

April 3, 1968

Secret North Vietnam Politburo Cable

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Summary:

The Vietnamese Politburo informs COSVN (the communist command in South Vietnam) of developments in the war following the 1968 Tet Offensive.

Credits:

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Vietnamese

Contents:

Translation - English

To: COSVN [Central Office for South Vietnam]

1. As a result of our massive victories in all areas, military, political, and diplomatic, especially the victories we won in the general offensive and uprisings during the Tet Lunar New Year, the situation on the battlefield in South Vietnam and the situation in the U.S. and throughout the world is developing in directions that are very favorable to us and very unfavorable for the enemy. Because of major political, social, and economic problems, because of the ferocious struggles going on within American leadership circles, especially during the primary elections in the U.S., and because of powerful pressure from world public opinion and from U.S. public opinion, Johnson has been forced to "restrict the bombing" of North Vietnam.

2. However, the U.S. continues to bomb a significant portion of North Vietnam from the 17 up to the 20 Parallels. The U.S. is also sending additional U.S. troops to South Vietnam, is strengthening the puppet army, and is increasing its budgetary expenditures in order to continue its war of aggression. Clearly, however, for the first time Johnson has had to lower his voice and has had to deescalate the war a notch in order to be able to negotiate with North Vietnam with the hope that he can find an "honorable" way out of Vietnam. This is a victory for us.

3. The American plan is to prevent the puppet government and puppet army from disintegrating any further or totally collapsing with the hope of putting pressure on us in order to prevent us from launching our next round of attacks on the battlefield and to try to secure a political settlement that is favorable to their side.

4. The Politburo has decided that on the diplomatic front, at this time both North and South Vietnam [North Vietnam and the NLF] must continuously launch sharp and effective attacks against the enemy aimed at supporting our effort to secure even greater military and political victories, at winning even wider sympathy and support from our [the socialist] camp, from the people of the world, and from the American people, and at deepening the contradictions [divisions] within American political circles, the contradictions between the U.S. and their puppets, the contradictions within the puppet camp, and the contradictions between the U.S. and the other imperialist countries in order to further isolate the enemy, drive him into a state of even greater defensiveness, confusion, and defeat, and allow us to win even greater diplomatic victories.

5. In order to achieve these goals, North Vietnam's government has already issued a public statement that criticizes the American position and reiterates our position and our good-faith attitude, but that at the same time opens up another step in our stratagem by announcing that we have selected a representative who is prepared to meet with an American representative to confirm that the U.S. will unconditionally end the bombing and all other acts of war against the Democratic Republic of Vietnam so that talks may begin. We will carry out the necessary tasks of disseminating, spreading propaganda, and explaining our position. The form the [National Liberation] Front's reaction to our government's announcement will take was discussed in Cable No. [...]

6. The Politburo believes that at this time the National Liberation Front must issue a solemn statement presenting its position regarding a political settlement in South Vietnam and announce that it is prepared to enter into talks with the United States based on the Front's position.

The content of the Front's statement will consist of three parts:

a) An affirmation of the Front's resolve to fight and to win victory, written in strong, resolute language.

b) An of the Front's position on a political settlement for South Vietnam. The Front's position will consist of five points (we will send you a separate cable on this subject).

c) An expression of willingness to talk to the U.S. on the basis of the Front's position.

This statement will be issued approximately one week after the [North Vietnamese] government's statement.

7. Because this statement must be issued quickly, the Politburo has instructed our staffs up here [in North Vietnam] to draft the statement. The Politburo will review the statement and have it released. We wanted to give COSVN advance notice of what we are doing.

8. With regard to our intensification of the diplomatic struggle during this current phase, we suggest that COSVN develop a plan to explain what is going on to Party members, soldiers, and the civilian population so that everyone understands it and maintains the correct ideological position in order to strengthen solidarity, so that they continue to fight and work well, and to guard against and overcome any erroneous trends or deviations.

[signed] The Politburo