

The President's Daily Brief

~~Top Secret~~ 25 July 1968



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THE PRESIDENT'S
DAILY BRIEF
25 JULY 1968

1. Soviet Union -
Czechoslovakia

Official silence veils the subject of the top level Soviet-Czech meeting. While we have no evidence that the meeting has begun, we note that the entire Soviet politburo has been out of sight since Monday, and the Czech presidium dropped from public view on Tuesday. If indeed the meeting is in progress, Czech hints to the contrary could be in compliance with insistence from Moscow on tight security precautions.

Yesterday a Czech party spokesman admitted that some Soviet troops were still in Czechoslovakia and said, according to one account, that they "will remain until a communiqué is published." Another Czech source said on Tuesday that some 5,000 to 6,000 Soviet troops were still on Czech soil.

We have no further details on the extent and activity of the large military exercise on Soviet territory announced by Moscow on Tuesday.

2. Turkey

There were further clashes yesterday between students and police, and more are probably in the offing. These new outbreaks were triggered by the death of a student injured in last week's anti-US demonstrations.

The public, however, seems to be turning against the leftists. In addition, the Turkish military--which in the 1960 coup sided with radical students--is said to be fed up with leftist agitation. It blames local officials, rather than the Demirel government, for failure to cope with these outbreaks.

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3. Malaysia-
Philippines

We are getting more concerned over the possibility of a military incident growing out of the dispute over Sabah. The Malaysians say that Manila has several armed groups, totaling about 1,500 men, standing ready to infiltrate Sabah from nearby islands.

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If the Filipinos did attempt infiltration, Malaysia at the least would be tempted to stir up secessionist sentiments among fellow Moslems in the southern Philippines.

4. Soviet Union -
Egypt

Soviet naval units in the Mediterranean recently put on a show of amphibious landing operations near Alexandria for senior Egyptian officers. Although these ships have been in the eastern Mediterranean since last summer's Arab-Israeli war, this is the first time we have detected this sort of activity.

5. Egypt

Nasir has announced that he is leaving shortly for a two- or three-week visit to the Soviet Union for medical treatment.

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6. World Youth Festival

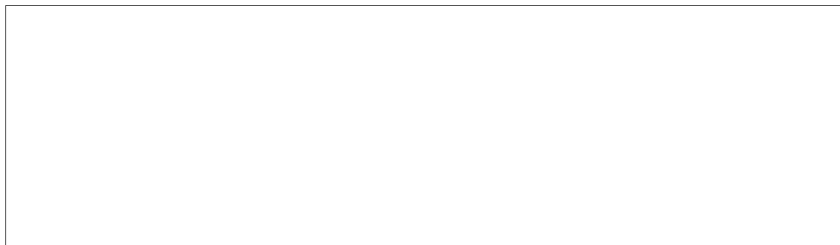
23 July 1968

As the 28 July start of the Ninth World Youth Festival in Sofia draws closer, its Soviet sponsors and Bulgarian hosts are getting more edgy. A number of issues--the Czech situation, artistic freedom in the Soviet Union, and the Cuban and Chinese approach to Marxism--could become highly volatile in the present atmosphere of worldwide student unrest. The Soviet radio is already acknowledging the possibility of disruptions by alleging Western efforts to divide the conference participants.



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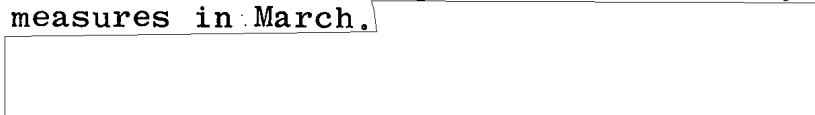
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7. Cuba

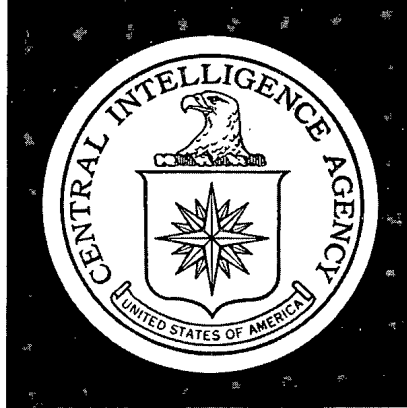
Castro's replacement yesterday of his interior minister may be an attempt to get the reins of security control more firmly in his own hands. Fidel has been worried over increasing acts of sabotage since he imposed new austerity measures in March.



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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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25 July 1968 ¹⁷

Special Daily Report on North Vietnam
for the President's Eyes Only

25 July 1968

I. NOTES ON THE SITUATION

Propaganda on Saigon "Siege": In its usual elliptical fashion, Hanoi has called attention to the lack of attacks on Saigon itself during the past month by boasting about the Communists' capability to conduct them and by playing up recent attacks in the city's environs. A Hanoi broadcast in English on 23 July quotes the North Vietnamese Army paper as saying that recent shellings on the outskirts of the capital, including those against the US supply base at Nha Be, belie allied "boasts" of heavy defenses around Saigon. The paper noted pointedly that Nha Be was only "six miles from the center of Saigon and included in the free bombing zone belt around the city." It described Saigon itself as under an "unbreakable siege" and Communist forces as able to move their "big guns very close to the enemy and strike with devastating blows." A US official was quoted as saying that "there is nothing you can do about it."

The paper seems to be trying to signal that the Communists have a capability to shell Saigon proper which they are not using at present because of political considerations.

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Reconnaissance Report: A high-altitude photographic mission of 18 July turned up the following points of interest:

--Nineteen MIG-21s were photographed. Four more are known from intercepts to have been in the air at the time of the mission. This is the largest number of MIG-21s ever noted in North Vietnam.

--There are some signs that the cement plant in Haiphong is back in limited production.

--A record number of 41 ships was photographed in Haiphong harbor and its approaches. The amount of cargo in open storage ashore, however, has decreased, indicating a faster rate of turnover.

--Rail and highway transport is restricted at several points by flooding.

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Chinese Economic Aid: The North Vietnamese economic delegation which has been on an extended visit to Communist China concluded an economic and technical aid agreement on Tuesday. The announcement of the signing ceremony, broadcast by Radio Peking's international service, gave no further details of the agreement.

Peking is the last stop for the traveling mission from Hanoi, which arrived on 10 July amid reports of serious friction between the two governments. Both sides put up a reasonably good front during the visit, probably reflecting a mutual desire to scotch reports of a serious split.

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Followup to Honolulu Conference: A Foreign Ministry spokesman in Hanoi on 24 July issued a bland statement on the Honolulu conference similar in tone to earlier North Vietnamese press treatment. The spokesman accused the US of plotting to "intensify" the war and of trying to "doll up" the Saigon government, but showed little evidence of Communist concern. He contrasted the February 1966 Honolulu Conference with this one by claiming that after the former the US "frenziedly stepped up the war," whereas this time the US sought to "hold on to South Vietnam and maintain the puppet administration."

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

There is nothing of significance to report today.

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