

E-Dossier Series Nr. 4.
Documentary Evidence

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

VOLUME III

Mediation Efforts – Part Two
(January–February, 1966)

Edited by
Csaba BÉKÉS, James G. HERSHBERG, János KEMÉNY and
Zoltán SZŐKE

COLD WAR HISTORY RESEARCH CENTER

BUDAPEST

2018

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DOCUMENTS

DOCUMENT 1

Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party (HSWP) Political Committee (Politbureau) meeting on Vietnam, 21 January 1966

Strictly confidential!
Distributed in: 2 copies

Minutes

From the session of the Political Committee held 21 January 1966

1, International issues

a, Information concerning the situation in Vietnam.

Comrade JÁNOS PÉTER:

Respected Political Committee,

At the end of the written report we indicate that I wish to inform the Political Committee about the prelude and future actions in person. I would like to give a brief review on events that followed right after the January 4 session of the Political Committee.

I reported to the Political Committee that comrade [Jerzy] Michalowski traveled to Vietnam while participating in discussions in Beijing. Here the Polish received the following answer: that from the side of the Americans, this is completely about seeking an alibi, the mediation of the Polish proposal will not be accepted in Vietnam. In Hanoi, comrade Michalowski was greeted three times: first by the Foreign Minister, the Prime Minister and finally by comrade Ho Chi Minh. Essentially things said by the Foreign Minister were substantially the same as comrade Michalowski was told in Beijing. The only difference was in the evaluation and tone of the Polish comrades proceedings. The proceedings of the Polish comrades were interpreted positively by the Foreign Minister as he regarded it as a sign of sympathy and support towards the Vietnam case. Afterwards the Prime Minister greeted comrade Michalowski cordially. Otherwise

they are old acquaintances since comrade Michalowski was a member of this Control Committee. The Prime Minister pronouncedly emphasized that they see the Polish proceedings differently than comrade Michalowski was told in Beijing.

Michalowski informed comrade Pham Van Dong on how the Polish proposal was received in Beijing as opposed to the Prime Minister who took it as an act of friendly supportive behavior. Comrade Pham Van Dong also expressed different opinions similar to what comrade Nguyen Duy Trinh has expressed the previous day and similar to what were said in Beijing, although he left most issues open. Towards the end of the discussion when comrade Michalowski asked whether they should respond to the Americans, comrade Pham Van Dong answered not to, for the time being, since this information and the proposal of the Polish comrades is full of elements that should be studied, examined more thoroughly and afterwards they will give a response.

Comrade Michalowski was greeted by comrade Ho Chi Minh the next day, along with comrade Pham Van Dong and comrade Nguyen Duy Trinh. Here the atmosphere of the discussion was entirely different from yesterdays' talks and besides, the issues were dealt with categorically. Comrade Ho Chi Minh pointed out that though the Americans may have grave defeats, difficulties of resupplying or in domestic politics, they still do not acknowledge their defeat though that time will surely come when political negotiations will be set to the daily agenda though for the moment it cannot be shifted from the military aspect until the Americans suffer additional defeats. Comrade Michalowski had certain arguments throughout the discussion, party concerning the fact that it would be beneficial to unveil these American maneuvers, etc. To this, he received the following answer: there is no need for unveiling these actions since the masses obviously see who the aggressor is and who the victim. In the end, comrade Michalowski asked whether they should give the Americans a response and comrade Ho Chi Minh answered that yes, they can. As for the question of what should the answer be like he answered that they should read the announcement of the Foreign Minister from the 4. January. This is the answer.

During these Polish actions took place, after comrade Michalowski's discussion with comrade Pham Van Dong, comrade [Polish Foreign Minister Adam] Rapacki granted us a proposal that the two of us should meet. He told us he would be delighted to come to Budapest, though unfortunately the doctors do not allow him to travel just yet, which is why he offered that I should meet him in Warsaw with complete discretion. They were interested in the following issue. Since they decided that the possibility of negotiation is not out of the question, but the main obstacle is that both sides awaited the other to make the definite and official initiative for different

reasons. The Polish comrades thought that from this deadlock situation the case could be shifted forward if the Polish or the Hungarians separately – or even together – take action, naturally according to a prior agreement with the Vietnamese comrades, to make a proposition to the parties concerned to establish a connection with one another and in order to establish this contact we offer our services pro bono. Examining the Polish comrades' propositions – examined already by the competent leaders of the party and the government – we've come to a decision to accept comrade Rapacki's suggestion and on the 7th I traveled to Warsaw, where a few hour long discussion took place. That is where I became familiar with the content of the discussion between comrade Michalowski and comrade Ho Chi Minh, since in the meantime the Polish received the relevant report. In addition to this report the Polish comrades explained that actually they did not only deal with this case because Poland is a member of the Vietnamese and the Indochinese Control Committee but also because in November, 1964 comrade Pham Van Dong asked comrade [Władysław] Gomulka – after the incident in Tonkin – to seek out relations with the leaders of the United States and to offer their help for seeking out a peaceful solution. This occurred in November, 1964 and afterwards comrade Rapacki in December, 1964 at the time of the UN General Assembly, had several discussions with Rusk concerning the Vietnam case. At the time the Vietnamese comrades were informed of these discussions, who appreciated this information. The Polish comrades complemented their report of Hanoi with this and afterwards we essentially agreed upon the following: They believe that in this situation their part in this case ends for the moment, they will not rush to give Washington a response, noting that they assume that the January 4 message was also read in Washington and they don't want to grant an alibi with their response. They are waiting for further developments in our relations with Hanoi. Besides this, we suggest comrade [Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei] Gromyko that the three of us should meet discretely and have a discussion of how to arrange further issues after comrade Shelepin's return. So much for the Polish concept.

Our operation actually continues in the same spirit, as I reported in the previous session of the Political Committee that we do not say a single word to the United States of handing any kind of message to Hanoi. It is only natural that they assumed we did so. Although we constantly informed the Vietnamese comrades in detail of the information received from the United States and we also informed similarly the Soviet comrades at all times. We ended the report of the January 4 Political Committee session by asking the Vietnamese comrades the following question: should their report be understood as if the United States wishes to negotiate, then they would establish direct contact with them. Furthermore can this be regarded as if they are

ready to have a kind of connection as systematic as there is with the Chinese ambassador for Warsaw and as with the Warsaw ambassador for the United States? The answer arrived from Hanoi on the 4 January, after the session of the Political Committee which was the following: they are ready to contact anyone who asks for it, also including the Americans as well in order to listen to one's opinion and concerning the same issue the Vietnamese side can also express their own opinion. Whether this meeting should be private or not, depends on the partner. Knowing this information, we in our own name asked Rusk whether his messages so far that were sent to us mean that they are ready to contact the representatives of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam and the South Vietnam [National] Liberation Front directly, where they have the chance to hear out each other's opinions and have a discussion concerning the issue. To this, we received a long response from Rusk however the most essential part was the following: they have a direct connection with the Consul General of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam in Rangoon. The Consul General received the message that they sent us the previous week between Christmas and New Year's that was passed on to Hanoi, although to this they did not receive an answer. Besides this, they have direct connection with Vietnamese representatives in a few more places, but of these he cannot say anything further. His message had a different point, viz. we refer to the following in our message: We excessively condemn the open propaganda they started with this initiative, since they help to increase general distrust by going against the initiative's own credibility. To this, [US Secretary of State Dean] Rusk gave an ireful response to our charge d'affaires [in Washington János Radványi] that included intimidation and obvious threat. He wishes to point that it would be extremely dangerous if the initiative was not taken seriously because they are also prepared for peace and war. Afterwards certain arguments were made in order to clarify why they take this initiative seriously. Our message had another important part where we expressed that if they are ready to establish this connection, they should tell who where and under what circumstances. Rusk's response to this was the following: this can only be answered depending on the response of Hanoi. After this we asked Rusk one more question, it seems he misunderstood the previous question, which wasn't about being ready for having a connection like in Rangoon but rather to have one where their opinion and thoughts can mutually be exchanged. To this, came a new answer which was the following: they offered their envoy of Rangoon to any kind of contact that we thought of or if we thought of a different place where negotiations like this can be pursued they are ready to examine the relevant proposition. We sent Rusk our answer to Hanoi, also explaining what question we asked Rusk. We told Rusk that we received his message and that we are also dealing with the other issue indicated in the second part. After this, in relation with Washington only the following occurred: two-three days ago right

before reading out the message of Johnson inquiries were made concerning comrade Radványi whether there is a response from our side or not to which we answered: no, there isn't any.

From Hanoi after those messages which we received in the meantime where on the one hand they ask for patience while they are dealing with the case and on the other hand they ask us not to send a response to the Americans until we don't discuss it with them etc. The answer arrived last Saturday that we passed on to the political Committee. After the arrival of the answer we sent a message to Hanoi which was the following: I received the message of the Foreign Minister, thank you. I report the content of the message to the leaders of the party and the government, that in all of our proceedings we consider the Vietnamese position as a starting-point and we will continue to do so in the future. Also, we support their cause and will continue to share all information with them. The Foreign Minister of Vietnam received this message at his residence, not in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Our Ambassador and the Foreign Minister had a one-hour long good-spirited conversation where the Foreign Minister thanked us for the message and he emphasized that they didn't have any doubts concerning us keeping in mind the loyalty and support for their cause from the side of our party the government and personally my own. He emphasized that all information was extremely useful for their cause, since it helped them in forming their position. After this, two additional messages arrived from Hanoi. One of the information concerns the conversation at the airport between the Foreign Minister and our Ambassador right after their delegation's arrival from the Republic of Hungary. The Foreign Minister told comrade Pehr that recently the United Arab Republic, Guinea and also Ghana – on behalf of the United States – in order to secure the peace offensive of the United States, wants to be involved which is why Nkrumah also wants to travel to Hanoi. The Vietnamese comrades believe that the time of negotiations isn't quite opportune just yet and they don't welcome Nkrumah's visit for the time being. However the Foreign Minister told our Ambassador that they have information about Tito wanting to convene the third conference of all non-aligned countries where the Vietnamese issue would be the main agenda.

The other written information comes from the Soviet Ambassador who informed comrade Pehr about comrade Shelepin's negotiations. The essence of the information is the same as we received from Moscow. What is new is the fact that the Ambassador told comrade Pehr that the Vietnamese comrades spoke highly of the actions of both the Polish and the Hungarians in front of comrade Shelepin and they consider the given information extremely valuable.

Last, I would like to report that after Rusk arrived back to Washington, his deputy called comrade Radványi yesterday and made inquiries whether there is an answer or not to which comrade

Radványi answered no, there is no response. To this, the Rusk's deputy asked him to inform them if any kind of message were to arrive.

Finally I would like to propose, it seems at this stage series of events so far, has to be closed in some way. Naturally in a form in which if any kind of worthy, credible development were to surface that would suggest moving towards a solution by negotiations we should have the possibility to move towards this direction to advance the process. It seems there is no urgent necessity to take this closing step just yet. With the message we sent to Hanoi and with the message that the Ambassador received, this issue seems closed for the time being. It seems, the closing also does not have to be done urgently in Washington. It would be advisable to wait for the end of the truce and wait for further developments. Certain signs show that the renewal of bombing the Democratic Republic of Vietnam will not start again until Wilson's visit. If it were to happen by all means, immediate measures should be taken towards Washington.

My suggestion is the following – as comrades Kádár and Kállai dealt with each and every step as competent members of the Political Committee – when the time of the two-sided action comes, with the lead of comrades Kádár and Kállai the texts of the messages should be approved and agreed upon.

Comrade JÁNOS KÁDÁR:

I believe we did well, acted honorably in the diplomatic action that started on the 23. December. What we did was necessary and we have no reason to be sorry for and nothing to regret. But then again, I feel this diplomatic mission has come to an end in a certain way. Either we put an end to it ourselves or it vanishes without a trace. I don't know which would be the better way to end it. I have a feeling that we should have a more determined way of ending it. Why is that? I see it as it has finished already – not the case itself, not the maneuvers of the Americans but rather the end of our actual diplomatic actions. Why I think finishing it would be the right choice is because it would end as it is now, I mean the Vietnamese-Hungarian relations in particular. The 5. point of the final response of the Vietnamese comrades is something we shouldn't take the blame for. I personally call this point the point of Beijing and what it contains does not equal what we have done. Furthermore this point also includes a certain threat.

Another thing: I'm not saying the government of the United States betrayed us, but not everything happened as it was in the beginning in the relations of the government of the United States and the

Hungarian government. We adhered to what came up in the first exchange of messages and the United States however, acted entirely different further on. Now, I feel we have an opportunity to take steps accordingly in both directions in some way – of course it should be considered that perhaps this moment it will not be welcomed not even by the Vietnamese, but will benefit the case eventually.

What kind of answer am I thinking of? One, that would be raised before the substantive issue is the following: of course we didn't finish this affair, there is an undeveloped position, there is also a truce, relations are advancing somehow, and ever since the 23. December the case which is not finished is in a certain condition. I am saying what comrade Péter said: let's keep this Foreign Affairs Committee in motion that includes: I myself, comrade Komócsin and comrade Péter. If necessary, let's deal with the issue in the future also. By this, I also mean that we should consider certain tinges at the wording of the text. I also agree that we should wait two days after the three and a half months expires.

The best I can hope for from the meeting of the three comrade Foreign Ministers is the discussion of principles of the diplomatic efforts, since the three Foreign Ministers cannot modify or evaluate the Vietnamese issue otherwise compared to the present situation.

I suggest, we first and foremost should send a response to the Vietnamese comrades approximately the following: comrade Péter should reply in his own name, in written form and should state that he reported the comrade Foreign Minister's 15. January response and all relevant issues to the competent party and government leaders also to leading organizations, there they discussed the issue and the following opinion was formed – and here he can change back to his own name again – if he wishes – thus it should be clear that this is not only his private opinion.

The following must be drawn: as it is known, we are driven by the following fundamental fact – in fact all our actions were driven by it – our solidarity towards our brotherly Vietnamese people and the South Vietnam Liberation Front who are fighting against the imperialistic Americans. This led us also when we engaged in a diplomatic action initiated by the American State Department on the 23. December. We were not driven by any selfish interest. We only and exclusively represented the common interests of the Vietnamese people and the socialist countries. Afterwards it should be said that to us according to your response from 15. January means that the mission is finished on our side. We acknowledge and accept your opinion and we invariably support both from the political and both from the economic side.

Although this has to be mentioned: we don't understand the 5. point of your response, moreover

we cannot accept it. I'm not saying it should be said with the exact words, but it should be said nevertheless. I suggest you quote the 5. point as it is written. Afterwards comrade Péter's speech could be quoted that the essence of the issue in question in this point is the following and it should be quoted that on 4. January we told the American State Department was the following, to your response was the following and it this has to be written down. Further on, there is no need to go into details concerning the additional story.

In our response we asked whether this means that you are ready to establish a connection like the one the Chinese and the American ambassador has in Warsaw. To this their remark was: yes, they are willing to do so anytime if one initiates it etc. Afterwards an ascertainment should be made: this is why it is not quite clear to us what we mean by: "in this case there will be regrettable consequences". We represent a just position which we can honorably defend against anyone. That's it! Then we should say that in this case we proved, sought in all kinds of enlightening work, diplomatic and economic assistance in every possible way and we are ready to continue to do so in the future if you feel it necessary and expedient, or if the situation requires it we offer our services pro bono in the diplomatic field as well. Done! Sincerely, János Péter. Is it clear what I want to achieve with this? I wouldn't scold the Vietnamese but with aspects like these: the Chinese horn in and threaten us when we assist them with good will. This is my opinion.

After, it should also be said that otherwise we also closed this stage towards the United States with appropriate notice and since we are only awaiting your final resolution and on the 15. January you informed us that your 4. January statement can be considered the final resolution, we will send appropriate notice to the State Department of the United States and we will end this diplomatic mission. I don't know how this will turnout, perhaps we will report what we answered to the United States at the same time.

To The United States an entirely different response should be sent. Perhaps I'm going overboard with this but I feel we dealt a lot with this issue and after what happened I dare to suggest with responsibility that we say something to the United States as well. Even though they didn't commit any blatant rascality in this, we should still say something to them also. They are expecting an answer. Let's answer. You gentlemen contacted me on the 23. December – and as it is customary it should be written down that Rusk called our charge d'affaires just before noon and asked for discretion and naturally we willingly complied. etc. etc. and it should be written why. I believe a response such as this could be sent to the United States and it's possible that this has to be discussed further. It has to be written that your diplomatic mission did not go as we were taken

into it. You asked for and promised discretion, and we kept it – and an observation could be made that the entire international press, the international public opinion is full of presumptions of what really lies behind your diplomatic actions: peace seeking or alibi seeking, furthermore it has to be stated clearly which one. Comrade Péter may also speak in his own name, he could share that we assumed the faint hope that here, there is also honest intervention and that we acted accordingly. Later you have violated the discretion by seeking to do who knows what exactly through 56 governments and it became perfectly clear to all that the seriousness towards the case ended on your part. After this we felt convinced that there is no need for our contribution in this mission. We feel solicitous about peace, the interest of the Vietnamese people, so you know the address and if we see serious intention we are ready to act at all times. Perhaps, someone will say that to this response the bombing of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam will start although I don't quite think this will happen since we aren't that important in world politics. I'm not saying we should write this in an obscene matter but the substantive part should be serious. Naturally I'm not putting the Americans and the Chinese on a common ground, but we have to write them that they should only preoccupy us if their intentions are serious. I would even consider sending this to the Chinese! This is a very difficult question.

We should draft both answers, it should be checked by the committee, perhaps we should also send it to the members of the Political Committee, they should share their opinions and if the fundamental idea is accepted by the members of the PC we may work out the response itself. It's possible that the United States will decide not to bomb the Democratic Republic of Vietnam without us but I also think if we have contributed with ten thousands of units in order to impede the bombings from the American side and if two children is saved then we have a major role already in the entire operation.

Furthermore the story hasn't finished yet concerning the future. I don't wish to go behind the scenes of things but there are tawdry aspects around our house, Our Chinese brothers should fool their dear granddads around but not us. I feel they would need a similar response. I say we should get out of this whole mission. We should share our opinion it should not be left untold.

Comrade ZOLTÁN KOMÓCSIN:

Forgive me but I believe comrade Kádár did indeed get a bit over board in this concrete case, and possibly not for the last time.

Actually, at the last session of the PC the concept of the 'Hungarian Channel' came up, our diplomatic action which actually started with comrade Péter's visit to London. The first and most important question is whether we should leave a loophole or should we close this channel. Closing it would be easier but then we would get even further from where we were and I feel this would also be less beneficial to the Vietnamese people and for the common cause. This is why I'm saying that comrade Kádár might have gone over the edge since if we are to continue like this, it means we could not quite achieve anything in the future nor with the Vietnamese nor with the Americans.

Comrade JÁNOS KÁDÁR:

This might be true, but there are 56 other channels other than ours.

Comrade ZOLTÁN KOMÓCSIN:

At present, it seems this is the only channel left. The Polish channel got stuck which is quite visible from what comrade Gomulka said and it's evident that what the Americans did to the Algerians and the Egyptians was a 100% bluff. Perhaps the most serious is, what there is with Nkrumah. It seems our actions are the most serious ones.

Comrade REZSŐ NYERS:

I'm not sure since the Chinese might welcome Nasser's mediation.

Comrade ZOLTÁN KOMÓCSIN:

No doubt, however in case the situation gets more serious the socialist block would have a great interest in taking part, not only to be involved but to create something on our side. Since in this, the Americans managed to achieve several political and diplomatic successes. I agree with comrade Kádár's evaluation. This is no doubt a Chinese point and a rude insult which is not in line with the Hungarian-Vietnamese relations at all. The fact that there will be a Chinese point is indisputable. Undoubtedly this is an insult. Now, the question is: should we take serious offense?

Comrade JÁNOS KÁDÁR:

I would like to pressure the Vietnamese also, just for a bit in order to take things more seriously.

Comrade ZOLTÁN KOMÓCSIN:

It's a recurring momentum whether we should wait a little or should we try to pressure the Vietnamese? If we examine the present situation it can be confirmed that the fact that they were not pressured turned out to be the tight decision. I'm inclined to say that the opportune moment for applying pressure hasn't arrived just yet and if I'm allowed to say such a thing, I also suggest that we press them a little indirectly however it is quite evident that the fact that they hadn't been pressured yet was the right thing to do. The truth is that the Chinese are behind their backs and the Vietnamese are between two fires at the moment. The Vietnamese declared the 5. point and if we decline we might be able to pressure them a little. The truth is that as the Americans, we also don't negotiate directly with China. The Chinese play the main role in this case and they stay in the background. According to this, the conclusion should be the following – what comrade Kádár said, although it should be significantly reorganized and should be made more diplomatic but most especially the final conclusions should be eliminated. If we said this out loud we would have closed the path from the Vietnamese side and it would be unlikely to benefit from it thus we should state our opinion adequately in order to keep the gate open at the same time for both the Vietnamese and for our side as well.

As for the Americans: unfortunately they are doing what they always have done, they sweep through half of the world with their rude pushy attitude, overrun governments – who can be run over – and they spread their propaganda in an enormous way both in secret and both openly. This is their method. Though in this particular issue taking into account what comrade Gomulka had said, I think that the Americans actually want to negotiate, in their own way. They cannot go there and admit – what we are saying – that they suffered defeat and they wish to negotiate. It seemed that at first Vietnam tended toward this also, but neither of them want to initiate the negotiations. Alas, regardless that it's not subjective, I don't like it and I cannot like it, there is an aspect to the Americans' prestige that we are entitled to acknowledge. They have a certain prestige in this. Rusk asked comrade Péter at the time whether the Vietnamese can negotiate without the

Chinese, whether they have an ability to make decisions independently. Unfortunately, there is none momentarily at the Vietnamese. The Chinese are the ones in fact who are pulling the strings from the background. If we were to close this case either one, either the other line, either the American, either the Vietnamese we would in fact do the Chinese a favor. If the Vietnamese were holding back information, the situation would be entirely different. Then, it would be worth it and just to close it in order to withdraw from the case with dignity and by keeping our national pride. However there is no guarantee for this and this is raised quite strongly in the present situation, whatever thin thread we may represent. I suggest we do everything in order to organize the Gromyko-Péter-Rapacki meeting. We should realize the political notion expounded by comrade Kádár by composing the message that should be sent to the Vietnamese in a way that a small loophole will remain open and we should continue to play our role as we did so far. Perhaps later something more serious could come out of this, though it is quite unlikely.

Comrade FRIGYES PUJA:

Basically I agree with the idea that comrade Kádár explained and I also agree that it should be closed. However the significance of the diplomatic action should not be overestimated, since the Americans would want to negotiate seriously, they would surely find a way. If we share our opinion on this with the Americans, it will not necessarily mean that the gate will be closed. They may return anytime if they want to either through us or others also. In my opinion, sharing our opinion concerning this initiative is the right thing to do, more or less as comrade Kádár explained though naturally in a more diplomatic way. I approve and agree, that we shouldn't leave it at that concerning the 5. point from the Vietnamese comrades, furthermore I believe there is also certain references in the 6. point also, which hints the following: Vietnam is our case and don't poke your noses into it. Concerning formality this is acceptable though it's not quite right to slap it at us so roughly. The response to the Vietnamese could be composed in a way that they understood our meaning though they would not feel hurt.

Comrade DEZSŐ NEMES:

I agree that we should say something in the matter. We could illustrate what comrade Kádár had said, in a way that, sorry we don't mean it this way. And if it has to be understood like this then it becomes impossible for us to grant certain information and be at help to the

Vietnamese comrades. Let's not say that at this juncture we have finished working on this matter, however, also let them know that it is not going to work this way. We should not send our response addressed to the Americans yet, instead we should send our response to the Vietnamese first and then wait for their reaction. Perhaps we can brief the Vietnamese about our planned response to the Americans, but we should send our final version to the Americans only once our Vietnamese comrades have responded.

Comrade JÁNOS KÁDÁR:

My minimal response would be that we cannot leave the 5. point unanswered. Fine, but we should note at the end that by doing so we have completed our exhausted our diplomatic efforts. At the same time, we need to discuss it all. It is a bit more difficult to craft a response to the Americans. So, what should we respond to them really?

Comrade ZOLTÁN KOMÓCSIN:

I support the option that we respond to the Americans and mention that we disapprove of their propaganda a bit.

Comrade JÁNOS KÁDÁR:

We should prepare two responses, one to the Americans and one to the Vietnamese and essentially we should declare our position short of saying that we are winding up our involvement. In essence: my view is that we should say something to the both of them. Perhaps the final text should be approved by this committee. By the time the meeting of the three foreign ministers is realized, it would be prudent to have our text ready and display it right then and there. The main point is that comrade Péter and his staff should be decisive on this. If we propose then and there that they should give us some advice on this, nobody will do so. In other words, even if we don't say that we have completed our diplomatic mission on this, it should be clear to both parties involved. This type of willingness on the other hand does not make any sense. At this stage, the Vietnamese have made their position clear. As to what the USA should or will do, I am not certain of, but in a year or two, they should come up with a proposal as to how things should proceed.

Comrade GYULA KÁLLAI:

I propose that the person who should add his name to the response being sent to the Americans should be comrade Péter.

Comrade JÁNOS KÁDÁR:

In both versions his name should be signed.

Comrade GYULA KÁLLAI:

Yes, but we are also talking about our government here. And they actually asked for our mediation. However, it is my opinion that we should stick to the level that we have already developed, the message should be phrased in a way that Comrade Péter will express his views on this. During the implementation of our series of actions, I believe, we never once mentioned that we are proceeding in the name of our government, all communication was sent in the name of comrade Péter.

Comrade JÁNOS KÁDÁR:

I believe we can respond and cite comrade Péter's name in both instances. I propose that somewhere at the beginning of the message that we are to send to the Vietnamese we should definitely name our party and government leadership, but should do so in a way that I have received the following report and instructions and based on this, I can tell you the following ... I think even in the letter sent to the USA there can be a vague reference to the fact that this is being sent in the name of our (my) government because this lends a more serious weight to this action. But, of course, this should be done only circumstantially, comrade Péter knows how this should be done. We should agree on this. On the other hand, I don't see the point of this right away as of yet, but if necessary, the Political Committee should have a session on this on Tuesday or Wednesday. The text should be ready and then we shall see whether we should dispatch it or have a renewed discussion about it.

[Magyar Nemzeti Levéltár-Országos Levéltár (MNL-OL – National Archives of Hungary) M-KS 288. f. 5./385. ő. e. (1966. 01. 04.) Translated by Sabine Topolánszky.]

DOCUMENT 2

Meeting between Hungarian deputy foreign minister Károly Erdélyi and the Polish ambassador, Budapest, 24 January 1966

Károly Erdélyi

4/EK/1966

Strictly Confidential!

Copies to: (list of names)

Memorandum

Subject:

The Polish Ambassador's, Kiljanczyk's visit

For your request (i.e. Péter's) I met Ambassador Kiljanczyk, the Ambassador of Poland to Hungary, on January 24.

1.) The Ambassador informed me about the content of a telegraph sent from Warsaw:
After arriving back from Hanoi, Ambassador Michalowski met J.A. Gronouski, the new Ambassador of the United States to Poland. Michalowski assured the Ambassador that Mr. Harriman's message was delivered to Hanoi. He also stated that nothing further was discussed beyond what Mr. Harriman's message contained.

After their meeting, Ambassador Michalowski came to the following conclusion:

1. Ambassador Gronouski indirectly confirmed the rumor according to which the North Vietnamese forces stationed in South Vietnam had suspended all military action after the stop of the bombing.
2. The Americans showed interest in finding out if it was possible to decrease military activity in South Vietnam if they (i.e. the Americans) did not continue the bombing.
3. As of today, it is not clear if the suspension of the military actions of the DRV in the South is a sign of their intention to completely stop all military actions.

During another meeting of Michalowski and the Foreign Minister of North Vietnam, the latter stated:

“Every indication is favorable, which would prolong the suspension of the American bombing... At a certain point the proportion of political and military actions will have to be changed. At the correct time, North Vietnam will propose political initiatives. “

4. It is unknown what the purpose of the Vietnamese comrades is by keeping the Americans in suspense for long.
5. Under such circumstances, if military actions do not start again on a wider scale by January 25, and they will not start bombing DRV territory, then during the meeting of the three Foreign Ministers in Moscow they could discuss – without the DRV agreeing to further commitments – how to convince the United States not to renew the bombings.
6. According to the latest analysis, there are two major trends within the Government of the United States, so there is a chance of putting some pressure on them. We will see, in case the cease fire is extended, how the DRV will utilize it.

II. It was clear from the meeting that the Ambassador was not informed about his Foreign Minister's visit to Moscow.

Budapest, January 25, 1966.

*[Source: MNL-OL, Foreign Ministry records, IV-43-4/E.K./1966, XIX-J-l-j, 112.doboz.
Located by Csaba Békés and translated by Aliz Ágoston.]*

DOCUMENT 3

Report on a meeting between Hungarian and US diplomats, Budapest, 25 January 1966

Béla Szilágyi

10/Sz.S./1966

Strictly Confidential!

Copies sent to: (list of names)

Memorandum

Subject:

O'Shaughnessy about Vietnam

On January 24 at 11 am, [Elim] O'Shaughnessy, the American Secretary's deputy [chargé d'Affaires] asked me to meet him in the afternoon. Since, due to my other appointments, it was not possible, he wanted to meet comrade Házi, but since he was on vacation at the time, he visited me on January 25 at 11 am. Our meeting lasted for about 1 hour and 40 minutes. His visit had one purpose:

To inform me about his government's standpoint on Vietnam. He brought with him a two-page typed document and wanted to read it to me, since he was not allowed to leave it with me. But for my request he passed it over to me to read it. I made a detailed summary of the text in 4 points:

1. As it is known by the government of Hungary, the US did not bomb the DRV during the last month. The US government has made serious initiatives through individuals sent by the President, who have already contacted more than 30 governments and have informed at least 70 others about their 14-point plan. The US-appointed agent to the UN, Goldberg, sent a letter to the Security Council about the issue of Vietnam and the President also dealt with the issue in his State of the Union Address. They want to meet all those governments that are in contact with the DRV and other communist countries. The US government is seriously looking for an opportunity for talks to find a peaceful solution.
2. The US standpoint has been delivered via several channels directly and indirectly to Hanoi. But Hanoi has not reacted in any ways to those initiatives. On the contrary, Hanoi and Beijing stressed their previous standpoint, including their opinion about the conditions of the talks, and about rejecting the initiatives of the US and of South Vietnam to stop the bombings.
3. We have proof that the DRV has established several supply routes from North Vietnam through Laos. Men and ammunition were smuggled in even during the period of the cease-fire. They continued with their military actions even during the Christmas cease-fire. The DRV violated the agreement several times during that period. They caused a lot of injuries, while the US and South Vietnam kept themselves to the agreement. The US wanted to avoid a possible conflict. Similar events occurred during the 4-day cease-fire during the New Year holiday. Everything pointed to a wide scale military action to be launched by the Communists after the end of the cease-fire.
4. A month has passed by and the Communists have not showed any willingness for the start of the talks. The US is worried about the lack of an answer and of correlation. In light of the above, the US does not feel that it can continue to freeze its own military actions and that of its allies.

He added, and also handed over as a written document, that the cease-fire was violated in 88 cases, out of which 56 was directed against the US, 23 against South Vietnam and 9 against Korea. There have been many injuries, deaths and imprisonments.

After re-reading the document, I told O'Shaughnessy that I would like to comment briefly on almost all the points above. I told him that their accusations are not acceptable; the situation is

exactly the opposite. During the 30-day period, on the basis of the information from the West, the size of the American troops was raised from 190,000 to 270,000. They also increased their budget to about \$6 billion, from which they want to spend about \$10.5 or \$12.5 million for increasing the size of the army and its accoutrements. 57 cents of every dollar in the budget are spent on the increase of the army, within which 9 cents are spent on the war in Vietnam. They are expanding the war to Laos, Cambodia and to the SEATO member Thailand. So, in my opinion, their actions are propagandistic and are not part of a peace offensive. One has the impression that they are trying to cover their military actions by a peace offensive. In my opinion, it would have been much better to contact the NLF, acknowledge it and start negotiations with them to settle the situation. I expressed my doubts about what he said and about the statement of his government. I also mentioned the statements of Senators Fulbright and Morse published in this morning's papers: 1. The US has to acknowledge the Viet Cong and has to start negotiating with it, 2. The most dangerous people are in the Pentagon. (O'Shaughnessy did not know about these statements.) Finally, I added [that] even if they had done anything, in light of the above facts their actions would have lost their attractiveness. Regardless, it was time for them to realize they would never win this war. The sooner they realized it and started acting accordingly, the better it was for them. I stressed that a renewal of the bombings against the DRV would have a very negative effect. Nobody believes that the war in Vietnam is the interest of the American people.

O'Shaughnessy briefly mentioned that the State of the Union address this year did not have much to say about foreign policy. Most of it was about domestic issues. For my question about how much of it dealt with the issue of the "fight against poverty," he said not much. I did not like the part about foreign policy. I found it very interesting that O'Shaughnessy did not mention and did not ask me if I wanted to report about our meeting to the government.

Budapest, January 26, 1966.

*[Source: MNL-OL, Foreign Ministry records, IV-43-10/Sz.B./1966, XIX-J-l-j, 112.doboz.
Located by Csaba Békés and translated by Aliz Ágoston.]*

DOCUMENT 4

Diplomatic measures in connection with the Vietnamese conflict, 31. January, 1966

MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS
1/PJ-1966. "C"

TOP SECRET
5 copies made

Proposal

To the Political Committee of the HSWP CC.

Subject: Diplomatic measures in connection
with the Vietnamese conflict.

Summarizing all the previous reports given to the Political Committee supplemented with the latest news I report the following:

Summary of the events that occurred between the 23. December, 1965, the start of the bombing pause against the DRV and the meeting of the Political Committee on 21. January, 1966:

- On the 23. December Secretary of State, Rusk informed our chargé d'affaires in Washington about the position of the United States on the political solution of the Vietnamese conflict with the request of forwarding this message to the Hungarian Foreign Minister.

- On 24. December comrade Fock shared the statement with the leader of the Vietnamese delegation negotiating in Budapest, Comrade Le Thanh Nghi. On the request of Comrade Le Thanh Nghi the letter was sent to Hanoi where our chargé d'affaires, referring to comrade Le Thanh Nghi, handed over the letter to the head of the main department of the Foreign Ministry.

- On 28. December the deputy Foreign Minister on the behalf of the Foreign Minister informed our chargé d'affaires in Hanoi, that they are thankful for the letter received on 25. December; the Vietnamese leaders didn't discussed the issue until then, and they asked the Hungarian side for patience, they will present their opinions and suggestions us as soon as they have decided about them.

- In Washington on the 28. December Rusk handed over a written statement summarized in two points to our chargé d'affaires with the request to forward it to the

[Hungarian] government. The substance of the message was: the bombing pause could be extended by the US into the New Year and further decisions depend on the response of Hanoi. The content of the message was forwarded by our chargé d'affaires in Hanoi to the Foreign Ministry of the DRV.

- On 29. December the comrade Deputy Foreign Minister of Vietnam – through our chargé d'affaires – asked us not to answer the US Secretary of State until the Vietnamese comrades inform us on their decision.

- On 31. December they handed over their written statement summarized in two points that condemned the American aggression, repeated the Vietnamese demands and stated: “If the Americans want something, they should turn directly to the DRV and the NLF.”

- On 1. January we directed a question to the Vietnamese comrade Foreign Minister, if we could interpret their message as readiness of the government of the DRV to engage the representatives of the government of the US in the same way as the ambassador of the People's Republic of China regularly engages in contacts with the US Ambassador in Warsaw.

The reply to this question arrived from Hanoi on the 4. January: “Our position is the following: we accept a meeting with anyone, who asks for one, including the United States, to present their position. On our side, we will present our point of view and our priorities. These are normal diplomatic activities. It depends on the request of the other side whether these are published or not.

- Based on this answer but in our own name, we submitted a question to the Secretary of State Rusk through our chargé d'affaires on the same day, the 4. January: can we interpret the previous messages of Secretary of State Rusk that way, that the United States is willing to make direct contact with the representatives of the DRV and the NLF for the mutual presentation of each others opinions.

Rusk had answered on the same day, stating, that they already made contact – for instance in Rangoon and also in other locations – with the representatives of the DRV. In Rangoon, the consul-general of the DRV accepted the two point document from 25. December from the US Ambassador and he forwarded it to Hanoi. They have received no answer yet. The United States is ready to offer its ambassador in Rangoon for any negotiation, which we support; but they are ready to consider a proposal for a different location as well.

During this exchange of messages, we criticized the wide ranging propaganda efforts of the US with regard to the ‘peace offensive’, which strengthens the distrust towards

their peace proposal. During this time, beginning on 29. December, the travels of the leading members of the Office of the President of the US and of the State Department started.

On 28. December we were also asked to receive Harriman for negotiations in Budapest. The visit – which was pushed for by Rusk through several channels – was declined by us.

Based on the negotiation with Harriman in Warsaw, the Polish comrades – as one of the members of the International Control Commission in Indochina – offered suggestions to the Vietnamese comrades and those suggestions were presented in Moscow and in Beijing as well by the personal envoy of comrade Gomulka. In Hanoi, the Polish envoy was received first by the Foreign Minister, later by the Prime Minister, and at last by comrade Ho Chi Minh. Both in Beijing and in Hanoi, they agreed, that the time of the negotiations has not arrived yet: the United States must suffer a similar defeat to the one suffered by the French did at Dien Bien Phu so that the United States will be ready to negotiate in earnest.

- The reply to our message was given to us by the Vietnamese comrades on 16. January in the Vietnamese Foreign Ministry.

One point of that message expressed their concern, that the United States could abuse the conversation between comrade Radványi and Rusk by publishing these, and this could be used to deepen the mistrust among Socialist states. “That would have a serious consequence.”

The Vietnamese message did not exclude the possibility of further exchange of messages between us and Rusk, but knowing the position of the Vietnamese comrades’, first communicated to the Polish comrades and later to comrade Shelepin, we saw no point in the further exchange of messages.

After comrade Shelepin returned from his visit to Vietnam, there was a confidential meeting based on our advice in Moscow, with comrade Gromyko, comrade Rapacki and me participating.

In the course of this meeting /which was held on 24. and 25. January/ comrade Gromyko informed us about the meetings of comrade Shelepin’s during his visit to Hanoi. The essence of this was: they signed agreements of a massive magnitude; Comrade Shelepin assured the Vietnamese comrades of the full support the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and of the government, during the confidential meetings, he called attention to the necessity of searching for a peaceful outcome. The Vietnamese comrades’ reaction was that the time for negotiations has not arrived yet before further military victories, but in order to

achieve a political solution, they deemed it necessary to improve diplomatic and propaganda work.

Comrade Gromyko informed us, referring to his Party's Central Committee and the Soviet government: he was authorized to thank for the cooperation of the Hungarian and the Polish comrades for the support for the common cause, which they achieved through their initiatives. Comrade Gromyko informed us about the meeting of comrade Kosygin and the US Vice President Humphrey and with Rusk in New Delhi, and comrade Dobrynin's meeting in Washington with the Security Adviser of President Johnson. The main characteristic of those meeting was that the Soviets strongly condemned the US aggression, but the US representatives were defensive, and they asked the Soviets to forward the US initiatives to the government of the DRV. From the Soviet side, they stated that they refuse to play the role of a postman.

Comrade Gromyko assessed the situation the following way: the US proposal has honest elements to it, they're looking for a way out, but for us, the final word will be spoken by the Vietnamese comrades.

At the end of the meeting, we agreed to continue to share our information with each other and to coordinate our future proposals and plans. We deemed it to be an immediate task to put pressure on the United States in order to lengthen the pause in the bombing of the DRV.

On the 27. January, the Soviet Ambassador in Hanoi received a letter written by Comrade Ho Chi Minh with the request of forwarding it to Comrade Podgorny. Our ambassador received the same letter on the 28. January. This letter was forwarded to the Presidents of all the socialist countries and also to those leaders who were participants of the 1954 Geneva Conference, as well as to those leaders who showed interest in the political settlement. The letter is enclosed here in full length /The content of the letter was published in Hanoi on the 28. January./

On 29. January Comrade Rapacki informed us in a secure phone call, that the Americans offered-through the Polish Foreign Ministry, that a confidant of President Johnson wants to travel to Hanoi in order to establish direct contact. From Hanoi, the Polish comrades received an answer after transmitting that message, saying, that the emissary of the President could contact them outside of the borders of the DRV, he may contact any of the ambassadors of the DRV, but they did not specify which one. This emissary wanted to travel to Warsaw with the intention to contact the ambassador of DRV, however, he [the ambassador of the DRV] was not instructed to contact the US representative, so the Polish comrades politely

declined to welcome the confidant of Johnson. The Polish comrades were informed in Washington, that if no positive answer is forthcoming about the US proposal from Hanoi until Sunday evening, 30. January Hanoi time, the bombings will be renewed.

As it is known, the bombings against the DRV started in the night of the 31. January.

On the morning of 31. January, the US chargé d'affaires asked for an urgent meeting with Deputy Minister Comrade Szilágyi. Comrade Szilágyi received the US chargé d'affaires at 8:30, who handed over a letter written by Secretary of State Rusk addressed to me with the comment, that they received the text at 3 AM on the 31. January. The letter is also enclosed below.

I recommend the following:

1. 1./ in the name of our Central Committee, Comrade Kádár, should send a confidential letter to Comrade Ho Chi Minh with the proposal that the Vietnamese comrades should initiate a move, in order to coordinate the efforts of the Socialist countries to support Vietnam effectively.
2. On behalf of the Presidential Council Comrade Dobi should send a reply to Comrade Ho Chi Minh.
3. The Foreign Ministry should send a message to the Vietnamese Comrade Foreign Minister in which we offer our help in the political and the diplomatic fields as well. /We should only tell so much about the 5. point of our message from 16., that we will discuss it later, when the written report in French from our ambassador arrives. /
4. Rusk's should get an answer to his letter, which qualifies the approach of the United States in the spirit of the speech in Parliament and should reflect interest in the proposals of the United States if there is any, in the new situation.
5. The government and the press should strongly condemn the hypocritical moves of the United States and its newer aggression which only contribute to the widening of the war.

Furthermore, I propose:

6. Through the Foreign Ministry, we should send out a call for an urgent meeting of the Foreign Ministers of the Warsaw Pact in order to coordinate the statements of the governments regarding the new developments in the Vietnamese conflict. With the notice, that the

impending discussions regarding the structural questions of the Warsaw pact could be discussed at this Foreign Ministers' meeting as well.

7. On the behalf of the Central Committee, Comrade Kádár should send a confidential letter to Comrade Ho Chi Minh, especially in the light of increasing aggression on the part of the United States, with the proposal of urging the Vietnamese comrades of vigorously supporting the Polish proposal of an urgent meeting between our parties' first secretaries.

The text of the points 1, 2, 3, 4, and 6 was approved by the Secretariat of the Central Committee

Budapest, 31. January, 1966

/János Péter/

[MNL-OL, M-KS 288. f. 5./385. ő. e. (1966. 01. 04.) Translated by Sabine Topolánszky.]

DOCUMENT 5

Minutes of a conversation with the State Department's Hungarian desk officer Squire, 3 February, 1966

Top Secret!

Washington, 3. February, 1966

Subject: A Conversation with the Hungarian desk officer Squire

While on a visit by Deputy Head of Office Popper I have met the Hungarian desk officer Squire the first time, since he arrived back from his round the world journey.

In the course of our discussion, Squire mentioned, that he is extremely grateful to the Hungarian government and especially to Foreign Minister Comrade János Péter, because had he not paid such great attention to the Vietnamese issue, he would never have visited so many capitals together with Harriman, as he did. Squire said this in a very polite and serious manner. The Hungarian desk officer also mentioned the cancelation of their visit to Budapest, stating, that Harriman expressed his regret of not meeting Comrade Péter and the Hungarian leadership, but he perfectly understood why the meeting did not take place. He would have been unable to provide any new information in addition to what's been already sent through me by Secretary Rusk to Comrade Péter. In the State Department, it is well known that the Hungarian government – similarly to the Polish and Yugoslavian governments – has worked on the issue of Vietnam so it can be settled through negotiations, if possible. Unfortunately, the leaders of the DRV have not yet come to the realization that the conflict cannot be solved by the force of arms, and neither side can win the war. The President – after receiving no reply to his peace offers from Hanoi –was forced to order the continuation of limited bombings, but he is convinced –Squire told me – that the President and Rusk are still committed to a peaceful resolution as soon as possible.

In my response, I expressed my regrets that the bombings were restarted and I told him, that in my opinion, the bombing of DRV and the non-recognition of the NLF will make any agreement impossible. With that, the brief conversation ceased, and Squire mentioned,

that he hopes that the Hungarian government is prepared to support the execution of a new peace initiative in the future.

Squire also stated, that he will be soon transferred to an overseas duty station.

Comrade János Péter
Minister of Foreign Affairs

(János Radványi)
chargé d'affaires

B u d a p e s t

[Source: MNL-OL, Foreign Ministry records]

DOCUMENT 6

Report of a meeting between deputy foreign minister Károly Erdélyi and the Polish ambassador, Budapest, 1. February 1966

II. Division
Polish Division
Ferenc Varga

Strictly Confidential!

Copies to: (list of names)

Memorandum

Subject:

The Polish Ambassador's, Kiljanczyk's visit

For your request Károly Erdélyi met Ambassador Kiljanczyk, the Ambassador of Poland to Hungary, on February 1.

The Ambassador said that on January 31, at 13:00 hours, Ambassador Gronouski, the Ambassador of the United States to Poland, delivered Mr. Rusk's (Secretary of State) letter to comrade Rapacki. In his letter, Mr. Rusk wrote that Mr. Harriman's mission was unsuccessful. The DRV did not react to the peace proposal of the United States. They are still building military projects, so the United States will renew the bombing of North Vietnam. They wished to inform the government of the Republic of Poland, the member of the Indo-China Control Committee, about their decision.

In his reply, comrade Rapacki stated that the United States did not use the opportunity provided by the stop in the bombings. He condemned this latest decision of the United States,

stressing that the United States is to be blamed for the renewal of the conflict. He also stated that the Republic of Poland continues to support the 4 points of the Republic of North Vietnam and the 5 points of the South Vietnamese National Liberation Front.

Ambassador Gronouski listened to comrade Rapacki's reasoning, but did not argue with it.

Ambassador Michalowski was also present when the letter was delivered.

Comrade Erdélyi informed Comrade Kiljanczyk that yesterday, the American Ambassador's deputy delivered a similar letter, which was addressed to comrade Péter, to comrade Szilágyi.

Budapest, February 1, 1966.

[Source: MNL-OL, Foreign Ministry records. Located by Csaba Bekes and translated by Aliz Agoston.]

DOCUMENT 7

Minutes of the session of the HSWP Political Committee held on 1 February 1966

HIGHLY CONFIDENTIAL!

2 copies made

MINUTES

of the session of the Political Committee held on 1. February 1966

1) Diplomatic measures taken in connection with the conflict in Vietnam

Comrade JÁNOS PÉTER:

Respected Political Committee!

As an amendment to my report, I just would like to report, that the meeting between comrades Gromyko and Rapacki was decided at the visit of comrade Gomulka in Budapest, when comrade Gomulka negotiated with comrade Kádár and they also informed each other about the situation in and the steps taken regarding Vietnam, and as a result of this discussion comrade Gomulka sent a telegram to Rapacki, so that he will also propose the meeting to comrade Gromyko.

The other thing I would like to report is, that it became clear during this discussion, that during that week, more precisely at the beginning of last week, the Americans started to use an ultimatum-like tone, they handed over a note in the Polish foreign ministry, the conclusion of which was in effect the announcement of the ultimatum, but at that time the Americans didn't expose this sufficiently.

The third thing: yesterday in Hanoi the friendly ambassadors were informed about the start of the bombings and stated, that today a government statement from DRV will appear, in which they will ask for support from friendly countries and for the condemnation of the American bombings.

Comrade DEZSŐ NEMES:

What kind of suggestion is there for the realization of point Nr. 4. of the proposal? Are the comrades thinking about a government statement? Or will it be a foreign ministry statement?

Comrade JÁNOS PÉTER:

A statement from the government would be more appropriate.

Comrade JÁNOS KÁDÁR:

We should take note of that and steps already taken.

The first point of the proposals is acceptable. Do we need a deadline for that?

Comrade JÁNOS PÉTER:

Maybe the Secretariat should decide when this should happen.

Comrade JÁNOS KÁDÁR:

Instead of the Secretariat I have the following proposal: The Political Committee should mandate this five member committee, which is operational to this day, the state secretary responsible for foreign relations, the foreign minister, the head of the department [in the Foreign Ministry], comrade Fock and me, and we should act as the executive instead of the Secretariat. We can be more operational, we can meet easier, if necessary.

The points 2 and 3 are acceptable.

Point 4 should contain government statement and press release to be acceptable. As a matter of fact, there is no need for a lengthy statement here. In the next few days we should release it.

Comrade JÁNOS PÉTER:

Perhaps after the meeting of the government.

Comrade JÁNOS KÁDÁR:

This should be reported to the Council of Ministers as early as possible, it should be proposed, and a text could also be sent. There is a need for this right now. Because if we don't release it now, we would need a lengthy statement.

There are these "other" proposals. These are a bit complicated. I have doubts about how these could be realized. Originally comrade Péter thought that these would serve the purpose of publication before a government statement. But this was somehow unrealistic, as the government statement should be publicized in the following days. The Soviet government already published a kind of a statement on Monday. Knowing the fate of previous initiatives, we have to assume that the Romanian comrades will hate the idea of sitting down together so suddenly, and this is as far bothersome and worrying for me, because other things could suffer delays because of this. Wouldn't it be more useful to suggest the speeding up of the foreign ministerial consultation on the other issue due shortly, by suggesting to negotiate there about the Vietnamese issue. This looks more realistic. Now our only option is to proceed this way. We should decide on such a resolution, and urge them to put the Vietnamese issue on the agenda at the proposed foreign ministerial consultation.

Here is this point Nr. 6. This is something about which we've already talked in connection with Vietnamese issue once or twice. On some occasion and in some form it would be useful to show the Vietnamese that they also have a determining role, and this point covers this. We could refer to the deteriorated situation, to the consultation with their delegation as well, and this should be done in the spirit of that. Dear Vietnamese comrades, you have a decisive role in this question at this moment, and you should act more firmly, you should initiate a meeting of the representatives of the socialist countries. We should however be careful not to thwart the Polish proposal. We should adopt the points with the remark, that there is a need for urgent and operational steps, and then this 5 member committee should be making the decisions, and if it is necessary we will bring it in front of the committee.

Comrade LAJOS CZINEGE:

Today morning I got the following notice: Comrade Brezhnev sent a telegram to comrade Kádár, informing him about the preparatory conference of deputy defense ministers will be held on the 4. They indicated, that the commanding officer also sent a telegram, but I didn't receive that. There is concurrence about this. Comrade Peter didn't receive anything until now.

Comrade JÁNOS KÁDÁR:

We should take note of it.

Comrade LAJOS CZINEGE:

I have one more thing to add. I couldn't forward it, because I received it this night, our informant in Washington reported yesterday: the Joint Chiefs of Staff have reached an agreement – they are now forwarding it to the administration, it's a two point document, and it proposes to mine the area around the 17. parallel in Vietnam and Laos, as well as sending troops into Laos and as long as this so-called infiltration continues from North Vietnam, an overland attack should be launched. The information got one verification, so it can be considered reliable, but we couldn't verify it from other sources.

Comrade JÁNOS KÁDÁR:

We should take note of it.

[Source: MNL-OL, M-KS. 288. f. 5./386. ő. e. (1966. 02. 01)]

DOCUMENT 8

Report from Hungarian ambassador in Hanoi, Imre Pehr, 3 February 1966

Embassy of the People's Republic of Hungary

Strictly Confidential
3 copies were made
2 for the Headquarters
1 for the Embassy

Hanoi, February 3, 1966.

Subject: Correspondence between comrade Péter
and the Foreign Ministry of the DRV.

43/Strictly Conf. /1966.

Attached I am sending you the written answers of TRINH Foreign Minister to the messages of comrade Péter, and the official statement of the Foreign Ministry of the DRV, published on January 4, 1966. I have already reported in detail about the delivery of the messages through other means, when those took place.

During the Soviet-Vietnamese inter-party talks the Vietnamese comrades said that they highly appreciated the supportive activities of the Hungarian Party and Government towards the resolving of the situation in Vietnam. The received information served well in forming their opinion about the situation and in forming their standpoint.

According to my judgment, the Vietnamese comrades were not entirely honest with us in their answers and the information they provided us with. For example, what happened in Rangoon was described to us completely in a different way by the Foreign Minister and by the Deputy Foreign Minister. I think, for the sake of the cause, it should have been wiser to inform us when our Embassy delivered the first message of comrade Péter, about the fact that in

Rangoon there had been some kind of relations between the representative of the DRV and of the Ambassador of the USA. Supposedly, the opinions could have been formed in a different way, especially when Rusk made his offer regarding the topic.

Dr. Imre Pehr
Ambassador

[Source: MNL–OL, Foreign Ministry records, 43/Strictly conf./1966. Located by Csaba Békés and translated by Aliz Ágoston.]

DOCUMENT 9

Report of a meeting between a Hungarian diplomat and the Polish ambassador, Budapest, 10 February 1966

II. Division
Pal Sztanko
33/II./66.

Copy
Strictly Confidential!
4 copies made

Memorandum

Subject:
The Polish Ambassador's, Kiljanczyk's visit

For your request I met Ambassador Kiljanczyk, the Ambassador of Poland to Hungary, on February 10, who informed me about the following in relation to the Vietnam issue:

1. Ambassador Wendrowski, the Polish Ambassador in Hanoi, visited the Foreign Minister of Vietnam, Pham Van-Dong on February 5, and informed him about the following: according to the information received from several Polish organizations in South Vietnam, the US is making preparation for the destruction of the South Vietnamese Liberation Front, and are working on establishing the hinterland and creating new military facilities. They are also planning to double the number of military aircraft stationed in South Vietnam and to cut the Ho-road, etc.

On the basis of the above and other information, the Polish Embassy in Hanoi analyzed the situation in South Vietnam and came to the conclusion that although the South Vietnamese society is opposing the “Ky”-system, nevertheless the majority is against communism, as well. Their claims are not aimed at the overthrow of the present system in Saigon and the victory of the NLF, so the continuation of the war would be beneficial primarily for the US.

Pham Van Dong replied the following:

- Vietnam is doing its best to minimize the war
- A nuclear war at this stage is impossible, since the Soviet Union already has nuclear weapons and China will have it soon.
- At this stage, a nuclear war with China is out of the question
- The US cannot be the winning party in the war in Vietnam
- As for how long the war will last is not a concern of the DRV. The DRV is prepared for the worst.
- The key factor in the analysis of the situation is the application of the Marxist theory for the situation.

Pham Van Dong added the following: if the US increased its military force and had six times as many forces in 1964-65 than before and it did not help her then, so to double its forces stationed there now will not help her either.

2. According to a report from the Embassy in Hanoi, there was a meeting of the Vietnamese Workers' Party on February 5, where Le Duan had the following comment on the visit of the delegation led by Shelepin:

All socialist countries are supporting the DRV and are concerned about their victory. But this interest is realized in different ways in the different countries, for example:

- For China: if the DRV is defeated, American military forces would be on the Chinese border. But if the DRV is victorious, it makes it easier for China to get Taiwan back.

- For the Soviet Union: to form a border, and not crossing it. (When I asked how it should be interpreted, comrade Kiljanczyk could not give me any further details.)
- Help received from the Socialist countries in 1965-66 was more than during the last 10 years all together.

(Information about the above statements of Le Duan came from a participant in the meeting.)

Comrade Kiljanczyk noted that this information was given to only a couple of socialist mission leaders by the Polish Foreign Ministry. He gave us the information of his own accord.

I thanked Comrade Kiljanczyk for the useful information and promised that I would pass it on to our leaders immediately.

Budapest, February 10, 1966.

[Source: MNL-OL, Foreign Ministry records: Located by Csaba Békés and translated by Aliz Ágoston.]

DOCUMENT 10

Record of a meeting with Polish Foreign Ministry director-general

Jerzy Michalowski,

7 February 1966

Hungarian Embassy in Poland

Top Secret!

Warsaw, 11 February 1966

Issued in 3 copies

Recipients: Headquarters (2)

Embassy (1)

Subject: Visit to the Foreign Ministry

Director General, A. J. Michalowski

On 7 February, I visited Ambassador Jerzy Michalowski, Director General of the Polish Foreign Ministry [...]

During the conversation Ambassador Michalowski provided the following information concerning his impressions and the situation in Vietnam:

DRV leaders are of the opinion that the time for a political resolution to the Vietnam conflict has not yet come. Nevertheless, there is no consensus within the leadership regarding the situation. Some of them show an inclination toward a political resolution, but they are not in a position to do anything. [Essentially as a result of Chinese influence]

[...]

It makes the situation of DRV leaders even more difficult that the NLF's leaders are convinced that they are able to achieve military victory and if DRV leaders showed inclination to negotiate they would so evaluate it that the North betrayed the interests of the South and tries to avoid [literally: is afraid of] armed struggle instead of diverting [US] forces from the South.

[According to Michalowski] Vietnamese leaders are afraid of a political resolution because they have been fighting for twenty years. [essentially: they know how to win a war but have no idea how to win the peace]. In addition, they overestimate their own military successes and underestimate the economic potential of the USA.

Ho grew old and tired. He gives the impression of a "walking statue," keeps repeating memorized [hackneyed] formulas.

Pham Van Dong is mentally fresh, comprehends what you tell him, evaluates the situation realistically, but his hands are tied.

Michalowski pointed out that, although the Polish and Hungarian initiatives proved unsuccessful, they were important because this was the first time DRV leaders learned the truth from their friends, which helped them seeing the world's situation and the USA more realistically.

In the present situation one must wait until conditions become more favorable for resuming peace initiatives.

(Signed) Ambassador Ferenc Martin

[Source: MNL-OL, Foreign Ministry records, 001297/1966, XIX-J-1-j, Polish Relations, 79. doboz. Located by James Hershberg and translated by Zoltán Szőke.]

DOCUMENT 11

Report of a meeting between a Hungarian diplomat and the Polish ambassador, Budapest, 16 February 1966

II. Division
Pal Sztanko
39/II.

Strictly Confidential!
Copies sent to: (list of names)

Memorandum

Subject:
The Polish Ambassador's, Kiljanczyk's visit

For your request I met Ambassador Kiljanczyk, the Ambassador of Poland to Hungary, on February 16, who further informed me about the latest information on the Vietnam issue:

Comrade Wendrowski, the leader of the Polish delegation to the International Control Commission in Vietnam (and not the Polish Ambassador to Hanoi, as he said during his last visit) after his meeting with Pham Van Dong, he had a meeting with General Giap, Defense Minister, on February 10, and were discussing the following issues:

1. The people of Vietnam strongly believe in the continuation of the war until victory. This belief goes back to their experience of the war against the French. They won against the French, who by then deployed more forces than at the beginning of the war. This belief is also powered by the results of the current war. The bravery and the

high ethical level of the people of Vietnam can overpower the technological advantage of the US.

2. It is also necessary to continue the war from a political point of view:

This is the interest of all the socialist countries. If Vietnam lost the war, that would increase the pressure of the US on other socialist countries.

3. The US is not capable of achieving its strategic and political goals.

4. The bombings will not conquer the people of Vietnam not even if all the cities are destroyed.

Report from the Polish Embassy in Paris: According to a consultant of the British Ambassador in Paris, the French do not have an interest in a possible meeting in Geneva. De Gaulle is watching Johnson's "Vietnamese problems" with satisfaction. But, he is concerned about a possible reelection of the Labor Party in the UK, in case there were early elections, because he thinks the British Labor Party is practicing an American friendly politics.

The director of the Asian Division in the French Foreign Ministry, (Manach), told the following to an employee of the Polish Embassy: The French tried to find out some information from the Chinese about the meetings of the Ambassadors of the US and of China in Warsaw. According to the received information, Beijing wanted to stop the discussions, but agreed to continue since the US expressed its wish to continue. Beijing agreed, with the condition that they would not only discuss the Chinese-American relations and Asian questions, but other international issues, as well. The French also gathered some information about these meetings from the Americans, as well and received the following information: according to the Chinese, the only way to restore the Chinese American relations is to withdraw the American troops from Taiwan. The Chinese Ambassador in Warsaw made the following comment in front of the American Ambassador: "If the US does not attack the Republic of China, China will not interfere directly in Vietnam."

The opinion of the French Ambassador in Cambodia: France is supporting the plans of Sihanouk, to increase the activity of the International Control Committee, because that would be beneficial for the neutrality of Cambodia. The Americans are trying to artificially polarize the situation on the borders of Cambodia, Thailand and South Vietnam, so as to create an excuse for an open intervention. According to the French Ambassador, the Americans will not

be able to reach a military agreement even if they increase the number of their troops to half a million. As for the latest American “peace offensive”- he said, the US is talking about peace, but solely on their conditions. But at the same time, Hanoi is also not showing any initiatives for discussions. The key for peace is held by Beijing. According to the French experts working in the area, the military losses of the two countries are about the same, however in the territories controlled by the NLF and in the DRV there have been significant civilian losses, as well.

The report of the Polish Embassy in Belgrade: There have been some developments in the standpoint of the Yugoslav perspective on the Vietnam question, which can be interpreted in the following way:

- They are attacking the standpoint of the US, and in relation to its “peace offensive” they think it is lacking good will.
- Yugoslav politicians have expressed their regrets that the US has not taken into consideration their opinion, which they have expressed during several meetings that they had with American representatives.
- The general public has a better understanding and support now of the standpoint of the DRV and the NLF. The support of the DRV financially, politically and morally has been stressed in several Yugoslav statements and in the press.
- Now the majority is on the opinion that only Vietnam can determine when and under what conditions should the talks begin.
- As for the 4 points of the DRV, the Yugoslav political circles are supporting 3 of them, but the 4th (withdrawal of US troops) is unrealistic. But their opinion is progressing for the better. Lately, they have been trying to persuade the Americans, before the start of the talks, they should agree to a general withdrawal of their troops.

Winiewicz Polish Deputy Foreign Minister had a meeting with the Ambassador of Canada in Warsaw, during which the following issues were brought up: Canada is concerned about the expansion of the American intrusion and the renewal of the bombings against the DRV. But at the same time he expressed his regret that Ho Chi Minh’s letter to the leaders of the different

countries was sent late. The Ambassador hinted that “it would be good to do something” to create the appropriate atmosphere for the talks.

In his reply, Winiewicz said that in Poland there is a storm of indignation because of the renewal of the air strikes before they could have analyzed Ho Chi Minh’s statement in detail, in which there are several new elements. He highlighted that it is solely Washington’s responsibility that there is a renewed tension in the area. The American standpoint, according to which they will stop the bombings only if Hanoi shows signs of their willingness to talk, is an ultimatum and because of this fact Poland is not planning to come up with any kind of political initiative right now. The main task is to put pressure on the US so that they would stop the bombings and all military intervention.

Budapest, February 17, 1966.

[Source: MNL–OL, Foreign Ministry records: Located by Csaba Békés and translated by Aliz Ágoston.]

DOCUMENT 12

**János Radványi, charge d'affaires, Hungarian Legation in Washington,
D.C., report, "Subject: The Vietnam issue,"
18 February 1966 (excerpts)**

00549/13/1966

Strictly Confidential!

Copies sent to: (list of names)

Copy

Of the report from the Legation of Hungary in Washington, DC dated Feb. 18, 1966 (No.16-2/)

Subject:

The Vietnam Issue

Before reporting about the events happening since the bombings against the DRV started again a couple of weeks ago, I would like to briefly summarize the information gathered about the renewal of the bombings since then.

On January 24, the order came from the State that the American foreign mission leaders needed to get in touch with the leaders of those countries that were involved with the American "peace offensive". They informed the governments involved, that since Hanoi has not reacted in any ways to the American peace initiatives, the US cannot continue to freeze its military activities and those of their allies any longer. This statement was the preparation for the renewal of the bombings, and served as a last warning for Hanoi.

It was not clear though during these days in Washington, when exactly the bombings would start again. The indecisive behavior of the President, the different interest present both in domestic and foreign issues had a major influence on the situation. Finally, President Johnson – according to my knowledge – put January 28 as the final deadline for making a decision. On

January 25, the US Ambassador in Moscow informed the White House that the British Embassy was in contact with the Embassy of the DRV in Moscow and that they were awaiting an important statement from President Ho Chi Minh. According to my knowledge, a letter was delivered from comrade Ho Chi Minh addressed to President Wilson on January 27, and was immediately forwarded to the Americans. But according to the White House the letter did not contain anything new or different from the 4-point statement of the DRV. On January 29, at a National Security meeting the President finally made his decision about the renewal of the bombings. There were only two against the bombings, Vice President Humphrey and US-appointed agent to the UN Goldberg.

On February 1, Rusk sent an explanation about the renewal of the bombings to the Foreign Ministers of all the countries involved in the "Peace Offensive," just as it was done on January 28.

I received some useful information about this period from Ambassador Drozniak, the Ambassador of Poland in Washington, DC and from Lewandowsky, Polish-appointed agent to the UN.

On February 3, Ambassador Drozniak told me that Mr. Harriman was very pleased with the meetings in Warsaw, but in his report to Mr. Johnson, he stressed that the Polish leaders are strongly of the opinion that the US not only has to stop the bombings completely, but also has to put an end to further shipments of ammunition and armed forces to the region.

The Foreign Ministry of Poland continued to analyze intensively the Vietnam issue even after Mr. Harriman's visit and arranged several meetings between the Foreign Ministry and Ambassador Gronouski.

Before the restart of the bombings, Ambassador Gronouski had visited the leaders of Poland twice and informed them that Hanoi did not reply to President Johnson's peace proposal.

Furthermore, they continued with their war preparations. Under these circumstances the US government could not paralyze its forces any longer.

The second message was delivered on February 1, on the day of the restart of the bombings. Ambassador Gronouski was delivering Secretary of State Rusk's message, in which he "explained the reasons for the restart of the bombings" and he stressed that he was welcoming all proposals for peaceful negotiations. According to the Polish Ambassador, the Polish leaders reacted very disapprovingly.

The Ambassador also informed us that Senators Mansfield and Aiken visited him on January 28 and begged him to contact Warsaw immediately and tell Foreign Minister Rapacki that the Presidential decision is only about a couple of days away. If the Americans did not receive a positive reply from Hanoi in regard to the start of the peace negotiations, President Johnson, under pressure from military and political leaders, would restart the bombings.

Ambassador Landowski [Bogdan Lewandowski?] (also the appointed agent to the UN), who just returned from Warsaw, informed us that according to his knowledge Vietnam did not reply to the American initiatives because they thought the American troops would never leave South Vietnam. Taking into consideration the West German and South Korean examples, the Vietnam government suspects that the American invasion in South Vietnam would last for years, which would make it impossible to unite the Southern and Northern parts of Vietnam. This, along with the pressure on the Northern border from China and in the South from the American expedition army, could endanger the continuation of the national entity of Vietnam. Comrade Ho Chi Minh was influenced in his decision making by his relationship to the National Liberation Front. I would like to support this latter sentence by a comment I received from Mr. [Joseph] Kraft, an American journalist, who told me that there were personnel changes at the top of the NLF three times during the last year.

According to Ambassador Lendowsky, during the last two weeks of the cease-fire, the North Vietnamese troops fighting in South Vietnam suspended their activities. The American military leadership must have noticed that. Another piece of information is related to the same

period, according to which during the last week of the cease-fire analysts (ordered by President Johnson) were examining whether the North Vietnamese forces were called back or not.

...

[continued from p.4.]

There are two possible military choices the US might take. The Pentagon offered two alternatives for President Johnson:

1. Maintaining the positions at strategic locations, expanding the activities by the so-called search and destroy operations to take control over territories where the Viet Cong has concentrated activities. The goal is to neutralize the major Viet Cong forces and not to annex the territories. Furthermore, to secure crucial parts of Rt. 1 in a North South direction and other roads leading to the center of the country and to the borders with Laos and Cambodia. The plan can be executed with a minor escalation and can be expanded without delay depending on the logistics.
2. Major military actions starting from the strategic locations towards the West and East all the way to the Laos and Cambodian borders. To execute this plan, according to the Pentagon, a reorganization of logistics and 600,000 new troops were necessary.

The extremists in the Pentagon are suggesting to bomb Hanoi and Haiphong, and to create a blockade at the seaport of Haiphong. President Johnson rejected this idea, since the expansion of the bombings in the North would not weaken the activities of the Viet Cong. A bombing against civilians could lead to unpredictable difficulties. So far it looks as if President Johnson was following the strategy explained in the first point.

The “weapons and rice” strategy was brought up at the meeting in Honolulu. The effectiveness of this strategy is not known today, but one thing is sure, that by signing the Honolulu statement, the President committed the US politically to the Vietnam issue, which was further supported by the South Asian visit of Vice President Humphrey.

On the basis of the above, under the present circumstances there is going to be a further escalation of the war in Vietnam. Its consequences are not predictable, but right now there is no danger of a bombing of Hanoi or Haiphong, or of a ground attack on the DRV. There are rumors that the escalation might lead to the attack of China and the use of the American nuclear bomb. But that does not seem likely in the near future.

Parallel to the escalation of the administration, there are several plans and ideas circulating. Most of these consist of two main elements. The complete cessation of the bombing against the DRV and the acknowledgement of the National Liberation Front. This is emphasized by the Fulbright group and by Senator [Abraham] Ribicoff’s plan, which complements it with the withdrawal of 10 thousand American and 10 thousand DRV soldiers.

The neutral countries of the UN are looking for a way to include the Viet Cong in the negotiations. According to some information from British sources, the talks would start between South Vietnam and Cambodia then Prince Sihanouk would be the intermediary between the government and the Viet Cong. (But on the basis of the statement of Ky in Honolulu, this would be highly unlikely.)

Some neutral Asian countries proposed a plan to give more power to the Indian-Polish-Canadian Control Committee and with their help reach a peace agreement first then the withdrawal of the troops.

So, there are plans and ideas, but the realization of them is not likely under the current circumstances. What is more likely is an escalation of the tension.

To end the Vietnam War at this point by peace negotiations does not seem possible, but the US government would be in a very embarrassing situation politically both internationally and in South-East Asia, if there were another Geneva Conference.

Finally, it is also clear that the US foreign policy is still heavily built on the Soviet-Chinese conflict, and this is the major factor in its policy toward the Vietnam issue.

János Radványi

Charge d'Affairs

[Source: MNL-OL, Foreign Ministry records]

MAIN ACTORS

APRÓ, Antal (1913-1994) raised in an orphanage, he became a painter. He joined the trade union in 1929, and in 1930 he joined a union dominated by communists, and became a member of the illegal communist party in 1931. He participated in organizing strikes and other illegal activities at the time. Due to his activities, he was imprisoned seven times by the authorities before and during the Second World War. After the war he was entrusted with organizing and leading the trade union department of the communist party, became a member of the provisional national legislature. From 1946 he became a member of the Central Leadership of the Hungarian Workers' Party, and held various positions mostly in connection with organizational work at the trade unions. In 1953 he became the minister for the building material industry but in the Nagy government he lost some of his important roles temporarily. He became a figure for the rehabilitation of victims of show trials, during the Nagy government. As the 1956 revolution broke out, he became a member of the newly established Military Committee, which was formally tasked with defeating the revolution and became a member of the Soviet supported Kádár government. From 1957 until 1971 he was a deputy in the Council of Ministers. From 1961 he led the government commission on foreign affairs, and was the permanent delegate to the Comecon. He became president of the Hungarian parliament in 1971, and he held this position until 1984. He went into retirement at the end of 1984.¹

BÍRÓ, József (1921-) technician, welder, economist. He became head of the London Trade Office (1957-1960), and deputy minister (1962-1963). From 1963 until 1979 he was minister for foreign trade.²

BISZKU, Béla (1921-2016) Born into a peasant family, his family moved to Budapest in 1929. There he finished his schools and learnt to become a tool mechanic, and worked as such until 1942. He joined a union of steel workers, and actively participated in the resistance by supplying weapons. In 1945 he became a member of the communist party, and worked in party organs in Budapest. In 1951 he was demoted from his position, due to family issues. He

¹ Apró Antal, Nemzeti Emlékezet Bizottsága
<https://www.neb.hu>

² Bíró József; Ki kicsoda? in: Bencsik Péter (ed.): Az államszocializmus kora Magyarországon és Kelet-Közép-Európában
<http://allamszocializmus.lapunk.hu/?modul=oldal&tartalom=718655>

remained active in the party organization and in 1956 he joined Kádár and started to reorganize the party apparatus in Budapest. He became a central figure in the new regime, and was named interior minister (1957-1961) and played a central role in the retaliation. He became a Member of Parliament, and remained a member until 1985. In 1961 he was made vice president of the Ministerial Committee (1961-1962), and in 1962 he was named a member of the Secretariat of the Central Committee (1962-1978). He had an important role in party organizational work. Because of the economic reform plans, he distanced himself from Kádár and became opposed to him. He was relieved from his duties as secretary of the Central Committee in 1978 and was sent into retirement, in 1980 he was removed from the Politburo, and in 1985 from the Central Committee proper. Until 1989 he held a position in the Central Council of the Hungarian Trade Unions. He was tried for his activities in 1956 and its aftermath in 2014-2015, receiving a short prison sentence.³

CZINEGE, Lajos (1924-1998) was born into a peasant family. After finishing six classes of primary school, he became a blacksmith's apprentice, later worked as a blacksmith and as a seasonal farm worker. In 1944 he became a member of the 25. SS (Hungarian) Division Hunyadi. In 1945 he joined the Hungarian Communist Party, and he was a founding member of the city chapters of the youth organization of the communist party. He worked as an independent political worker in 1947, and later became a leading member in a city party chapter, later promoted to a deputy county leadership position. Because of an incident in 1950, he was demoted, and worked at a farm equipment repair station. He was promoted to deputy director a short time later at the same station. In 1951 he joined the armed forces, and became a member of the Main Directorate for Political Affairs with the rank of a captain. He later became a political officer at the Artillery Command of the Hungarian Peoples' Army, in 1952 he was promoted to Lt. Colonel. From 1954 on he worked at the central party organ responsible for the armed forces as a deputy leader, in 1955 he became the leader of it. In 1956 he was a member of the Military Committee of the Central Leadership of the Hungarian Workers' Party. After the Soviet intervention of 4. November, he joined the government of János Kádár and was appointed as the responsible leader for the reorganization of the internal armed forces. In 1957 he was entrusted with the organization of the Workers' Militia. Between 1958 and 1967 he was a member of the parliament, and the president of the parliamentary committee of the armed forces from 1960 on. In May 1960 he was promoted to the rank of Lieutenant-General and was named as defense minister. In 1961 he became a

³ Biszku Béla Nemzeti Emlékezet Bizottsága
<https://www.neb.hu/asset/phpc7CWuX.pdf>

member of the Political Committee. In April 1962 he was promoted to general. In 1963 he enrolled in the Voroshilov Military Academy as a corresponding student. He regularly took part on the defense ministerial meetings of the Warsaw Pact. His membership in the Political Committee ended in 1970 after a reform of the membership. In November 1978 he was promoted to the rank General of the Army. In 1984 he became deputy president in the Council of Ministers (he was defense minister for 24 years). In 1987 he retired. In 1988 he lost his seat in the Central Committee. In 1989, due to a scandal he gave up his rank of General of the Army.⁴

DOBI, István (1898-1968) was born into a poor peasant family. After finishing six primary school classes, he became a soldier in 1916 and fought in World War I. In 1919 as a red soldier, he was captured by the Romanians. He returned from captivity in 1920, where he was immediately recruited into the national army, leaving armed service at the end 1920. As a veteran, he received a small parcel of land, and besides its cultivation he worked as an unskilled worker by the Hungarian State Railway Company, later held various unskilled jobs. He joined a landholder association in 1920, and in 1930 he founded a local chapter of the Social Democratic Party in Szőny. In 1936 he switched over to the Independent Smallholder Party, where he rose in the ranks quickly. Thanks to his party affiliation he took higher paid jobs. In 1939 he ran as a candidate for parliament, but was defeated. He was an active organizer, and he saw as his mission to protect the Hungarian peasantry. He came into contact with the illegal communist organization in 1942, and he shared their views sometimes during his work. In 1944 he was mobilized for military service and was captured. He returned in 1945. He became a member of the Communist Party, but he kept his membership of the Independent Smallholders Party, where he became a leader of the left wing. He held high posts at the Independent Smallholders Party. He became a member of the transitory legislature, and was named minister. After the forced departure of Ferenc Nagy, the leader of the Independent Smallholders Party, he was chosen to be the new party leader. During his leadership, he was instrumental in upending the party structures in cooperation with the communists. He also helped the build-up of the communist system. He was Prime Minister between December 1948 and August 1952, but held no real power. In 1952 he became the leader of the collective state leadership (he was the leader of this organ until 1967, and stayed a member until his death). During the uprising of 1956 he stayed in his office, and helped the Kádár government. In 1959 he joined the HSWP, and he was chosen to be a member of the

⁴ <https://www.neb.hu/asset/phpCkpYug.pdf>

Central Committee of the HSWP. He was a proponent of collectivization, but his views were increasingly disregarded. He held various positions in Hungarian agricultural organizations.⁵

ERDÉLYI, Károly (1928-1971) diplomat. He earned a teacher's degree in the Soviet Union. He worked in the Foreign Ministry from 1953, he was a consular of embassy, in Moscow. He arrived back home on the 28. October, and after 4. November he worked at the government secretariat, later he was the referent of Kádár in the party apparatus (1958-1962). He was deputy foreign minister (1962-1970), leader of the Foreign Policy Department of the HSWP (1970-1971), member of the Central Committee of the HSWP (1966-1971). According to some, he committed suicide, other believe, he was murdered.⁶

FOCK, Jenő (1916-2001) He learned as a technician and before the war worked as one. In 1931 he joined the youth organization of the trade union, and in 1932 he participated in activities of the illegal Hungarian Association of the Communist Youth Workers. He also joined the Social Democratic Party in 1933. He was drafted in 1939 and was arrested for his activities in 1940 and spent three years in military prisons. He escaped in 1944 and waited for the arrival of Soviet troops. He joined the Communist Party in 1945, became a member of the provisional legislative body. He worked on the workers' issues of the heavy industries. He was named in 1951 as deputy minister for defense industry, a few months later as deputy for machine industry. In 1954 he became the leader of the Hungarian trade office in Berlin, in 1955 he became the one of the secretaries of Central Council of the Hungarian Trade Unions, and in 1956 he was elected as a substitute member of Central Leadership of the Hungarian Workers' Party. After the defeat of rebellion in 1956, he became a member of the Kádár leadership circle. In 1957 he became the member of Politburo, in 1958 he became a Member of Parliament. He was in charge of economic issues. In 1961 he became a deputy in the Presidential Council. He took part in the planning of economic reforms, which would have given a bigger role for market economic methods. As these plans became shelved, he was sent into retirement in 1975, but remained a member of the Politburo until 1980 and a member of the Central Committee until 1989.⁷

⁵ Dobi István, Nemzeti Emlékezet Bizottsága,
<https://www.neb.hu/asset/phpnFm602.pdf>

⁶ Erdélyi Károly; Ki kicsoda? in: Bencsik Péter (ed.): Az államszocializmus kora Magyarországon és Kelet-Közép-Európában

<http://allamszocializmus.lapunk.hu/?modul=oldal&tartalom=718660>

⁷ Fock Jenő, Nemzeti Emlékezet Bizottsága
<https://www.neb.hu/asset/php4wGGVm.pdf>

HÁZI, Vencel (1925-2007) he studied at the University of Technology in Budapest, was a member of youth organizations. In 1948 he was enrolled in a military course as education officer, and later was sent to a one year military school in Leningrad. In 1949 he became an officer of Hungarian military intelligence service MNVK 2 (Magyar Néphadsereg Vezérkar 2. Csoportfőnökség – Hungarian People’s Army General Staff 2nd Directorate), and later was sent to the Hungarian legation in London (1951-1953). After his return he worked at MNVK 2. In 1957 he was employed by the Foreign Ministry, and was sent to Stockholm (1957-1958). He became the ambassador to Iraq in 1958. From 1961 he was minister to Greece. In 1965 he returned to Hungary, where he worked in the Foreign Ministry (1964-1968). He was deputy foreign minister between 1968 and 1970. In 1970 he became ambassador to Great Britain (1970-1976). After his return he became deputy foreign minister again (1976-1983), after that, he became Hungary’s ambassador to Washington (1983-1989). He retired in 1989.⁸

ILKU, Pál (1912-1973) was born to a peasant family in Czechoslovakia. Having earned a degree as a teacher in 1932, he came into contact with the mass organizations with communist background. He became a devoted member, publishing articles and taking an active role in organizations. He joined the Czechoslovak Communist Party in 1937, becoming a youth organizer. After the territory was re-annexed to Hungary, he was arrested, released and placed under police supervision. In 1944 he joined the armed resistance. After the war he relocated to Hungary, where he became a member of the Hungarian Communist Party. He organized and lead a party school, held a party position in the city of Pécs and was elected to be a member of the provisional legislature, and he was a member of the legislature until his death (with the exception of one legislative period). He was named to be the deputy head of agitation and propaganda department. He was also named given the rank of colonel (later lieutenant general) of the Political Main Directorate of the Defense Ministry. He was sent to a military academy in the Soviet Union, from where he was called back in 1956 to lead and reorganize the armed forces. In 1958 he was named as deputy culture minister responsible for lower and middle education, becoming minister in 1961 until his death. He was also named a member of the Central Committee in 1958, and was named reserve member of the Politburo until 1970.⁹

⁸ Baráth Magdolna, Gecsényi Lajos (ed.): Főkonzulok, követek és nagykövetek, 1945-1990, MTA Bölcsészettudományi Kutatóközpont Történettudományi Intézet, 2016, p. 186.

⁹ Ilku Pál, Nemzeti Emlékezet Bizottsága
<https://www.neb.hu/asset/phplZBtIN.pdf>

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, only took the name Kádár in 1945. He learned to be a typewriter mechanic, but couldn't 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, 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 first secretary (with also being the prime minister between 1957 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. 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 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.¹⁰

KÁLLAI, Gyula (1910-1996) originally trained as a journalist, he was a member of the Hungarian Communist Party from 1931. He worked for the daily Népszava, and later for other dailies. After the war he held various state and party positions, becoming a member of the Central Leadership of the Hungarian Workers' Party (1945-1951), and was named foreign minister in 1949 until his arrest on false charges in 1951. He was rehabilitated in 1954. He held cultural leadership positions, and only shortly before the revolution of 1956 was he named a member of the Central Leadership. After the revolution he became a member of the Central Committee and Politburo, minister of culture (1957-1958), state minister (1958-1960)

¹⁰ Kádár János, Nemzeti Emlékezet Bizottsága
<https://www.neb.hu/asset/phpuoKyAw.pdf>

deputy prime minister (1960-1965), prime minister (1965-1967), speaker of the Hungarian parliament (1967-1971) and a member of the Presidential Council (1967-1989).¹¹

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, he 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 Hungarian daily *Népszabadság* (1961-1965). He was named regular member of the Politburo (1962-1974) and became the secretary of the 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.¹²

MARTIN Ferenc (1912-2001): he was born into a worker family. After finishing six primary school classes, he started working as an iron-founder apprentice, but after finishing the apprenticeship, he couldn't find work. After a short period he found work as an unskilled worker. Only in 1936 was he able to find work as an iron-founder. He joined a trade union and took part in strikes for higher wages. During his mandatory military service he served as a driver and took part in the operation of the occupation of Slovakian territory. In 1941 he served on the Eastern Front, but was wounded and dismissed from military service. In 1943 he joined the Social Democratic Party. In 1945 he joined the Hungarian communist party, he became party secretary at the plant he worked at. In 1947 he became a worker at the Heavy Industry Centre, from 1949 he worked in the Ministry of Heavy Industry as a department leader. He became a secretary of the National Committee of Trade Unions in 1951. From 1953 he was the leader of the Trade Union for Metallurgy Workers. In 1956 he was dismissed from his positions, the Kádár government brought him back, and served again as the trade union leader for metallurgy workers. In 1959 he was chosen to be a reserve member of the

¹¹ Kállai Gyula; *Ki kicsoda?* in: Bencsik Péter (ed.): *Az államszocializmus kora Magyarországon és Kelet-Közép-Európában*

<http://allamszocializmus.lapunk.hu/?modul=oldal&tartalom=718668>

¹² Komócsin Zoltán *Nemzeti Emlékezet Bizottsága*
<https://www.neb.hu/asset/phpR7ev2n.pdf>

Central Committee, from 1960 he was a regular member until 1966. In 1960 he joined the Foreign Ministry, from 1960 until 1963 he was ambassador to China, from November 1963 until February 1968 he was ambassador to Poland, from December 1969 until October 1974 he was ambassador to Romania. Between 1953 and 1963 he was a two term member of parliament.¹³

NEMES, Dezső (1908-1985): historian. He was a leader of a main department in the Ministry for Peoples' Education (1950-1953), he was the director of the Szikra Press (1953-1956), later he became the leader of the Party Academy (1956). He didn't have any role in the uprising of 1956. He was chief editor of the daily Népszabadság (1957-1961 and 1977-1980), was a member of the Central Committee of the HSWP (1957-1985), was secretary for foreign affairs (1961-1965), and a member of the Political Committee (1959-1980). He was the main director of the Institute for Party History (1965-1966), director (1980-1983), rector of the Political College (1966-1977). He was a member of the pro-Kádár faction in the 70s, and he was also a member of the faction.¹⁴

NYERS, Rezső (1923-2018) after finishing four primary school classes, he worked as a delivery boy for four years, and in 1938 he became an apprentice at a printing-house. He became a member of the youth organization of the Social Democratic Party in 1939, became a member of the Party in 1940, and joined the trade union in 1942. After finishing his apprenticeship, he worked in various printing-houses. In 1944 he was called up for military service, and after the German occupation he deserted his unit and went into hiding until the arrival of Soviet troops. In 1945 he served for a short time as a policeman, and after that he became active in the Social Democratic Party. In 1946 he joined the printing-house of the daily Népszava, in 1947 he became a county official of the Party. He took part in the process of fusion with the Communist Party. In 1948 he became a member of parliament and he remained a member until 1998 with the exception of one term between 1953 and 1958. In 1948 he became an accessory member of the Central Leadership of the Hungarian Workers' Party (the communist party). He went to a party school and worked as a political worker in the field of agriculture. He enrolled as a student at the Karl Marx Economics University in Budapest, and finished his studies in 1956. From 1952 he worked in the Ministry of Domestic

¹³ Martin Ferenc, Nemzeti Emlékezet Bizottsága
<https://www.neb.hu/asset/php8goser.pdf>

¹⁴ Nemes Dezső; Ki kicsoda? in: Bencsik Péter (ed.): Az államszocializmus kora Magyarországon és Kelet-Közép-Európában
<http://allamszocializmus.lapunk.hu/?modul=oldal&tartalom=718655>

Commerce, becoming a deputy minister in the Ministry of Domestic and International Trade in 1954. He was named Minister of Agriculture in 1956. He held this position shortly after the uprising of 1956 and was one of the first members of the newly constituted HSWP. He joined the Kádár government, and acted as a government commissioner for the supply of the public. He was chosen to be a member of the Central Committee, and he remained a member up until 1989. He was named minister of finance in 1960. He was named as a reserve member of the Political Committee of the HSWP and leader of the Secretariat of the Central Committee in 1962. He was responsible for economic issues, as well as some political organizations of a few counties. In 1966 he became a regular member of the Political Committee. He was one of the architects of the so called new economic mechanism, which intended to mix elements of the planned economic system with elements of capitalism. Because of international events the program was abandoned. He was relieved as leader of the Secretariat of the Central Committee in 1974, and he was left out of the Political Committee in 1975. From 1974 he was the director of the Department of Economics at the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, from 1981 until 1988 he was a scientific adviser for the institute. Due to the economic problems of the 1980s he returned to public life, and helped some economic reforms. In 1989 he was chosen as the party secretary of the HSWP and after the election defeat he didn't nominate himself again. He withdrew from public life in 1998.¹⁵

PEHR, Imre (1914-1977) He was trained to be a doctor in Italy (1932-1938). After earning his university leaving certificate, 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.¹⁶

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 minister to Sweden (1953-1955), later to Austria (1955-1959).

¹⁵ Nyers Rezső, Nemzeti Emlékezet Bizottsága, <https://www.neb.hu/hu/nyers-rezso>

¹⁶ Baráth Magdolna, Gecsényi Lajos (ed.): Főkonzulok, követek és nagykövetek, 1945-1990, MTA Bölcsészettudományi Kutatóközpont Történettudományi Intézet, 2016, p. 238

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 minister in the same year. In 1983 he was named as ambassador to Finland. He held this position until his retirement in 1986.¹⁷

PÉTER, János (1910-1999) A Calvinistic minister, he started working at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 1945. He became a bishop of the Calvinistic Church (1949-1956). After the revolution of 1956 he held positions at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and was a member of the Council of Ministers. He became deputy foreign minister (1958-1961), and joined the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party in 1961, 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 he was deputy speaker for the Hungarian parliament.¹⁸

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.¹⁹

SZILÁGYI, Béla (1908-1995) he finished the Textile Industrial College in Brno. Between 1934 and 1945 he worked in the textile industry at different plants. Between 1945 and 1946 he was the secretary of the Hungarian communist in the county Vas, and was a member of the transitory legislature in 1945. He was acting director of Hungarian coal mines (1946-1948), and later the director of the Textile Industrial Directorate. Between 1949 and 1950 he was the director of the Institute of Industrial Quality Inspectorate. His diplomatic career began with a

¹⁷ Baráth Magdolna, Gecsényi Lajos (ed.): Főkonzulok, követek és nagykövetek, 1945-1990, MTA Bölcsészettudományi Kutatóközpont Történettudományi Intézet, 2016, pp. 242-243

¹⁸ Péter János; Ki kicsoda? in: Bencsik Péter (ed.): Az államszocializmus kora Magyarországon és Kelet-Közép-Európában

<http://allamszocializmus.lapunk.hu/?modul=oldal&tartalom=1203950>

¹⁹ Baráth Magdolna, Gecsényi Lajos (ed.): Főkonzulok, követek és nagykövetek, 1945-1990, MTA Bölcsészettudományi Kutatóközpont Történettudományi Intézet, 2016, p. 243

posting to India (1950-1952), and later became a head of department at the Ministry for International Commerce (1952-1958). He became a member of the Central Committee of the HSWP (1958-1965). He was minister to London (1959-1963). He worked at the Foreign Ministry between 1963 and 1970. His last post as ambassador was to Greece, from 1970 to 1975. He retired in 1975.²⁰

SZTANKÓ, Pál (1928-1989): he started his career as an unskilled worker at a bank. He was later employed by a chicken processing plant (1942-1948). He was an educator in a technical school (1948-1949). From there he went to the Foreign Ministry's Academy, and he became an employee of the Foreign Ministry in 1951. He became a diplomat at the consulate in Bratislava (1952-1953), and after a short stint at the ministry, he became the consul in Bratislava (1957-1960). After his return he was a deputy head of department at the ministry (1960-1966). In 1966 he became consul-general in Bratislava. He became temporary head of the embassy in Albania (1973-1978). After that he worked at the Foreign Ministry, until 1985, when he became consul-general at the Hungarian consulate in Leningrad. He retired in 1988.²¹

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²⁰ Baráth Magdolna, Gecsényi Lajos (ed.): Főkonzulok, követek és nagykövetek, 1945-1990, MTA Bölcsészettudományi Kutatóközpont Történettudományi Intézet, 2016, pp. 270-271

²¹ Baráth Magdolna, Gecsényi Lajos (ed.): Főkonzulok, követek és nagykövetek, 1945-1990, MTA Bölcsészettudományi Kutatóközpont Történettudományi Intézet, 2016, p. 275

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