



*The President's Daily Brief*



*21 May 1969*

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*FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY*

I. MAJOR PROBLEMS

VIETNAM

As we suspected, there was more to the recent conversation between Prime Minister Souvanna and North Vietnamese Ambassador Hien than Souvanna passed on to his cabinet. Under some prodding from Chargé Hurwitch, Souvanna admitted he told Hien that US bombing in Laos would cease if North Vietnamese troops pulled back to border areas--not necessarily into North Vietnam itself. When Hurwitch noted that infiltration routes to South Vietnam run through such border areas, Souvanna stated that the US could continue to bomb the trails. The prime minister "smiled enigmatically" when Hurwitch tried to pin him down further.

Souvanna also said he expected to see Hien again before the ambassador returns to Hanoi next week, and implied that Hien might before then have some response from Hanoi to Souvanna's proposals.

Hurwitch believes that Souvanna still has not revealed all that transpired with Hien, and that the prime minister's negotiating position is a good deal more flexible than his public one, which calls for a complete withdrawal of North Vietnamese troops from Laotian soil as a precondition for a Lao settlement.

MIDDLE EAST

The Christian and Muslim communities in Lebanon, further polarized over the fedayeen issue, are arming themselves.

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Already well supplied with small arms, they are now seeking heavier weapons. In the current atmosphere of mutual antagonism, it would not take much of an incident to set things going. The US Embassy estimates that the Muslims, along with the fedayeen and Palestinian refugees, may have the preponderance of arms, but in the event of civil war the Christians would be better organized and might have greater access to army weapons.

EUROPE

A communiqué issued last Friday was the first indication that a group of 30 "democratic socialist and other leftist" European politicians from the Common Market six, plus Britain, had met earlier this month in the Netherlands to discuss formation of a European political party. The conference was held at the initiative of one Vredeling, a Dutch Labor Party member of parliament, with the support of some West German SPD members. This was the first serious discussion in recent years of the need for a supra-national party base for the European integration movement. Vredeling referred to the increasing number of "European" issues which require political action--direct election of the European parliament, enlargement of the communities, and suspension of Greece from the Council of Europe. A working group of three was set up to prepare for a second meeting in October.

SOVIET AFFAIRS

There is nothing significant to report.

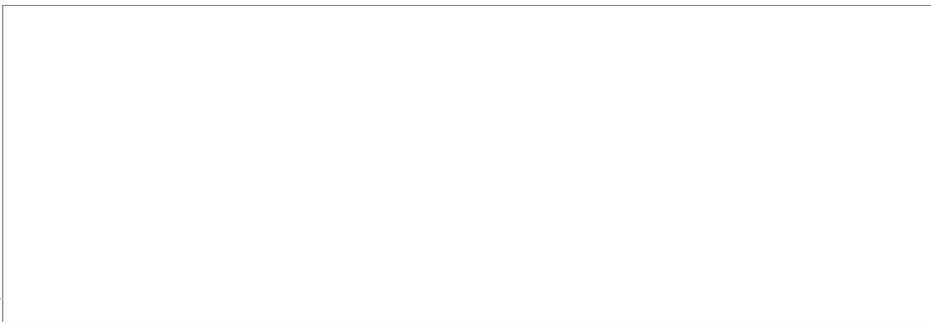
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II. OTHER IMPORTANT DEVELOPMENTS

MALAYSIA-SINGAPORE

The emergency cabinet announced yesterday in Kuala Lumpur will play little more than an advisory role to the Malay-dominated Operations Council, which has assumed all governmental power. Nonetheless, the nation's Chinese will not miss the message of its composition--all portfolios but two went to Malays, and the exceptions were Indians. Four Chinese, two of whom previously held cabinet posts, were named to "special functions" in the cabinet, not further identified.



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With the lessening of incidents, curfews are gradually being relaxed. The official count of 152 killed in the week-long rioting appears to be running far behind the actual number.

In Singapore, security forces have been put on alert after scattered clashes between Chinese and Malays there. While criminal elements may have been largely responsible for these incidents, the troubles in Kuala Lumpur have undoubtedly sharpened racial tensions in Singapore as well.

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PERU

The government issued a communiqué last night calling for withdrawal of US military missions from the country and stating that the scheduled visit of Governor Rockefeller on 30-31 May would be "inopportune." The communiqué was released after a cabinet meeting called to discuss the suspension of US military sales, made public following seizure of a US fishing boat last week. The public disclosure of the suspension has apparently enabled those in the Peruvian armed forces who want to replace US military missions with French advisers to prevail over those opposed to such a move. Four admirals who had been invited to a farewell dinner honoring the US naval attaché declined the invitation without explanation an hour before the communiqué was issued. Ambassador Jones had been giving serious consideration to recommending cancellation of the Rockefeller visit, in any event, on the basis of the problem of providing adequate security.

TURKEY

The Senate met for some two hours yesterday but never reached the question of the constitutional amendment opposed by the army. On finding that a quorum no longer existed after a discussion of minor agenda items, it adjourned. It is uncertain whether another session will be held today but until the issue is resolved or abandoned, the political situation will remain unsettled.

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