



The President's Daily Brief

~~Top Secret~~ 14 December 1968



50X1

THE PRESIDENT'S
DAILY BRIEF
14 DECEMBER 1968

1. Laos

At last report, intensive US air strikes had forced a sizable North Vietnamese force to retreat from the important government base at Ban Thateng. The North Vietnamese, whose strength was estimated at three battalions when the attack began, reportedly lost about a battalion during the fighting.

The successful defense of Thateng may ease some of the Vientiane government's jitters, but a recent prisoner report suggests that Saravane, the provincial capital, may soon be the target of an equally sharp Communist attack.

2. Brazil

Costa e Silva yesterday finally yielded to the generals and decreed the most severe repressive measures Brazil has seen in years. The legislature has been suspended indefinitely, some of its members will be expelled, and the powers of state and local governments have been sharply restricted.

We will probably see a roundup of the government's critics and the imposition of some press censorship. A good deal of militantly anti-Communist propaganda can also be expected from the hard-liners who are now in the saddle.

All this happened because Costa e Silva, under pressure from the military, had painted himself into a corner in an intrinsically unimportant dispute with the legislature. His own prestige has dropped sharply as his indecisiveness and dependence on the military became apparent. He may be nothing but a figurehead president from now on, and there is even a chance that he will eventually be eased out entirely.

50X1

3. Okinawa

A demonstration protesting the presence of B-52s is scheduled today near Kadena Air Base. This is a popular issue, and the demonstration could be a big and boisterous one.

50X1

4. Peru

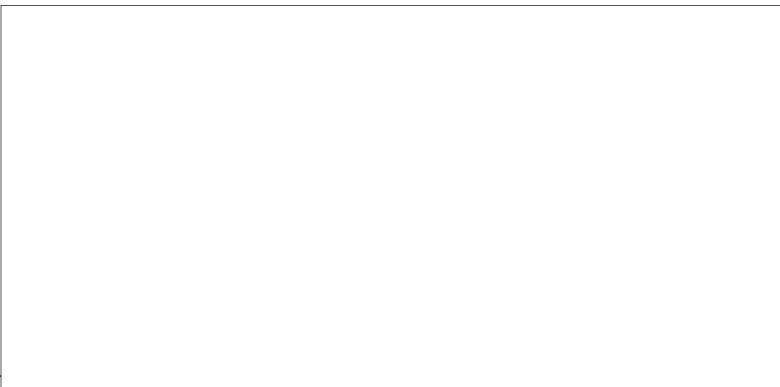
General Montagne, who now is prime minister, minister of war, and head of the army, seems to be maneuvering to take over the presidency when Velasco retires from the army in January. Montagne leads the relatively moderate group in the cabinet

50X1



Velasco is also trying to organize a civilian political party to support his efforts to retain the presidency.

5. Soviet Union

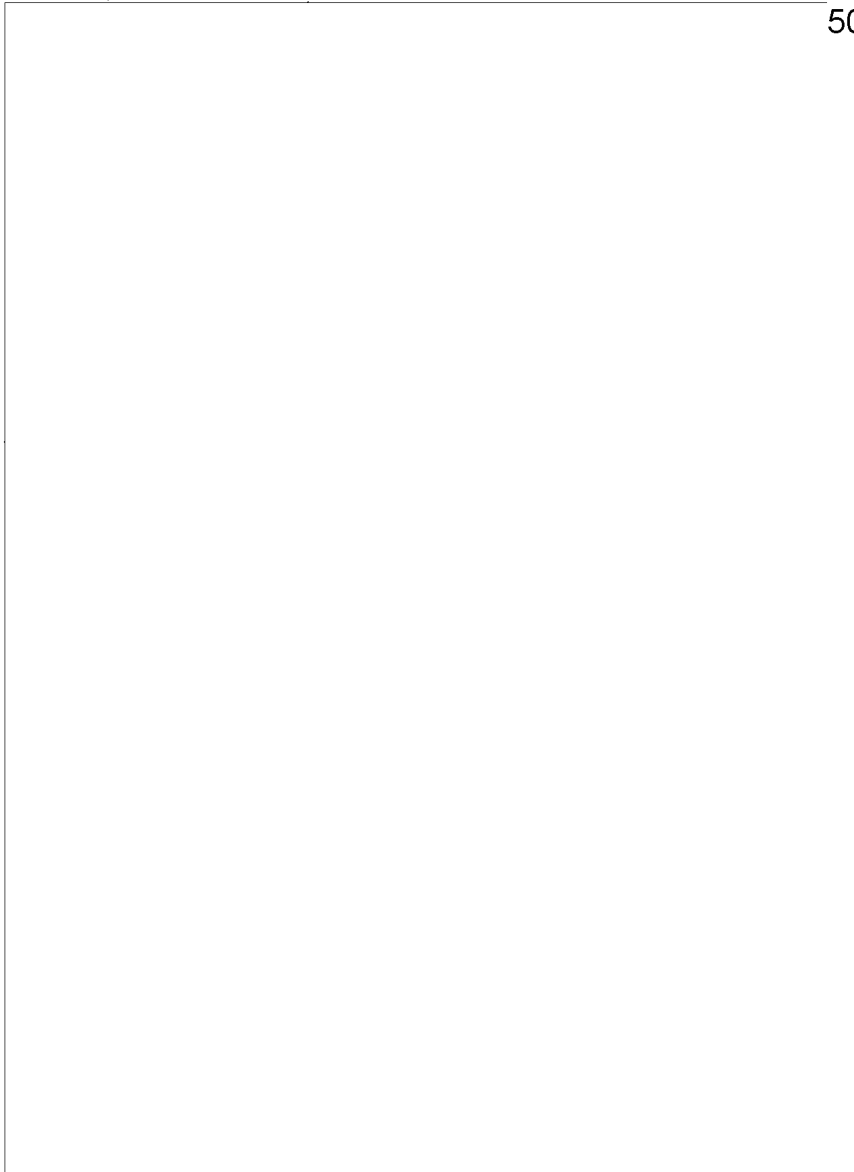


50X1

50X1

6. Jarring Mission

50X1



50X1

7. Communist China

The Chinese Communist Party's constitution is finally being updated. The buffeting of the Cultural Revolution having subsided somewhat, a draft revision is being circulated among the rank and file. They should quickly give it the required approval. The stage will then be set for the long-awaited ninth party congress, which must ratify the document before it becomes official.

The draft is both shorter and less precise than the present one. Among other things it provides for less frequent party congresses and for the "production," rather than the pseudo-election, of party officials. It also effectively confirms Lin Piao as Mao's successor.

The draft omits the strictures in the present constitution against disobeying party directives. Apparently, anyone disagreeing with a directive may appeal directly to the Central Committee and Chairman Mao. There is no requirement that he obey the directive while his appeal is pending. This loophole could be interpreted by dissidents as a sanction for continued insubordination.

For all its contradictions and vagueness, the document does represent a significant milestone for those who have been trying to get China back inside some kind of organizational framework.

Top Secret

Top Secret



FOR THE PRESIDENT'S EYES ONLY

- 1.) Special Daily Report on North Vietnam
- 2.) North Vietnamese Reflections of US Political Attitudes



Top Secret 50X1

16

14 December 1968

50X1

Special Daily Report on North Vietnam
for the President's Eyes Only

14 December 1968

I. NOTES ON THE SITUATION

Liberation Front Delegation to Paris Via Peking:
The complete new Liberation Front negotiating team probably will be in Paris some time next week. The chief of the delegation, Tran Buu Kiem, accompanied by part of the team, is now en route with stopovers in Peking and probably Moscow.

Kiem's party received an impressive reception in Peking on 13 December, according to accounts broadcast by Radio Hanoi. It was welcomed at the airport by two Chinese vice ministers as well as the Soviet Embassy's first secretary. Later, Premier Chou En-Lai feted the group at a reception and dinner.

Radio Hanoi's accounts suggest that the Front's delegation received considerably more elaborate and effusive attention from the Chinese than their North Vietnamese counterparts. This appears to be in line with Peking's long-standing efforts to pump up the extent of its contacts and influence with the Front.

* * *

Armed Forces Exhorted on Anniversaries: In a broadcast designed for the edification of the party faithful, Hanoi Radio on 13 December called on its armed forces to celebrate the three upcoming holidays with special efforts to carry out the instructions of the Communist Party. The instructions call for honoring the achievements of the armed forces, exposing "the enemy's great failures and his new schemes," and understanding the "new step" in the party line. The broadcast enjoins the armed forces to remember that its role is to "fight the enemy" and that the war is by no means over for anyone. It suggests that a special campaign to indoctrinate forces in the "new situation" since the bombing halt and to head off any relaxation of effort will be mounted in the next few weeks.

50X1

50X1

North Vietnamese Peasants Spend Too Little Time in Rice Fields: An 11 December newspaper editorial complains that "many cooperatives" have underutilized their members' time, and the short time spent in the rice fields has resulted in careless plowing, tardy transplanting, slow harvesting, and a late start on next spring's crop. Peasants are accused of spending too much time on their private plots to the detriment of the collective. The editorial advises cadres to "settle the relationship between collective and family economy" and "interest themselves in organizing their members' lives" to free them for work in the fields. North Vietnam has long had a manpower problem in rural areas, contributing to the steady decline in agricultural production since 1965.

* * *

First Foreign Merchant Ship to Vinh in Three Years: A Cypriot flag merchant vessel, under North Vietnamese charter, departed Haiphong for the port of Vinh on 8 December, according to an intercepted message. The ship will proceed from Vinh to Hong Kong where it is due to arrive between 18-20 December. This will be the first foreign flag ship to arrive in Vinh since the US bombing of North Vietnam began in 1965.

* * *

International Conference on Vietnam Off to Slow Start in Sweden: Press reports from Stockholm indicate the international conference, "Vietnam 1969--International Mobilization," sponsored by the Swedish Vietnam Committee and scheduled to run from 13-15 December, has attracted only about half the 300 delegates originally expected. Principal figures at the kickoff press conference on 12 December, at which nothing of significance developed, were the North Vietnamese Minister of Culture and the National Liberation Front representative in Rumania. The Swedish press has tended to ignore the meeting thus far. One of the major problems faced by the conference organizers is the continuing disagreement on tactics among various radical left and Vietnam peace groups in Stockholm.

50X1

II. NORTH VIETNAMESE REFLECTIONS OF US POLITICAL
ATTITUDES ON THE WAR

There is nothing of significance to report
today.

Top Secret