

NSC BRIEFING

18 March 1954

PROBABLE FRENCH REACTION TO
FALL OF DIEN BIEN PHU

- I. Assembly pressure for immediate negotiated settlement with Ho would assume critical proportions.
- II. In any event, greatly increased demand for solution at Geneva.
 1. Greater pressure for American concessions to Communist China because French military position weaker.
- III. Intensified pressure for UN or US military intervention, if Geneva fails.
- IV. Some qualified American observers expect Laniel to fall immediately if Dien Bien Phu is lost, because of pressures listed above.
- V. Nevertheless, Laniel government would probably survive because:
 1. Imminence of Geneva talks.

- a. Laniel bluffed assembly before Berlin conference on threat of difficulty in forming new government.
 - b. Hope of solution at Geneva definite in comparison with pre-Berlin situation.
2. Present pro-EDC majority in assembly would try to retain Laniel, believing it impossible to form new government if Laniel falls now.
 3. Fall of Laniel could precipitate new elections under 18-month clause in constitution.

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I. Vietnamese fears of ultimate

Communist victory will be sharply aggravated by fall of French strongpoint.

1. Reaction will be compounded by knowledge of effect of loss in France.
2. Supporters of Bao Dai government will diminish to negligible group.
3. Anti-Communist Vietnamese look to US as only effective source of support.

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