

The President's Daily Brief

~~Top Secret~~ 14 October 1968



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THE PRESIDENT'S
DAILY BRIEF
14 OCTOBER 1968

1. Panama

Shooting occurred last night in Panama City following the formal installation of the junta and cabinet; more clashes between Arias forces and the National Guard can be expected today.

Arias yesterday issued a highly inflammatory statement telling his followers to take up arms against the Guard. In addition, leaflets were circulated urging people to go into the streets. Some reports say that Arias supporters hope to organize disturbances or a general strike today. Communist elements probably would join in, but they are remaining aloof for the time being until other forces take the initiative. In the past, efforts by Arias to foment a general strike have failed.

[REDACTED]
guardsmen moved quickly over the weekend to round up potential troublemakers.

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2. Brazil

Police have broken up a congress of the illegal National Student Union and arrested nearly one thousand students, including the Rio and Sao Paulo regional leaders. Some extreme leftist students are barricaded in the University of Sao Paulo, however, and trouble could develop if police try to force them out. If charges can be made to stick against the arrested leaders, student antigovernment activities will be severely handicapped.

The government still has no definite information on the murderers of the US Army officer who was shot to death in Sao Paulo on 12 October. Leaflets left near the body denounced US involvement in Vietnam and in the death of Che Guevara.

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3. Czechoslovakia

In an emotional speech on Friday, Dubcek bowed to nearly all of the Soviet demands. He said that no opposition to the Soviets will be permitted and that personal safety will be guaranteed only to law-abiding citizens. He claimed his policies will be guided by the principles of Communist Party supremacy and alliance with the Soviet Union. He pointedly admitted his regime's failure in the past to appreciate the Soviet view.

Dubcek made it clear that while he will not resign voluntarily, Soviet dictates will be implemented with or without him. In other remarks showing a growing division in the leadership, he implicitly blamed several of his colleagues for bringing on the Russian intervention.

4. Poland

Gomulka has also been speech making recently. In an agitated and stumbling performance on 8 October, he may well have caused the party rank and file to wonder if he is still up to the task of running the country. Judging from excerpts shown on Warsaw television, the 63-year-old Gomulka wandered from his text a number of times to give rambling answers to unexpected criticism and to speak imprecisely about the situation in Czechoslovakia and the unsatisfactory economic situation at home.

Gomulka spoke to the party organization in Silesia, which is led by one of his rivals, politburo member Edward Gierek. Gomulka's bewildered performance may have been partially caused by the surprisingly frank discussion which he encountered. It is also possible that the subsequent telecast of the speech was a deliberate attempt to damage his image.

5. Dominican Republic

Political maneuvering is already under way in anticipation of the presidential election next May. Much of the jockeying centers around President Balaguer, whose partisans are already moving to secure his re-election. Although Balaguer's recent actions suggest he is toying with running again, the drift and stagnation that characterizes his administration does not suggest that he has yet made a decision.

The former provisional president and current ambassador to the US, Garcia Godoy, has begun a campaign to organize a moderate "movement of national unity" behind his candidacy. Then there is Juan Bosch; his recent statements that he intends to leave his self-imposed European exile and return home have led to speculation that he too will run again.

6. Guatemala

The Communists

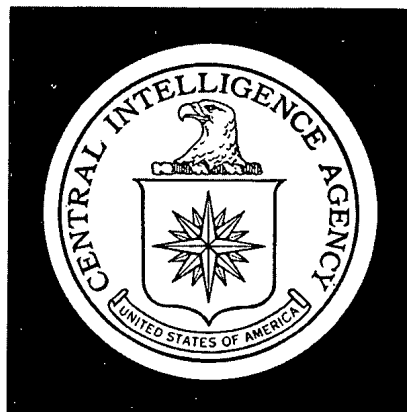
[redacted] plan to set off some bombs in the capital this week to commemorate the revolution of 20 October 1944. Judging from previous Communist actions, the bombings will probably be for propaganda effect and the targets selected are likely to be those where the risks of getting caught are minimal. No US installations are believed to have been targeted.

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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

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Propaganda: The Vietnamese Communists in both Paris and Hanoi issued pessimistic assessments of the possibility of any progress in the Paris talks. In propaganda commentary this weekend, the authoritative Nhan Dan called the Paris peace talks "deadlocked," saying there has been no progress in five months and there is little prospect of improvement in the future. President Johnson steadfastly refuses to meet Hanoi's demand for an unconditional cessation of the bombing, said the Communist daily, and Communist reading of the statements of the major presidential candidates is that they both would continue this policy. President Johnson and his Vice President were called "obdurate and stubborn" and Nixon was characterized as "warlike and colonial." Without an unconditional cessation of the bombing and some significant change in official US thinking, said Hanoi, there will be no progress in Paris and the war will be "prolonged."

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Xuan Thuy Interview: In Paris, Xuan Thuy told a [redacted] correspondent virtually the same thing in an interview on Friday. Thuy also characterized the talks as "deadlocked" and said a halt in the air strikes was an "absolute condition for progress in the current negotiations."

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Thuy consistently avoided rising to the bait of his interviewer's pointed questions. He used the occasion to restate Hanoi's determination to persevere in its objectives, both in Paris and on the ground in South Vietnam. He refused to be drawn out on the kind of representation which Hanoi envisaged for postbombing talks and ducked the question why both the regular news conference and his own previously scheduled private interviews had been canceled last Monday. This cancellation had caused considerable press speculation that Hanoi was cautiously avoiding any inflammatory statements in the hope of encouraging new US concessions. Xuan Thuy said merely that both he and his press spokesman had been "busy with some work."

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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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