

## **Hungarian Embassy to China, Report, 2 November 1954. [Summary]**

It is based on conversations between a Hungarian diplomat and North Vietnamese diplomats accredited to the PRC (including the DRV Ambassador). The Vietnamese diplomats stressed that in handling the most urgent tasks (reconstruction of the transportation system, strengthening of the armed forces, establishing a new administration, carrying out democratic reforms etc.), the Vietnamese leadership intended to learn from the experiences of the Chinese revolution, but they wanted to take into consideration the special domestic and international circumstances and the economic situation too. China sent a substantial amount of consumer goods to Vietnam (principally from Shanghai, but also from other southern cities), but the Vietnamese leadership also intended to import a lot of consumer goods from France so as to make the French interested in maintaining contacts with the DRV and counter US attempts aimed at the isolation of North Vietnam. In addition, the Vietnamese population became accustomed to French consumer goods and the discontinuation of the latter's import would make the government unpopular. The government laid a great emphasis on the maintenance of the supply of consumer goods so as not to alienate merchants and the petty bourgeoisie. Since there were few skilled Vietnamese workers and the cadres of the resistance movement were not capable of administering larger factories, the government encouraged French entrepreneurs to continue their business activity in the DRV, in the hope that this would also encourage Paris to support the fulfillment of the Geneva agreements. The land reform campaign was to be continued, but with modifications: hitherto, land reform had been carried out just in a few hundred villages, and, due to war conditions, the landlords had been tried by people's courts according to the Chinese method, but now a new method was to be used. The landlords' land was to be taken in a much more flexible way. Mass meetings aimed to sentence landlords were to be discontinued and, as opposed to previous policies, the voluntary donation of land by landlords was to be accepted. Only those landlords who had murdered peasants or taken their property were to be tried as common criminals; landlords who had committed petty crimes or collaborated with the French were not to be punished (the Geneva agreements also prohibited the punishment of collaborators). Landlords were not to be deprived of their political rights on their social status alone, and they were to be allowed to participate in the activity of the Lien Viet (though they could not get any important position). These moderate policies were aimed to lessen the resistance of landlords and appeal to South Vietnamese public opinion.

Since there was a serious shortage of cadres in education, the curricula could not be changed to a large extent: only pieces of pro-French and pro-Bao Dai propaganda were to be excised from the textbooks. While village schools tended to be staffed by pro-Viet Minh teachers, the urban schools were still manned by the teachers appointed by the French. The

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government intended to provide political education to the youth with the help of the Youth League so as to gradually mobilize university and secondary school students against "reactionary" professors and teachers. Chinese experiences seemed to be very useful in cultural matters. For instance, American films had been shown in Shanghai cinemas until 1952, and the DRV government also allowed American and French films to be shown in Hanoi unless they propagated colonialism and anti-Communism. The government understood how much the population had been accustomed to Western films and literature, and a sudden rupture did not seem advisable, since Soviet and Chinese films were still too alien for moviegoers. Instead, a gradual change was to be introduced. The government intended to allow near-complete freedom of press so as to make an impression on the population. Although newspapers and magazines were prohibited from violating the laws of the DRV, they could criticize the government and its policies. Thus, even "reactionary" articles criticizing the regime were published. The director of Radio Hanoi, who had been appointed by the Bao Dai regime, was also allowed to keep his seat, but his control over broadcasting was restricted to technical matters, the content of the news was specified by the authorities. Officials and policemen of the former regime were not dismissed but allowed to receive their former salaries. Thus, the value of their salary was that of 100 kilograms of rice, while Communist cadres newly appointed to these offices were paid the equivalent of 35 kilograms of rice. The cadres supervised the work of the old officials, whose skills were badly needed to run the state machinery.

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