



*The President's Daily Brief*

22 March 1971

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THE PRESIDENT'S DAILY BRIEF

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PRINCIPAL DEVELOPMENTS

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## COMMUNIST CHINA

*The unexpected appointment of long-absent politburo member Hsieh Fu-chih to the top party post in Peking city gives us a new fix on the balance of forces in China's unsettled leadership which was last reported in The President's Daily Brief of 19 March.*

*Hsieh was the first of a trio of important politburo members to have dropped from sight in the past year. Although the regime never acknowledged that he was in disgrace, there were a number of strong indications that he was involved in behind-the-scenes infighting within the politburo. Peking's sudden announcement on Friday that he had been "elected" first secretary of the new municipal party committee suggests that he has undergone a political resurrection after a concerted effort to oust him from the Chinese leadership. The fact that Hsieh did not deliver the major address at the municipal congress which "elected" the new party committee and that he has not yet been identified again as politburo member and minister of public security, however, may indicate that he is not yet completely out of the political woods.*

*The precise reason for Hsieh's lengthy disappearance is still obscure, but he may have been a temporary victim of "leftist" pressure within the politburo. In his position as head of public security he was almost certainly involved in the investigation begun in January 1970 to ferret out officials who had supported the ultraleftist supporters of the Red Guard organization. According to Red Guard accounts, these people were backed by a number of leaders on the present politburo, including Chen Po-ta and Kang Sheng, both of whom may have felt politically endangered by the investigation.*

*China's present politburo is composed of individuals who were often bitter rivals during the Cultural Revolution and who must necessarily be concerned with securing tenable political positions for themselves and their followers in anticipation of the death of 77-year-old Mao Tse-tung. Indirect evidence suggests that these rivalries have been extended and renewed by the process of rebuilding the nation's party and government apparatus--a process in which some of the militant ideologues who have been closest to Mao appear to have been losing ground. They seem to have*

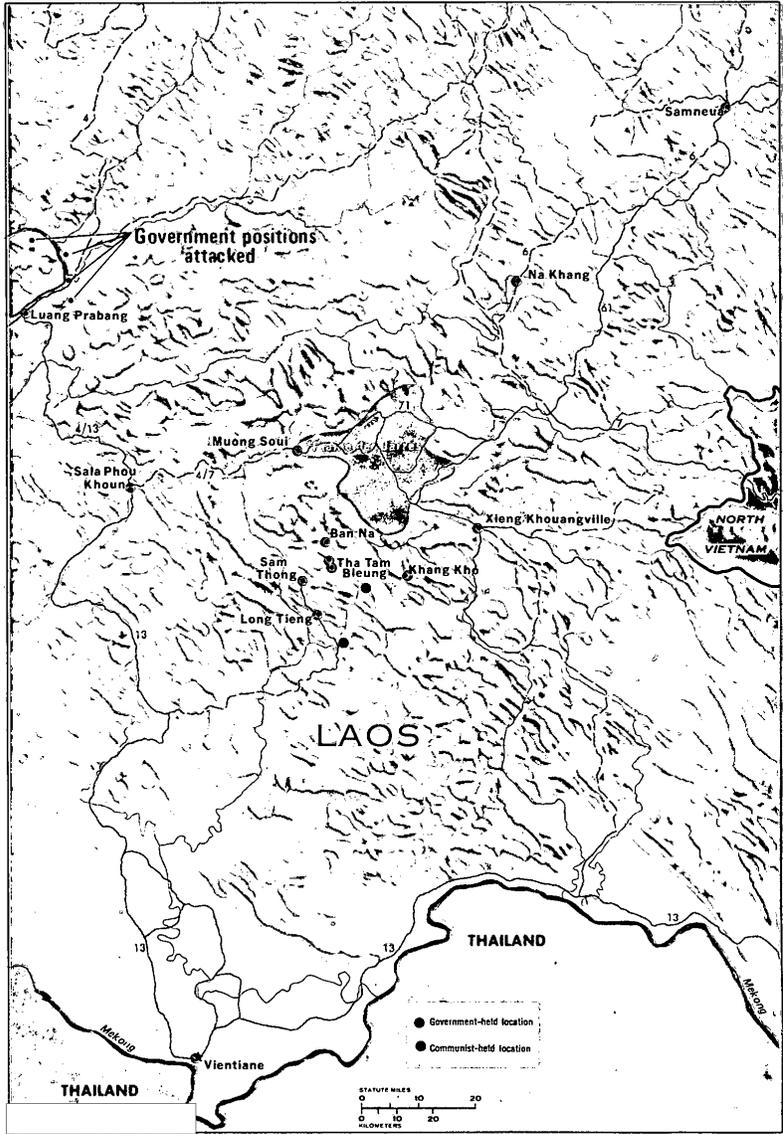
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been unable to form many bases of power in the reconstructed party organs which, like the new Peking committee, are led in most localities by military men and veteran officials. Many of the latter were once victims of political attacks inspired by radical leaders such as Chen Po-ta and Kang Sheng. Indeed, the formation of party committees at the important provincial level did not begin until the disappearance of Chen and Kang.

The confirmation of Hsieh Fu-chih in an important party job while Kang and Chen remain sidelined suggests that the balance within the politburo has now swung in favor of a loose grouping of relative moderates which includes Chou En-lai and some of the powerful central and regional military leaders. It also raises serious questions as to the present power of Mao himself. Since he has close personal and philosophic ties with Chen and Kang, a setback to them seems to tarnish his image and suggests there are constraints on his authority.

Neither of these important leftist leaders has been denounced in public and it is possible that, given the fluid state of Chinese politics, they may be eventually "rehabilitated" much like Hsieh Fu-chih. Nevertheless, even their reappearance would not belie the impression that the "leftists" on the politburo have lost a round in the ongoing struggle and have even less chance than before to carry much political clout in the post-Mao era.

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LAOS

Government troops have abandoned a number of defensive positions northeast of Luang Prabang following a series of coordinated Communist attacks yesterday. For the first time this dry season the Communists placed rocket fire on the Luang Prabang airfield. One attack early this morning destroyed an ammunition dump, but otherwise damage to the field and aircraft was light. The rocket attacks underscore the continuing vulnerability of the city, however.

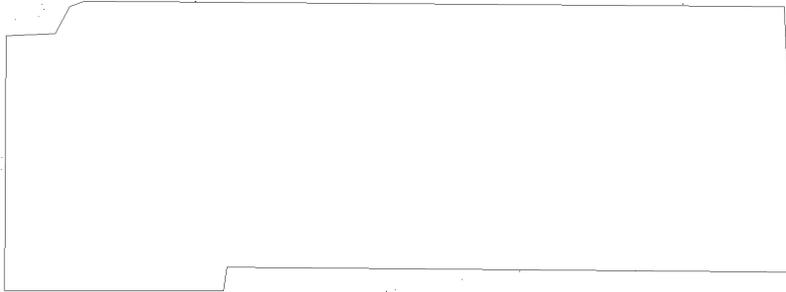
The US Embassy thinks that a Communist attack against Luang Prabang is unlikely, but US dependents have been temporarily evacuated to Vientiane as a precautionary measure. Steps have also been taken to send three additional irregular battalions to the area if they are needed.

*This is not the first time Luang Prabang has been threatened, but the Communists are now closer to the city and in larger numbers than ever before. As in the past, the North Vietnamese could move into the city almost at will, but this would mark a major departure in their strategy in Laos. Almost without exception, the Communists have refrained from direct attack, harassment, or terrorism against major population centers in the country. It seems more likely, therefore, that the current campaign near Luang Prabang is to further Communist objectives in the countryside and to demonstrate once again to Lao leaders the essential precariousness of their country's situation.*

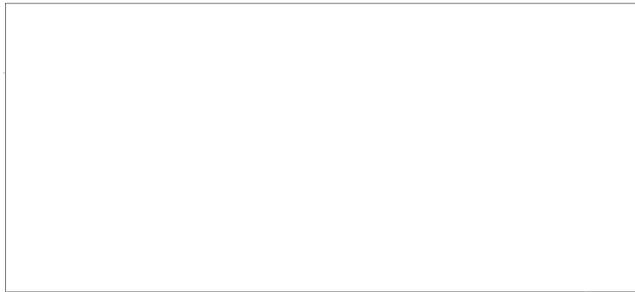
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**SOUTH VIETNAM**



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NOTE

Pakistan: President Yahya Khan and Mujibur Rahman apparently made some progress in the last three days, but both sides are being very tight-lipped about the substance of their talks. The Western press speculates that Yahya will give in to Mujib's demands, which would mean that Pakistan would remain one country but almost all power would be in the hands of the provincial governments. The two leaders are scheduled to meet again today, and Z.A. Bhutto, in a complete about-face, flew to Dacca yesterday to participate in the discussions.

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