

December 12, 1968

Secret North Vietnam Politburo Cable

Citation:

"Secret North Vietnam Politburo Cable", December 12, 1968, Wilson Center Digital Archive, Archive of the Party Central Committee, Hanoi. Translated for CWIHP by Merle Pribbenow. <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/114327>

Summary:

The Vietnamese Politburo updates COSVN (the communist command in South Vietnam) on the progress of plans for a four-party conference with the US. It discusses the upcoming inauguration of President Nixon and the Vietnamese negotiation strategy.

Credits:

This document was made possible with support from Henry Luce Foundation

Original Language:

Vietnamese

Contents:

Translation - English

To: Bay Cuong [COSVN Party Secretary Pham Hung]

The Politburo has just held further discussions about the situation since the U.S. ended the bombing of North Vietnam. It assessed the possibility of settling the Vietnam problem during the last days of the Johnson Administration or the first months of the Nixon Administration and laid out the following operational tasks:

1. As we previously concluded, the general direction of U.S. policy is to deescalate and bring the war to an end quickly. The Americans want to end the war with "honor." However, Nixon will be inaugurated soon and the puppets are trying to delay the four-party conference and are obstructing discussions about the real substance of a settlement. This means that it will be difficult for the Paris conference to resolve anything important during the last days of Johnson's term and that we are probably going to have to reach a settlement with Nixon. We believe that Nixon, too, must quickly resolve the problem by deescalating and ending the war.

We now have a great opportunity to conduct our struggle on all three fronts (military, political and diplomat) to implement the Politburo's August 1968 resolution. The important issue for us is on the battlefield, where we must firmly hold to that resolution and strive to step our efforts and correctly carry out the military and political plans laid out in the resolution.

The diplomatic struggle must make a positive contribution to our effort to pressure the U.S. to replace the current puppet leaders with other puppets and to talk directly to the NLF, and we must tell the Americans that only if they do these things can there be a resolution of the South Vietnam problem. In this way, the struggle in Paris will stimulate the movement in Saigon demanding that the puppets be replaced, and it will help create conditions that will enable our military forces to make powerful attacks and win big victories. The intensification of the military and political struggles in South Vietnam will in turn create more favorable conditions for the diplomatic struggle. One very important issue at present is to establish a government in Saigon whose goal is to discuss political issues with the Front and that will work with the Front to form a coalition government that will demand that the American imperialists withdraw their troops from South Vietnam and restore true peace and national independence to South Vietnam. This means that we must closely coordinate the political struggle with the diplomatic struggle and we must exploit the contradictions between the different puppet factions to topple the present puppet government. To accomplish this, we must utilize the role of France and the pro-French faction. We need to develop a stratagem to use with France in order to be able to exploit the pro-French faction during this transition period. We must intensify the urban movement, coordinate the political and diplomatic struggles and the stratagem we use with France (to oust Thieu and Ky) with an extremely active, vigorous military plan in order to win the highest level of military victory, as we had previously planned, and to strike a stunning first blow that will force Nixon to make a clear decision to quickly withdraw from South Vietnam.

2. With regard to a number of issues involving the Paris Conference, we have decided:

In the public struggle, our primary effort will be to proclaim our just cause and our good faith.

With regard to procedural questions, we will hold firm to our principles, that this is a conference of four equal delegations of representatives. The Front is an independent delegation. This is a matter of principle on which there can be no concessions. We can be flexible on other procedural questions.

In the joint discussions, the Front will take the lead role in presenting the issues involving South Vietnam, and the Democratic Republic of Vietnam will support them and coordinate with them. We will clearly expose to the public the entire history of the American intervention and aggression and the war crimes that the American have

committed; we will denounce the puppet government; we will clarify the role and position of the Front; we will proclaim the resolve of the South Vietnamese people and of the Front to continue fight to save the nation until complete victory is achieved and the Americans are forced to withdraw from South Vietnam; we will present our principled positions and the Front's five-point settlement proposal. [Tran Buu] Kiem's initial presentation will be a comprehensive speech that will set out the Front's entire program.

If the conference goes well, after a period of general discussions we may shift to begin concrete discussions on the different issues.

In our backstage [private] contacts, we will use bargaining over troop withdrawal and the formation of a provisional coalition government to pressure the U.S. into replacing the puppets. We will demand that the U.S. must talk to the Front (and that they must also talk to the NLF in the backstage [private] contacts) about those issues involving South Vietnam and about resolving the issues involving South Vietnam. No matter whether the U.S. suggests a complete settlement or whether they only want to discuss military matters first, we will be prepared to hold discussions with them, but no matter how what they suggest, we will still demand that the first question that must be addressed is the withdrawal of American troops.

3. Dividing the puppets and causing them to disintegrate is an important task that must be carried out constantly over a long period of time.

Initially, we will denounce and isolate the puppet delegation in Paris. We must have a plan to split and divide this group.

In order to stimulate the disintegration of the puppets and to assemble new forces, the Front and the Alliance must conduct consultative conferences, lay out the minimum program acceptable for the coalition government, and publicly announce that they are ready to meet with and cooperate with people of good faith who truly desire peace and independence. Up here [in North Vietnam] we are now studying specifically what France is capable of doing and what measures we might take to win over the French. We suggest that you down there [in South Vietnam] also study the problem and inform us which of the puppets are completely pro-French, which ones are both pro-French and pro-American, and which ones are completely pro-American. Also give us your ideas what we might be able to do to persuade France and the pro-French elements to work with us. The Politburo has also asked Brother Tho [Le Duc Tho] and Xuan Thuy to put out feelers and contribute their ideas on this subject.

4. The Politburo has also laid out a number of other external [foreign] relations tasks to be carried out: To exploit the new advantageous conditions to try to win greater support from the socialist camp; to hold discussions with the Neo Lao Hak Sak [the Pathet Lao] about having the Lao also launch a diplomatic and political offensive to support us; to strengthen the Indochina People's Front; to stimulate and strengthen the positive aspects of our relationship with Cambodia; to strengthen the world peoples front supporting the people of Vietnam and opposing American aggression (by taking action to organize a world people's conference to support us and by intensifying the international activities of both North and South Vietnam); and to study ways to win the sympathy of the neutral countries.

5. If you have any additional ideas please send them to us.

[signed] The Politburo