

SECRETINFORMATION

April 27, 1971

MEMORANDUM FOR HENRY A. KISSINGER

FROM: TOM LATIMER /S/

SUBJECT: CIA's Memo on Hanoi's Options and Strategy Choices

I am concerned about the opening paragraphs of the CIA memo on Hanoi's objectives and concept of the war. CIA seems to be saying that we are up against a foe whose whole history indicates an unswerving pursuit of his paramount goal, unification of all of Vietnam under party control. There is no doubt that the Vietnam Workers Party has as a major goal the extension of its control over all of Vietnam. The key question, however, is whether or not under certain conditions, the party leadership might not opt for a negotiated hiatus, if not settlement, which would leave it somewhat short of its maximum goal of control over the South.

The CIA memorandum would seem to leave out the possibility of any such option being considered, let alone adopted by Hanoi. In doing so, I believe it distorts history. For example, a good case can be made that during the years from 1954 to 1959 the party gave a lower priority to gaining control over the South than it did to consolidating its control over the North. That raises the possibility of a shift once again to a lower priority being placed on gaining its maximum goal immediately. Moreover, the memo's statement that "there have been no significant changes in or addition to the Politburo for more than a quarter of a century," is simply not true. In September 1960 the Third Party Congress named a new Politburo and a new party first secretary. More importantly, the whole purpose behind that party congress and the naming of the new first secretary, Le Duan, was to signal the launching of a new policy toward South Vietnam, one of armed struggle. In short, the history of the Vietnam Workers Party is one of flexibility, of willingness to switch from armed struggle to political struggle whenever such a change seemed best given the "objective situation."

The chances that Hanoi will soon opt for a negotiated settlement may be slim but by altering history, the CIA memo seems to attempt to rule out such a possibility altogether.

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