

MAY 14 1968

# Paris, Hawaii & Saigon

It is a measure of our uncertain times that Hawaii's Army National Guard goes off to active duty on the day talks towards a possible Vietnam peace open in Paris.

Some may see an inconsistency between the two events, as if one mocks the other.

What it really reflects, however, is the fact that nobody knows the fate of the guard or the talks.

**THE HOPEFUL** view is that the guard callup is not an escalation but part of a last and needed strengthening of our military posture during negotiations. Expectations are the Hawaii guard will not go to Vietnam under present circumstances.

Those circumstances will be determined by the talks that opened yesterday in Paris and what happens in Vietnam itself as any negotiations proceed.

It is impossible to judge the Paris talks on the basis of one session. But in future days, weeks and months they must be judged on several aspects:

- The atmosphere. Right now that is considered good because Hanoi opened with no strong threats. That's a favorable beginning, but it is virtually certain to be grimmer in times to come.

- Public positions. Both sides are far apart, having taken hard, opening stands. Still word was these were considered maximum positions that might be reduced by bargaining.

- Private bargaining. In contrast to the public statements released to

the press, this is how any agreement will be reached. Presumably it has not begun, but it is something Americans must anticipate in judging the Paris talks.

Behind all this is the question of whether Hanoi is really interested in working out a compromise now, or whether it wants to see what can be gained in a protracted talk-fight period. And here the military situation in South Vietnam becomes an important factor—not just the situation as we see it (which is important in U.S. internal terms) but the situation as the enemy sees it as well.

**THERE ARE DIFFERENT** ways to read the news in this context:

It is possible to hail word that allied troops have "crushed" the Communists' nine-day attack on Saigon. Some observers picture the attack's lack of dramatic success as a sign the Communists really are weaker than many felt.

Others might suggest, however, that it had limited military and political objectives, to show attacks on Saigon are no accident and can happen again, to create a mixture of doubts and uncertainty plus more refugee problems for the Saigon government in its center of power.

This view would suggest that, just as in the past, even bigger Communist military attempts can be expected in the weeks and months to come.

We shall all see on that. The signs will come from Saigon, from Paris and perhaps from what happens to the Hawaii men who went off to Schofield Barracks yesterday.