

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

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WASHINGTON

INFORMATION

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MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

FROM: Henry A. Kissinger *HK*

SUBJECT: Communist Congress in South Vietnam and Reports on Hanoi Strategy

Recent defector reports about the second congress of the Communist Party of South Vietnam, held in September 1969, reflect Hanoi's concern about Communist prospects and interest in a cease-fire before U.S. withdrawal and installation of a coalition. Though the congress was held almost a year ago, some of the material emerging from it is still pertinent today.

Problems Discussed. Several leaders of Hanoi's effort in South Vietnam cited the following problems to the congress:

- The Communist political and military structure had suffered great losses.
- There had been a decline in the morale and quality of Communist party cadres.
- The Allied programs which created the greatest troubles for the Communists were the accelerated pacification program, the Phoenix program, and the Chieu Hoi (defector) program.

Possible Countermeasures Discussed. Several countermeasures were emphasized:

- To recruit new Communist party members very fast.
- To infiltrate party members into the GVN apparatus.

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- To break up large Communist units into smaller units.
- From the middle to the end of 1970, the "general offensive" must be implemented.

General Options: According to the leading statements at the congress, Hanoi envisaged two possible outcomes to the struggle:

- (1) A Communist defeat of various GVN programs, leading to a cease-fire. The earlier the GVN programs could be defeated, the earlier the cease-fire could come into being.
- (2) If this could not be achieved, the result would be a more prolonged struggle. The delegates attending the congress did not even want to consider this situation.

*their likely game plan - in any event*

Cease-Fire Conditions. The conditions which the Communists anticipated for the cease-fire included the continued existence of the GVN and the presence of U.S. forces in Vietnam at the start of the cease-fire. During the cease-fire the Communist cadres would attempt to infiltrate the cities and would attempt to foment uprisings against the GVN. Moreover, after the withdrawal of U.S. forces, the Communist forces then anticipated turning on the South Vietnamese forces and defeating them completely. At some unspecified point, after U.S. withdrawal, the coalition government with Communist control of key positions would be imposed.

The sequence thus envisaged was (1) cease-fire, (2) U.S. withdrawal, and (3) a coalition government.

Further Recent Appraisals: A more recent report by a defector

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confirmed many of the above appraisals but reflected some changes in tactics. The following appraisals were given to him as reflecting the view of the Hanoi Politburo:

- 1969 was the worst year of the war for the Communists.
- The immediate effects of Cambodian developments have been very detrimental, although the situation there will have long-range benefits for the revolution in South Vietnam and Cambodia.

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-- Fighting on three fronts is a great drain on the resources of North Vietnam.

-- Viet Cong finances and rear services have been cut to the bone.

-- But the situation in Saigon was considered to be basically favorable to the revolution because of demonstrations and opposition against the GVN.

-- Vietnamization gives hope because it means that the power of the allies will be reduced and that the GVN will face great military and economic problems.

Recent Tactical Changes.

Communist

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plans for future ways to end the war were very closely held and only a few top cadre were briefed. He said, however, that plans were to be completed by 1970 so that operations could start at the beginning of 1971. (This schedule shows considerable slippage from the earlier expectation that the "general offensive" was to be implemented from the middle to the end of 1970.)

The recent plans also place a great deal of emphasis on the attainment of a new GVN -- without Thieu and Ky -- as an intermediate objective, rather than on the immediate attainment of a coalition government. The Communists would hope that the new GVN would be less effective on the ground and would be more ready to compromise in Paris. They described several ways in which they then hoped to move from the creation of a new GVN to the ultimate formation of a coalition.

Comment: Although there have been changes in Communist plans and timetables since the 1969 Congress, it is still noteworthy that at that time they were seriously contemplating a cease-fire before U.S. withdrawal and before a coalition, but that they planned to violate it after we had pulled out.

It is also noteworthy that there has been some slippage in Hanoi's timetable since then.

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