

The President's Daily Brief

~~Top Secret~~ 28 October 1967



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DAILY BRIEF
28 OCTOBER 1967

1. North Vietnam

North Vietnam lost or evacuated nearly all of its fighters as a result of US air action during 24-27 October.

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North Vietnam still has substantial reserves of fighter aircraft in China and presumably could receive additional MIGs from Peking if requested. Hanoi's ability to resume fighter operations will depend less on the repair of runways and revetments than on the replacement of equipment and personnel probably lost in the raids on Phuc Yen.

2. Laos

The annual movement of supplies from North Vietnam into the Laos panhandle appears to be under way as the rainy season draws to a close. Supplies moved through the panhandle road network are estimated to have risen during each of the past three years, reaching a high of about 30,000 tons during the 1966-67 season. The Communists probably intend to ship this much or more during the coming dry period.

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3. Soviet Union

The launch yesterday of a Soyuz-type spacecraft probably means that Soviet manned space flights could resume in the near future--possibly before the anniversary celebrations next month.

This is the first launch directly connected with the manned space program since the death of the Russian cosmonaut last April. It is probably a check-out of modifications and improvements made as a result of the investigation of the Soyuz disaster.

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4. Soviet Union

Disagreement in the Soviet leadership over economic priorities has again broken into the open. Politburo member Dmitri Polyansky, the top agricultural man, has written an article saying that agricultural investment is being slighted.

Polyansky makes this statement just after the economic plan for 1968 and projections for 1969-70 have been made public. His statement of dissent now--after the government has formulated its policy--is a rather venturesome move. We suspect he lost out in the Politburo voting on next year's plan, but that he intends to resume the debate in hopes of changing the 1969-70 figures which are still not firm.

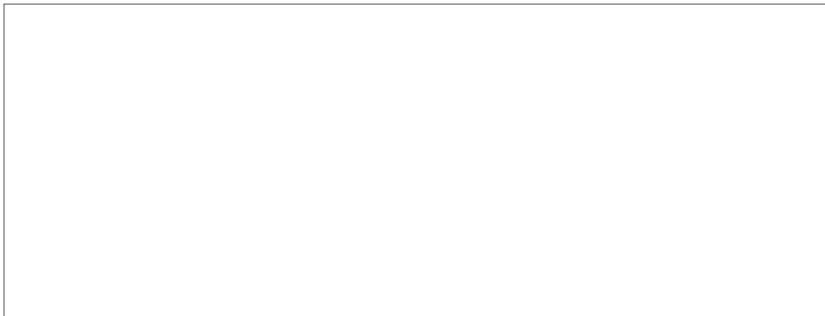
Polyansky fails to say with whom in particular he is arguing; we surmise it is Kosygin who has been pushing consumer goods--not agriculture--in recent statements.

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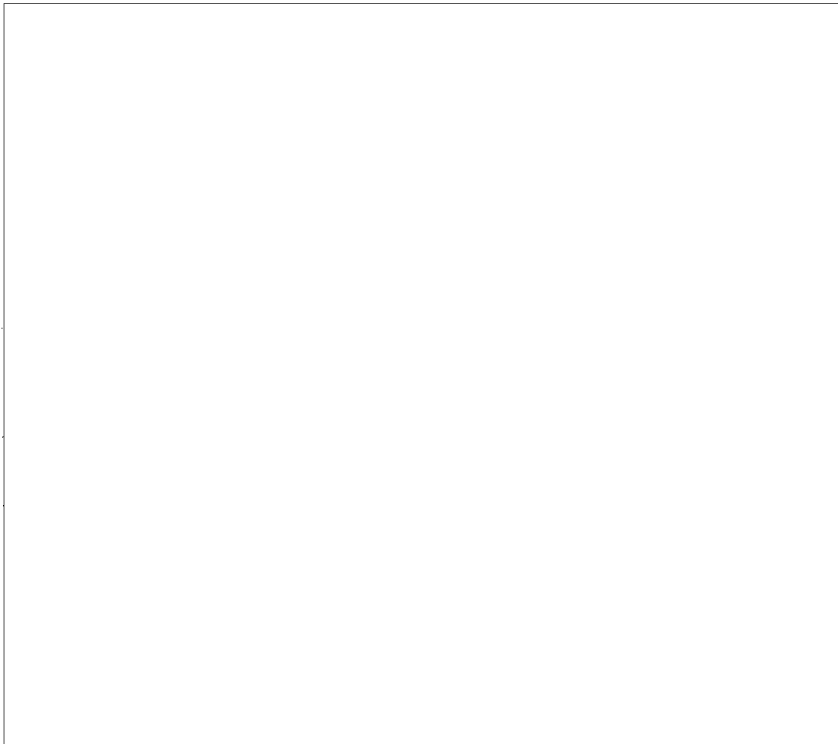
5. Soviet Union -
Middle East

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6. Common Market

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7. Denmark

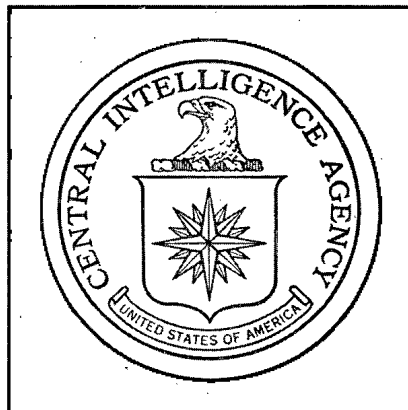
Despite official disapproval, the organizers of the second session of Bertrand Russell's "International War Crimes Tribunal" have succeeded in securing facilities outside Copenhagen for its meeting in late November. The decision to hold this meeting in Denmark has created difficulties for Prime Minister Krag who, although he finds the whole business personally distasteful, has taken the position that he cannot legally prevent it.



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FOR THE PRESIDENT'S EYES ONLY

Special Daily Report on North Vietnam



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I. NOTES ON THE SITUATION

Maurer on His Trip to Hanoi: Rumanian Prime Minister Maurer in a 25 October conversation with the American ambassador in Bucharest gave a detailed account of the impressions he formed during his recent, secret trip to North Vietnam. Maurer's basic conclusion from his four days in Hanoi was that the North Vietnamese are now more flexible in their attitude toward negotiations and that there definitely would be talks if the US unilaterally and unconditionally stopped the bombings without demanding any form of reciprocity or prior guarantee of such talks.

The Rumanian offered no evidence for his assertions that talks will follow a bombing cessation, and he does not appear to have been given any assurances in this regard by the North Vietnamese. Rather, his report, taken together with other recent information on his trip, suggests that Hanoi's current position on the war is the same now as it was when first outlined last January by Foreign Minister Nguyen Duy Trinh--there could be talks with the US if the bombing is stopped unconditionally.

Maurer's account of his visit was almost deliberately optimistic but showed in the last analysis that the North Vietnamese are taking their usual inflexible stand even in conversations with their allies. Maurer's testimony makes it clear that not only will there be no reciprocity on Hanoi's part for a bombing halt, but that the North Vietnamese intend to continue fighting in the south and to maintain their supply operations to their forces in South Vietnam during any talks.

Maurer also spelled out in terms unusually frank for a Communist leader the fact that the Communists believe once talks begin, the pressures on the US for compromises leading to an end of the war will be irresistible. This, of course, is what Hanoi has in

mind by insisting that the fighting in the south will continue while talks are being conducted.

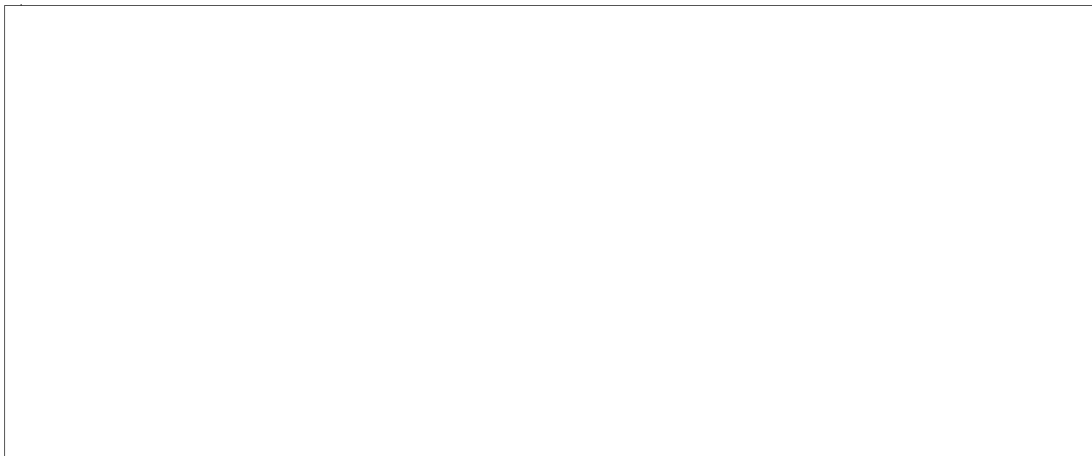
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More from Nobel Committee: Duncan Wood, a member of the Nobel prize committee, has passed along to the US mission in Geneva some more observations on talks held earlier this month with Vietnamese Communist representatives in Moscow. Wood expressed general discouragement at the negative results of the meetings, which were initiated by the Nobel group to sound out the Communists on prospects for a negotiated settlement of the war.

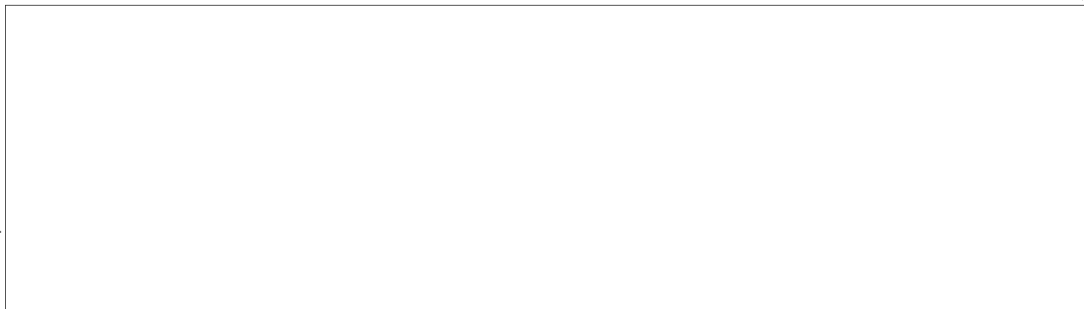
Wood's comments indicate the group was given a hard-line position by the Vietnamese. The North Vietnamese ambassador, for example, made it quite clear that in any future talks with the US, there could be no discussion of matters related to South Vietnam. In response to Wood's question about what postbombing talks might entail, the ambassador replied: "Oh, we'd talk about relations between our two countries."

Wood also apparently received the standard Communist line on the future of South Vietnam as most recently outlined in the new program of the Liberation Front. He was told that North Vietnam would accept an "independent, democratic, neutral, prosperous South Vietnam with reunification a matter to be discussed between the North and South." Wood expressed a realistic assessment of this position in stating that in his understanding, an "independent and democratic" government meant a coalition of elements in the south "who had seen the light" and were acceptable to the Liberation Front.

Wood received no response when he asked the Communist representatives if a provisional executive might be set up during a cease-fire period and whether, if the bombings were stopped, they would discuss in negotiations with the US the mutual freezing of forces in the south.



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Hanoi Continues to Send Students Abroad: Despite the demands which the war has made on its manpower, North Vietnam continues to send students abroad for training. A 24 October Hungarian broadcast reported that 332 students had arrived in Budapest to receive training in the chemical and telecommunication industries or to study at Hungarian universities. The group is part of some 1,000 North Vietnamese students who will receive training in Hungary during a three-year period.

II. NORTH VIETNAMESE REFLECTIONS OF US POLITICAL ATTITUDES ON THE WAR

Nothing of significance to report.



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