



The President's Daily Brief

~~Top Secret~~ 9 December 1968



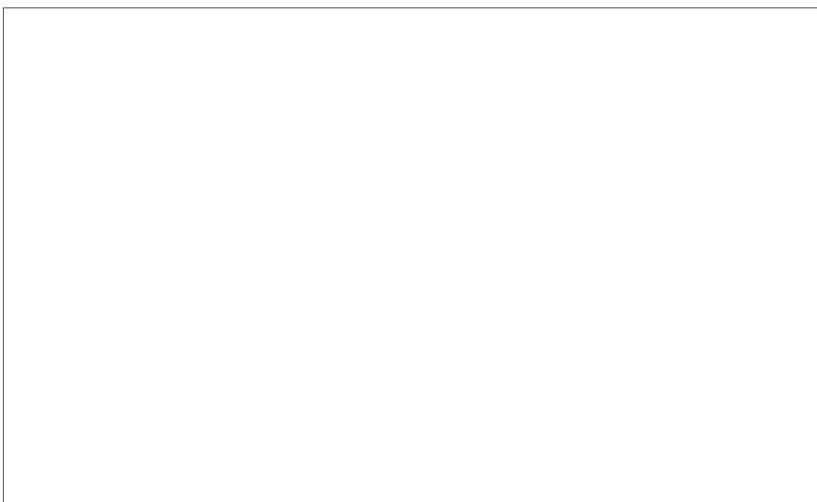
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THE PRESIDENT'S
DAILY BRIEF
9 DECEMBER 1968

1. Czechoslovakia -
Soviet Union

The weekend meeting in Kiev between top Czechoslovak and Soviet leaders apparently involved another effort by Prague to get Moscow's "clearance" on an aspect of domestic policy. Dubcek, in this case, probably sought Soviet approval for carrying out some portions of Prague's pre-invasion economic reform program. Economic policy is the subject of a party central committee meeting in Prague scheduled for this Thursday, and the Czechoslovak leaders presumably wanted to find out how far they would be permitted to go.

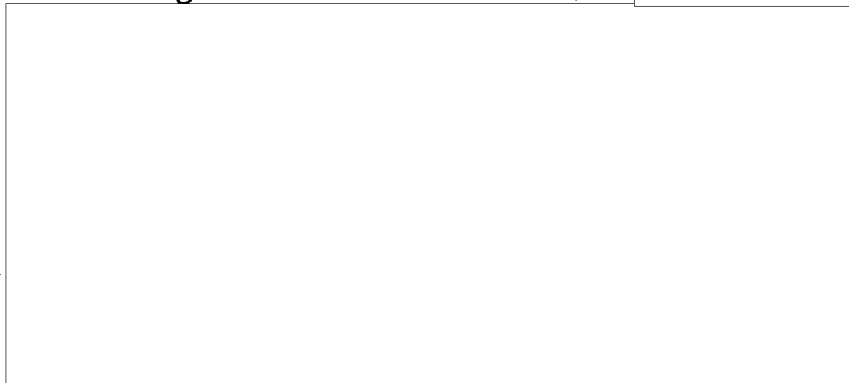
The communiqué issued after the meeting gives no hint as to how the Czechoslovaks made out.



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2. Japan

Prime Minister Sato, fresh from his recent re-election as party president, looks upon Okinawa as the crucial challenge of his third term.



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3. Venezuela

Final election returns give victory to Christian Democrat Rafael Caldera. He won just under thirty percent of the total vote--only one percent more than his nearest rival, Gonzalo Barrios of the administration's Democratic Action Party.

Government and military leaders have assured Caldera that they will uphold the election results. Some isolated incidents may occur, but security forces are alert to control any demonstrations.

Inauguration day is not until 14 March, and Caldera will be busy in the interim working to put together a coalition government. His Democratic Action rivals have apparently won a plurality of seats in the lower house of Congress.

4. Communist China

Recent satellite photography shows that the Chinese have been continuing their nationwide airfield construction program despite the disruptions of the Cultural Revolution. About 60 airfields have been completed, modernized, or started since the program began in 1964.

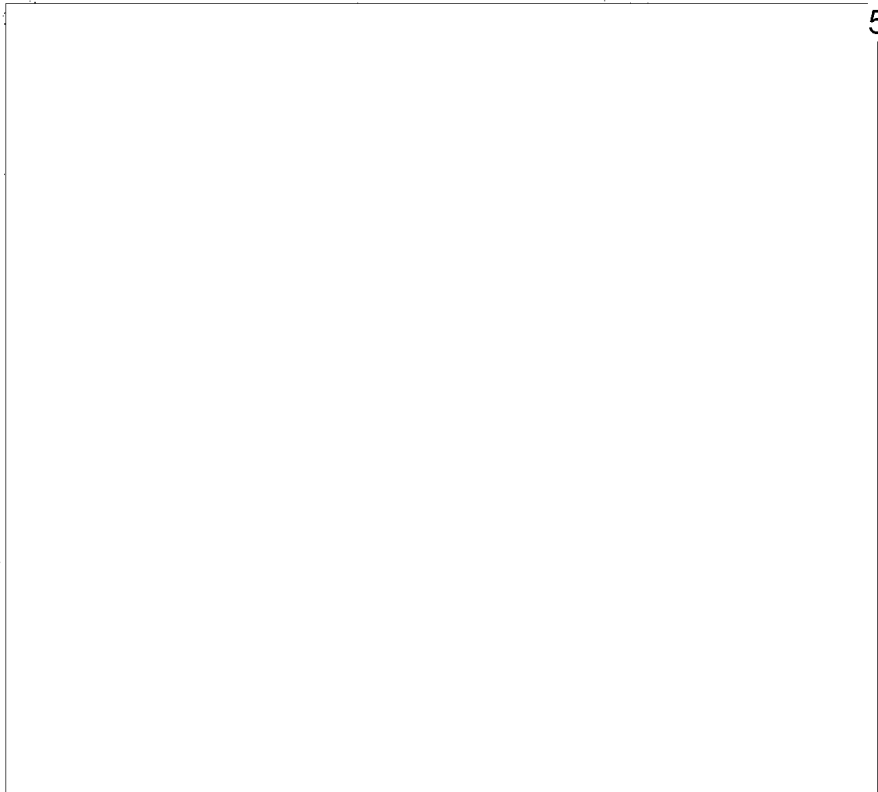
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5. Latin America

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FOR THE PRESIDENT'S EYES ONLY

- 1.) Special Daily Report on North Vietnam

- 2.) North Vietnamese Reflections of US
Political Attitudes



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9 December 1968

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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Another Protest: On 7 December Hanoi broadcast a very brief report of the latest North Vietnamese Foreign Ministry protest against US aircraft entering North Vietnamese air space and US artillery firing into the northern half of the Demilitarized Zone. Hanoi clearly is protesting for the record and is not making a major issue of these alleged US activities.

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Foreign Minister Interviewed: North Vietnamese Foreign Minister Trinh broke little new ground in a recent interview with a Japanese correspondent. In response to questions about the Paris talks and the future political shape of Indochina, the minister mouthed the usual platitudes and cliches. His most notable comment on political matters was one stressing that reunification of Vietnam should not be realized "immediately and in haste" and that contacts between the "two regimes" (in North and South) should be developed in the interim. These are basic points in the Liberation Front's political program but because they imply a good deal of compromise on the part of the Communists, they are rarely made by North Vietnamese officials.

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Trinh made a relatively forthright bid for non-Communist postwar aid in response to questions from his Japanese interviewer. He emphasized Hanoi's self-reliance, but he acknowledged that aid from other countries would be needed and would be accepted as long as North Vietnam's independence and sovereignty were respected. He said that aid from a multi-nation postwar rehabilitation fund would be rejected if the plan was a "manifestation of neocolonialism in collusion with the United States." Otherwise, he said, non-Communist aid, including aid from Japan, would be welcome.

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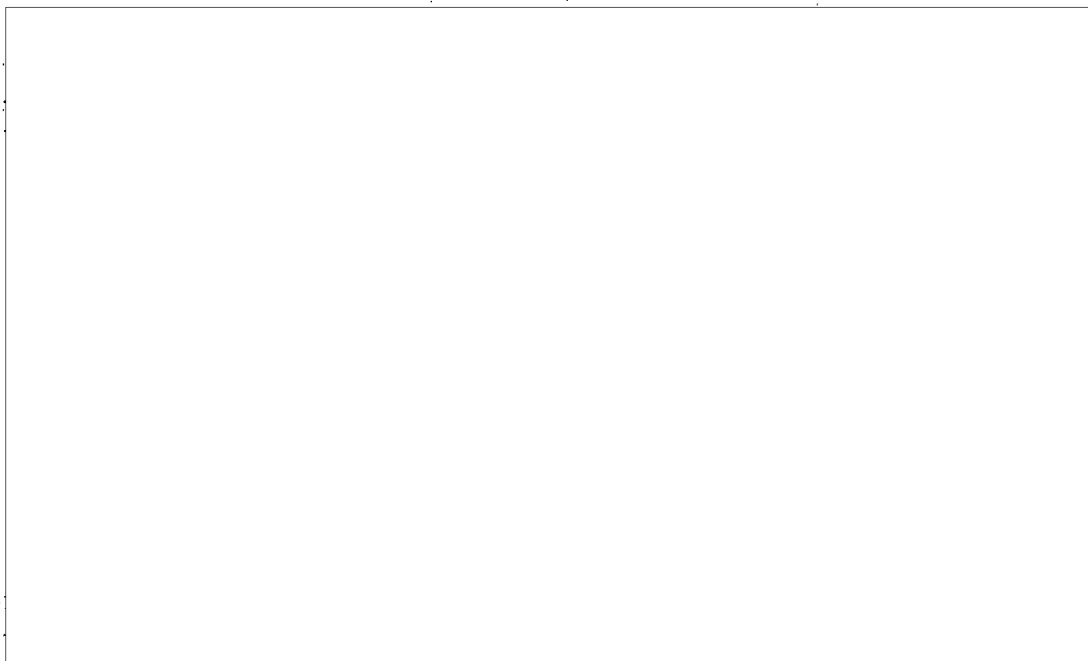
More on Agricultural Problems:

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[redacted] Hanoi is rounding up officials from some of the northwest provinces for a powwow on agricultural problems. The local officials were enjoined to report on results of the 1968 harvest, preparations for next year's crops, and measures to prevent famine and disease (apparently among both humans and animals). The message sounds as if this is another brainstorming session to begin work on some long neglected domestic problems.

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Hanoi Discusses US Redeployment: Hanoi for the first time has reported on the movement of the US 1st Air Mobile Cavalry Division from the northern provinces of South Vietnam into III Corps. In an editorial in the party daily on 7 December, the North Vietnamese alleged that the division had taken "heavy losses" since moving south and claimed these "proved" the "bankruptcy" of US airborne tactics.

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

Hanoi on Antiwar Activities: An English language broadcast from Hanoi on 8 December rounds up various recent antiwar activities in the US. It devotes two paragraphs to the demonstration on 4 December at New York University, at which a South Vietnamese official was prevented from speaking. It also mentions the refusal of a US naval officer to board a ship for Vietnam duty and the recent appearance of peace activist David Dellinger before the House Committee on Un-American Activities.

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