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21 December 1972

MEMORANDUM FOR: Dr. Henry A. Kissinger  
Assistant to the President for  
National Security Affairs

SUBJECT : Hanoi's Game and Current Game Plan

I. THE PLAYERS

1. To diagnose the strategy being employed in a game and estimate the actions which pursuit of that strategy is likely to produce, it is necessary to know what game is being played. It is also necessary to know who the players are, or at least who is calling the plays. Applying the game analogy to the Vietnam negotiations leads one to speak of "Hanoi" and "North Vietnam," e.g., "Hanoi's intentions," "North Vietnam's objectives," etc., etc. In this context, "Hanoi" and "North Vietnam" are shorthand labels for the Politburo of the Lao Dong Party -- a finite group of eleven (possibly twelve) identifiable human beings who collectively determine North Vietnam's policies, i.e., determine that country's game plan and call the signals for all of its major subordinate players.\*

\*The role of the Politburo, the way it does business and the types of considerations that influence its individual members' decisions were discussed in some detail in my 3 August 1972 memorandum entitled "Factors Influencing the Decision-Making Process in Hanoi." That memorandum's annex gives brief sketches of the individual Politburo members. There are nine known surviving full members of the Politburo plus two known alternates, who some evidence indicates may have been recently promoted to full membership. There is also evidence suggesting that Pham Hung's COSVN Deputy Nguyen Van Linh may be a covert (undeclared) Politburo member. If so, he would be the twelfth full member if both former alternates -- Public Security Minister Tran Quoc Hoan and PAVN Chief of Staff General Van Tien Dung -- have in fact been promoted to full membership, as is probably the case.

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2. This collective of about a dozen top Party leaders is not a monolith or unified persona. It is a Committee which has not had a formal Chairman since Ho Chi Minh's death in September 1969. It appears to operate by consensus, though this may not necessarily mean any rule by arithmetic majority, since some of its members seem to be more equal than others. It is patently subject to the stresses of conflicting personal ambitions which complicate and compound genuine differences of opinion over the wisdom or net advantage of alternative policies. At this writing, these stresses may be fairly acute.

3. "Kremlinology" is an occult art, doubly dangerous when applied by Westerners to North Vietnam, but there are at least two bits of evidence presumptively indicative of some stress within the Politburo and perhaps some recent shift of power relationships therein.

a. First, there is the fact that the two Politburo members who went to Peking on 16 December and thence to Moscow on 18 December -- almost certainly to touch base with Hanoi's two major Communist patrons -- are Truong Chinh and Hoang Van Hoan (the former Ambassador to China). Truong Chinh has made several trips to East Germany in recent years for health reasons (genuinely so to the best of our knowledge), but he has not been abroad on official business for more than a decade. Furthermore, at least until last September, Le Duan -- not Truong Chinh -- would have been the logical candidate for this kind of top level and most important mission.

b. Secondly, there is the curious and still unexplained Jean-Claude Pomonti story published in Le Monde on 25 November about an alleged crisis within the Viet Cong ranks occasioned by (according to the story) a "coup" attempt mounted on 12 November by an "extremist faction" of the North Vietnamese Army opposed to negotiated settlement. (In Pomonti's words, "the rebels ... were 'partisans of continuing the fight to the bitter end,' a line which was allegedly supported by Le Duan, (Lao Dong) general secretary.") The story is almost certainly fictional, but whoever passed it to Pomonti -- a rather careful

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journalist with good left wing contacts -- had a very detailed knowledge of the VC/PRG structure and a flair for superficially plausible verisimilitude. I know for a certainty that this was not a U.S. psywar gambit. The GVN has never before -- or since -- shown this much wit, imagination or facility with telling and plausible detail. Thus the story almost certainly came from a left-wing source of considerable knowledgeability. It may have been a ploy designed to encourage us to settle while the "Politburo doves" still had tenuous control, but it smelled much more like a leak related somehow to internecine squabbling within the Vietnamese Communist movement.

4. It would be pointless to digress into bootless speculation about what may or may not now be going on within the Lao Dong Politburo. It is important to remember, however, that these dozen-odd very human beings -- with their intricate web of interlocking relationships -- are the ones who call Hanoi's signals and the ones whose collective decisions will dictate North Vietnam's negotiating behavior. It is also important to remember that the Politburo is a committee -- and hence subject to the behavioral patterns of all committees.

## II. HANOI'S GAME

5. The "Two-Game" Problem. Ever since the inception of the current (i.e., post-1954) phase of the Indochina struggle, U.S. efforts to negotiate a settlement with the North Vietnamese have been plagued and complicated by what might be called the "two-game" problem. Our negotiators and theirs may have faced each other across the same table, literally or metaphorically, but while we have been playing (say) chess, they have been playing a Vietnamese version of "Go." This has made it extraordinarily difficult to agree on a common set of procedural rules, let alone keep score.

6. We have several primary interests, including (though not necessarily in this order), a return of all U.S. prisoners, and disengagement of the U.S. from direct combat participation in the struggle, with these objectives to be made possible by a negotiated settlement which is reasonably fair to all parties involved and

gives the GVN a reasonable chance to compete with the Communists in the political arena. There is only one point, however, at which our concerns tangentially touch Hanoi's -- the Vietnamese Communists also want to see U.S. disengagement and an end to U.S. participation in the struggle, though (obviously) for reasons quite different from ours. Hanoi has no intrinsic interest in releasing its U.S. prisoners. They are a bargaining counter to be exchanged for the highest possible price in terms of U.S. political concessions. Hanoi has no interest in a settlement fair to all parties in the struggle, since a genuinely "fair" settlement would spell the indefinite postponement or even de facto abandonment of Hanoi's southern ambitions. For similar reasons, Hanoi has a positive aversion to giving the GVN any reasonable chance to survive or compete with the Communist Party. From Hanoi's perspective, an optimum settlement would reduce that chance to zero; and Hanoi will certainly endeavor to come as close as possible to that goal in any settlement it negotiates with the U.S.

7. Our objective is a fair and reasonable negotiated settlement. Hanoi's objective -- in the cracked-record refrain repeated in its 26 October statement -- is "to liberate the South, to defend and build the Socialist North, and to proceed to the peaceful reunification of the country". Neither settlement nor peace is viewed in Hanoi as a state or concept with over-riding intrinsic merit. In certain contexts, either or both may be useful tactical devices and, hence, at least temporarily desirable -- so long as they facilitate the quest for ultimate total victory. If the Politburo should decide that a given settlement would redound to the Party's net advantage in pursuing its ultimate objective, the Politburo will agree to settle on those terms. If the Politburo reaches a consensus that the net advantage runs the other way, there will be no settlement.

8. This "net advantage" concept is by no means a simple one. At several crucial points in the Party's history -- 1954 being the most notable example -- "net advantage" has clearly translated as "least undesirable." Thus, should the Politburo decide that the probable consequences -- no matter how unpalatable -- of accepting a far from ideal settlement are less disadvantageous than the probable consequences of continuing the struggle in its present form, the Politburo (grudgingly and reluctantly) would decide to settle. The key to Politburo action here, however, and the ultimate

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determinant of its decision, will be its assessment of where the Party's net advantage lies. Such an assessment will have to be thrashed out in detailed debate among the Politburo's current members, none of whom considers settlement as an end desirable in itself. Thus the "two-game" problem remains: We are questing for a reasonable negotiated settlement. Hanoi is questing for a situation most likely to facilitate, or least likely to hinder, its dogged pursuit of ultimate victory.

9. The September 1972 Situation. The details of Hanoi's decision-making over the past six plus months are murky. Hanoi's post-September behavior nonetheless indicates that by late August or early September, the Politburo had decided that a major shift in strategy was desirable or (perhaps) necessary. Such evidence as is available suggests that the Politburo found the total situation then prevailing to be unacceptable, at least in the sense that the Politburo was unwilling to see an indefinite continuation of that situation or the trends then discernible therein. On the ground in South Vietnam, the military offensive launched on 30 March had scored few advances since its initial weeks. Despite heavy and continuing Communist casualties, the overall tide of battle was running the wrong way. The GVN's position -- including its control over both population and territory -- showed signs of improving over time rather than deteriorating. North Vietnam's ports were closed and its territory subjected to aerial (and naval) pounding more severe than anything heretofore experienced. Though not actually disaffected, its people were showing signs of fatigue and stress, more susceptible than ever before (or so the Politburo clearly feared) to the blandishments of a heightened allied psychological warfare effort. Though the overland logistic support arrangements eventually worked out by Hanoi's Russian and Chinese patrons may have been deemed arithmetically sufficient, Hanoi was certainly not blind to the troubling implications of the way Moscow and Peking had responded -- or not responded -- to U.S. actions, particularly after 8 May. In the U.S., the anti-war movement's political impact was unimpressive and President Nixon's re-election chances appeared to be improving to the point of near certainty. An unchanged situation hence held -- at a minimum -- the risk of four more years of an unfettered President Nixon diminishing U.S. participation in the struggle in his way and on his terms, working in close, undisturbed partnership with a GVN whose position seemed unlikely to worsen and more than likely to improve incrementally and steadily over time. The situation then existing also held the clear risk

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of an indefinite pounding of North Vietnam by the U.S., whose actions seemed unlikely to provoke more than benign neglect in Moscow or Peking, despite the physical assistance these essential allies might (or might not) be willing to furnish Hanoi.

10. To all members of the Politburo, this must have been a rather bleak and unacceptable prospect. It had to be changed and, hence, something had to give. In the event, what "gave" was some of Hanoi's heretofore adamant inflexibility in the negotiating arena. Again, one has to be cautious in second-guessing Hanoi's decisions or the operative arguments that prompted them. Nonetheless, it certainly looks as if a decision was made to probe in the negotiating arena to see what situational improvements might be thereby obtainable. We do not know Hanoi's private priority order of desires, nor do we know the price it was (or is) prepared to pay for its immediate tactical objectives. It is fairly evident, however, that Hanoi wanted an end to physical punishment of the north, U.S. disengagement from direct participation in the struggle, and a curtailment -- ideally rupture -- of U.S. support to the GVN. For this Hanoi was prepared to offer the return of U.S. prisoners, the dropping of its insistence on Thieu's immediate resignation and the dropping of its concomitant insistence on U.S. acceptance of (or assistance in) the immediate imposition on South Vietnam of a coalition government under de facto Communist domination.

11. To understand Hanoi's game it is essential to understand that by early September Hanoi had not necessarily decided to negotiate a settlement. Instead, it had probably decided to see if the then current situation -- i.e. the totality of pressures to which Hanoi was then subject -- could be alleviated or improved through probes in the negotiating arena. The Politburo would of course have recognized that these probes and the modifications in Hanoi's previous negotiating position they embodied might lead to a negotiated settlement, but the key to understanding Hanoi's subsequent behavior is an appreciation of the fact that the Politburo's objective was to improve the situation -- not to seek a settlement as an end in itself.

12. Even this degree of movement, however, reflected a major shift in Politburo thinking -- and, almost certainly, in Politburo priorities. Hanoi had never before been willing to discuss a settlement that did not include a coalition government and Thieu's removal from office. Now it was going to discuss and was even prepared to countenance a settlement that left the GVN at least temporarily intact with Thieu at its head. Any such settlement involved a degree of risk for the southern struggle that Le Duan, at least, had always been adamantly unwilling to incur. Hanoi's willingness to move this far therefore strongly suggests a Politburo decision that a point had been

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reached where pressures on the North had to be alleviated even at the price of jeopardizing the southern struggle's prospects. This is a policy it is hard to envisage Le Duan as endorsing, particularly since he had vetoed its adoption in previous years when the Communist position in the South relative to the GVN was much stronger and, hence, this policy could have been pursued with far less risk to the southern struggle. Thus, one possible and viable interpretation of Hanoi's post-September actions is that Le Duan was outvoted or overruled -- a possibility that lends added interest to the developments cited above in paragraph 3.

13. Once again, however, a word of caution is essential. Hanoi's post-September actions do not indicate any abandonment of the Party's southern ambitions, far from it. They simply suggest a Politburo determination that, for the time being at least, precedence had to be given to protection of the North -- in communist parlance, the "great rear" whose support (hence ability to provide it) is essential to pursuit of the liberation struggle in the South. In any Politburo debate leading to adoption of this ordering of priorities, the proponents of this policy would certainly have assured and promised their colleagues that in pursuing it the Party would bend every effort to protect the Party's southern interests and prospects to the maximum extent feasible.

14. The Developments of September and October.\* Against, I strongly suspect, a backdrop roughly approximating that speculatively sketched above, during September and October Hanoi's negotiators engaged in a dialogue that produced the 20 October draft of the "Agreement on Ending the War and Restoring Peace in Vietnam". From Hanoi's standpoint, this document was certainly far from ideal. It left the GVN intact with Thieu in office -- i.e. left in being the strongest opposition the Communists had ever had to face in South Vietnam. Furthermore, in it the concept of coalition government was reduced to a pale shadow in the unanimity-rule hobbled tri-partite National Council of National Reconciliation and Concord (though the shadow was paler in the English text than in the Vietnamese). Nonetheless, the 20 October draft also held a number of attractions for Hanoi. It ended the pressure on the North and got the U.S. militarily disengaged from the struggle. Its language was quite

\*From this point on, my analysis of Communist behavior and -- by inference therefrom -- intentions is offered with great diffidence. Its evidential base is conversations with you supplemented by the portions of the written record you have asked me to examine -- plus the Communists' public statements and the covert reporting we have relayed to you. The problem is, of course, that I am offering for your consideration judgments based on a record of which I have only a sketchy knowledge but which you know in complete detail.

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specific and reasonably precise with respect to U.S. obligations but vague and ambiguous (hence minimally constricting) with respect to Communist obligations. Its inspection and supervision provisions were no more onerous than similar provisions in the 1954 Geneva Accords which Hanoi had easily evaded for almost two decades. It committed the U.S. to aiding in the reconstruction of the North. Above all, it also committed the U.S. -- formally and in writing -- to a basic juridical position that had always constituted the foundation of Hanoi's rationale and justification for its effort to conquer the South: The position that the 17th parallel is not an international boundary (even temporarily) and that there is legally only one Vietnam.\*

15. To Hanoi, the 20 October draft agreement had two further merits not directly embodied in its language: The draft had been negotiated without GVN participation or detailed knowledge -- something Hanoi knew was bound to be translated in Saigon as having been negotiated "behind the GVN's back". Furthermore, Hanoi must have known that Thieu would be unable and unwilling to accept some of the provisions and language of the 20 October draft, which Thieu was bound to regard as tantamount to accepting political suicide. Hanoi thus had every reason to anticipate that when he learned of the 20 October draft's contents, Thieu would adamantly refuse to concur in signing it. Hence the draft itself would help corrode relations between Saigon and Washington in a way that would prejudice U.S. willingness (if not ability) to provide the GVN with continued full support and backing.

16. During the course of the October negotiations, another element entered the equation -- timing. The proposed 31 October target date fit perfectly into Hanoi's overall game plan. It raised the possibility of an agreement rushed to completion and signature. To Hanoi, such a forced draft schedule offered several potential advantages: First, the Politburo probably believed that the chance of getting significant concessions out of the Americans (or slipping such concessions by them) would be greater in the weeks just before Presidential election than they would be once the U.S. Government was freed from election pressures and preoccupations. Hanoi knew how much it had profited for eighteen years from the hasty drafting of the 1954 Geneva Accords, which were cobbled together in final, agreed form under the pressure of

\*The points here covered in summary form are examined in more detail in my 30 October 1972 memorandum entitled "Lacunae in the Draft Agreement" and my 4 November 1972 memorandum entitled "The Current Situation's Potentialities for 'Surrender' or 'Victory'".



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Pierre Mendes-France's self imposed 30-day deadline. Second, and perhaps even more important, U.S. acquiescence in such a compressed schedule would be certain to intensify and exacerbate Thieu's negative reaction to the 20 October draft, which would have to be presented for his almost immediate concurrence -- and Hanoi well knows that Thieu resists rushing, or being rushed, into anything. Furthermore, Hanoi seems to have believed that the record contained elements -- statements you made at the table (or suitably excerpted portions thereof) and/or messages sent from Washington to Hanoi--that could be cited and played at the proper time to "prove" the U.S. had accepted both the 20 October draft and the 31 October timetable before Thieu was consulted about either. Thus, a situation had been structured that Hanoi could exploit to gravely impair -- if not actually rupture -- the bond between Washington and Saigon that Hanoi deemed it essential to break.

17. On 22 October, another development occurred which Hanoi must have regarded as yet another windfall: the U.S. unilaterally cut the bombing back to the 20th parallel. We intended this as a gesture of good will offered to improve the climate for fruitful negotiations. The Vietnamese Communist Party, however, does not construe or respond to gestures of this sort in any such spirit. To the Politburo, such a gesture from an adversary is an appetite-whetting sign of weakness on the latter's part and a tactical opportunity to be immediately exploited. Remember that the Politburo's basic objective is not settlement per se but an improvement in the situation which faced the Party in September and a relief from the totality of pressures to which the Party was then subject. The curtailment in the bombing greatly eased one of those critical pressures -- an easing for which Hanoi had not yet paid much, if anything, beyond civility at the negotiating table. With the bombing eased, the Politburo had more breathing room, and wiggle room.

18. All of the above set the stage for Hanoi's 26 October announcement which, in turn, laid down a tactical gambit Hanoi is still pursuing. That announcement -- publicly surfacing much that had not yet been divulged to the American people or Congress, or the GVN -- was part of an attempted force play that Hanoi has not yet abandoned. Hanoi is trying to drive the U.S. to the table at the earliest possible moment to sign, unchanged, the 20 October draft as an acceptable (even if not ideal) document from the standpoint of its interests. Hanoi's current political action gambit, however, is not keyed to the intrinsic merits (from Hanoi's viewpoints) of that draft's language. Instead, Hanoi's current course of action almost certainly derives from a Politburo determination that the draft itself -- plus alleged U.S. agreement thereto -- has become a propaganda/political action vehicle that can be profitably exploited to embarrass the U.S., undercut the GVN, poison relationships between Washington and Saigon and generally improve Hanoi's Vietnam and Indochina prospects.

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19. November and December. If we look at the current situation from the perspective just described, Hanoi's negotiating behavior during November and December not only makes sense, it was almost inevitable. Hanoi wants to (a) break the bond between the U.S. and the GVN and (b) place squarely on the U.S. any onus for blighting hopes or prospects of an early "peace," from which other desirable benefits would presumably flow -- including a prompt return of American prisoners. Thus Hanoi wants to keep the negotiating dialogue open but exploit it to support the Politburo's overall effort to force the U.S. to accept the 20 October draft unchanged.

20. Hanoi was doubtless disappointed to see the 31 October timetable go askew, along with formal signing plans related thereto. When the private negotiating sessions reconvened on 20 November, Hanoi's initial desire was probably to probe to see whether the U.S. considered this a pro-forma session whose purpose would be largely cosmetic or if we were really intent on further serious bargaining, including the modification of some aspects of the 20 October draft. The slight chill in the tonal atmosphere noticeable after 22 November was probably occasioned -- at least partially -- by a realization that you and your colleagues had come to transact further serious business. By then, of course, the Politburo would have also gotten its reading -- from open and covert sources -- on your visit to Saigon and the state of U.S./GVN relations. This information was probably digested by the Politburo, and at least preliminary word relayed to Le Duc Tho -- in the shape of information and/or modified instructions -- while your November sessions were in progress. Tho's instructions were probably to be personally cordial, keep the conversational ball bouncing, but to stonewall on any material changes in the 20 October draft and keep steering you back to it by every possible tactic -- including that of matching you (or better) change for proposed change.

21. The December sessions were probably guided (on Le Duc Tho's part) by similar instructions and I would suspect that they followed a roughly analogous pattern -- personal warmth accompanied by steadily increasing bargaining toughness. Tho probably wanted (or was instructed) to make you think "peace" was almost "within reach," but to keep it out of reach unless you were willing to go back and formally sign the 20 October draft, without change. My reading of the transcript of the final, 13 December meeting certainly suggests that the outrageous protocols, the metaphysical discussions, the Loi nitpicks that Tho urbanely tabled, etc., etc., were all designed to convince you that any further U.S. endeavor to tinker with the 20 October draft's Vietnamese or English texts would inevitably open an endless series of Pandora's boxes.

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22. In sum, Hanoi's game is not settlement per se but situational improvement -- in which, of course, the right kind of settlement (from Hanoi's standpoint) can obviously play a key role. Hanoi's current gambit is almost certainly that of trying to force the U.S. back to accepting the 20 October draft -- not so much because of that draft's intrinsic merits as because, in light of all that has happened in the intervening two months, a U.S. acquiescence in that draft now or in the near future would have a profound impact on the whole Vietnam situation that Hanoi believes would redound very much to its net political advantage.

### III. HANOI'S CURRENT GAME PLAN

23. At this writing, the Politburo is doubtless engaged in a serious, urgent review of the bidding necessitated by our resumption of bombing north of the 20th Parallel. In some ways, the situation has been returned to that existing in late September -- though of course the djins let out of the bottle by the past two month's negotiating developments have not been and cannot be recorked.

24. Given the fact that the Politburo is a committee -- possibly one without a real chairman -- plus the fact that committees find it very hard to agree on decisive new courses of action even when new actions are patently mandatory, I suspect the Politburo will try to temporize, at least for the time being. It will want to see what political impact the resumed bombing -- and the B-52 loss rate -- plus the postponement of prospects of early settlement (and returning prisoners) has within the United States, particularly after Congress reconvenes. Hanoi's initial, instinctive response, hence, will probably be to hunker down and stand pat on its game plan until it sees whether the U.S. can politically sustain its new course of action. Hanoi may try to step up the pace of military activity within South Vietnam as a retaliatory gesture that might also have political impact by projecting an image of Communist resilience in the face of adversity. Here, however, the Politburo would have some nice calculations to make. It has long planned to utilize its military capabilities in South Vietnam to improve the Communists' political/territorial control position in the south on the eve of any cease-fire's implementation. The Communists got burned once by jumping the gun in October and they may be reluctant to commit now assets they feel might be needed in the not too distant future.

25. If Hanoi decides the resumed U.S. pressure is not a short-shot affair but looks likely to continue for an indeterminate period, the Politburo will have to make some different, tougher calculations. It will have to consider

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the new situation's, and the renewed bombing's, total impact -- not just the physical impact but the impact on the morale, will and determination of the North Vietnamese people, the Party organization and the Party's troops and followers in the south.

26. The Sino-Soviet Dimension. Much of the basic debate over the shape and form of a negotiated settlement revolves around one central issue -- the juridical question of whether there is one Vietnam or, for the time being, two nations divided at the 17th Parallel. This issue is central to both Vietnamese protagonists. If Hanoi succeeds in insisting that a final settlement agreement explicitly endorse the one-nation concept, it knows it will have an agreement vindicating its basic rationale for southern intervention, plus an agreement that Thieu almost certainly cannot and will not sign (with all the political and other consequences thereby entailed). Conversely, if Hanoi were to accept an agreement explicitly embodying the two-nation concept -- or even an agreement that does not explicitly endorse the one-nation concept -- the Communists would have suffered a major defeat, undisguisable as such throughout Indochina.

27. In this sphere, however, Hanoi is extremely vulnerable to pressure from its Soviet and Chinese allies. There are, as Hanoi is acutely aware, three divided countries -- Korea, Germany and Vietnam. North Korea -- which shares common borders with both China and the Soviet Union -- long maintained a doctrinal position essentially similar to that now stridently advocated by Hanoi. But without any outward sign of Soviet or Chinese objection -- indeed, quite the reverse -- even Kim Il-sung has become a revisionist apostate, has accepted South Korea's existence as a fact of life, and is now engaged in serious dialogue with President Park. Germany -- to Hanoi -- is an even worse parallel; for here it is the Soviets who have always insisted on the "two-nation" concept. Recent U.S. acceptance of that concept in Germany provides a clear opening for discussion of reciprocal Soviet behavior with respect to Vietnam. Furthermore, Hanoi cannot have forgotten that on 24 January 1957 the Soviets formally proposed that North and South Vietnam both be admitted to the UN as two separate countries. Protecting the juridical/doctrinal position here involved is a major object of Hanoi's game plan and a major reason why the Politburo wants us to sign, unchanged, the 20 October draft agreement. But the Politburo must be haunted by the realization that in light of all other aspects of the current situation, this juridical/doctrinal position would be hard to sustain -- particularly as a major impediment to settlement and peace -- if Hanoi's stand should not be politically supported by its two major Communist patrons.

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28. Conclusion. Hanoi's political and propaganda force play keyed to the 20 October draft has now been countered by our resumption of the bombing. At a minimum, this new situation will make the Politburo reconsider its game plan. The major strategy decision of whether to stick to that plan or revise it -- with concomitant revisions in Hanoi's negotiating posture -- has probably not yet been made. It will probably not be made until Hanoi gauges our political ability to sustain the resumed and intensified bombing program, its physical and psychological impact on the situation on the ground in both North and South Vietnam, and the extent of support or backing for its adamant negotiating stance that Hanoi can anticipate from China and the Soviet Union. Unless the Politburo has made some prior decision to modify its negotiating position promptly if we reinstitute full scale bombing (an unlikely hypothesis with no supporting evidence of which I am aware), Hanoi's outward behavior is not likely to change until the Politburo has debated and framed these collective estimates. Given the fact that the Politburo is a committee, this process is likely to take time, particularly since the relative positions and powers of the Politburo's members may themselves be affected by the course of recent events or the outcome of these debates. The time in question will probably be measured at least in weeks. Given the nature of the issues involved plus their complexity, the number of weeks required could easily stretch into two or three months. Until this process of debate and assessment is completed, however, the Politburo's own members would probably find it difficult to predict with confidence just what Hanoi's new game plan will be.

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