



The President's Daily Brief

~~Top Secret~~ 15 August 1968



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**THE PRESIDENT'S
DAILY BRIEF
15 AUGUST 1968**

1. Poland

The Soviets have moved additional divisions into Poland since the end of July, [redacted]

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[redacted] the moves are a sign that Moscow remains deeply uneasy about developments in Czechoslovakia. [redacted]

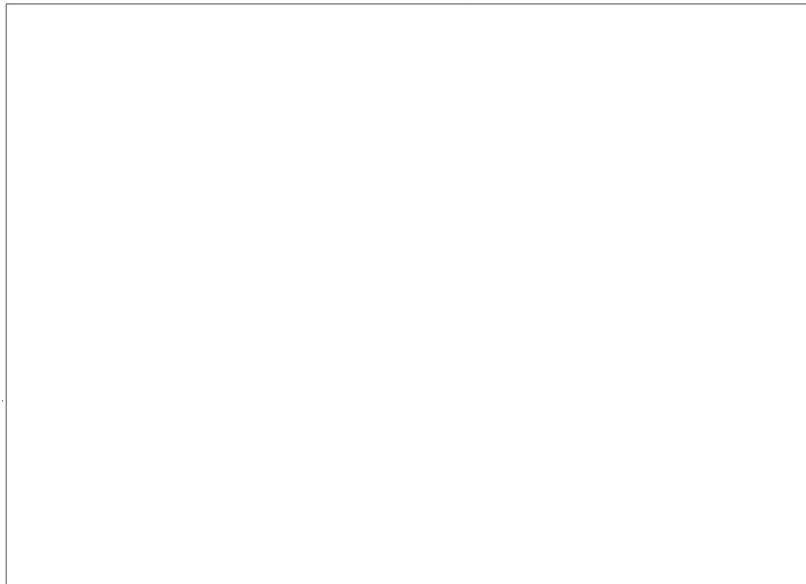
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[redacted] another reason for the move is to back up Gomulka, who has been involved in a protracted power struggle.

2. Soviet Union



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3. Dominican Republic

There could be trouble tomorrow when one of Balaguer's men replaces the leftist mayor of Santo Domingo. Some of the Communists have called for an "armed uprising"; the extreme right would like to see disorder, which it could then blame on the left. Nothing very serious is likely [redacted]

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4. Mexico

Diaz Ordaz has kept carefully out of the student situation. He may be reserving the weight of his personal involvement for critical developments.

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The mayor, who figures prominently in speculation on a successor to Diaz Ordaz, has been the target of student hostility. He also has been the official spokesman on the crisis. With that background, he could end up as the official scapegoat.

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5. Panama

When he takes office, Arias told US Embassy officers, he will fire National Guard Commandant Vallarino. All top Guard officers routinely submit their resignations to a new president and Arias, who feels Vallarino dabbled too much in the electoral process, intends to take up his option. Vallarino, however, has considerable power in his own right and could turn the tables on Arias.

6. Cuba

As estimated, sugar production this year was far below what Castro had hoped for. The goal had been 7.5 million tons. Between 5.1 and 5.2 million tons were harvested. This was a million tons below last year's 6.1 to 6.2 million ton crop, and Castro has fired the minister in charge.

Besides hurting Cuba's ability to earn foreign exchange, the shortage this year will make it even harder to reach the objectives set for 1970 which are based on yearly increases in production.

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7. Communist China -
Australia

The Chinese, their harvest hurt by bad weather and the Cultural Revolution, have asked for immediate negotiations on Australian wheat. The Chinese probably want to insure there will be no break in deliveries this December when the present one-million-ton contract with Australia expires. Chinese grain imports for 1968 will run about 3.6 million tons, .6 million down from 1967.

8. Burma

Communist guerrillas, using Chinese sanctuary and some Chinese equipment, are becoming more active in the rugged border area of northeastern Burma. The guerrillas, a mixture of Burmese and tribal insurgents, have destroyed bridges and inflicted heavy casualties in several recent encounters with Burmese troops. The Burmese Army is not too effective in this terrain and could be hard pressed in a sustained guerrilla campaign.

9. Congo

Mobutu's pursuit of grandeur is carrying him to new follies that make some of his other Alice-in-Wonderland performances seem almost rational by comparison. He is at the moment:

--Planning to build three replicas of St. Peter's Cathedral in the Congo;

--Buying a British jet airliner for his personal use at a cost of about \$5 million;

--Discussing the conversion of his residence into an imitation Versailles;

--Acquiring an expensive villa in Switzerland.

Ambassador McBride feels Mobutu's personal expenditures are the most serious problem now facing the Congo.

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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

15 August 1968

I. NOTES ON THE SITUATION

Alliance Holds a Conference: The Vietnam Alliance of National, Democratic, and Peace Forces held its second conference on 30 and 31 July and adopted a political program, according to a Liberation Radio broadcast on 14 August. Despite a claim that the Alliance had an "urgent reason" for publicizing the program, the broadcast gave few details on the program beyond the tantalizing statement that it is intended to serve as "a basis for bringing together broader and larger numbers of patriotic forces and individuals who are eagerly seeking a way out in the South Vietnam situation at present, as well as for the lasting future."

This sounds as though the Communists still hope to use the Alliance to muster the widest possible South Vietnamese support for an early settlement. Several additional persons were surfaced as members of the Alliance, but these appear to be of even lesser note and influence than known Alliance members.

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Food Shortages: The deteriorating food situation is causing Hanoi continued anxiety, but the Soviet Union and China appear willing to go on underwriting North Vietnamese food supplies. Nhan Dan on 2 August called for a strengthening of controls over food distribution in order to overcome "present shortcomings" and for a new distribution of manpower in order to "solve the food problem in a more steady manner." The article is one of several items during the past month pointing out a need for solving distribution and production problems.

The "shortcomings" in distribution probably have to do with the substitutes being used to adulterate the "rice" ration. The adulterants are largely imported wheat flour, imported and domestic corn, and domestic manioc and sweet potatoes. These substitutes

made up about 40 percent of the ration in early 1968, and the proportion had increased to about 50 percent by mid-year [redacted]

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[redacted] Since the substitutes are less palatable to the North Vietnamese than rice, the fair apportionment of them among individuals becomes an important matter of policy.

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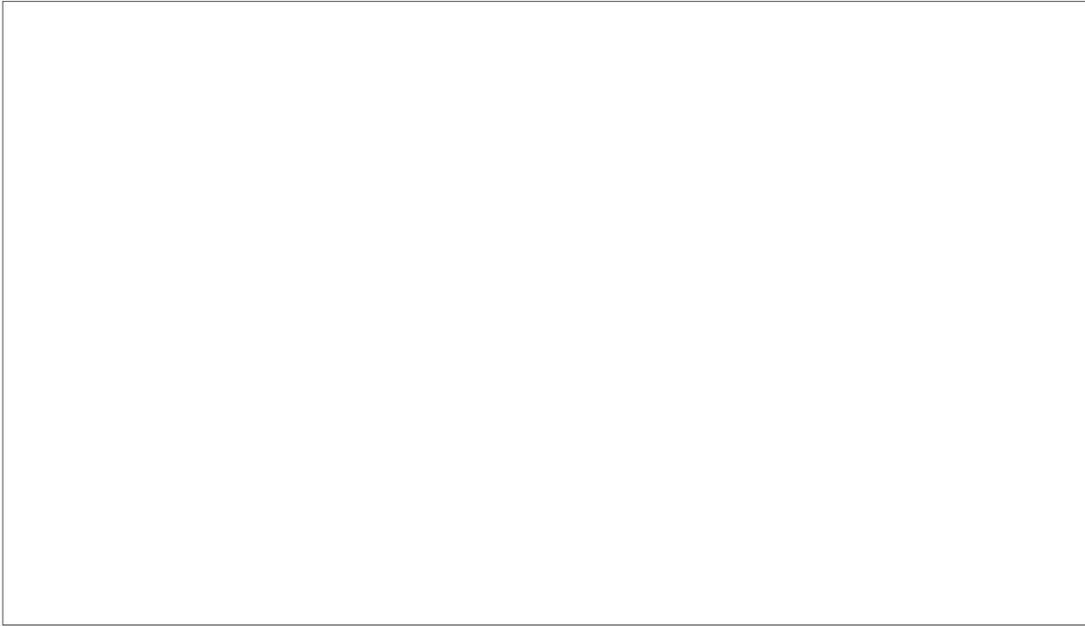
Allusions to manpower distribution problems in agriculture are of long standing. The loss of rural workers to the war effort and the overburdening of those remaining with war-related tasks have apparently lowered the quality of management in farm work. The burdens lifted by the cessation of bombings in northern North Vietnam--where the important farm lands are located--have been balanced by backlogged chores needing attention and by an overlapping of spring harvesting and planting work caused by bad spring weather. The fifth-month rice crop this year not only was below average but was harvested a month late, delaying the planting of the more important tenth-month crop and endangering its output.

The shortfalls in domestic food production have been partially covered by increasing imports of food from Communist countries. These imports amounted to about 440,000 tons during the first seven months of 1968, compared to about 460,000 tons for all of 1967 and only 80,000 tons for all of 1966.

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No Trade Fair in Hanoi: North Vietnam has apparently shelved any plans to hold a trade fair in Hanoi until the end of the war.

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Hanoi will step up its participation in foreign trade fairs while postponing plans for its own for the duration.

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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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