

Hungarian Embassy to North Vietnam, Report, 25 April 1955.
[Summary]

It is based on a conversation between a Hungarian diplomat and an assistant under-secretary of the DRV Ministry of Information named Duc Qui. The latter stated that at the March 1955 CC plenum, the party leadership had practised self-criticism for having neglected the problem of famine in northern Annam. The officials of the ministries and the party cadres had to renounce 1 kg of rice per month in favor of the inhabitants of the famine-stricken areas. The soldiers' rice rations were cut by two kilograms (from 23 kilograms per month to 21). The situation was serious anyway, but in a number of cases it was further aggravated by the bureaucratism of the local administrative and party organs. It happened quite frequently that these authorities spent 8-10 days discussing how to distribute the rice spent by the government, which caused the death of several people. In other cases, the local authorities sold the rice spent by the government on the black market. Because of the bad state of the transportation system, the central government could not sufficiently control the activities of the local authorities. In recent times, Duc Qui noted, the party leadership recognized that serious leftist deviations had taken place in the treatment of the Catholic minority. A significant part of the local cadres considered the official policy of religious freedom an empty slogan not to be followed. In a number of cases these authorities brutally intervened in the religious life of Catholic believers. For instance, the party secretary of a Catholic village seized the robe of the priest and made a skirt of it for his wife. By now, the party leadership decided to punish severely such abuses. Duc Qui went on to say that the regime had very few good cadres in the villages. Most of the good cadres were in the army, in the teams carrying out land reform and, above all, in Hanoi. Whole provinces had no radio at all, particularly in the northwest. It often took 20 days to send newspapers to such places. Finally, he stated that the DRV had got 5,000 tons of rice from Poland, and the government managed to import a smaller amount of rice from South Vietnam.

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