

The President's Daily Brief



24 May 1969

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I. MAJOR PROBLEMS

VIETNAM

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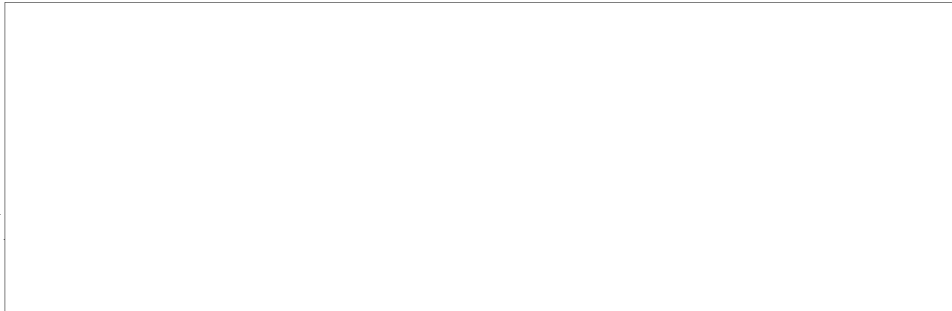
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Under the bombast of the presentations at Paris on Thursday by both Liberation Front and North Vietnamese delegates were rather forthright attempts to spell out problems the Communists have with the US eight-point proposal.

Tran Buu Kiem stated that "according to the US," the war would be continued during both the 12-month period when mutual withdrawal would be taking place and during the period when regroupment within South Vietnam of the remaining non - South Vietnamese forces takes place. In Kiem's view, this proposal is aimed at giving the US enough time to strengthen the South Vietnamese army and government.

Kiem's statement reinforces the basic Communist objection that allied proposals to date do not provide them adequate security to insure even the survival of the Communist apparatus, much less what the Communists regard as their right

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to establish a legitimate political power base. Kiem made this point when he said that US proposals for mutual withdrawal would leave Communist forces at the mercy of South Vietnamese military operations, and again when he rejected elections conducted under the aegis of the present Saigon government.

Kiem emphasized one of the Front's ten points that "neither party shall impose its political regime" on the South during an interim period between a cease-fire and general elections. He also raised again the Front's proposal for a "provisional coalition government" in this period which would, among other things, organize and supervise elections. Kiem clearly left room for bargaining on this key point, however. He did not insist that the Front's proposal was the only way to tackle the problem of interim political authority, but only that the situation required a "provisional administration" to attend to "necessary work following the restoration of peace."

Xuan Thuy in effect watered down the Communist demand for an "unconditional" US troop withdrawal by acknowledging that this was a "problem to be discussed." More importantly, Xuan Thuy obliquely suggested that the method used to get around the bombing halt impasse last year (the so-called "understanding") might also be suitable to resolve the troop withdrawal issue. He did this by comparing what he called the US demand for reciprocity from the Communists on troop withdrawals to the previous administration's demand on the bombing issue. Like all other Communist statements on this

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subject, Xuan Thuy flatly ruled out Hanoi's acceptance of the concept of reciprocity or "mutual" withdrawal.

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Xuan Thuy's appearance at the talks Thursday was apparently his last for awhile; he leaves Paris today for his first trip back to Hanoi since the talks started on 13 May 1968. The trip was probably prompted by a need to take stock in the wake of President Nixon's peace initiatives and to devise new tactics to cope with them. The President's speech of 14 May came just after the top North Vietnamese official in Paris, Le Duc Tho, had returned from nearly three months of consultations in Hanoi and to have sent him back would have conveyed an impression of disarray in the North Vietnamese camp, especially with his politburo standing.

MIDDLE EAST

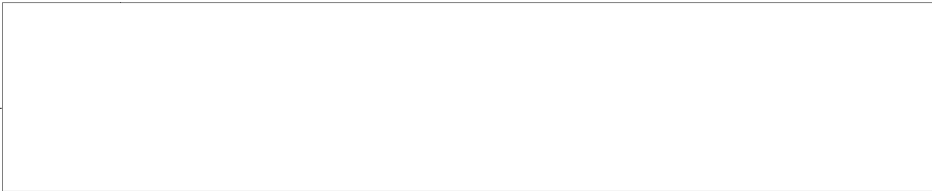
A [redacted] official, while convinced that 50X1 bilateral talks between Washington and Moscow offer the best hope for reaching an agreed Middle East settlement, is pessimistic about the prospects of the two countries compromising their differences.

If the bilateral talks break down, the officer, [redacted] 50X1 [redacted] believes the four- 50X1 power exercise will become meaningless. Before this happens, however, London plans to present--hopefully in conjunction with the French--its full position on a settlement and, if

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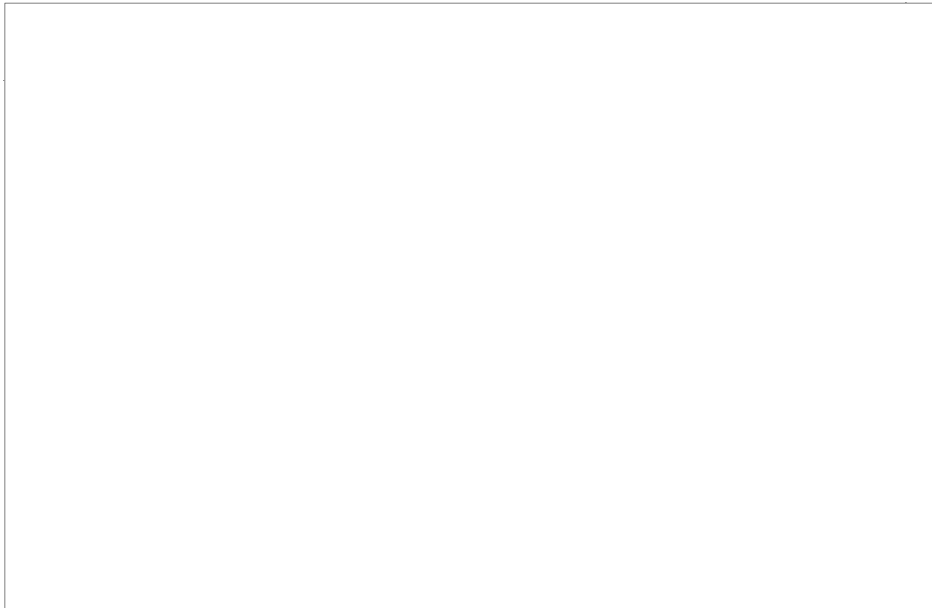
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there is still no agreement, to publicize this position in order to marshal world opinion behind efforts to reach a settlement.



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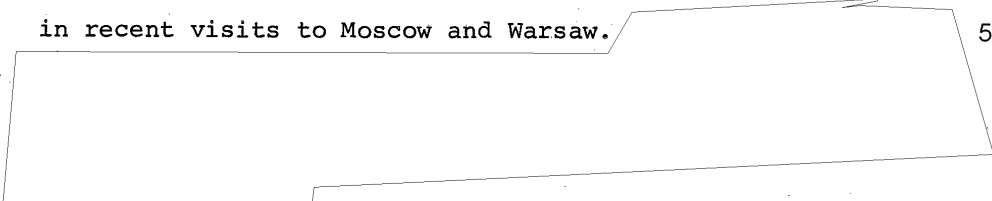
SOVIET AFFAIRS

The Rumanian party central committee held a one-day meeting Wednesday at which party boss Ceausescu was chosen to head the delegation to the 5 June international Communist

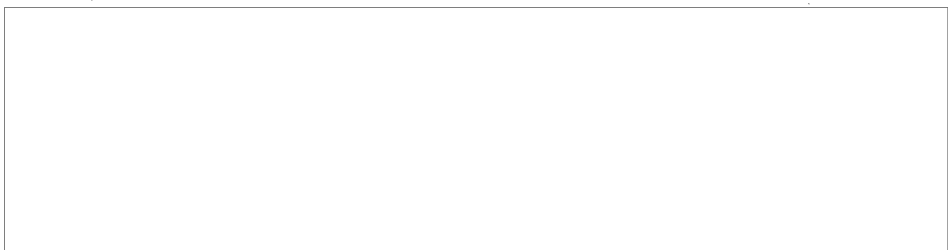
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conference. He received a "mandate" to work toward improving the language of the conference document--that is to get approval for insertion of changes he unsuccessfully sponsored in recent visits to Moscow and Warsaw.

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Moscow



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, probably intended to influence their attitude

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toward China on the eve of the conference, charging that Chinese troops have occupied six square kilometers of Soviet territory as the result of events on 2 May. Other evidence suggests that the Sinkiang-Kazakhstan border was the scene of some sort of incident in early May; the Soviets leaked this version to Western newsmen at the time but how closely the present Soviet version accords with the facts cannot be determined from evidence currently available. Moscow claims that so far it has only protested the Chinese occupation and is seeking the advice of fraternal parties. Some of these--

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most notably the Italian--criticized both sides over the Ussuri River clashes in March and the Soviets are apparently trying to gain maximum backing against the Chinese by proclaiming a policy of restraint.

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Moscow has concluded the extended range test series of the SS-9 ICBM carrying multiple re-entry vehicles, and announced yesterday that the closed area in the north Pacific was again open to ships and aircraft. The three tests conducted during the series were generally successful although there appeared to be minor problems on one of them. This multiple re-entry vehicle system could be operational by the end of the year.

EUROPE

There is nothing significant to report.

II. OTHER IMPORTANT DEVELOPMENTS

LATIN AMERICA

Demonstrations are quite likely in most, and perhaps violence in some, of the countries to be visited by Governor Rockefeller on the second phase of his Latin American mission beginning next Tuesday.

In Colombia, the first stop, several youth and student groups apparently are organizing demonstrations designed

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to embarrass the governor. Colombian security officials are mainly concerned lest undisciplined and extremist students try something rash.

In Ecuador, student disturbances have been going on for over a month, and it is possible there could be some violence designed primarily to embarrass the government. Ecuadorean officials believe they will be able to control limited demonstrations, but are considering transporting the governor from the Quito airport to the palace downtown by helicopter if they appear to be getting out of hand.

Bolivian student leaders are reported to have agreed to hold demonstrations in La Paz. The students also hope to get workers and peasants into the streets on the day of Rockefeller's arrival.

Finally, Venezuelan authorities are concerned over the security situation, primarily because of growing anti-US student agitation and violence. Concern over the governor's safety has led to a recommendation that he stay at the Caracas military officers' club rather than a hotel.

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