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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

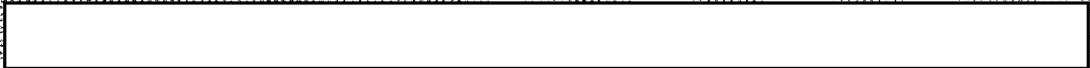
Memorandum



THE SITUATION IN VIETNAM

Information as of 1600
8 April 1966

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ARMY review(s) completed.

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HIGHLIGHTS

An armed showdown in Da Nang may be near as the government ruling military Directorate again decided to use force to restore their authority and more antigovernment troops were reported moving into the city. Meanwhile, the most anti-American violence to date took place today in Saigon.

I. The Military Situation in South Vietnam:
Elements of the US 101st Airborne Division skirmished with an estimated Viet Cong company yesterday during the US/ROK rice harvest/security Operation FILLMORE in coastal Phu Yen Province (Para. 1). B-52 Stratofortress strategic bombers yesterday attacked the suspected Viet Cong Military Region V forward command post in Quang Ngai Province (Para. 2). Company-strength Viet Cong forces early today attacked an ARVN battalion troop compound 15 miles southwest of Saigon, in Long An Province (Para. 3). A Liberation Front broadcast has predicted difficulties in food procurement suggesting that the Viet Cong may be beginning to feel the effects of the allied efforts to deny them necessary food supplies (Paras. 4-5).

II. Political Developments in South Vietnam:
The military Directorate today reportedly agreed on a plan to reinforce Saigon troops in the Da Nang area, and a move on the town may be imminent (Paras.1-2). Antigovernment elements in I Corps are apparently also moving armed personnel into Da Nang (Para. 3). A new commander for I Corps, General Ton That Dinh, has been named and is to be installed tomorrow in place of General Chuan, now in Saigon (Para. 4). Violence, much of it against Americans, flared again in Saigon today (Para. 5). Buddhist elements have reportedly set up a new "struggle committee" to fight the government to the bitter end; there are reports of growing Catholic alarm and possible plans for counter-action (Paras.6-7). Officials in Saigon, meanwhile,

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are preparing to go ahead with their plans to convene a political congress next week, even without Buddhist participation if necessary (Para. 8).

III. Military Developments in North Vietnam:
There is nothing of significance to report.

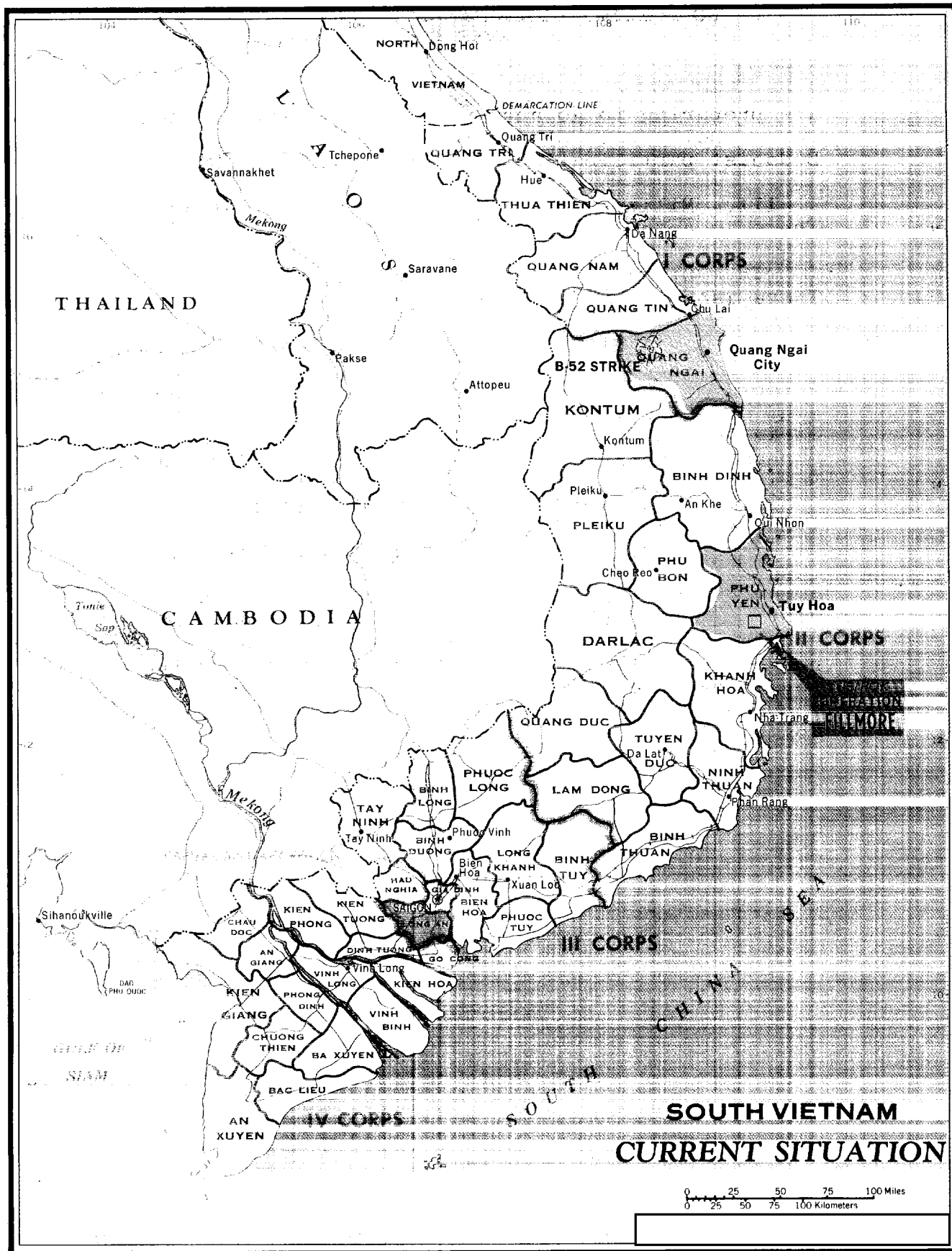
IV. Other Communist Military Developments:
There is nothing of significance to report.

V. Communist Political Developments: The North Vietnamese are continuing their propaganda celebration of the first anniversary of the announcement of the DRV's four points (Para. 1). In remarks to the Pakistani President, Liu Shao-chi emphasized China's support for Vietnam and restated Peking's standard pledge to "fully oblige" the Vietnamese should Hanoi encounter serious difficulties as a result of US attacks and request direct Chinese intervention (Para. 2). The draft resolution on Vietnam at the Soviet Party Congress did not alter Moscow's basic position on Vietnam (Para. 3). Both Suslov and Brezhnev, in closing speeches, underscored the unanimous approval from other parties at the congress for the Soviet call for unity in the Communist ranks, thereby highlighting China's isolation in the Communist camp (Para. 4).

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I. THE MILITARY SITUATION IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. Elements of two battalions of the US 101st Airborne Division participating in the five-battalion US/ROK rice harvest/security Operation FILLMORE in coastal Phu Yen Province yesterday engaged an estimated Viet Cong company ten miles southwest of Tuy Hoa. Nineteen enemy troops were killed, one captured, and 15 weapons and 800 grenades seized. US losses were one killed and 17 wounded. Since its initiation on 24 March, FILLMORE has resulted in cumulative Communist losses of 141 killed, 28 captured, and 197 suspects apprehended. Allied casualties to date stand at nine killed (7 US) and 58 wounded (52 US).

2. Fifteen USAF B-52 Stratofortresses yesterday attacked a Communist-controlled target area approximately 26 nautical miles west of Quang Ngai city believed to contain the forward command post of Viet Cong Military Region V. Poststrike ground exploitation of the drop zone was not scheduled.

Viet Cong Activity

3. An estimated Viet Cong company, equipped with mortars and small arms, early today attacked an ARVN battalion troop compound in Long An Province, 15 miles southwest of Saigon. Seven government soldiers were killed and three wounded; enemy losses were not reported.

Viet Cong Anticipating Food Problems

4. The Viet Cong may be beginning to feel the effects of the US/GVN efforts to deny them necessary food supplies. A Liberation Radio broadcast on 6 April claimed that since the resistance movement was growing larger and stronger than ever, a larger volume of food--"which is supplied mainly by the liberated area"--will be necessary. The broadcast admitted that current allied operations had created "some difficulties" in food procurement and urged

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the people to "exhibit their patriotism by stepping up further the work of food production." In the current situation "the task of producing food is as important as killing the enemy."

5. With the continuing increase in infiltration and the build-up of the VC/PAVN forces in the South, any marked decrease in the amount of food which can be raised, purchased, or taken in the form of taxes could inhibit the insurgents' ability to maintain the current level of military action and hamper any expansion of the war. Scattered low-level reports have begun to give evidence of just this situation. One report, for example, pointed out that in a district of Quang Tri Province government operations, which had upset the tax collection schedule and uncovered stores of rice, had made it difficult to provide VC troops with food.

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II. THE POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. The military Directorate, which met in Saigon today, has again decided to use force to restore governmental authority to Da Nang, according to Military Security Service chief Loan. General Cao Van Vien, chief of the Joint General Staff, will be in command of one special and three marine battalions which are already there, plus two Ranger battalions which are being airlifted via VNAF. A specific time for the move to liberate the city has not been reported, although it is expected to commence on 9 April Saigon time.

2. According to Loan, the antigovernment forces in Da Nang now have under their control 17 M-24 tanks and 20 mortars, in addition to some 3,000 armed youths. Earlier; one regular Vietnamese Army battalion and two Ranger companies were reported in the city, apparently under the control of dissident Vietnamese military officers. The loyalties of armored personnel carrier squadrons in the area have not been ascertained.

3. Antigovernment forces have been reported to be moving more reinforcements into the city. One company of national police with small arms and Browning automatic rifles left Hue for Da Nang today. Some 120 "student suicide troops," earlier reported to have received two or three days' military training, also left Hue for Da Nang this morning. A US air observer reported a convoy of buses and trucks carrying uniformed personnel moving south to Da Nang this afternoon. The convoy, which later arrived in the city of Da Nang, may have been the national police group, the student suicide troops, or additional reinforcements. An earlier report from US military sources stated that one battalion of the Vietnamese First Division in the Hue area was put on alert today for immediate deployment. The recoilless rifle elements of two other battalions in the same regiment were also reported to be on alert today.

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4. I Corps commander Chuan flew to Saigon today and will not return to Da Nang. General Ton That Dinh, one of the ousted generals involved in the coup against Diem, was appointed to replace Chuan as I Corps commander at the Directorate meeting today. Colonel Loan has reported that there is a plan to fly Dinh to Da Nang and escort him to I Corps headquarters in the struggle-group-held sector of the city for installation ceremonies. The escorting officers, made up of progovernment troops at the air base, will be ready to shift from an "administrative" role to combat formation if the struggle committee interferes.

5. Violence, the most anti-American to date, occurred again today in the streets of Saigon. Random vehicles and bystanders were attacked by roving bands of demonstrators. One American has apparently been shot, and several other Americans have also been injured. A grenade explosion in a refreshment stand located about a mile southwest of Cholon injured eight Americans and three Vietnamese. An explosion near the main gate of Tan Son Nhut Airfield has also been reported, but there were no casualties. The US Embassy has reported that the grenade incidents and the bomb explosion appear to be the work of Viet Cong terrorists taking advantage of the unrest, although details are lacking.

6. According to press sources, Buddhist leaders in Saigon today announced the creation of a "Committee of Struggle Against the Government" to be headed by Thich Thien Minh. A recorded statement by Minh, who is the Buddhist Institute's youth commissioner, declared the Buddhists put no faith in government promises, and that "we are determined to go on to the bitter end, even if it means bloodshed."

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7. The US Embassy reports that elements of the Catholic community, particularly northern refugees, are becoming more restive about the government's inaction in central Vietnam thus far. Vague hints of some kind of action "in the next few days" by a group of northern refugee priests in the Saigon area and some sympathetic Vietnamese generals were passed to a US Embassy official today by a Catholic political figure.

8. Vietnamese Government officials in Saigon are preparing a list of those to be invited to the national political congress, now scheduled to be convened sometime next week. The purpose of the congress, which was announced by the government on 3 April, is to obtain a broad consensus on the institutions of an eventual civilian government. Government intentions are to issue invitations today to representatives of each municipal and provincial council, representatives of the politico-religious sects, political parties, and professionals, and to other notables. Minister of Interior Tiet, who is involved in arranging the congress, hopes that between 150 and 200 will attend the meeting, but admits that the major problem facing the government now is to make certain that those invited will agree to participate. Tiet said that Buddhist Institute representatives and some individuals actually associated with the struggle movement in central Vietnam would also be invited to attend. Buddhist Institute chairman Tam Chau boycotted the preliminary consultative session of the congress held earlier this week.

9. Elsewhere in I Corps, the Hue radio station has broadcast a denunciation of the forthcoming government-sponsored national political congress and of the Buddhist Institute communiqué which yesterday called for a temporary cessation of the "struggle" movement. In a private conversation with a US official in Hue, ranking Buddhist monks in the area also declared that they would not abide by the institute order. Regarding the recent evacuation of American civilians from the Hue area, the monks stated that Buddhists in the area had no intentions of harming

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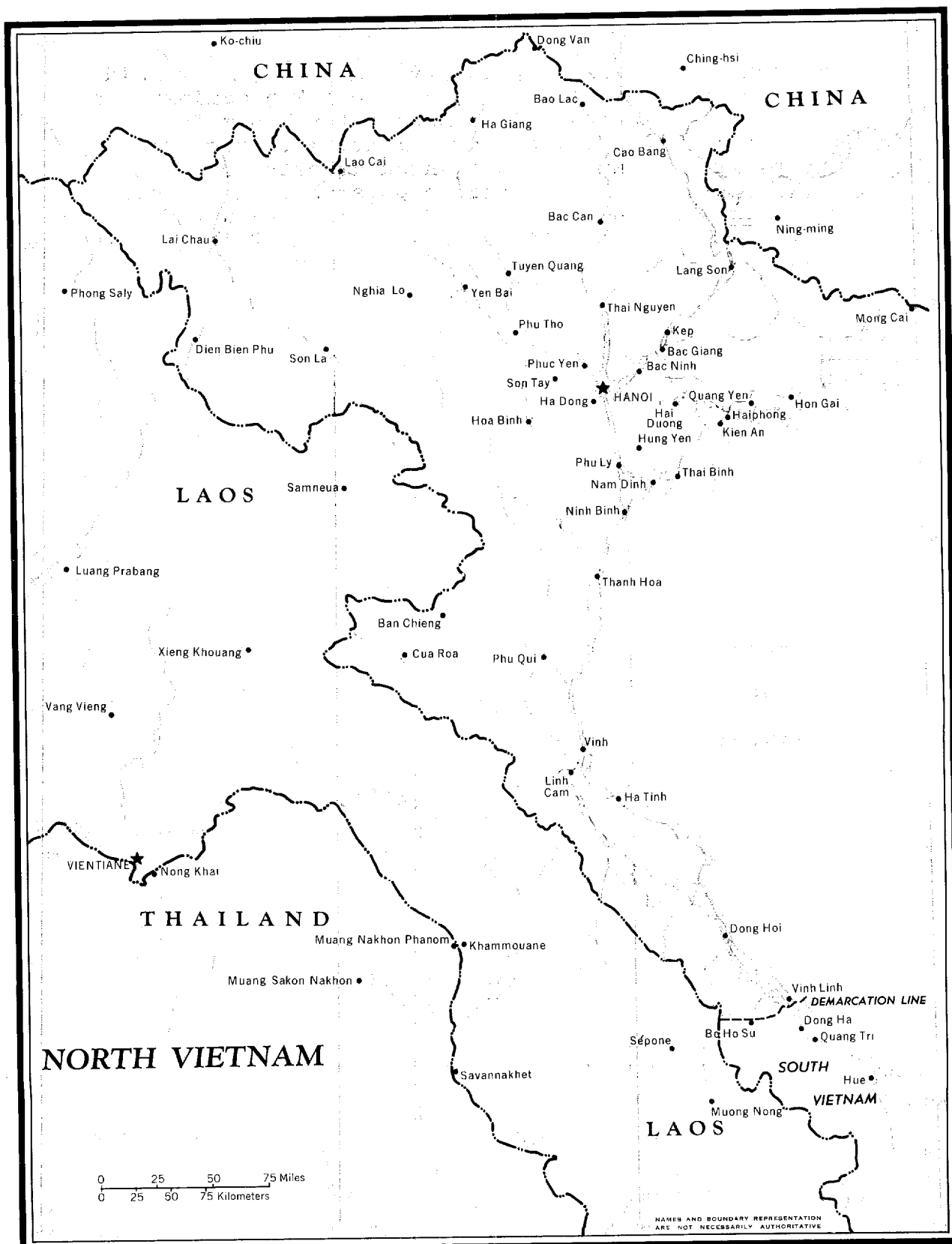
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Americans or American property. However, they said that "defensive" measures would be taken against the Saigon government until it made a firm commitment to establish a civilian government, withdrew its troops from Da Nang, and granted amnesty to those participating in the struggle movement. A Catholic priest in the Hue area told US officials that Catholics there believe the antigovernment movement is heavily infiltrated by the Viet Cong, and they fear that a Viet Cong take-over is imminent.

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III. MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS IN NORTH VIETNAM

1. There is nothing of significance to report.

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IV. OTHER COMMUNIST MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS

1. There is nothing of significance to report.

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V. COMMUNIST POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

1. North Vietnam is continuing its propaganda celebration of the first anniversary of the announcement of the DRV's four-point proposal for settling the Vietnam war. The party daily Nhan Dan on 8 April devoted a lengthy editorial to commemorating this "important event," and in pointing out Hanoi's unchanged position on settling the war it covered much the same ground as an article in the party's theoretical journal the previous day. The editorial focused on the contention that US refusal to accept point three of the program, which calls for the settlement of the South Vietnamese problem without foreign interference and in accordance with the Liberation Front's program, would prevent any negotiated settlement. Nhan Dan asserted that all the four points constituted a single entity and that refusal to accept point three meant only that the US rejected them all. The editorial ruled out categorically any settlement of the war either through unconditional discussions or discussions of the four points in conjunction with the American 14 points, and strongly implied that US acceptance of the DRV's four-point program was in fact a precondition to any settlement of the war.

Chinese Chief of State on Vietnam

2. Liu Shao-chi's remarks on Vietnam to Pakistani President Ayub Khan in late March appear calculated to convey the impression that Peking is taking a "responsible" position in Southeast Asia and is ready for a long struggle. The Pakistani foreign minister informed US officials on 7 April that Liu had been "cool and relaxed" while discussing Vietnam and had emphasized to President Ayub that a settlement was possible only on the basis of the North Vietnamese four-point formula.

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Liu reportedly declared that the Chinese have no intention of intervening with troops in Vietnam or Laos but will continue giving military aid to these and other "wars of national liberation." He added that while North Vietnam had not asked for Chinese troop support, should Hanoi encounter serious difficulties as the result of US attacks and ask for direct Chinese intervention, China "will oblige fully." This is a restatement of the pledge Peking first made publicly last spring and represents no expansion of the Chinese commitment to aid Vietnam.

Soviet Congress Draft Resolution on Vietnam

3. Judging by the proceedings at the Soviet 23rd Party Congress, Moscow has not altered its basic position on Vietnam. At the closing session, politburo member Suslov read the CPSU "Draft Declaration on Vietnam" which merely reiterated Moscow's well-worn public expressions of support for the DRV and restated Soviet willingness to continue support of the Vietnamese people. Suslov reaffirmed Moscow's public position that "the Vietnamese question can be resolved only on the basis of the recognition of the just demands of the DRV and the NFLSV."

4. Suslov, as well as General Secretary Brezhnev in his closing speech, underscored the significant tactical victory Moscow won against Peking at the congress. Highlighting China's isolation in the Communist camp, Brezhnev stressed that the "fraternal parties which participated in the congress unanimously approve the line of the CPSU in the world Communist movement." Indicating satisfaction with the Soviet Union's present course, he added that the CPSU once more reaffirmed its "resolute determination to continue waging the struggle for the unity of Communist ranks."

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