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USSR: General Secretary Brezhnev has not been identified in public since 11 October, and he may be ill.

Brezhnev did not see Egyptian Prime Minister Sidqi during his visit to Moscow from 16 to 18 October, nor did he receive the Japanese foreign minister the following week as expected. Italian Prime Minister Andreotti did not see the general secretary during his six-day official visit to the USSR. Soviet officials reportedly informed both the Egyptian and Italian delegations that Brezhnev's absence was due to illness.

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Rumors that Brezhnev is under treatment for cirrhosis of the liver are now circulating in Moscow's diplomatic community. [redacted] Brezhnev has been hospitalized on a number of occasions in recent years for a variety of medical problems, some of them apparently of a minor nature.

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In his absence, efforts are apparently being made to keep Brezhnev's name before the public and to leave the impression that he is on the job. President Podgorny, during an award ceremony on 31 October, announced that "I have just had a talk with Leonid Ilich Brezhnev, who asked me to convey his greetings." The day before, Radio Moscow announced the publication of a third volume of the general secretary's speeches and articles. (CONFIDENTIAL)

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CHILE: The inclusion of three senior military officers in the new cabinet could improve the climate for ending the protest strike still in progress.

The most significant new appointment was that of former army commander General Prats as interior minister, a post that puts him in line to succeed Allende in case of the president's incapacitation. An admiral and an air force general took over the public works and mining portfolios. Those civilians who are not holdovers do not appear to be prominent politically.

The military reportedly welcomed participation in the cabinet in order to serve as a moderating influence on government policies. The positions they hold, however, do not offer them direct control over the areas of the economy most important to the opposition. Any calming effect the military members' advice may bring could be offset by [redacted] radicals such as Rolando Calderon, the new agriculture minister. A new army commander has not yet been named. (SECRET NO FOREIGN DISSEM)

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CAMBODIA: The possibility of a cease-fire in Cambodia is prompting Phnom Penh to focus on political approaches to the Khmer Communist problem.

The government has ordered all provincial officials and Cambodian Army field commanders to try to contact local Khmer Communist elements to persuade as many of them as possible to rally. To complement this effort, Phnom Penh has also begun to increase its psychological warfare operations against the indigenous insurgents. It seems questionable, however, that these activities will result in sizable numbers of ralliers from the ranks of increasingly aggressive and confident Khmer Communist units. The fact that Lon Nol's unpopular brother, Lon Non, is to play a key role in the rallier program is likely to undercut its effectiveness.

There are still no indications that the government is ready to consider high-level negotiations with the Khmer Communists aimed at a broad political settlement. Lon Nol, however, has formed a "national committee of action for peace and concord" that could provide a forum for discussion of this problem. The committee will include all cabinet ministers and representatives of Cambodia's two Buddhist orders. Apparently in recognition of the need for greater unity and broader support for the government, the president has also asked opposition political parties to join the committee. Republican Party Chief Sirik Matak has agreed to participate. Some members of the Democratic Party may also lend their support to the committee. (CONFIDENTIAL)

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IRELAND-USSR: The Lynch government is moving toward a trade pact and an exchange of ambassadors with the USSR.

An Irish official recently told the US chargé that he believes agreements with the Soviets will be signed before the end of the year. The basic policy decision to establish relations with Moscow has already been made, and the details of a trade pact were agreed to during the visit of a Soviet delegation to Dublin earlier this year. The Soviets, however, insist that diplomatic relations are a prerequisite to completing the trade agreement. Further pressure to reach agreement with Moscow stems from the fact that after 1 January, when Ireland becomes a full member of the EC, Dublin will not be permitted to enter into a separate trade pact such as the one presently envisaged.

Dublin has long been willing in principle to establish closer relations with the USSR and East European nations in hopes that the thaw would help diminish an adverse trade balance with these states and thereby lessen Ireland's dependence on trade with the UK. The government also believes that at least limited ties with Warsaw Pact nations would balance Ireland's entry into the EC, thus preserving the country's traditional "neutrality."

Irish reluctance to conclude the deal swiftly stems from domestic political considerations, security factors, and the attitude of the UK. The Lynch administration may be hesitant to prod a conservative public into accepting still another change. The government successfully pushed through a referendum on EC entry in May, and before the end of the year the voters will be asked to approve the vote for 18-year-olds and deletion of the "special position" of the Catholic Church from the Republic's constitution.

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Dublin also fears potential Soviet meddling in Ulster. The Irish, who understand the need to keep an eye on Soviet officials, wish to establish a two- or three-man mission in Moscow and would like to limit the Soviets to a similar number. Irish police, however, would encounter difficulties in maintaining effective surveillance of a Soviet mission.

Moscow probably sees several advantages in establishing relations at this time. It would further the over-all Soviet drive for expanded relations with the nations of Western Europe prior to the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe. Although the effect of a trade agreement before year's end would be minimal, its conclusion would be consistent with the USSR's hope to weaken the impact on Eastern Europe of the EC's common commercial policy, which comes into effect on 1 January. Moreover, relations with Dublin would clearly nettle the UK, whose relations with the USSR remain strained. (CONFIDENTIAL NO FOREIGN DISSEM)

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BAHAMAS: The Nassau government, facing a projected budget deficit of at least $15 million by the end of the year, may eventually turn to the US defense-related installations in the Bahamas for revenue. Base agreements will have to be renegotiated after the islands become independent next July. By then, the effect of the general exodus of white businessmen after Prime Minister Pindling's overwhelming election victory last September will probably make monetary problems even more acute. Despite earlier indications that Pindling's victory might enable him to overhaul his government's economic policies and the makeup of his cabinet, he has not done so. The worsening of his financial problems so close to independence may soon impel him to seek help from the US, Britain, or private sources. (SECRET NO FOREIGN DISSEM)

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ZAMBIA: The government has just published a bill to amend the constitution, banning opposition parties and paving the way for Zambia's transition to a one-party state before the end of this year. The bill will probably be passed handily by the National Assembly when it meets next month. President Kaunda believes a single party system is necessary to end the disruptive influence of the country's small, tribally based opposition parties. Kaunda has said he intends to establish a socialist-type government in Zambia, and additional constitutional changes, including possibly a whole new document, are likely to be announced sometime next year. Kaunda has not revealed precisely what he has in mind, but he has said he hopes to avoid the "repressive measures" that characterize many other one-party states. Imposition of the new system could lead to demonstrations by tribal supporters of the opposition parties, but security forces should be able to prevent major disturbances. (CONFIDENTIAL)

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