



The President's Daily Brief

~~Top Secret~~ 25 September 1968



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THE PRESIDENT'S
DAILY BRIEF
25 SEPTEMBER 1968

1. France

De Gaulle had a 50-minute talk with Ambassador Shriver on Monday. He concentrated--in characteristic De Gaulle fashion--on his thesis that US commitments to Western Europe are inadequate, making the following points:

--The US will not risk a nuclear war to defend Western Europe; this explains West German edginess.

--There probably would be further Soviet diplomatic, economic, and psychological pressures against West Germany, "looking toward the day when, having built a sufficient foundation, the Russians would invade Hanover or Hamburg."

--Moscow was worried by the threat of a revitalized Germany joining with other nations (De Gaulle mentioned Czechoslovakia, China, and "even East Germany") against the Soviet Union.

--France, looking to its own life and death, would not regard an invasion of West Germany as an invasion of France.

De Gaulle will be visiting Kiesinger later this week. We think he will continue to work on Bonn's edginess to shake its confidence in the US.

2. Soviet Union -
Czechoslovakia

In recent days, one Soviet division that moved into Czechoslovakia has returned to garrison in Hungary, and elements of another probably have returned to the Soviet Union.

At Annex today we examine some recent developments in the Moscow-Prague relationship.

3. Israel - Arab States

The Israelis have again gone to the United Nations following Sunday's alleged foray by Egyptians across the Suez Canal. Arab apprehension over an eventual Israeli retaliation remains high, however.

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4. Thailand

The wraps may be coming off anti-American sentiment. A group of Thai journalists recently gave our embassy people an earful on the "objectionable" behavior of Americans in Thailand and generally on US policy in Asia. An account of this session favorable to the journalists appeared in a newspaper owned by the deputy prime minister. The government may find it useful as legislative elections approach to give some nod to the dissenters.

5. Panama

Vallarino is still resisting pressure from Arias to avoid embarrassment and step down from his National Guard post before the inaugural on 1 October.

[Redacted]

[Redacted] Vallarino may hope in the meantime to temper Arias' plans to wield a heavy axe on the Guard.

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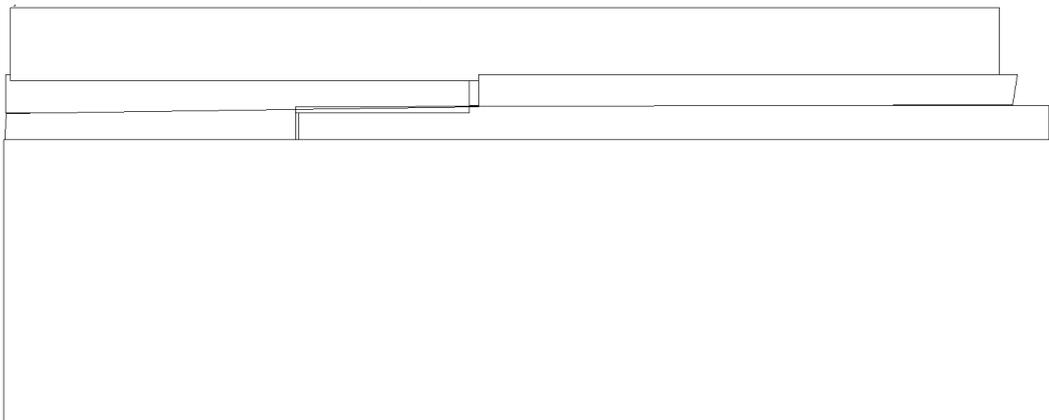
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ANNEX

Soviet-Czechoslovak Relations--A Month After

A month after their lightning military strike into Czechoslovakia, the Soviets are now reaching the point where they must decide if their political follow-through is doing the job.



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Clearly, the Soviets are not satisfied with the rate at which the Czechoslovaks have reimposed the limits which existed before January. The Soviet press has more than offset its praise for steps in the "right" direction with warnings that much, much more needs to be done. For all the cleverness of their resistance, the Czechoslovaks have not fooled the Soviets into thinking that washing the freedom signs from the statues in Wenceslas Square has removed the idea of freedom from Czechoslovak minds.

The Soviets may stick to nudging the Czechoslovaks along in the hope that the latter will move faster. Moscow has not, however, foreclosed the option of using its military presence to oust the top liberals, impose a conservative regime and repress any dissident forces which oppose it.

The Czechoslovaks are in fact playing a dangerous game. In the last analysis, Moscow has virtually all the high cards. If the Soviets get sufficiently frustrated, they will lose patience and play them.

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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

Le Duan on Reconstruction: North Vietnam's number two man appears to be increasingly concerned with problems of economic reconstruction. On 22 September, Hanoi Radio broadcast a speech the party first secretary had given to provincial authorities in northeastern Lang Son Province. No date was given for the tour, but this was the second time in recent weeks that Le Duan's trips into the countryside have been publicized. The first was an early summer visit to Nam Ha--an important agricultural province just south of Hanoi. In each case the main thrust of the secretary's remarks was the need to get the local economy going again and to develop plans for improving agricultural production. As in his earlier speech in Nam Ha, Le Duan devoted most of his remarks in Lang Son to detailed recommendations on production techniques.

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Another Mission to France: [redacted] another North Vietnamese economic mission is scheduled to visit Paris next month. Nothing tangible has yet resulted from the last visit a year ago. [redacted] Hanoi's attempt to purchase French trucks on credit has been discouraged by the French Government [redacted]

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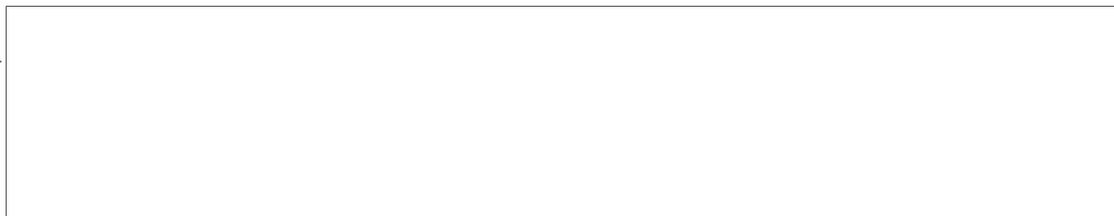
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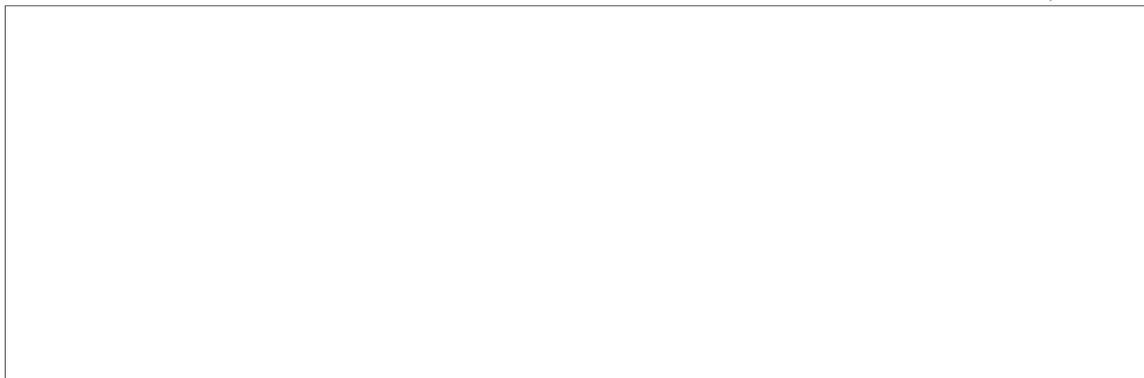
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On Bombing: Hanoi is turning up the volume on its propaganda portraying the US as out to destroy foodstuffs.

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[redacted] the Communists charged the bombing below the 19th Parallel is more intense than ever and is deliberately aimed at disrupting North Vietnam's agricultural production. The spokesman for the North Vietnamese delegation to the Paris talks had used much the same theme in his press briefing on 16 September. He contended air strikes are made on dams, irrigation systems, and farming communities.

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

On US Scene: Radio Hanoi played up several examples of Vietnam war dissent in the United States during an English language broadcast yesterday. Citing various Western news agency reports as sources, the broadcast mentioned recent antiwar demonstrations encountered by the presidential and vice presidential candidates during their campaign stops. The efforts by groups of army reservists to escape their Vietnam assignment also were reported.

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