which is almost entirely under NLF control, from the central plateau region. This area is the pantry of South Vietnam, the richest in rice, vegetable and fruit. Also, the general headquarters of the NLF, along with its radio station can be found in zone “C”.

The intensity of the previous two decreased, neither party could achieve success.

In zone “C” however, a bitter fighting went on even as late as the end of November. The Americans failed to carry out their plan despite the fact that they deployed a large number of B-52 bombers and strong artillery.

The strength of American and allied forces in the middle of November

Ground forces	294,000
Marines	50,000
Navy (other than 7 th Fleet)	17,000
Air Force	50,000
<hr/>	
Total	411,000
7 th Fleet	50,000

During the last 6 months the Americans increased the strength of their forces by 84,000. The strength of South Vietnamese government forces is 705,000 troops, of which 327,000 are regulars.

The South Korean, Australian and Philippine forces add up to about 50,000 troops. 150 troops from Thailand arrived recently.

The estimated military strength of the NLF is 300,000, of which 30,000 are regulars.

In the Saigon region the proportion of military forces is 4:1, the proportion of regular forces is 10:1 to the Americans' advantage.

The number of average NLF casualties per month is 5,700 dead and seriously wounded, the same figure on the US and allied side is 4,700. This is evaluated as a great success of the NLF, since the technical superiority of the Americans is depressing. The number of civilian casualties is not included in the above; in 1965 the Saigon regime suffered the greater casualties.

The armament of NLF forces increased in number and improved in quality. They have recoilless guns and air defense artillery. According to Lewandowsky, the USA faces increasing difficulties in deploying its helicopters as a result of the strengthening of NLF air defense. For instance, directly before the Manila Conference the Americans initiated a demonstrative operation south of Saigon. They wanted to drop nine battalions behind the NLF's lines. 33 of the carrier helicopters were shot down before they reached the actual battlefield. Perhaps the US High Command anticipated the high level of casualties, as all the nine battalions consisted exclusively of the Saigon regime's forces.

Perspectives for the Recent Dry Season

The Americans want to continue their ongoing operations. There are signs indicating that the NLF also concentrates its forces for a major offensive. The Americans want to prevent this by all means. They concentrate their efforts on occupying roads and junctions and increase the bombing by deploying B-52s and mass artillery. They will also use the dry season for increasing the strength of their forces. The intentions of the USA are taking shape more and more clearly; they want to achieve military victory in South Vietnam. The increase of troop levels means that further drafts can be expected in the USA and forces must be redirected from elsewhere. The situation is not too promising for the Americans – said Lewandowsky. The NLF wants to keep its positions, but they abandoned the possibility of a Dien Bien Phu. They are aware that in the recent situation it is impossible to occupy the US bases, but they intend to keep or regain their freedom of movement and initiative outside the bases and major settlements.

At present, the forces of the Saigon regime are kept in the background, as their moral situation is very bad. Although the number of desertions has indeed significantly decreased, its reason is not the sympathy toward the Americans, but rather the fear of the intensified bombing against the NLF-controlled territories.

There are desertions from the NLF units too, but that is insignificant, not at all as extensive as the American propaganda depicts it. The truth is that there are more POWs captured from the DRV units than from the partisan forces, because they are not familiar with the local conditions and are less capable of escaping from mopping-ups and traps. The guerilla forces, even if they

cannot attack with large forces everywhere, can carry out acts of terrorism essentially wherever they choose. This was well demonstrated, among other things, by the successful action against the military parade in Saigon and by the attacks against the guard of the Saigon diplomatic district, where the partisans penetrated the diplomatic district using their own vehicles and dressed in their own uniforms and executed the officers of the guard.

II.

The main features of the political situation of the South are as follows:

The September elections did not bring along the expected political stabilization. The conflict between the Government and the Constituent Assembly is extremely sharp. The Government wants to further extend the dictatorship, the Assembly attempts to establish constitutionalism, or at least the appearance thereof. There are ordinary thieves and embezzlers among government members; the corruption, bribery and graft continue. The Americans, for instance, devote huge investments to the development of existing ports and to the construction of new ones, large amounts of which simply disappear without a trace. This situation is not favorable to the American plans for pacification. The Ky Government has a wide opposition in Saigon and in the RVN dominated territories, which is not just a result of the war, the constitution, the way of governing, the corruption etc.; it is rooted in the religious, ethnic and tribal divergence. However, the political opposition is extremely divided. The NLF has no appropriate influence over these, and it is unable to hold them together or unify them. That, of course, is not an easy task, regarding that a significant part of the political opposition is inside the ruling class. The Americans intend to uphold this divergence, and they do it very skillfully. The other main American effort is aimed at the prevention of any kind of initiative directed towards the establishment of relations and reconciliation between the North and the South.

The political influence of the NLF decreased. This is detectable not only among the different layers of the population living in areas dominated by Saigon, but also in the territories occupied by the NLF.

/Ferenc Hidvégi/
chargé d'affaires

[Source: The account (report, presentation, briefing) of the Polish Commissioner General of the International Control Commission in Saigon on the situation in South Vietnam, 28 December, 1966, MNL-OL, 1966, Vietnamese Relations, Foreign Ministry Documents, Top Secret, 112. Doboz, IV-43-005238/1/1966, XiX-J-1-j; obtained and translated by Zoltán Szőke.]

DOCUMENT 8

Report on Le Duc Tho's comment on China during his visit to Budapest 9 December, 1966

IV. Regional Department

Sándor Pataki

Top Secret!

Issued in 6 copies

Recipients: Minister Péter

Dep. Min. Erdélyi

Group Head Kukucska

Head of Dep. Mrs. Szűcs

Embassy, Peking

Department

Memorandum

Subject: Comrade Le Duc Tho's
remark concerning China

In the afternoon of 8 December, various programs were organized for the members of the Vietnamese delegation taking part in the party congress. Comrade Le Duc Tho, head of the delegation, wished to visit the Museum of Fine Arts at 16:00 hours. The party's foreign department asked me to accompany him. In the car, the Vietnamese interpreter informed comrade Le Duc Tho that I had lived in China for a longer period and that I have a Chinese wife. Comrade Le Duc Tho jokingly asked whether there was a "split" also within my family? Explaining his question, he related that at present there were at least 3 different positions in every Chinese family. Some family members were on Mao Ce-tung's [Mao Zedong's] side, others supported Liu Sao-csi [Liu Shaoqi], and the rest took a position different from both of these.

Unfortunately, the conversation was interrupted because we arrived at the Museum.

Note: In my judgment, the above remark has special significance as, to the best of my knowledge, Comrade Le Duc Tho had spent a long time in China, he had also been a member of the CCP's Central Committee, thus, he must know the state of affairs in China very well.

Budapest, 9 December, 1966

(Signed) Pataki

[Source: MNL-OL, 1966, Vietnamese Relations, Foreign Ministry records, Top Secret, box 111, 003650/13/1966, XIX-J-1-j, obtained by James Hershberg and translated by Zoltán Szőke.]

DOCUMENT 9

Excerpt from a note on “Soviet–Polish talks during the visit of the Polish party and government delegation led by Comrade Gomulka,”

14 December, 1966

Summarizing copy

1/Beijing

2/Hanoi

3/File

TOP SECRET!

Moscow, 14 Dec., 1966

Subject: Soviet–Polish talks during the visit of Polish party and government delegation led by Comrade Gomulka

[...]

Gomulka stressed that the Vietnamese proceeded mistakenly when they did not react to US “peace–actions” and did not take the opportunity to use them for propaganda purposes. He deemed necessary that the socialist countries put forward concrete proposals to the Vietnamese in this respect.

From the Soviets’ part Kosygin agreed and expressed the view that the socialist countries must actively support the emerging independence efforts of the Vietnamese [against China]; they must work out methods to encourage these efforts.

[...]

[Source: MNL–OL, 1966, Polish Relations, Foreign Ministry records, Top Secret, box 79, 005104/1/1966, XIX–J–1–j, obtained by James Hershberg, translated by Zoltán Szőke.]

DOCUMENT 10

Memorandum of conversation with members of the DRV delegation
taking part at the 9th congress of the HSWP” 15 December, 1966

IV. Regional Department
Ambassador Imre Pehr

Top Secret!

Issued in 8 copies

Recipients: Comrade Péter

Comrade Erdélyi

Comrade Kukucska

HSWP CC Foreign Dep.

Comrade Mrs. Szűcs

Embassy Hanoi

Embassy Beijing

Department

Memorandum

Subject: Conversations with
members of the DRV delegation
taking part at the congress

Ung Van Khiem on the Chinese Cultural Revolution, the resolutions of the 11th plenum of the
CCP CC and the social problems caused by the war in the DRV:

1./ On the Chinese cultural revolution

According to the WPV's official standpoint, this is essentially the internal problem of the CCP and no one has the right to interfere in it. In reality, however, the leadership of the WPV and the Vietnamese public follows the events with great concern and, apart from some exceptions, they do not agree with them. Khiem himself considers the Chinese events a folly, because "what kind of cultural revolution is the one which destroys culture, terminates school education, as a result of which they were forced to call home their 4.000 scholarship holders." He is of the opinion that the cultural revolution will not be able to penetrate into the DRV; the Vietnamese people would not accept it. During his stay here, Comrade Khiem almost demonstratively showed interest in our cultural life, repeatedly asked us to organize cultural programs for the delegation etc. He stressed several times that his favorite composers were Mozart, Schumann, Verdi and Puccini.

2./ On the anti-Soviet resolutions of the CCP CC's 11th plenum

Neither he personally nor the majority of the WPV's leaders agree with them and they condemn the anti-Soviet campaign of the Chinese, especially its manner, the abusive press articles and demonstrations. Answering my question that if that is so, why they do not let the Soviet comrades know it officially, during interparty talks, when their leaders meet in person, he said that their difficult situation did not allow this, they were afraid that it would compromise them in the eyes of the Chinese, and that we [Hungarians] knew very well that how dependant they [the Vietnamese] were on the Chinese in terms of transport, aid and other things.

In addition, one must be aware that the [WPV] leadership is not unified in this respect, neither are they undivided in general questions concerning the Vietnamese situation, yet, even the ones like him, who think more objectively, must remain good communists, accept the CC's resolutions, must not speak about this question openly [since] they are bound by party discipline.

[...]

On one occasion, during a conversation between Le Duc Tho and Comrade Puja – where I was also present – when it came to the DRV's air defense system and the effectiveness of Soviet missiles, Le Duc Tho stated that we [Hungarians] overestimated the effectiveness of the rockets, as they are not at all as good as we thought; they had serious deficiencies. Above all, they were fixed, not sufficiently mobile and they were only effective at a certain altitude.

They had definitive information about the fact that the Soviet Union had much more up to date and effective devices, as well, but unfortunately, they did not want to share them with the Vietnamese, despite their repeated appeals. Comrade Tho stressed the importance of Soviet assistance but repeated that Vietnam did not get these highly effective devices, although these were what they needed the most. When we tried to convince Comrade Tho that he was wrong [“Why would the SU do that? Do you think they want the DRV get destroyed?”], he became irritated and replied that he could not tell, but that was a fact, and that they would bring this issue up when, on their way home, they meet Brezhnev.

Budapest, 15 December, 1966

(Signed) Ambassador Imre Pehr

[Source: MNL-OL, 1966, Vietnamese Relations, Foreign Ministry records, Top Secret, box 111, 004429/34/1966, XIX-J-1-j, obtained by James Hershberg, translated by Zoltan Szoke.]

MAIN ACTORS

ERDÉLYI, Károly (1928–1971) He earned a teacher's degree in the Soviet Union. He worked in the Foreign Ministry from 1953, he was a consular of the embassy in Moscow. He arrived back home on 28 October, 1956 and after 4 November he worked at the secretariat of the government, later he was János Kádár's assistant in the party apparatus (1958–1962). He was deputy foreign minister (1962–1970), leader of the Foreign Policy Department of the HSWP CC (1970–1971), member of the Central Committee of the HSWP (1966–1971). According to some, he committed suicide, other believe, he was murdered.³

KÁDÁR, János (1912–1989) born out of wedlock in Fiume, he was the son of a soldier and a maid. He took the family name of his mother and changed his name to Kádár only in 1945. He learned to be a typewriter mechanic but could not find a permanent workplace. He joined the youth group of the illegally functioning communist party in 1931, was arrested multiple times before the war. In 1937 he joined the Social Democratic Party and worked in the party apparatus. In 1940 he joined the illegal communist movement, and later became a Central Committee member. He disbanded and reorganized the communist party as the Peace Party in 1943, for which he was reprimanded after the war. He had important party functions from 1945, becoming deputy secretary general in 1946 (he held the position until 1951). He was named interior minister in 1948 and played a role in the organization of show trials. He was arrested in 1951 with other officials but was rehabilitated in 1954. In 1956 he was chosen by the Soviets to head the new government. He was named a member of the Central Committee and Politburo and was the first, then general secretary of the HSWP from 1956 to 1988 (with also being the prime minister between 1956 and 1958, and also between 1958 and 1961) and held various other positions as well. He consolidated the communist system in Hungary. Kádár also took an interest in the improvement of living standards and initiated reforms in 1968 but had to backtrack partially. In foreign policy, from the 1970s he acted increasingly independently, but with Soviet interests in mind. Due to economic problems in Hungary, he relied on Western partners to keep living standards at a relatively high level through loans. In 1985 he was named general secretary of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party. In the 1980s the economic crisis deepened, and he denied the seriousness of the problems. In 1988 he was sidelined with some

³ Erdélyi Károly; Ki kicsoda? in: Bencsik Péter (ed.): Az államszocializmus kora Magyarországon és Kelet-Közép-Európában
<http://allamszocializmus.lapunk.hu/?modul=oldal&tartalom=718660>

of his closest associates due to the popular pressure. Combined with his declining health, he was removed from all his positions and died shortly thereafter.⁴

KOMÓCSIN, Zoltán (1932–1974) He had humble family origins, learned to become a trader. He joined the youth organization of the Social Democratic Party in 1938 and joined the trade union in 1939. After Soviet troops occupied Hungary, he joined the communist youth organization, a short time later also the party. He held various party position until 1950, when he was elected as a member of parliament (1950–1974). He was sent to study to the Soviet Union, and after he came back, held high state and party positions. He was a member of the Provisional Central Committee of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party and helped to reorganize the party. He led the youth organization (1957–1961), was named editor in chief of the party's daily *Népszabadság* (1961–1965). He was named regular member of the Politburo (1962–1974) and became the secretary for foreign relations of the Central Committee (1965–1974). He was opposed to the economic reform plans in 1968 and started to form opposition against Kádár inside the HSWP. He fell ill in 1973 and died a short time later.⁵

MINDSZENTY, [born Pehm] József (1892-1975) catholic priest (ordained in 1915), bishop of Esztergom (1945-1973), cardinal (from 1946) later archbishop. He worked as a teacher at the beginning of his career, was interned during the 1919 Hungarian Soviet Republic. As a parish priest, he served in Zalaegerszeg. During the Second World War he supported people who were persecuted because of their political views and their roots, and in 1944 he opposed the policies of the Arrow Cross regime, for which he was interned. He was freed in April 1945. After the war he opposed measures, which decreased the role of the church (like the reform of the school system), and which were increasing the influence of the communists. He was arrested and sentenced to life in prison based on phoney charges in 1948. In 1956 he was freed, took a political role, and due to the Soviet military response, he had to take refuge at the US legation in Budapest. He took active position on domestic political issues in Hungary during this time, causing diplomatic difficulties between the US and the Hungarian People's Republic. He

⁴ Kádár János, Nemzeti Emlékezet Bizottsága
<https://www.neb.hu/asset/phpuoKyAw.pdf>

⁵ Komócsin Zoltán Nemzeti Emlékezet Bizottsága
<https://www.neb.hu/asset/phpR7ev2n.pdf>

remained at the US embassy until 1971, when as a negotiated outcome, he was allowed to leave Hungary. He lived in Vienna until his death.⁶

PEHR, Imre (1914–1977) He was trained to be a doctor in Italy (1932–1938). After earning his university diploma, he was drafted into the Hungarian army, served as a driver in Budapest (1940–1942), and was later transferred into the forced labor service (1942–1944). He was captured by the Soviets and was a prisoner of war until 1947. After the war, from 1948 to 1965, he became a civilian worker, later an officer of the Hungarian military intelligence service MNVK 2 (Magyar Néphadsereg Vezérkar 2. Csoportfőnökség – Hungarian People’s Army General Staff 2nd Directorate). He later became a diplomat, serving in Switzerland and Italy, becoming ambassador in the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (1965–1970) also accredited to Laos. After 1970 he worked in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.⁷

PÉTER, János (1910–1999) He studied in Budapest, Paris and Glasgow and became a Calvinistic minister. In 1945 he started working at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. He became a bishop of the Calvinistic Church (1949–1956). After the revolution of 1956 he held positions at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs where he became deputy foreign minister (1958–1961). In 1961 he joined the Hungarian Socialist Workers’ Party, becoming a member of Central Committee in 1968 and remained a member until 1980. He became foreign minister in 1961 and held the position until 1973. From 1973 to 1988 he was deputy speaker for the Hungarian parliament.⁸

PUJA, Frigyes (1921–2008) he finished 5 classes of high school, and learned to become a printer apprentice, and worked as such between 1942 and 1945. He worked as a party worker, later as a political worker. After he finished the Party College, he was invited to work for the Foreign Ministry. He became a minister to Sweden (1953–1955), later to Austria (1955–1959). He was deputy foreign minister between 1959 and 1963, and he was the leader of the Foreign Relations Department of the Central Committee of the HSWP between 1963 and 1968. He was promoted to first deputy of the foreign minister in 1968, and state secretary in 1973, becoming foreign

⁶ Mindszenty József Ki kicsoda? in: Bencsik Péter (ed.): Az államszocializmus kora Magyarországon és Kelet–Közép–Európában <http://allamszocializmus.lapunk.hu/?modul=oldal&tartalom=718671>

⁷ Baráth Magdolna, Geccsényi Lajos (ed.): Főkonzulok, követek és nagykövetek, 1945–1990, MTA Bölcsészettudományi Kutatóközpont Történettudományi Intézet, 2016, p. 238

⁸ Péter János; Ki kicsoda? in: Bencsik Péter (ed.): Az államszocializmus kora Magyarországon és Kelet–Közép–Európában <http://allamszocializmus.lapunk.hu/?modul=oldal&tartalom=1203950>

minister in the same year. In 1983 he was named as ambassador to Finland. He held this position until his retirement in 1986.⁹

RADVÁNYI, János (1922–2016) After finishing secondary education, he became a trainee for skilled work (1940–1944). During the Second World War he was drafted into the forced labor service. After the war he studied and joined the Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 1947. He worked as a junior diplomat in Turkey, Paris and Switzerland between 1948 and 1953. He was fired from the Ministry in 1954 but returned in 1957. He became charge d'affaires, consul-general and ambassador in Syria. He returned to the Ministry in 1958, until he was named charge d'affaires for the US in 1962. He defected to the US in 1967 for which he was sentenced to death in absentia. In 1971 he earned a doctoral degree at the Mississippi State University and taught history of diplomacy. He was founding member of the Center for International and Security Studies.¹⁰

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