

January 23, 1967

Secret North Vietnam Politburo Cable

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Summary:

The Vietnamese Politburo informs COSVN (the communist command in South Vietnam) of new developments in the war, stating that international opinion is turning against the US after the escalated bombing of North Vietnam. It then outlines the Vietnamese "Talk-Fight" strategy.

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To: COSVN [Central Office for South Vietnam] and Region V

1. Generally speaking, world opinion supports our four-point and five-point positions, denounces American aggression in Vietnam, and demands that the U.S. stop the bombing of North Vietnam, withdraw its troops from South Vietnam, and recognize the National Liberation Front (NLF). Recently, after the U.S. escalated the bombing of North Vietnam, and especially after it bombed Hanoi, refused the request from [UN General Secretary] U Thant, and refused to extend the bombing halt for several holidays, public opinion has become even more hesitant about the U.S., expressing concern about the U.S. escalation and denouncing the U.S. bombing of North Vietnam. Demands for an end to the bombing of North Vietnam have become very widespread. Against this background, our reception of the American journalist Salisbury and the press conference held by our representative in Paris have had a great impact on public opinion and have created a new opportunity to take another step forward in the struggle to demand that the U.S. stop the bombing of North Vietnam.

2. The Politburo believes that the situation in the immediate future is very advantageous for us to begin to use our strategy and to take the initiative in setting forward the following issue: If the U.S. ends the bombing permanently and unconditionally, then there can be talks between the Democratic Republic of Vietnam and the United States.

The favorable factors are:

Militarily, the U.S. is faltering. In North Vietnam, the U.S. has not yet made any new escalatory attacks on Hanoi and Haiphong. In South Vietnam, we have continued to win a series of victories. Although the U.S. has increased its troop strength, the Americans are still undecided and confused about their strategy. Our resolve is also very clear to them.

World opinion is presently actively in favor of our side and unfavorable toward the enemy. The U.S. is experiencing internal confusion and contradictions [disputes] about whether to continue or to end the bombing. If they stop, they will experience both military and political difficulties. They do not want to go down the road of fighting and negotiating at the same time. If they stop, then it will be even more difficult for them to resume the bombing in the future. On the other hand, however, if they do not end the bombing they will become increasingly isolated and will not be able to begin negotiations.

The Americans now know clearly that if they stop the bombing we might begin talks with them, but the people of the world and the people of the United States do not yet know this. For this reason, we should make this fact public. If we do not take the offensive at this time we will lose our opportunity, because:

□□□□ Public opinion is very heated and interested in this subject right now, and if we do not do something further to stimulate it, interest will wane.

□□

□□□□ The U.S. will escalate again, and it will be harder for us to employ our strategy.

□□

Our friends may take actions that stray off course, in one direction or the other, thereby making it more complicated and difficult for us to employ our strategy.

3. Our goals are to win public support to pressure the Americans to make them confused, uncertain, and put them on the defensive; and to intensify the movement demanding the suspension and ending of the bombing of North Vietnam to it difficult for the U.S. to escalate further and to make them hesitant to do so. Advancing a step further, we want to intensify the struggle in the battle for public opinion in coordination with our victories on the battlefields of South Vietnam. If we can do this, at some point we may be able to force the U.S. to actually stop the bombing so that they can hold talks with us.

4. Our representatives will receive American representatives when they request contact and will tell the U.S. that the U.S. must stop the bombing of North Vietnam and that if they do stop the bombing, the Democratic Republic of Vietnam and the United States could begin to talk to one another. Later, our Foreign Minister will make a response in an interview with the press to make this primary concept crystal clear.

5. There are several possible outcomes:

The U.S. will reject the idea.

The U.S. will set forward conditions in order to bargain with us. After a period of argument on this, the U.S. may end the bombing in practical terms in order to be able to meet with us, but is also possible that they will not.

The U.S. will accept our conditions, end the bombing, and meet with us. At present, the first possibility is unlikely and the third possibility is very unlikely. The most likely outcome is possibility number two. We are not being subjective [over-optimistic], but we must strive to force the U.S. to end the bombing. It is possible that our struggle will force the U.S. to end the bombing, and it is also possible that it will not. Even if it does not, however, we will still benefit from the political standpoint.

6. After we present our position, on the one hand we must continue to struggle against the enemy strongly to counter their stubborn attitude. On the other hand, however, even if world opinion applauds and supports us, we will also have to struggle against the tendency for people to hold erroneous illusions about peace talks.

Internally, we must mold and correct erroneous concepts and ideas.

7. Our intended plan is as follows:

a) Before raising this issue, we will intensify our propaganda operations aimed at:

Denouncing the U.S. for intensifying its war of aggression and for the crimes it has committed in North and South Vietnam.

~~Ex~~pose the duplicitous nature of the American peace feelers.

□□

~~M~~ay it clear to all that the U.S. is very confused and on the defensive, that it has many problems and contradictions, and that the Americans are becoming increasingly isolated.

□□

~~S~~trongly attack Johnson's speech to the U.S. Congress [State of the Union Address].

□□

~~P~~lay up our just cause, our resolve, and our victories.

□□

b) After our Foreign Minister's response in the interview is made public, we need to implement a plan for a wide-ranging propaganda campaign. Our representatives in foreign nations will meet with the local governments to clearly explain our position and to stress our good faith.

c) The NLF needs to express its attitude on this issue. It should express its resolve and discuss the NLF's demands while at the same time clearly expressing the solidarity and unanimity between North and South Vietnam and expressing approval of the announcement of our Foreign Minister made in the form of a response to a question during an interview (we will send another cable later providing ideas on this subject).

d) We must carry out good ideological operations to provide deep and profound explanations internally to our own cadre and our people and to guard against and overcome erroneous thoughts and concepts. We must emphasize that the political and military struggles on the battlefield will actually be the decisive factor, that the enemy is still very stubborn, and that this is only diplomatic offensive designed to further isolate our enemies.

e) There is a plan to intensify the political struggle, especially in the cities, in coordination with our diplomatic activities and with intensifying our enemy and puppet proselyting operations.

[Signed] Uncle Huong [Codename for the Politburo]