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Politburo Sends Letter to COSVN, Region 5, Tri-Thien, Saigon, Hue, and Danang

Citation:

"Politburo Sends Letter to COSVN, Region 5, Tri-Thien, Saigon, Hue, and Danang", September 18, 1973, Wilson Center Digital Archive, Lich Su Bien Nien Xu Uy Nam Bo va Trung Uong Cuc Mien Nam (1954-1975) [Historical Chronicle of the Cochin China Party Committee and the Central Office for South Vietnam, 1954-1975], 2nd ed. (Hanoi: Nha xuat ban Chinh tri quoc gia, 2008), 1281-1283. Translated by Merle Pribbenow. <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/176175>

Summary:

A letter, presumably written by Le Duan, offers a clarion call for war in the wake of the Paris Peace Accords.

Credits:

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Original Language:

Vietnamese

Contents:

Translation - English

[Translator's Note: At the conclusion of an important Politburo conference, a letter summarizing the results was sent to the major commands in the South. While the author is unknown, it was probably written by Le Duan. He clearly states, that the Paris Accords were designed for them to resume the offensive at some point in the future. Whether the party leader was taking advantage of the improved posture of Communist forces in South Vietnam at that time to justify the signing of the accords, or revealing his original intent, is difficult to determine. Regardless, the letter is a clarion call for war.]

In order to concentrate on assessing the situation and to provide proper guidance to the South Vietnamese revolutionary movement, the Politburo offered the following thoughts on assessing the situation in South Vietnam:

-The current balance of forces on the South Vietnamese battlefield has moved another step in our favor, but the balance of forces has not yet reached the point at which the Americans and their puppets will be forced to change their policy on implementing the Paris Agreement on Vietnam, and they are still very stubbornly fighting us ferociously for control of territory. The problem that the U.S. faces in South Vietnam is whether to continue the fighting in its present form or to change course in order to seek a political settlement. If they continue the war, the U.S. and their puppets will suffer even more defeats and will run into even more insoluble problems. If they change course and seek a political settlement, they will have to cling to the Paris Agreement in order to implement that policy decision, because they will have no other option.

"No matter how the situation develops, in the end the path to victory for the South Vietnamese revolution is still the path of [armed] violence. The two possible courses for the development of the South Vietnamese revolution are intimately linked to one another. For that reason, we must pro-actively prepare for both possibilities so that we can take the appropriate action without being simply reactive, without being caught off guard, and without any illusions..."

The Politburo stressed that:

"-During 1975, no matter what the cost, we must win much bigger victories than before and we must inflict even greater defeats and failures on the enemy in order to create an important, significant transformation in the balance of forces between us and the enemy. When that transformation happens, based on the actual developments at that time we will take the appropriate action based on the various possibilities for which we have prepared plans in order to be able to inflict fundamental defeats on the enemy in all three areas: military, political, and diplomatic.

"-At this time we also need to be vigilant and on guard against right-wing, pro-American elements in the religious community, such as Buddhists or Catholics who spout slogans demanding peace, freedom of the press, and who even demand that Thieu step down. The true scheme of these elements is to exploit the banner of peace and national reconciliation to win the support of the masses and to gain control of the third force.

"-On our side, we must actively recruit and organize forces within the mass movement and we must understand that gaining control of the masses is the most important goal. We must direct our mass [civilian] supporters into these movements in order to bring the greater masses together. We must select cadres and hard-core members, both at the highest levels and at the lowest levels, and use them to form and control a front that is made up of the third force, and we must isolate bad elements who are pretending to be members of the third force.

"-After we signed the Paris Agreement, our strategic plan was to maintain both our posture and our strength in South Vietnam in order to be able to eventually renew our attacks against the enemy. For us, the important part of the Paris Agreement was not the agreement's recognition that there are two governments, two armies, and two areas of control, or the agreement's provision regarding the eventual formation of a three-sided government. For us the key parts of the agreement were that the U.S. had to leave [South Vietnam] while our troops stayed in place and that our North-South corridor [the Ho Chi Minh Trail] would remain unbroken, so that it continued to link our rear area with our front lines, giving our side an integral, unified, solid offensive posture.

"-We now have an opportunity to take action. It has taken twenty years of fighting to create this opportunity, and we must seize it in order to achieve total victory in our fight for national liberation. This is the only chance we will get. If we delay for ten or fifteen more years, the puppets will be able to gain strength, the forces of aggression will recover their strength, and then the situation will be extremely difficult for us.

"-In order to seize this opportunity we must act quickly and decisively, but we also must act skillfully and wisely. Only in this way will we be able to surprise the enemy so that he has no time to react. We have agreed that this is what we must do, and we are determined to successfully accomplish this task.

"-We must understand the tremendous importance of our strategic decision to liberate South Vietnam, and at the same time we must also recognize the problems and the difficulties that the enemy could create for us. ...We must emphasize that we must have a clear vision of the massive capabilities and forces that we will need, and that we are fully capable of mobilizing, in order to create the combined strength that will be needed to win victory in this final test of strength.

"-Our strength is, first of all, the strength of our people's mastery, the strength of our entire nation, from North to South, from the rear area to the front lines, in fighting the enemy. Our strength is the popular national democratic revolution in South Vietnam and the socialist revolution in North Vietnam, brought together to become as one. However, our greatest strength, our most decisive strength, is in the North, in our rear area. Our strength is the strength of people's warfare. From this moment on we must begin to carry out all of the necessary preparations with the greatest urgency in order to create the best conditions and the most bountiful material resources possible so that we will be able to strike hard and to win quickly, cleanly, and totally during the next two years, 1975-1976."

Source: Document held in the Archives of the Party Central Committee
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