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Summary of the Most Important Discussions and Arguments in the Drafting the Vietnam Declaration at the Meeting of the Political Consultative Committee in Bucharest

The proposal to adopt a declaration regarding U.S. aggression in Vietnam was submitted during the conference of the foreign ministers of the Warsaw Treaty member-states in July 1966 in Moscow. The foreign ministers agreed then that the Soviet Union should prepare a draft for the PCC meeting and send it to the member-states. In this regard, Foreign Minister Manescu indicated that in the SRR's view, it was necessary first to speak with the Vietnamese comrades about it and ask for their comments.

To this end, the Soviet delegation, after having consulted with the Vietnamese, distributed a draft Vietnam declaration to the delegations at the meeting of the Political Consultative Committee in Bucharest. The Romanians had also prepared a draft Vietnam declaration, independently of the Soviet Union, and had received upon their own request a written memorandum from the Vietnamese stating the principled position of the Vietnamese comrades. The Romanian draft basically corresponded to the main ideas presented in the Soviet draft. However, it differed from the Soviet draft with regard to several passages that were unacceptable to the other member-states. In particular, there were the following problems:

1. For the most part, it avoided explicit mention of the Warsaw Treaty member-states; instead, it listed them individually by name.
2. It made no mention of West Germany's support for the U.S. aggression.

3. It contained a formulation that the intensification and continuation of the aggression in Vietnam is having an increasingly negative effect upon relations to the Warsaw Treaty member-states.
4. It drew a connection between the U.S. aggression and disarmament issues; it stated in particular that the U.S. aggression is creating serious obstacles to the resolution of disarmament issues.

These problems met with objections from other delegations. The inclusion of these points in the declaration was not considered useful by the other member-states.

The Polish delegation presented yet another draft Vietnam declaration. This draft was very short and focused on new measures made necessary by the new phase of escalation of the U.S. war in Vietnam, which began after the bombing of the suburbs of Hanoi and Haiphong. The Polish proposal included in particular a passage that called for ongoing contacts and consultations among the member-states and other interested states regarding assistance to Vietnam in resisting the U.S. aggression. At the same time, it proposed a warning that the continuation of U.S. aggression would have consequences for the U.S. itself.

These three drafts constituted the point of departure for our work, with regard to which all participants – except the Polish and the Romanian delegations – favored using the Soviet draft as the basis [for discussion]. In the commission established for preparing a joint draft, it was decided that the Soviet draft should constitute the basis for discussion. During the working-group discussions and also during the consultations of the foreign ministers and First Secretaries regarding the Vietnam declaration, the GDR sought to make the following additions to the Soviet draft:

1. In terms of dealing with the responsibility for the crimes, it should be mentioned that these “will be punished most severely under international law, just as the war crimes of the German fascists were punished by the international military tribunal at Nuremberg.”
2. It should be mentioned that “countless governments and parliaments of the world have denounced the war crime committed by the USA in its bombing of Hanoi and Haiphong, but the government of the West German Federal Republic has condoned even this war crime committed by the US and has sought to justify it.
3. It [the declaration] should appeal especially to the international working class, the communist and workers’ parties, the trade unions, women’s and youth organizations and to all other forces in favor of peace and progress, for whom the freedom and independence of peoples is holy.
4. It should be mentioned that the USA must be held responsible for its crimes and must be forced to pay reparations to the Vietnamese people and their country.

While the Polish delegation withdrew its original short proposal for the Vietnam declaration in the course of the meeting, the Romanians insisted that the language contained in the Romanian draft should be reflected in the document. They justified this in particular by asserting that the formulations it included corresponded to the wishes of the Vietnamese comrades. To this end, they referred continually to the Vietnamese Comrades’ memorandum.

After a draft had been prepared by a working group of the deputy foreign ministers responsible for drafting the declaration, the Polish delegation took this as an opportunity to make some structural changes designed to enhance the clarity of the declaration, as

well as to add more precise wording in some places. The Romanians strictly refused to discuss this draft, which all the others present considered to be a substantially improved working document. Instead, they insisted that the document prepared in the working group of the deputy foreign ministers should form the basis for discussions in the ministers' consultations. A broad discussion regarding this matter ensued during a conference of the First Secretaries and the foreign ministers. Comrade Ceaușescu and Comrade Maurer explained that the draft improved by the Polish delegation was unacceptable to the Romanians because it had been drafted without the participation of the Romanian foreign minister. Should this draft be used nevertheless by the others as a basis for discussion, the Romanian delegation would be forced to submit a large number of amendments that they considered necessary.

The discussion of the draft with the Polish changes focused mainly on the following problems:

1. The Romanians proposed deleting the statement that the Warsaw Treaty member-states had discussed the situation in Southeast Asia. The reason it gave for this was that no such discussion had taken place, and that only the situation in Vietnam had been discussed. The other delegations finally agreed to this proposal.
2. The Romanians absolutely wanted to include a reference in the declaration that the U.S. war in Vietnam and the violation of the Geneva Agreement of 1954 constitute a cynical expression of American imperialism's aggressive policy. They justified this by arguing that it would strengthen the declaration. In the discussion it became evident that it would have precisely the opposite effect; it would weaken the document. Finally, during a meeting of the First Secretaries

- and the foreign ministers, the Romanians agreed not to insist upon the inclusion of this passage.
3. In terms of holding the USA responsible for its actions in Vietnam and referring to them as war crimes, the Romanians, like the GDR, proposed including a reference to Nuremberg. An extensive discussion ensued. Both the Soviets and the Czechoslovaks had already voiced their opposition to the GDR's proposal and indicated that in their view the reference to Nuremberg would not be useful. They argued that, on the one hand, the Nuremberg principles had already become recognized international law. Declaring that all the participants in the Vietnam War were committing war crimes would be too simplistic. This could eventually even have an effect opposite to what was intended. For tactical reasons, therefore, it would not be clever to mention this. Furthermore, it would also not be clever to pin oneself down already now to using the Nuremberg principles as the basis for punishment. This would block the way for an even more severe punishment that may be necessary for the perpetrators of the crimes in Vietnam.

Taking this discussion into account, the GDR did not insist upon the inclusion of the reference and withdrew it, and this was finally also accepted by the Romanians.

4. The Romanians adamantly insisted that the following sentence should be included: "By its actions, the USA is putting obstacles in the path of the search for solutions in the area of disarmament and other fundamental international issues." Comrade Gromyko rejected the Romanian view that the war in Vietnam and disarmament negotiations were mutually exclusive. If that were the case, then the declaration on European security would also be senseless under current circumstances. Precisely by demanding steps toward disarmament in the USA, by

calling for the dissolution of military bases and the withdrawal of the foreign troops, one is making an important contribution to the fight against U.S. aggression. The Soviet Union will exploit every opportunity, again and again, to unmask U.S. imperialism. In this regard, Manescu referred to a declaration by the Soviet Union of June 14 regarding the work of the Eighteen Nation Disarmament Committee, which implies that the continued deployment of U.S. troops to Vietnam will make the work of the Eighteen Nation Disarmament Committee more difficult. Comrade Naszkowski, among others, also stated that the Vietnam declaration and disarmament issues should not be linked because they were not analogous issues.

During the discussion, the Hungarian foreign minister, Comrade Peter, stated at the beginning of the discussion that the Hungarians had no objections to the inclusion of the Romanian proposal. He later corrected himself, however, and in the end joined the view of the other delegations, which were against the inclusion of this sentence.

During the consultation of the First Secretaries and the foreign ministers regarding this question, which had remained open in the consultation of the foreign ministers, the Romanians finally declared themselves ready to give up on the inclusion of this passage.

5. At the beginning of Section II, the Romanian side proposed replacing the reference to Warsaw Treaty member-states with the phrase “the signatory-states to this declaration.” Finally, the following compromise was achieved: “The Member-States of the Warsaw Treaty that have signed the present declaration...”

6. The Romanians proposed including a sentence stating that the continuation and intensification of the aggression in Vietnam would have ever more serious consequences for our countries' relations to the USA. In the discussion, it became clear that this would basically mean a weakening of the declaration. It is a fact that relations have radically deteriorated as a result of the U.S. war. The Romanians finally declared their readiness during the meeting of the First Secretaries to give up on this sentence.
7. There was a very long discussion regarding the Romanian demand that the Polish proposal on the necessity of consultations should include an addition that our countries will conduct these consultations only after consultations with the Democratic Republic in Vietnam. It was pointed out that this would hinder operability. The Romanians could not be moved to change their position on this question. Finally, it was agreed to delete this paragraph entirely.
8. A very extensive discussion developed regarding the paragraph stating that the Warsaw Treaty member-states call upon all states that treasure peace, all peace-loving forces, and public opinion the world over to form a united front in the struggle against the American aggression. The Romanians objected that in their view it is impossible to form a united front with most capitalist states, especially the imperialist states. Based upon a proposal by Comrade Winzer, an attempt was made to find a compromise by which the international workers' movement, the communist and workers' parties would be added to the forces to which the appeal was addressed. However, the Romanians repeatedly objected to this phrasing. Finally, a compromise was reached: to speak of a "fighting front" instead of a united front against U.S. aggression.

In order to avoid complicating the discussion and provoking additional discussions, given the Romanian attitude, the delegation of the GDR gave up on pushing through its few¹ original amendments to the Vietnam declaration.

[Translation from the German by Ursula Froese]

¹ Transl. Note: The word “few” was added by hand.