

The President's Daily Brief

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14 February 1972

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PRINCIPAL DEVELOPMENTS

The diplomatic and political maneuvering regarding the Cyprus situation is discussed on *Page 1*.

A recently published speech by Hanoi's number two man appears to be a last-minute cautionary note to China in advance of President Nixon's trip. The Soviet Union is also singled out for the warning. (*Page 2*)

The situation in northern Laos remains relatively quiet. (*Page 3*)

Soviet
(*Page 3*)

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We present at Annex a brief background to Yugoslavia's Croatian problem.

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CYPRUS

The Greek-dominated Cypriot National Guard is keeping a close watch on possible hiding places for the Czech arms imported by President Makarios. [redacted]

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[redacted]

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[redacted]

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There have been no signs of unusual military activity, either in Greece toward reinforcing the Guard on Cyprus or in Turkey, which continues its wait-and-see attitude as long as the Turkish Cypriots are in no danger.

According to [redacted] diplomatic sources, both Makarios and Athens would prefer to negotiate an end to the present imbroglio, and there does appear to be some room for maneuver. Athens has publicly denied that its recommendations to the President represented an ultimatum, although privately Greek Ambassador Panayotakos is insisting that the Archbishop must go. According to the Cypriot press, the ambassador is to return to Greece on Wednesday with Makarios' formal reply, which he is discussing with his cabinet today.

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Athens has been trying since 1969 to whittle down the prestige and power of President Makarios, and the Greeks concluded that his acquisition of new arms gave them the opportunity they were seeking. Nevertheless, the Archbishop is adept at turning an impasse to his advantage, and the Greek Government may have underestimated Makarios' popularity among the Greek Cypriot community. Athens has the military strength to win a showdown, but the uneasy truce among the island's inhabitants could quickly break down before a fresh solution to the communal problem is devised.

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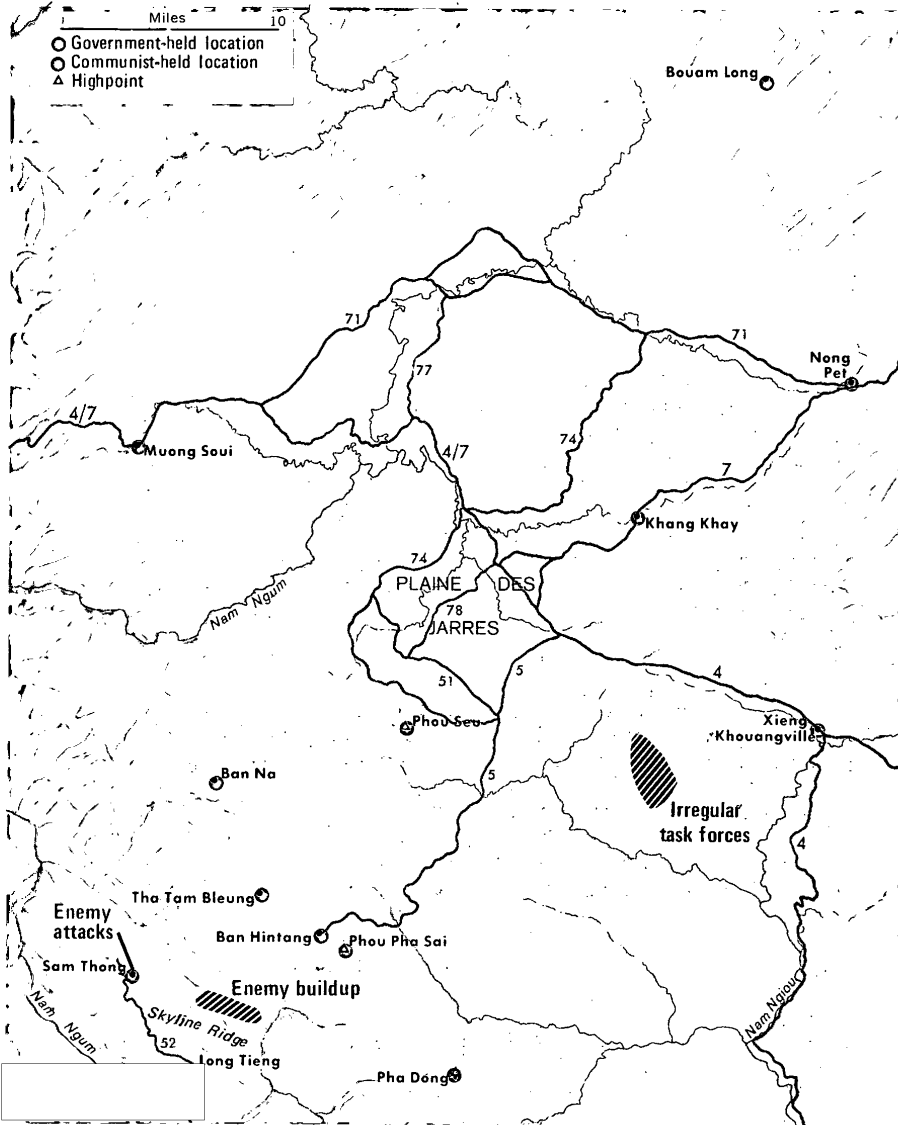
NORTH VIETNAM

Hanoi's number two man has singled out the Soviet Union and China for a special warning about the "duplicity" of US diplomatic strategy. In a speech delivered a month ago but made public only now, National Assembly President Truong Chinh claims that the main objective of US policy is to be "ready to negotiate with a number of countries, especially the Soviet Union and China" so as to "block" and "divide" them. He goes on to advise all Communists to join in countering US policy on three united fronts--Vietnam, Indochina, and the world.

Although the speech echoes much of Hanoi's propaganda of last summer that warned of US efforts "to split the socialist camp," it is the first time Hanoi has mentioned both China and the Soviet Union in this context. As for its timing, while Hanoi often delays the publication of major statements, the belated release of this one suggests it is intended as a last-minute cautionary note to the Chinese as they begin talks with President Nixon next week.

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LAOS: PLAINE DES JARRES AREA



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NOTES

Laos: Irregular units just north of Sam Thong were heavily shelled on the night of 12 February, and they briefly abandoned two positions.

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[Redacted]

East of Long Tieng, Vang Pao's 5,000 irregulars have advanced to the high ground south of Route 4. This operation--now a week old--has met little resistance and has neither uncovered any supply caches nor caused any damage to North Vietnamese rear support areas. The Communists are using Route 4 only to a moderate degree, and their main supply push continues to be along Route 5 on the Plaine des Jarres and its new extension south toward Long Tieng.

USSR:

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[Redacted]

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Egypt-USSR:

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[Redacted]

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Yugoslavia: A large conference of senior officials will convene on 16-17 February to examine the extent of popular demoralization throughout the country following the political upheaval in Croatia in December and January. The gathering--the first of its kind--is billed as a look at Yugoslavia's political and psychological preparedness for defense. It will be the second major conference at the national level in three weeks as Belgrade continues to wrestle with the problem of how to ensure the survival of a unified, nonaligned Yugoslavia once Tito leaves the scene. (At Annex we include a brief background discussion of the Croatian problem.)

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YUGOSLAVIA IN TROUBLE

In 1970 Tito set in motion a precedent-shattering decentralization of governmental power designed to create a federal structure of strong autonomous republics that would function smoothly after Tito's unifying influence is gone. Nothing like this had ever been tried in polyglot Yugoslavia, where ethnic and religious groups have always competed for power. Nothing like this had ever been tried in a Communist state.

The keystone to the success of the new system was to be a small, disciplined federal Communist party that would provide guidance from the center and hold the Yugoslav federation together. The modalities for the party's new role were to have been worked out at a party conference late in 1971. Preparations for the party conference were begun more than a year in advance; there were few in the Yugoslav establishment who questioned the basic premise, and what frictions arose centered about familiar problems, such as creating ethnic balances so that each nationality group could feel that its interests would be protected.

The complacency of the federal party was shattered last November and December. The Croats, the second most powerful nationality group in the country, pressed too far with demands for changes that would, if successful, have guaranteed them virtual independence rather than a degree of autonomy. Among the things they wanted were permission to establish Croatian trade missions abroad and the possibility of retaining a greater share of their hard currency earnings. The Croats also were seeking to avoid a repetition of the 1919-1941 period, when domination by the majority Serbs piled up Croatian grievances and later led to retributive massacres during World War II. Tito, and most of the non-Croatian leaders of the party, did not view Croatia's aspirations so simplistically; they saw the machinations in Zagreb last fall as a threat to the survival of the federation and brought strong pressure on Croatian leaders.

The Croats refused to compromise. An angry Tito publicly characterized the situation as the worst crisis of post-war Yugoslavia. After refusing to recant, the Croatian party leaders were purged on Tito's orders and replaced by more tractable people, including a party head who is of Slovenian origin.

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This alleviated the problem to a certain extent, but it also solidified the belief of Croatian nationalists that they had to defend themselves against further depredations by Belgrade.

The Yugoslavs were ill-prepared for such a development. There was considerable confusion among party leaders while they sought to assess whether or not the system they had so painstakingly created was irreparably damaged. In this situation, opponents of the federal system from the right and the left began to float ideas for a solution, ranging from calls for a return to the Stalinist methods of the late 1940s and early 1950s to schemes for a loose confederation. The party leaders met for weeks in nearly continuous session, obviously debating some of these propositions.

In the midst of such uncertainty about the future, the party conference--twice postponed--finally convened in late January. Tito, clearly worried about the lack of direction among the delegates, set the tone for the gathering by playing down the seriousness of the situation and pointing out that after all Yugoslavia had so far survived. He accused the Western press of overdramatizing the recent events and thus avoided needlessly antagonizing anyone. Tito was probably also moved to take this stance in order not to jeopardize Yugoslav efforts to gain economic credits and investments from the West.

The conference took its cue from Tito and made a basic, if not very spectacular, decision that the decentralized system and all of its democratizing reforms must be retained. The decision was clearly helped by the strong support for this proposition of two party presidium members, Marko Nikezic, a Serb, and Vidoje Zarkovic, a Montenegrin. Croatia's new leaders did not have to play a major part in the discussion, and thus the possibility of acrimonious debate, or even a breakdown of the conference, was avoided.

The depth of the party's disorientation, however, became apparent when the conference failed to agree on anything but Tito's original concept. It wrote no blueprint for the party's future guiding role. There was self-criticism on the part of some delegates, but little change of heart, and the resolution on unity does little more than paper over differences. Agreement to trim the party's bulky executive bureau and to reduce the size of basic party

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bodies constituted no more than a half-hearted attempt to cut the bureaucracy. There is probably worry in Zagreb because three Serbs and only one Croat were put on the smaller executive bureau. The problem of nationalism in the republics was never directly attacked, and no new steps were taken to prevent its recurrence in Croatia or an outbreak in some other area, such as Kosovo, where a million disaffected Albanians live.

There has been one major change in power relationships, but this was the result of Tito's decisions during the crisis period rather than of the party conference. This was the assumption of a new political role by the Yugoslav armed forces, which have been consistently loyal to Tito. During the Croatian troubles, Tito publicly indicated that if need be he would use the army to defend the revolution. In fact, the Zagreb military commander provided the base for Tito's move against the Croatian party leadership, and the army is said to be still playing a role in putting down dissidence in the republic. Perhaps symbolic of the new status of the armed forces, the military emerged from the party conference with the right to participate in a non-voting capacity in the sessions of the federal party executive bureau.

If the party cannot pull itself together and create a cohesive organization for the effective management of the federation, the military are waiting in the wings to play a larger role. At the moment, the officer corps is content to serve Tito and takes pride in the application of its power to preserve the state. After Tito, however, it seems reasonable that, on the basis of their past contributions in times of crisis, the generals might wish to share power with political leaders. As a result of the Croatian eruption and the party's feeble response to its problems, the armed forces would be in a good position, once Tito leaves the scene, to make a bid for power.

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