

# Peking-Hanoi Talks Marked by Coolness

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HONG KONG, Aug. 14 — A visiting North Vietnamese economic delegation held talks with Chinese officials in Peking today in an atmosphere that appeared diplomatically correct but lacked the warmth and fanfare that marked relations between the two countries during the Indochina war.

No details of the talks, which presumably focused on Chinese aid for postwar reconstruction in Vietnam, were made public. The meetings were the first since the Communists' victory in Saigon last April.

The North Vietnamese delegation was led by Le Thanh Nghi, a Politburo member and Deputy Premier in charge of economic development. His Chinese counterpart was Le Hsien Nien, also a Politburo member and Deputy Premier for economics.

## The Cambodian Visit

Unlike on Mr. Nghi's last trip to China in November, 1974, when he visited Premier Chou En-lai in the hospital, he has so far seen neither the ailing Premier nor Teng Hsiao-ping, now in charge of China's day-to-day administration. Since Mr. Teng has seen four other foreign groups in the last week—including an American Congressional delegation and the minister of land development in the Seychelles Islands—the North Vietnamese leader's failure to meet him was taken as significant.

Analysts here were reluctant to draw any firm conclusions from the visit. But it appeared that the low-key reception was subtle indication that relations between the two Asian Communist powers may have changed since the end of the war and that their traditional 2,000-year rivalry may be re-emerging.

Chinese Communist sources

in Hong Kong have complained privately in the last few weeks about what appears to them to be Hanoi's lack of gratitude for China's wartime aid and over what they believe is now North Vietnam's pro-Soviet policy: They fear that Hanoi may grant Moscow a naval base at Cam Ranh Bay.

Whatever the state of Peking's relations with Hanoi, Mr. Nghi's meetings have been overshadowed in the Chinese press by the impending visit to China tomorrow of a Cambodian delegation headed by Khieu Samphan, a Deputy Premier whom some specialists regard as Phnom Penh's senior leader. It will be the first trip outside Cambodia by any of the new communist rulers in Phnom Penh since their triumph last spring.

Analysts here believe it is likely that Prince Norodom Sihanouk, the nominal Cambodian head of state, will return to Peking from North Korea, where he has been since May 19, to meet the Cambodian delegation. After talks with Mr. Khieu Samphan and Ieng Sary, another Deputy Premier who is also on the delegation, Prince Sihanouk may then finally make the journey back to Cambodia, the analysts speculate. [A senior aide to Prince Sihanouk told a Reuters correspondent in Peking that the Prince would meet with Khieu Samphan.]

## Embarrassment for Chinese

Although there is a long history of animosity between the Prince and the Communist leaders—he reportedly once had Mr. Khieu Samphan beaten and stripped in public by his secret police—Prince Sihanouk would be an invaluable asset to the Communists as their spokesman at the United Nations General Assembly next month.

They have few other officials

with any international experience or stature.

The Prince's failure to return to Cambodia so far is regarded as an embarrassment for the Chinese, who invested substantial political capital in him by serving as his hosts and chief supporters since he was overthrown in 1970.

It is considered unlikely that the Chinese press would give the Cambodian delegation's impending arrival the wide publicity it has received unless Peking expected some resolution of the Sihanouk problem.

Moreover, the Chinese seem to regard Prince Sihanouk as a possible foil to North Vietnamese influence in Cambodia. Since the end of the Indochina war, there has been a growing, if undeclared, rivalry between Peking and Hanoi for influence in Phnom Penh, with the Chinese sending a large number of technical advisers to Cambodia and the North Vietnamese a high-level delegation headed by their party first secretary, Le Duan.

In addition to their competition in Cambodia, there are several other possible areas of friction between the two countries:

China warmly received Thailand's Premier, Kukrit Pramoj, when he went to Peking in July to establish diplomatic relations, while Hanoi has repeatedly denounced the Thais for continuing to maintain American bases and sheltering Vietnamese and Laotian refugees.

North Vietnam has expressed support for Indira Gandhi's suspension of democracy in India and Portugal's leftist military rulers while China has condemned Mrs. Gandhi and the Portuguese.

Both China and Vietnam claim the tiny Paracel Islands and Spratly Island in the South China Sea.