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SUMMARY

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SOUTHEAST ASIA

1. Most of Viet Minh forces at Dien Bien Phu expected to return to delta:

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The French now expect all except one of the Viet Minh divisions which were at Dien Bien Phu to return to the delta periphery, according to the American army attaché in Saigon. The 308th, 312th, and 351st Divisions are expected to assemble in Viet Minh base areas north of the delta, while the 304th is expected to return to its normal rainy season base in the Thanh Hoa area south of the delta. The French believe the 316th Division will remain in northwest Tonkin.

The French consider that a decision to commit these divisions in an early major attack on the delta would be a political one, as Viet Minh military commanders would prefer waiting until fall, when their forces would be well rested and organized.

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The French have in the past generally lacked clear intelligence on enemy dispositions during early stages of Viet Minh re-deployment.

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3. Vietnamese chief of staff sends "ultimatum" to Bao Dai:

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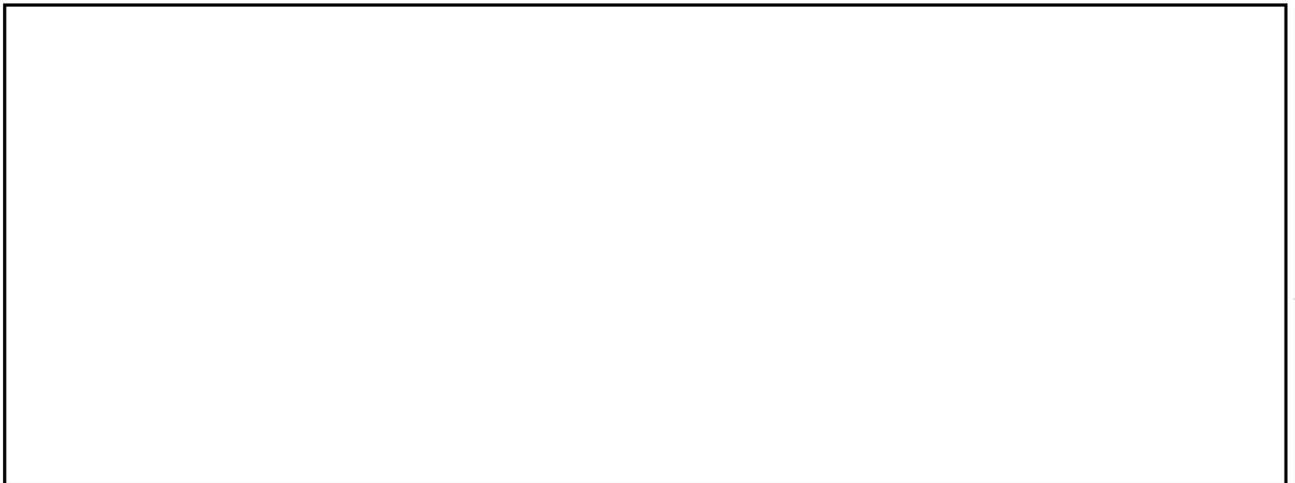


The Vietnamese chief of staff, General Hinh, told the American chargé in Saigon on 13 May that he had sent an "ultimatum" to Bao Dai demanding that he be given the defense and interior portfolios. Hinh estimated that unless his demands were met, or unless Bao Dai himself returned to take over active direction, the present regime could not last more than 30 days.

The chargé considers it "quite apparent" that Hinh is seeking to set himself up as dictator. Should the general undertake a coup, much would depend on the attitude of the public toward the army, which is generally disliked, and on the attitude of the French high command.

Comment: Hinh's machinations and unwillingness to co-operate with Defense Minister Quat--who is generally regarded as the ablest man in the government--have been important factors in the political deterioration in Vietnam.

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WESTERN EUROPE

6. Laniel may face new government crisis this week:

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The consensus in Paris is that the Laniel government will soon face another crisis in the National Assembly, Ambassador Dillon reports. Even Deputy Foreign Minister Schumann has been quoted as predicting that a new question of confidence will arise "in one form or another" early this week. The Laniel government intends

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to stay in office as long as possible, however, in order to maintain Foreign Minister Bidault at Geneva.

Vice Premier Reynaud's chef de cabinet on 14 May described the French military position in the Tonkin delta as "desperate," a view Dillon believes is shared by a majority of government officials.

Most of the Radical Socialists supported the government in the 13 May vote of confidence only because they anticipated more bad military news and did not want to consider participation in the next government until the Indochina situation improves.

Comment: Laniel is unlikely to face another test this week unless there is a drastic change in Indochina or a stalemate at Geneva. It is doubtful, however, that Laniel can continue for long to use Geneva to retain his government in power. Strong feeling is reported among Bidault's own Popular Republicans against his running his "own show" at Geneva. The Paris press views the recent vote of confidence as merely a brief respite for the government. [REDACTED]

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