

Hungarian Embassy to North Vietnam, Report, 30 October 1956.
[Summary]

The Hungarian diplomat who wrote the document noted that Phan Khoi, an old and famous North Vietnamese writer, had declared that there was no freedom of creation in the DRV. Phan Khoi illustrated his statement with the case of the poet Tran Dan who had been imprisoned for his (allegedly reactionary) poem about the battle of Dien Bien Phu. The pressure of public opinion, however, compelled the authorities to release Tran Dan from prison. While Phan Khoi was not a Communist, all his sons were party members, and this led to frequent family quarrels. Once Phan Khoi was even put under "house arrest" by his own sons, who did not let him leave the house for several days. The writers around "Nhan Van," a literary journal that was becoming more and more critical of the regime, constituted several different groups; some of them were the defenders of the "French literary school", others were the critics of the "cult of the individual," still others were Marxists, and so on. The leadership of the Union of Writers and Artists could not control the situation, and the party leaders, who concentrated on the correction of errors committed during the land reform campaign, did not react to the demands of the intellectuals. The 10th Plenum of the VWP CC did not discuss literary and artistic issues at all. This made the intellectuals even more dissatisfied. Several writers told the Hungarians that the CC was not properly informed about the present situation in cultural life. "They emphasize that they do not need a 'hundred flowers' --- this way, they refer to the 'Hundred Flowers' literary movement that was launched in China ---, let them have just 25 or twenty, without any 'flowery' policy, and then they will create such a vivid cultural life that they will not be ashamed neither in front of the Vietnamese people, nor in front of the foreign countries."

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