



The President's Daily Brief

~~Top Secret~~ 9 September 1968



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THE PRESIDENT'S
DAILY BRIEF
9 SEPTEMBER 1968

1. Czechoslovakia

Soviet First Deputy Foreign Minister Kuznetsov is continuing his talks with Czechoslovak officials. The Czechs have tried to put his visit in the best light, hoping that a Prague-Moscow dialogue will develop and that Soviet strong-arm tactics can be avoided. There is evidence, however, that Moscow sent Kuznetsov to check on how Moscow's demands are being met, rather than to negotiate their acceptability.

2. Soviet Union -
Czechoslovakia

[redacted] Czech leaders put heavy blame for the Soviet invasion on the misleading reporting of Moscow's ambassador to Prague, a holdover from the Novotny days. [redacted]

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Dubcek has asked for the Soviet ambassador's replacement, according to press reports. The Soviets, as well as the Czechs, have good reason to be dissatisfied with his performance.

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3. Soviet Union

We are getting indications that a full-scale stocktaking of the Czech situation by the Soviet leadership may be in the wind. [REDACTED]

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4. Rumania

During a recent talk with Ambassador Davis, Foreign Minister Manescu said the "danger is not entirely over," but his remarks and manner suggested a calmer view of the situation. Manescu stressed the point that Rumania's leaders considered President Johnson's 30 August statement as having had a "cooling" effect on a dangerous trend.

The Bulgarian military exercise near the Rumanian border ended last Friday. Rumania and Yugoslavia, however, apparently have not reduced the alert status of their armed forces.

5. Portugal

It may be several days before the outcome of Salazar's brain surgery, following his accidental fall, is known. Initial reports are optimistic, and there is no plan to appoint an acting prime minister.

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6. Israel-Egypt

The heavy exchange of artillery fire yesterday along a major portion of the Suez Canal is reported to have caused a number of deaths on both sides. An incident at the southern end of the canal, in which Tel Aviv claims Egyptians opened fire on Israeli troops removing a mine along the waterway, apparently sparked the wider duel, which lasted for several hours.

Tensions are likely to increase further if the Israelis carry out their plans to hold a military exercise "shortly" near the canal.

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

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I. NOTES ON THE SITUATION

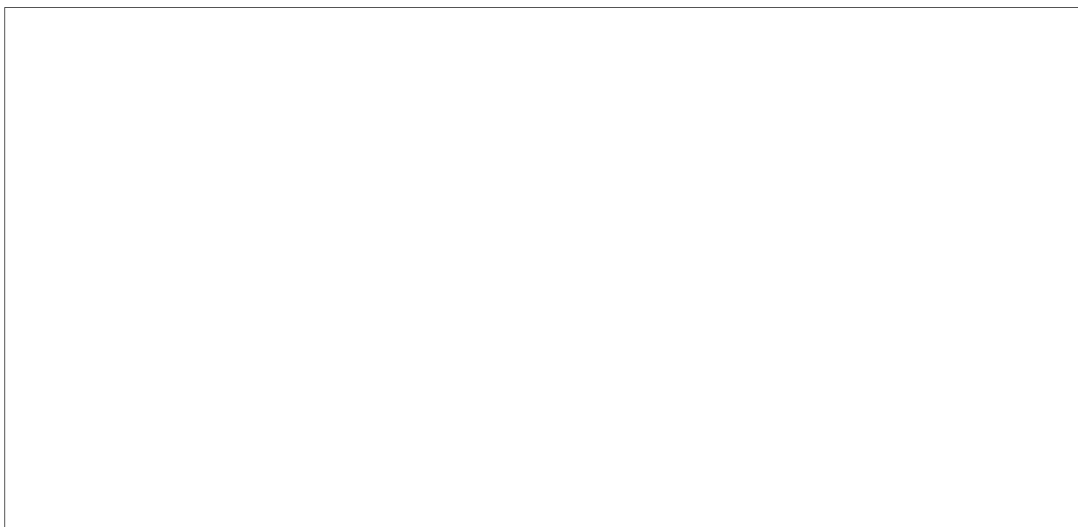
Propaganda on the Military Situation: Recent propaganda on the fighting in South Vietnam has avoided unfounded optimism and relied heavily on the Communist contention that the situation is a "stalemate" which makes allied "defeat" inevitable.

This was the approach in a Hanoi press agency item on 6 September summing up military action in August. It was laced with the usual claims of Communist military successes but was relatively modest in assessing the over-all situation.

An even more sober tone is apparent in a message from Ho Chi Minh to Communist forces in South Vietnam which was broadcast by Hanoi on 8 September. Ho praised recent Communist military actions, saying they have "increasingly firmed up our position and strengthened our force." His final words contained more admonition than optimism, however. The southern comrades, Ho said, are determined to "overcome all difficulties and hardships and to bravely and perseveringly fight, and (they) will certainly score greater achievements."

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Conference on Vietnam: The special three-day anti-American Afro-Asian conference on Vietnam opened Saturday in Cairo with the usual speeches condemning US policy.

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Vietnamese Communist groups representing both North Vietnam and the Liberation Front were to be in attendance.

Ho Chi Minh's message to the gathering was carried by the North Vietnamese press agency on 8 September. It described the meeting as a sign of "great encouragement." Ho spelled out Hanoi's usual demands, including the formulation used by Pham Van Dong last week that the US must "recognize" the Liberation Front and "enter into talks" with it on problems of concern to South Vietnam.

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Delegation to North Korea: The Hanoi delegation to the North Korean 20th anniversary celebration is headed by Foreign Minister Trinh. It is Trinh's first foreign trip since he attended the Soviets' 50th anniversary celebrations last fall.

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

More on US Elections: North Vietnam's coverage of the US election campaign continued over the weekend. Hanoi Radio beamed a commentary to South Vietnam on Saturday entitled, "The Platform of a Donkey and Johnson's Pony." The treatment was the same as in other propaganda forums: the Democratic convention underscored the cleavages in the US over Vietnam policy, but the results offered no grounds for optimism.

The broadcast characterized the Democratic party platform as "reactionary" and Vice President Humphrey as a loyal "disciple" of President Johnson. The commentary charged that Humphrey was "pretending to be politically independent of Johnson," but it chalked this up as an attempt to "deceive" public opinion. In conclusion, the commentary lumped the President, Vice President, and Mr. Nixon all in the same "aggressive" camp and promised that the Communists would fight on unless the next US president "gives up his aggression."

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