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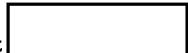
18 March 1955



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State Dept. review completed

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SUMMARY

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FAR EAST

- 25X1A 1. Comment on condition of Chinese Communist air bases in Fukien:

[Redacted] [Redacted]
[Redacted] the Chinese Communists have apparently not yet begun to renovate the six airfields in the coastal area of Southeast China opposite Formosa and the Nationalist-held offshore islands (see map, p. 4). [Redacted]

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Chinese Communist bombers can reach the Matsus and Quemoys from existing bases outside Fukien Province, but Peiping would probably want to ready some of the Fukien fields in order to provide close-in jet fighter support prior to launching major attacks on the islands. Operational air bases in Fukien are considered essential for major operations against Formosa.

The Chinese Communists are believed capable of readying any one of the Fukien area fields for jet operations in five days' to two weeks' time.

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SOUTHEAST ASIA

- 25X1A 2. Vietnamese defense minister wary of military action against sects:

[Redacted]
The Vietnamese defense minister and three other cabinet members believe an attempt to solve the sect problem by military means would result in a civil war "which Diem cannot win."

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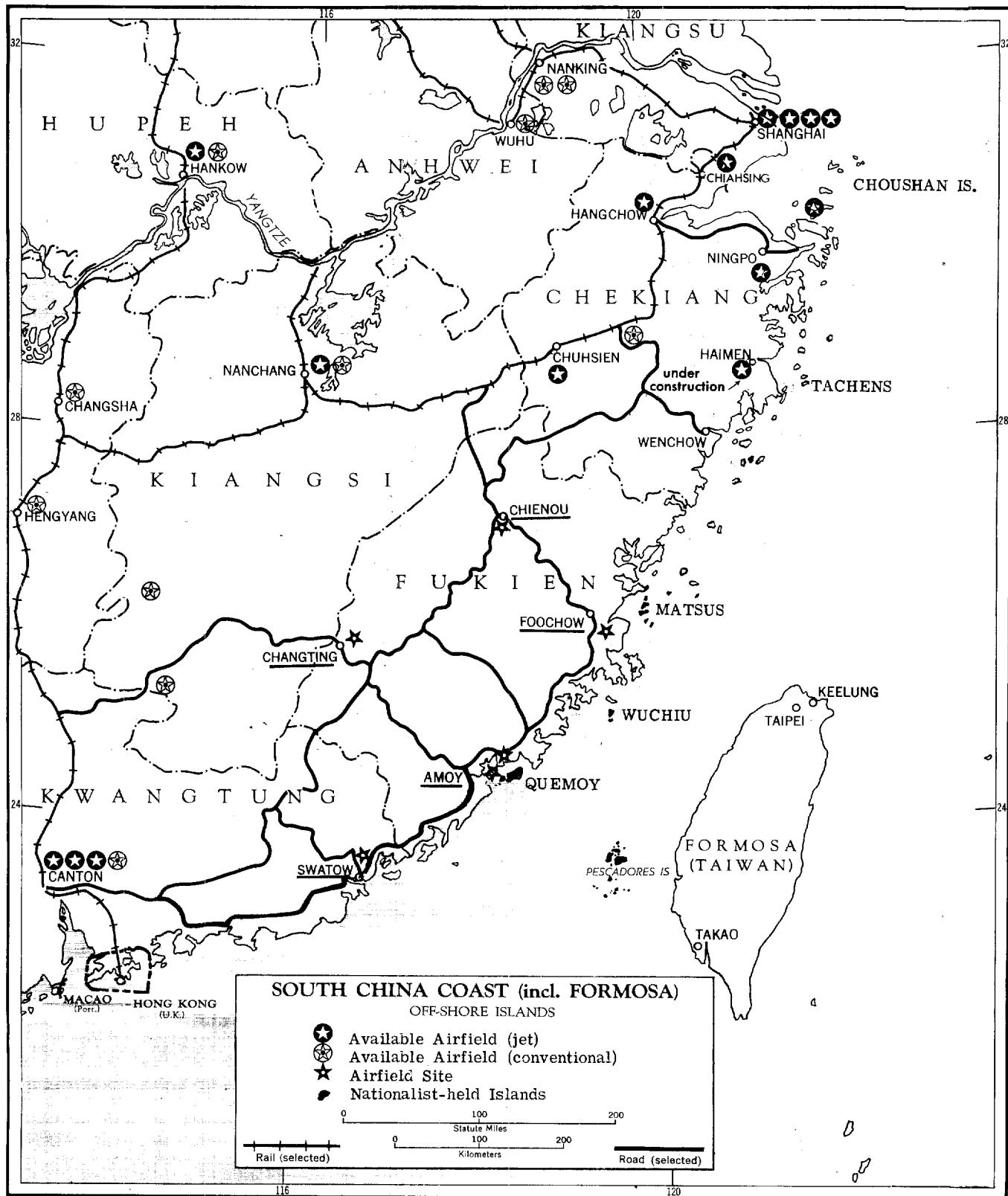
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Premier

Diem is more worried about the Binh Xuyen than about the other sects. The premier asked General Ely to request the return of two armed corvettes which the French provided the Binh Xuyen and also asked that Ely supply the Vietnamese army with tanks. The Vietnamese general staff believes the Binh Xuyen is currently capable of isolating and controlling Saigon.

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Comment: Diem's current tactics against the sects stress political maneuvers--for the most part the lavish distribution of bribes--rather than force. By such means, he hopes to weaken the sects as a whole to the extent that a military solution would be feasible.

Such subordinate commanders as he has been able to buy off, however, are likely to stay "bought" only so long as funds are forthcoming. In the meantime, the Binh Xuyen, whose armed forces are the most effective, have not been weakened. Their lucrative holdings appear to be such as to put them beyond any price Diem could raise.

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WESTERN EUROPE

5. Right-wing British Laborites plan new tactics to ensure Bevan's expulsion:

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The narrow majority (141-112) by which Aneurin Bevan's Labor Party status in parliament was removed may make it necessary for the right-wing elements to adopt new tactics in order to ensure his expulsion from the party, according to the American embassy in London.

Right-wing leaders, including the former chancellor of the exchequer and the heads of three of Britain's top trade unions, are considering "cornering" Bevan before the National Executive Committee meets on 23 March. An "abject apology" is being prepared which, it is expected, Bevan will refuse to sign. He could then be expelled without greatly endangering party unity.

According to the embassy, the closeness of the 16 March vote is explained by Attlee's deliberate failure to make the issue a test of confidence. He refused to state that the "shadow cabinet" would resign if its motion were defeated.

Comment: Identification of the right-wing leaders confirms the impression that trade union leaders are responsible for the determined effort to purge Bevan. Their determination contrasts sharply with Attlee's continued vacillation, and may presage growing criticism of his leadership.

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