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focus 1 (normass/deepe)

SAIGON, DECEMBER 16—Communist sources indicate the ~~significance~~ of the Viet Cong's sending Tran Buu Kiem to Paris to head their delegation at the expanded peace talks ~~is significant~~ is significant for two reasons:

1. The Viet Cong—called the National Liberation Front—are preparing on their side to shift the peace talks from preliminary procedural questions to discussions on substance—probably the first item on the agenda being the "de-foreignization" of the war in south and the withdrawal of American, North Vietnamese and other "foreign" troops.

2. Kiem is known as a very tough, hard-line Communist with considerable experience in secret negotiations. A member of the Communist Party, the so-called foreign minister of the National Liberation Front, Kiem patiently organized the Viet Cong delegations who have been traveling abroad on diplomatic-propaganda missions for the past months. A member of the National Liberation Front's Presidium and Chairman of the Commission for External Relations of the Central Committee, Kiem once served as the resident, ^{of the} ~~unofficial~~ National Liberation Front representative in Cambodia, and largely ~~is due~~ ^{is due} to due to his ~~efforts~~ efforts that Prince Sihanouk has been fairly lenient in ~~his attitudes~~ towards Viet Cong use of Cambodia as a ^{sanctuary} and supply corridor.

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focus 2 (normass/deepe)

South Vietnamese government officials are predicting their largest war-time budget—and budget deficit—in the ~~eight~~ eight-year//history of the war. For ~~caland~~ ~~cald~~ calendar year 1969—which is also the Vietnamese fiscal year—officials are estimating a war-time budget of 130 billion piastres (1.1 billion dollars), and ~~a d~~ with more than one third of that — or of 50 billion piastres (420 million dollars) as deficit. To gain more revenue, the government has begun a multitude of steps—some of which have ~~stat~~ started a chain reaction of economic complaints ^{discontent amongst} from the urban population. Several weeks ago, the government cut a portion of its subsidy on imported rice, thus raising the price of American and Thai rice in the cities by as much as thirty per cent. It is the poorer classes in the cities which had been eating the imported rice; the ~~Vietnamese~~ homegrown Vietnamese rice being scarcer and more expensive. The government action ~~brought~~ created a controversy both in the Vietnamese-language press and in the legislative assemblies—as a came at a time of traditional ~~pri~~ increases in the cost of living before the holidays and especially before the Vietnamese new year in # February. ^{VIETNAMESE} ~~Busi~~ Business circles had been predicting a hike in government taxes—but, fearing hoarding and speculation on essential commodities, the government denied 1969 taxes would be increased. Instead, the government warned commercial enterprises—especially foreign for firms—to pay up ~~their~~ ~~back~~ taxes for 1967 and 1968, ^{MANY} which have yet to be collected. ==end retuer