

The President's Daily Brief

10 May 1972

47



Top Secret

25X1

FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

THE PRESIDENT'S DAILY BRIEF

10 May 1972

PRINCIPAL DEVELOPMENTS

On *Page 1* we report Soviet, Chinese and Vietnamese Communist reactions to President Nixon's 8 May speech.

In the Vietnam fighting, the enemy is maintaining pressure on government positions in the northern provinces. Meanwhile, the Communists are reported to be taking measures to consolidate political control over areas they have occupied. (*Page 2*)



25X1

The resolution of last-minute difficulties has cleared the way for debate today of Bonn's Eastern treaties. (*Page 5*)

The national elections in Italy produced only marginal shifts in the parliamentary strengths of the leading parties and another center-left government appears likely. (*Page 6*)

FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

VIETNAM

In the period immediately following President Nixon's announcement on 8 May, both Soviet and Chinese Communist military activities appear normal. The Yugoslav news agency's correspondent in Moscow has reported, however, that the Soviet Politburo has convened to discuss the President's statement.

The Soviets first took note of the President's address in a routine TASS account issued 11 hours after the speech was given. The statement, dated Washington, said the US actions were "open aggressive acts, signifying increased interference in Vietnam." TASS noted the President's remark that "these actions are not directed against any other country," but it did not report the part of the speech directed specifically at Moscow. TASS also reported the US offer to begin withdrawing as soon as the prisoners are released and a cease-fire is established. It concluded that, although the speech contains a number of reassurances that the US wants to end the war, US actions "speak of something quite different."

Peking has not yet commented on the President's speech, but the Foreign Ministry issued a statement yesterday protesting the attacks on Chinese merchant ships near Vinh over the weekend. The protest is brief and relatively mild. It asserts that the attacks constitute a "grave provocation against the Chinese people" and adds that Washington must bear "full responsibility" for "all the grave consequences" arising from such attacks if they are not stopped. All Vietnamese Communist statements from Hanoi and Paris insist that US actions will have no effect on Communist determination to carry on the war. Much of the Vietnamese Communist commentary on the speech is vituperative. In addition to bitter invective aimed at the President personally, the propaganda also contains long and emotional passages on the aggressive nature of US actions, the right of the Vietnamese people to defend themselves, the hopeless position of the US and its "puppets," and other staples of recent Hanoi statements.

Hanoi is giving heavy emphasis to international implications of the US action. A North Vietnamese statement in Paris claimed that the US is posing an "insolent challenge" to Hanoi and its Communist backers, and the Viet Cong added that Washington's action is a violation of international law and moral principle. According to French press reports from Hanoi, North Vietnamese spokesmen are claiming that the President's speech is an "ultimatum" aimed not just at the Vietnamese Communists but at the "entire socialist bloc and the world."

(continued)

1

FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY



FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

These initial reactions suggest not only that Hanoi will maintain a very tough stand but also that it will take every opportunity to remind the Soviets and the Chinese of their obligations to support the Vietnamese Communists.

* * *

Communist military forces are maintaining pressure on government positions in the northern provinces. Enemy artillery and ground attacks continue in the Hue area, but the main thrust of Communist activity at the moment is toward completing logistical and other combat preparations. Intercepted North Vietnamese messages show that a major logistic authority has moved from the Laos panhandle to the Hue area, apparently to facilitate large-scale logistic support for the pending offensive against that city. Intercepts show that the Communists have already moved artillery and some infantry units into striking positions near Hue, but that some other units may not be ready for action until the middle of this month.

In the central highlands, the loss yesterday of Polei Kleng has opened Kontum City's western approaches to the enemy. In coastal Quang Nam Province, [redacted] the North Vietnamese [redacted] [redacted] apparently are increasing their activity against major towns in the area and are now within range of Da Nang and the provincial capital of Hoi An. [redacted]

25X1
25X1
25X1
25X1

President Thieu is expected to sign an order today relieving General Dzu of command of Military Region 2 and replacing him with General Nguyen Van Toan, currently commander of South Vietnam's Armored Command.

Dzu seemed complacent about the unprecedented enemy buildup in the highlands last winter, but when the fighting began he proved to be an ineffectual commander. Thieu has apparently been considering Dzu's replacement since his forces abandoned their second line of defense at Vo Dinh in late April. Communist regiments and local forces have been moving almost at will through the countryside of northern Binh Dinh and Quang Ngai Provinces and, in effect, have cut South Vietnam in half.

(continued)

FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

Thieu clearly hopes that Toan will get a more vigorous, aggressive performance from Military Region 2 forces, save the situation at Kontum City, and protect Qui Nhon City from the enemy forces headed that way.

The city of Da Nang is trying to cope with some 400,000 refugees that have streamed in from Quang Tri, Hue, and outlying regions in recent weeks. According to the US Consul General in Da Nang, just providing water--let alone food, medical care, and sanitary facilities--is proving to be a sizable task.

In addition to these problems, there is a growing fear that Da Nang may be attacked by the enemy. Communist artillery attacks against Da Nang or news of the fall of Hue or Hoi An might spark a panic in much of the city that would greatly complicate efforts to defend it. The situation may be eased somewhat if a plan to ship as many as 100,000 refugees from Military Region 1 to a new refugee center in Military Region 3 is successfully carried out.

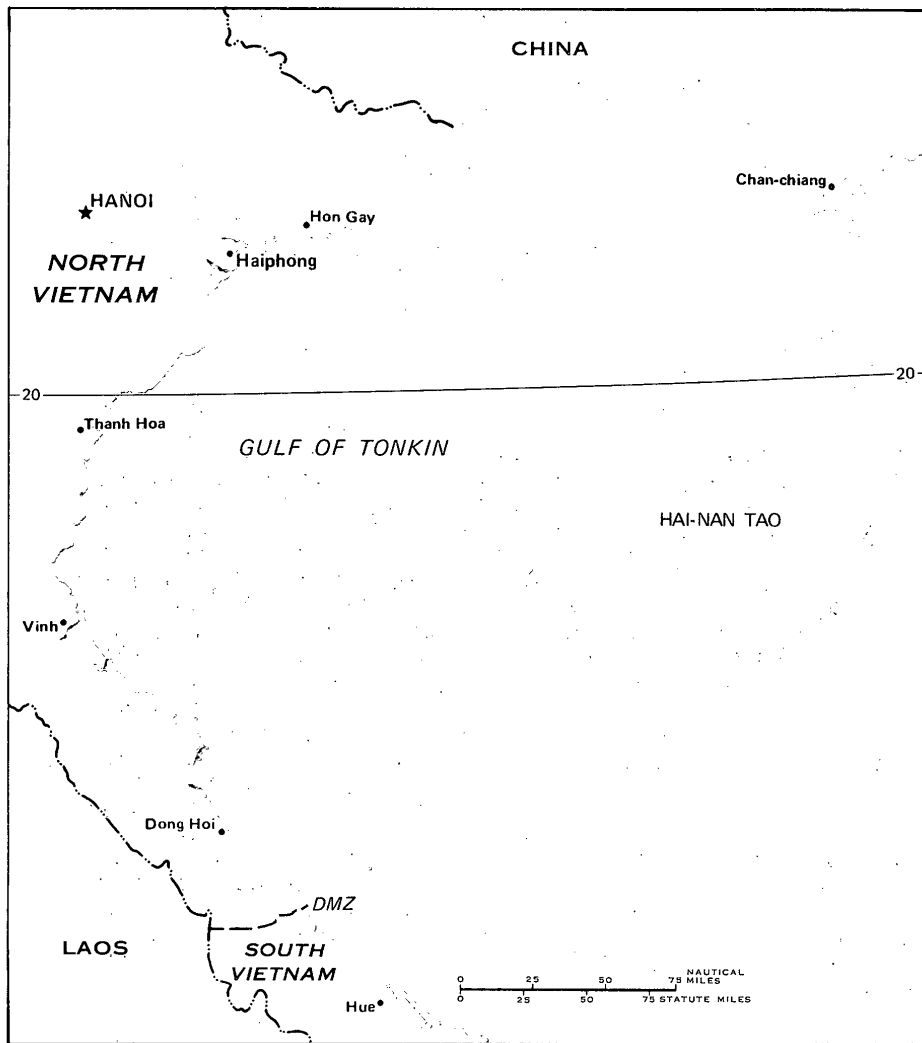
* * *

Refugees fleeing from Communist-occupied districts in northern Binh Dinh Province are bringing out stories about enemy moves to consolidate political control there. The Communists are said to be setting up "liberation governments" and executing some South Vietnamese officials. Journalists who have interviewed the refugees report that the North Vietnamese units that spearheaded the attacks in Binh Dinh immediately turned over civil authority to local Viet Cong officials, some of whom are government cadre who were recruited earlier as secret Viet Cong.

The new governments are said to be carrying out routine functions such as trying criminals, arbitrating land disputes, and supervising repair of war damages. They are also said to be screening all individuals who were connected in any way with the government. Some officials are being given the opportunity to cooperate with the Viet Cong, but others, particularly policemen, reportedly are being shot.

The refugees' accounts are generally consistent with earlier reports of how the Communists proceeded after occupying other areas in South Vietnam, such as Loc Ninh District north of An Loc. The Communists evidently have well-thought-out procedures that are being implemented as a follow-up to their military operations. The enemy's measures are intended for the long term and indicate that the Communists clearly mean to stay in the areas they have seized.

FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY



553021 5-72

FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

NORTH VIETNAM



25X1

FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

WEST GERMANY

A government spokesman has announced that last-minute Soviet objections to parts of the draft Bundestag resolution have been resolved and that debate on the Eastern treaties will begin today.

Yesterday, the Soviet Foreign Ministry indicated that it could not accept the wording that the treaties are only a *modus vivendi* and do not create a legal basis for existing borders. Moscow also contended that another passage dealing with residual Four Power rights in Germany was repetitive and unnecessary. Later in the day, however, Soviet Ambassador Falin indicated that these points might be negotiable.

In announcing the agreement last night, the Bonn spokesman said the Soviets had only been seeking clarification of certain points and they had received "satisfactory answers." He added that the treaties could be voted on today, and predicted that they would pass with a broad majority.

FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

ITALY

The 7-8 May national elections produced only marginal shifts in the parliamentary strengths of the leading parties. The four parties of the center-left coalition that have governed Italy for most of the last decade gained six seats for a total of 371 in the 630-member Chamber of Deputies. Although the Communist Party won two additional seats, the extreme leftist parties did poorly, with the Proletarian Socialists losing all 23 of their seats and the militant Manifesto group failing to win any in its first electoral test.

The far right parties scored the most impressive gains. The neo-fascists, who joined forces in this campaign with the tiny Monarchist Party, won 56 seats, 26 more than their total in the outgoing parliament. The far rightists apparently drew strength from the center-right parties, especially from the Liberals, who lost ten seats.

The Liberal Party's decline reduces the possibility of a centrist coalition as a viable alternative to the well-worn center-left alignment. The four parties that would have made such a center combination possible now have three seats fewer (331) than they had in the outgoing Chamber. This would constitute a majority, but one with a margin that is probably too thin for a viable government.

Thus we expect an attempt to refurbish the center-left alliance, even though it would face the same problems that forced the early dissolution of the last parliament. Putting the new government together may not be completed until the major parties have had a chance to sort out their problems at party congresses this summer. In the interim, the Christian Democrats are likely to rule as a minority government.

FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

NOTE

USSR-Cuba :

[Redacted]

25X1
25X1

25X1

[Redacted]

25X1

Top Secret