

NSC BRIEFING

21 December 1954

VIETNAM

I. Diem's chances for success dimmer than ever.

A. Quat, able ex-defense minister, barred from cabinet on grounds sects' opposition.

B. Meanwhile, sects lukewarm toward Diem, fight among selves.

C. Split with army only superficially healed by Hinh's ouster.

II. Collins gloomy, but would defer final judgment on Diem until early January; if then no improvement, sees three alternatives:

A. Government under Quat,

B. Government under Bao Dai, including Diem and Quat,

C. US withdrawal from Vietnam.

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III. Meanwhile, French policy seen aiming toward salvage French interests in event expected Viet Minh takeover.

IV. Sainteny's mission major instrument this policy.

A. He accepted by Viet Minh (16 Dec) as official French delegate general to Viet Minh government.

B. Viet Minh press (18 Dec) welcomed representation, said Viet Minh must soon reciprocate.

C. Sainteny's aim:

1. Modus vivendi to ensure French cultural, economic interests in North.

2. Establish basis for similar modus vivendi in South should Viet Minh take over.

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3. Break ground for general
"coexistence" policy with
Orbit.

V. Widespread desire in France for
general policy "coexistence."

A. Sainteny mission has strong
non-Communist support in
National Assembly, particularly
among Gaullists, Radical
Socialists.

B. Le Monde said (4 Dec) necessary
"make US understand our common
interest in attempting the
coexistence experiment, and
Indochina offers the experi-
mental ground."

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C. Ex-president Auriol (15 Dec):
Viet Minh sure to win '56
elections, hence only French
chance lies in strict applica-
tion Geneva agreement. Paris
should now try reach under-
standing with both North and
South governments.