



The President's Daily Brief

23 October 1969

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THE PRESIDENT'S DAILY BRIEF

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PRINCIPAL DEVELOPMENTS

The Lebanese Government's crackdown on fedayeen activities is having reverberations throughout the Arab world and could lead to armed conflict in Jordan as well as in Lebanon itself. (Page 1)

A recent speech broadcast by Hanoi adds to evidence that Truong Chinh may be the "first among equals" in North Vietnam's new leadership. (Page 3)

In Laos, the government still holds the military initiative in the Plaine des Jarres area, but in the south its gains continue to be eroded. (Page 4)



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The Chilean Army dissidents achieved at least one objective during their short-lived revolt--the dismissal of the unpopular defense minister. (Page 6)

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ARAB STATES

The Lebanese Government's crackdown on fedayeen activities has caused an uproar in the Arab world.

Major fedayeen political leaders meeting in Amman yesterday called upon the heads of Arab states to intervene with Lebanon on behalf of the guerrillas. The radical governments of Iraq and Syria had already voiced their support. Iraq offered its army's assistance, and Syria threatened to take firmer action, closing its border with Lebanon. Later in the day Lebanese posts along the Syrian border reported Syrian Army and fedayeen units supported by tanks and armored cars massing at border positions. Beirut Radio announced early this morning that armed infiltrators had crossed the Syrian border, attacked several Lebanese frontier posts, and abducted a number of police, customs, and security personnel.

Libya has withdrawn its ambassador from Beirut, and Algeria has hinted it might also break relations. Egyptian President Nasir has informed President Hilu of his concern and has asked him to end the army-fedayeen confrontation. Lebanon last night announced it would submit the fedayeen question to the Arab League.

It is unlikely that the Lebanese will be successful in gaining League support for their position.

Jordan's King Husayn, who has been having his own problems with the fedayeen, is said to have met with his advisers to review the political and military situation in his country. There was a large demonstration yesterday in Amman protesting the Lebanese Government's actions. In addition, recent fedayeen broadcasts to Jordan have been calling on the army, the bedouins, and the East Bank's population to stand behind the guerrillas.

The fedayeen, fearing a coordinated crackdown on their activities in both Lebanon and Jordan and emboldened by the actions of the radical Arab states, might decide to challenge both the Lebanese and Jordanian governments at this time.

(continued)

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In Lebanon itself, demonstrations occurred in Beirut and Tripoli yesterday. Following an attack by fedayeen on seven soldiers near a refugee camp in Tripoli, the Lebanese Army Command ordered army and gendarmerie units to enter all refugee camps and disarm the occupants. Other units are standing by to bring any civil disturbances that might erupt in major urban centers under immediate control. Leftist-organized demonstrations are planned for tomorrow. These may lead to even further clashes between the army and fedayeen supporters.

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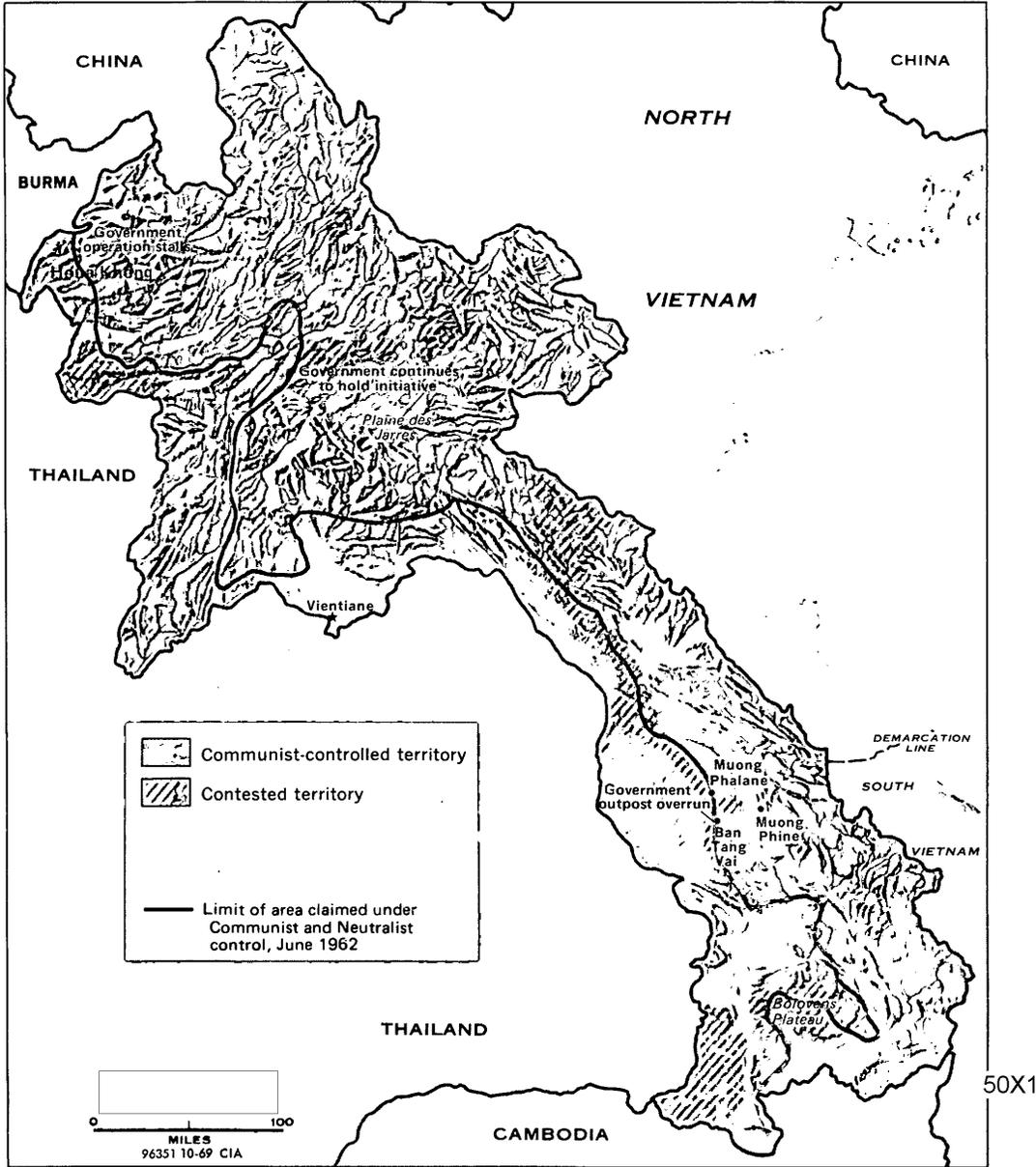
VIETNAM

A speech broadcast by Hanoi on 19 October adds to evidence that Truong Chinh may be the "first among equals" in North Vietnam's new leadership. Chinh bluntly told personnel of a propaganda publication that they had been overemphasizing the war and ignoring the "building of socialism" in North Vietnam. He charged that this had been going on since 1966 and he left no doubt that the emphasis was going to be changed in the future.

Truong Chinh is the only member of the leadership in Hanoi who can be solidly identified with the view that North Vietnam must devote more attention to domestic issues and less to the war. It is a theme he has been pushing at least since mid-1968, most recently in a speech he made to the National Assembly last month. The text of this speech is among the study documents of a current Politburo indoctrination campaign. All other documents used in the campaign are either works of Ho or attributed to the Central Committee.

The two Chinh speeches are the only significant policy statements by an individual North Vietnamese leader to be broadcast by the regime since Ho Chi Minh's death. Although not conclusive, this special treatment seems to us a good indication that he may be the dominant figure in the new regime. Moreover, the latest speech supports the thesis that Truong Chinh has been the principal figure behind policies of phasing out the big-unit war in the south.

Laos: Current Situation



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LAOS

The government still has the initiative in the Plaine des Jarres area. General Vang Pao's Meo guerrillas have moved into important enemy logistical and staging areas during the past few days, inflicting additional supply losses on the Communists. Intercepted enemy messages indicate that North Vietnamese elements are trying to retake some high ground north of the Plaine, but their inability to put together a concerted assault suggests that they are still hampered by supply and manpower shortages there.

Recent communications intelligence indicates that over 2,000 men of the North Vietnamese 312th Division remain in North Vietnam waiting for transportation to the Laotian border. It may be some weeks before fresh enemy troops can significantly alter the power balance in and around the Plaine des Jarres.

In the sensitive corridor area in southern Laos, government advances toward the Muong Phine area seem to have been dealt a fresh setback. A North Vietnamese force is reported to have overrun the government outpost at Ban Tang Vai Tuesday. [redacted]

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The government base at Muong Phalane would be an important target for the Communists. The base supports government guerrillas operating farther to the east in the infiltration corridor.

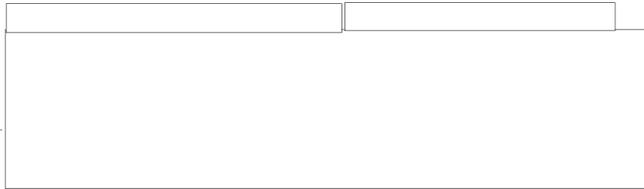
Government commanders in the northwest, faced with more concerted enemy resistance, have called a halt to a month-old operation to recapture some advance bases. Guerrilla elements have for some years enjoyed considerable success in disrupting Communist supply lines in this region.

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LIBYA



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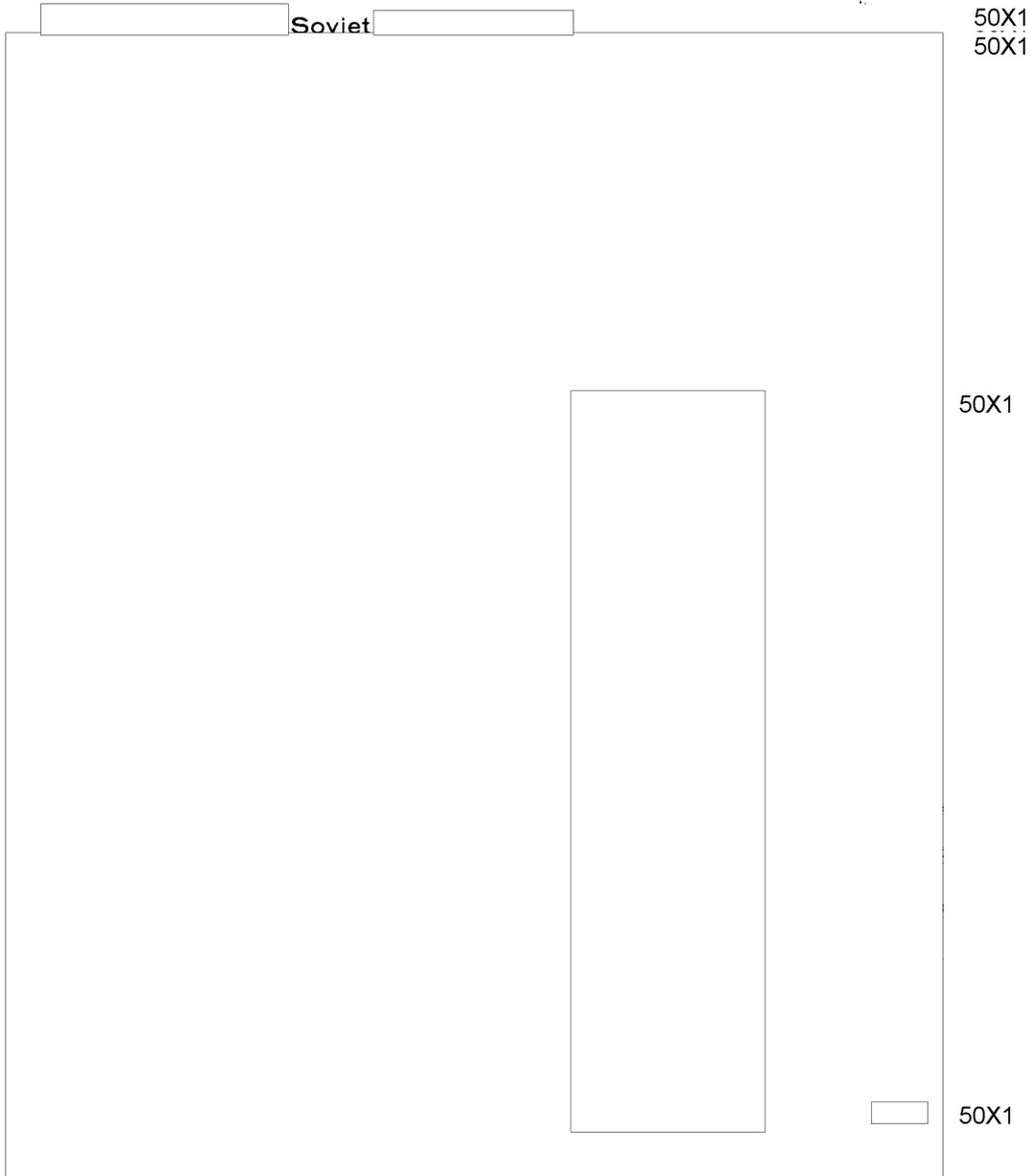
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CHILE

We are beginning to get some idea of General Viaux's price tag for surrendering. The unpopular defense minister, one of Viaux's targets, has been replaced by a close civilian associate of President Frei. There are reports that the army commander is on his way out as well. In his surrender speech, Viaux claimed that Frei had also agreed to solve some of the problems--low pay and outmoded equipment, for instance--which touched off the dissidence.

We expect prolonged repercussions from all this. Viaux's complaints that the armed forces have been generally shortchanged in recent years are widely shared. If he and the officers who joined him are court-martialed, they could become martyrs which in turn would have important political implications as the 1970 elections approach.



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NOTES

USSR: [redacted]
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Bolivia: Nationalization of two more US-affiliated companies may come on or before 31 October, the seventeenth anniversary of the nationalization of the tin mines. The government has already drawn up a decree to nationalize the South American Placers Company, a small gold mining enterprise [redacted]

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[redacted] Speculation is widespread that the large Matilde Mines (zinc, lead, and silver) will also be nationalized. Meanwhile, about 100 employees of Gulf Oil, mostly US citizens, are leaving Santa Cruz.

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