

The President's Daily Brief

~~Top Secret~~ 4 May 1968



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THE PRESIDENT'S
DAILY BRIEF
4 MAY 1968

1. Paris Talks

The news that the US and North Vietnam have agreed to meet in Paris has been greeted with relief in most parts of the non-Communist world. Three comments from Communist countries are available so far. Two of them--Havana's domestic television and East Berlin's German service--take the line that Hanoi has forced Washington to the negotiating table.

The third, a Radio Moscow broadcast in Serbo-Croatian to Yugoslavia, plays a somewhat different version of essentially the same theme. In a tone largely devoid of shrillness, it questions how much the US really wants the talks to start. It alleges that "those who insist on a military solution to the problem" are becoming more influential in Washington, and it quotes recent remarks by Vice President Humphrey and Ambassador-designate Ball as indicative of US reservations.

Nevertheless, the broadcast concludes, the fact that contacts are to start is by itself "very cheerful." The next step is to force the US to halt its raids in North Vietnam "and then to achieve the cessation of the entire war."

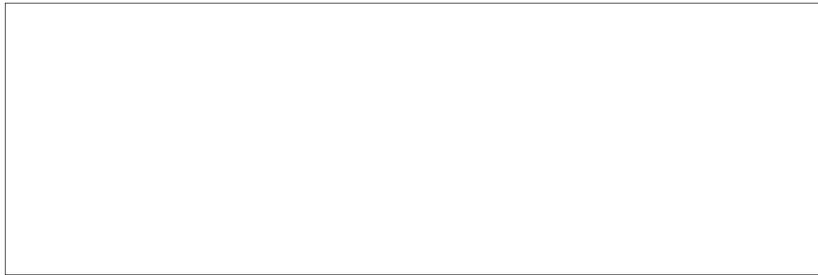
There has been no more authoritative comment than this from Moscow. Hanoi's reaction has so far followed generally predictable lines. Peking has not yet commented.

2. South Vietnam

Fighting has slackened somewhat in the northern provinces. Communist losses in this area may have been heavy enough to delay their plans for attacking such cities as Hue. On the other hand, the fact that some of the combat occurred near the major towns indicates how much the Communists have expanded their operational areas along the coast since the first of the year.

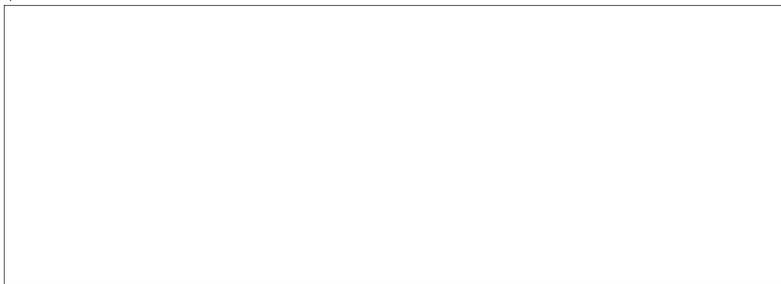
Signs continue to appear that the Communists are getting ready for further offensive action. It is still not clear, however, how they plan to orchestrate military activity with political talks.

3. North Vietnam



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4. North Korea



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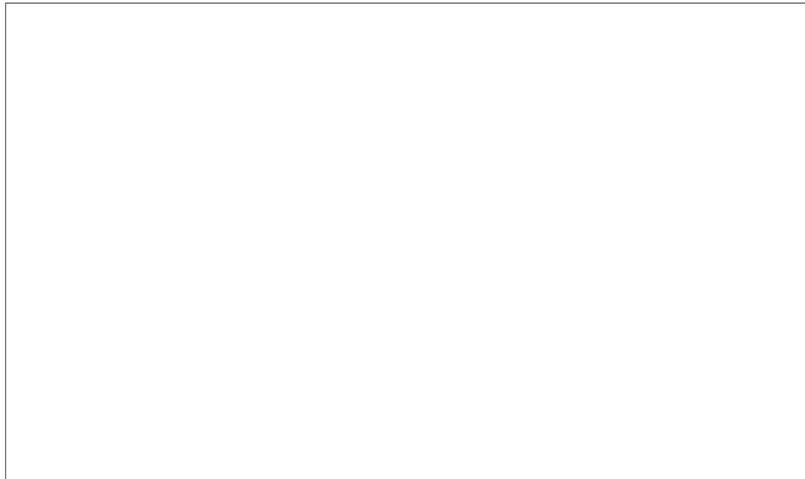
5. Soviet Union

The Soviets have deployed more mobile missiles along the Sino-Soviet border. Satellite photography has disclosed 13 transporters for their surface-to-surface missile at just one border installation. We previously had never seen more than four such transporters at any of the four sites.

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6. Panama

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7. Czechoslovakia-Soviet Union

Dubcek has suddenly gone to Moscow with four of his chief lieutenants. According to the Czechoslovak press service, this "short comradely meeting" was called by the Soviets. Prague's domestic service said this morning that the two sides would discuss Czechoslovak-Soviet economic relations, but the Soviets doubtless are looking for further reassurance that the liberal trend in Prague is not getting out of hand.

Dubcek is acutely aware of Moscow's potential leverage, particularly in the economic field. He therefore has consistently tried to persuade the Soviets of Czechoslovakia's basic loyalty. All the while, signs of Czechoslovak dissatisfaction with the standard Communist way of doing things keeps cropping up.

For example, no less an authority than the Communist Party paper in Prague yesterday criticized East German efforts to hinder Western access to Berlin. In the process, it also criticized Soviet policy in Germany in strong--if indirect--language. This kind of talk obviously is not going down well in Moscow.

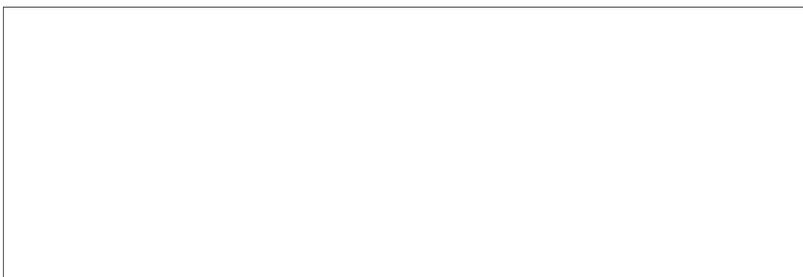
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8. Soviet Union



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9. Pakistan



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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

4 May 1968

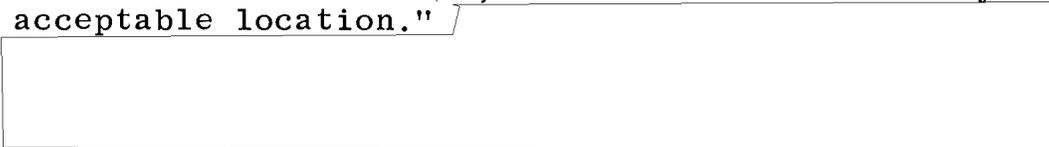
I. NOTES ON THE SITUATION



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North Vietnamese Efforts to Look Flexible on Site for Contacts: More than a week before Hanoi proposed Paris as its third choice, one of its European diplomats told a propaganda forum in Austria that North Vietnam would be willing to consider sites other than Phnom Penh or Warsaw. In an apparent effort to make Hanoi look as flexible as possible, a North Vietnamese diplomat from the Budapest mission said publicly on 23 April that Hanoi preferred Warsaw as a site, but it was "not the only acceptable location."



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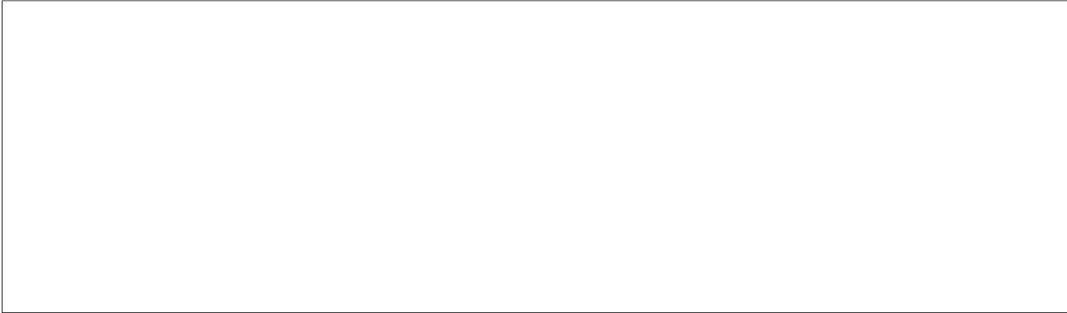


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Disorders in China Cause Slowdown in Shipments to North Vietnam:

[redacted] civil disorders in the city of Nanning had caused a slowdown in rail shipments to North Vietnam. This was despite efforts of the Chinese Army to keep the goods moving on schedule. [redacted] troops were closely guarding the trains bound for North Vietnam. [redacted] this was necessary to prevent pilferage by hungry Chinese.

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Japanese Trade: Two Japanese ships are apparently to load coal at the North Vietnamese port of Cam Pha this month. These will be the first Japanese vessels to visit North Vietnam since 1965.

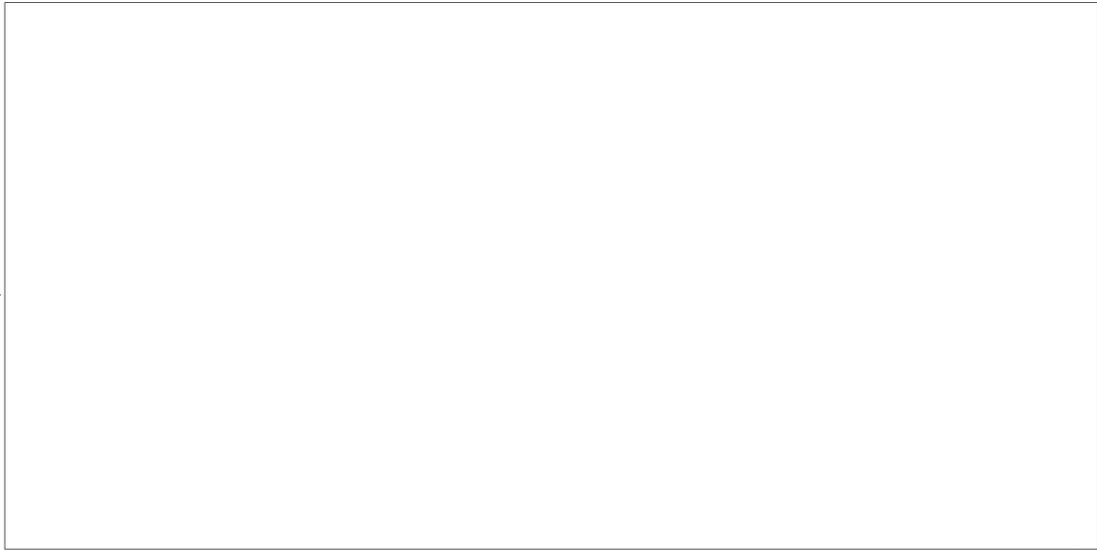


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Unusual Passenger Flights: Hanoi may have made unusual flight arrangements to get one of its people home from Phnom Penh in a hurry. Under normal circumstances, the ICC flights are used to carry North Vietnamese personalities between Cambodia and North Vietnam. On 30 April, however, the scheduled ICC flight was canceled.

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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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