

The President's Daily Brief

~~Top Secret~~ 31 May 1968



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THE PRESIDENT'S
DAILY BRIEF
31 MAY 1968

1. France

By refusing to resign, De Gaulle has brought France to the verge of disaster. Francois Mitterrand, head of the Federation of the Left, expressed the dominant response of all opposition groups by saying that the parties of the left are prepared to answer what he sees as De Gaulle's "call to civil war."

The leadership of the left would probably like to take advantage of De Gaulle's call for new elections in order to try to come to power legally. The events of the past three weeks, however, show that the leaders of the left have been swept along by their more radical rank and file. Now it is highly questionable whether these leaders can regain control and rally their followers for a legal assault on the regime at the ballot box.

The reaction of the people has been both angry and enthusiastic. On the one hand, more workers have left their jobs, including some public service employees; on the other, thousands of Gaullists have jubilantly taken to the streets. When, how, and if a head-on collision between right and left will occur is not yet clear, but a spark could touch it off.

2. Czechoslovakia

We see in Dubcek's speech at the opening of the Central Committee session an attempt to satisfy the party's liberals while at the same time mollifying the party's conservatives and the Soviet Union. Dubcek responded favorably to the demand of the liberals by recommending that a party congress be convened in September and that a new central committee be elected. The plenum also ousted from the Central Committee ex-party leader Novotny, the most obvious member of the conservative faction.

In an effort to forestall a further intensification of the factional struggle, however, Dubcek again rejected attempts to discredit the party as a whole and to create an "atmosphere of hysteria." He appealed for party unity, and emphasized repeatedly that anti-Communist and anti-Socialist tendencies had to be decisively and publicly exposed.

3. Italy

The decision of Socialist Party leaders to abandon participation with the Christian Democrats in a coalition government does not mean that a new political crisis is at hand. The Christian Democrats will presumably form a minority government and the Socialists are not likely to join the opposition in Parliament.

The Socialists' decision--subject to approval by their Central Committee today--does reflect their anguish over the poor showing they made in the elections last week. Party leaders are coming to the conclusion that their participation in past coalition governments was a bad deal. They were unable to push the Christian Democrats toward the reforms they think the country needs--and the result has been more votes for the Communists.

4. Panama

Arnulfo Arias yesterday accepted his credentials as president-elect after the National Elections Board certified his victory by over 40,000 votes. Government candidate Samudio rejected the board's action, but said he would contest it by legal means rather than force. Continued National Guard backing for Arias and expected defections from Samudio's ranks, however, are likely to undermine any initiatives by the government-controlled Electoral Tribunal to upset the results.

5. North Vietnam

Sea shipments are arriving in North Vietnam at a record rate. Shipments in May are up some 28,000 tons over the previous monthly record set last January

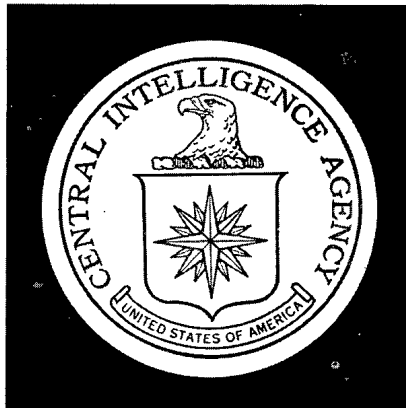
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Shipments from China this month are up more than 50 percent over last year's average. Most of this cargo is food.

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FOR THE PRESIDENT'S EYES ONLY

- 1.) Special Daily Report on North Vietnam

- 2.) North Vietnamese Reflections of U S
Political Attitudes



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I. NOTES ON THE SITUATION

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Nhan Dan on Talks: An authoritative article yesterday in Nhan Dan restated yet again Hanoi's standard line on the Paris talks. As broadcast in English by the North Vietnamese international service, the article said that there were "many other concrete questions" to be taken up at the talks, but that it was necessary first "to determine the unconditional cessation of the bombing and all other acts of war" against North Vietnam. The article claimed

that the US, in agreeing to the talks after Hanoi had made clear its view of their purpose, had in effect indicated its agreement with that purpose. Most of the article was devoted to a rebuttal of Ambassador Harriman's suggestion that the Demilitarized Zone be restored to its status under the Geneva Accords.

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

There is nothing of significance to report.

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