

The President's Daily Brief

~~Top Secret~~ 23 December 1967



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DAILY BRIEF
23 DECEMBER 1967

1. Australia

Ambassador Clark had a 15-minute talk with Prime Minister McEwen shortly after President Johnson left Melbourne. Prime Minister McEwen told Ambassador Clark that, while the US and Australia have had excellent relations all along, the President's visit "cemented our relationship for all time." The ambassador comments that McEwen could not have been more complimentary.

The prime minister also said it was the announcement of the President's visit which had caused others--including specifically the British--to send top-level delegations. McEwen is very grateful for this.

2. North Vietnam

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3. South Korea

President Pak is facing a new legislative crisis. Opposition legislators are paralyzing all legislative business by a sit-in at the National Assembly.

The primary issue is the ruling party's failure to live up to its agreement to establish a committee to investigate the Assembly elections last June. Such a committee would undoubtedly finger a number of high administration officials for involvement in election irregularities.

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4. Vietnam

The Vietnamese Communists apparently are taking a cautious approach toward President Johnson's television remarks about possible South Vietnamese contacts with the Liberation Front. There has as yet been no official comment from either Hanoi or the Liberation Front.

The chief of the Front's mission in Prague, however, seems to have dismissed the President's statements rather perfunctorily, but probably had not received any authoritative instructions. A Czech newspaper says he "answered" President Johnson by saying in a 20 December interview that "We do not intend in any way either to ease the position of the Saigon puppets or to help the American imperialists solve their problems."

Hanoi seems to be wary of such brusque disclaimers, probably because it sees US encouragement of contacts between Saigon and the Front as another step toward bolstering the role of the Front in any future settlement. The Vietnamese Communists took a similar approach toward Ambassador Goldberg's congressional testimony on 2 November in which he said the US would not stand in the way of Front representatives appearing at the UN Security Council or at a "Geneva" conference. The Communists completely avoided comment on Goldberg's remarks at that time. Only after the US disclosed Front overtures for a presence at the United Nations did they address themselves to this issue. Then both Hanoi and the Front denied the overtures and once again dismissed the competence of the UN on Vietnam issues.

5. Greece

Papadopoulos has just announced an amnesty for all persons taken prisoner since the junta seized power last April. He stated specifically that it will apply to Andreas Papandreu.

He also announced a referendum in April on a new constitution.

6. Eastern Europe

The Soviet bloc foreign ministers, winding up their meeting on the Middle East, have issued a communiqué based on the lowest common denominator. The statement claims complete unity of views among the participants, including the Rumanians. In order to achieve this consensus, however, the foreign ministers balanced a renewed call for the withdrawal of Israeli forces from Arab territory with the reaffirmation of Israel's right to exist. The absence of any pledge of military and economic aid to the Arabs also seems to represent a concession by Moscow to some of the East Europeans.

7. Czechoslovakia

The Czech party central committee session ended late on Thursday, but no communiqué has yet been published. So far there has been no hint of major changes in the leadership.

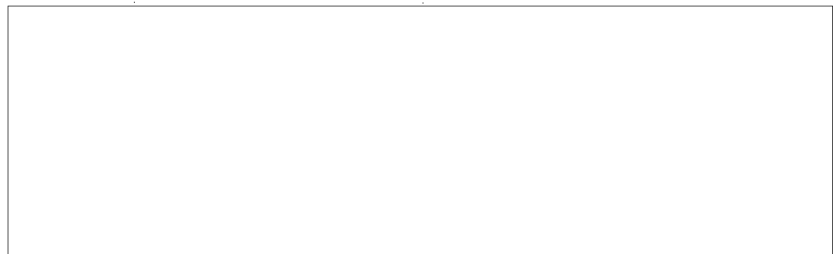
8. Venezuela

The government's release of some 500 political prisoners in the annual Christmas amnesty may lead only to more terrorism next year. Among those released was a prominent Communist leader, as well as all of the terrorist group that abducted a US military officer in 1964. With the 1968 election campaign close at hand, the government is trying to avoid being charged with repression.

9. Canada

Foreign Minister Martin is the popular favorite to succeed Prime Minister Pearson as leader of the Liberal Party, according to the Gallup Poll. Martin was favored by 29 percent, Finance Minister Sharp by 13 percent, and former defense minister Hellyer by 11 percent. Forty percent had no preference.

10. Nepal



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FOR THE PRESIDENT'S EYES ONLY

Special Daily Report on North Vietnam



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I. NOTES ON THE SITUATION

Hanoi and the UN: Hanoi's adamant opposition to any UN involvement in the settlement of the Vietnam problem was underscored recently in an effort to get the message across directly to diplomatic missions in the capital. The North Vietnamese Ministry of Foreign Affairs called in selected heads of diplomatic missions and reiterated that the UN has no jurisdiction and that settlement must be on the basis of the Geneva agreements and the program of the Liberation Front.

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Report from [Redacted] Refugees: [Redacted]

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some interesting and probably accurate information on the draft situation in the Lao Cai area northwest of Hanoi. [Redacted] no one under 20 is conscripted and that the recruits for the army leave the area once every few months in groups of four or five at a time. The standard period of service is three years, but not all are released from service at the end of this term.

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