



The President's Daily Brief

30 October 1969



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PRINCIPAL DEVELOPMENTS



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There were new clashes in eastern Lebanon this morning, amid signs that Fatah was willing to come to terms with the Lebanese. (Page 2)

The Vietnamese Communists seem to be strengthening their forces [redacted] (Page 3)

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Franco has made extensive changes in his cabinet. (Page 6)

Castro's speech launching the 1970 sugar harvest displayed a preoccupation with the problems of manpower efficiency and discipline--an indication even he may be anticipating a shortfall in the 10-million-ton quota he has set. (Page 7)



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SOVIET UNION

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LEBANON

Fedayeen units in eastern Lebanon near the Syrian border attacked Lebanese troops again today, according to press reports. The clashes came only a few hours after Fatah had announced a 24-hour cease-fire. They also followed hard on the heels of an announcement in Cairo that the talks there were progressing well and that Yasir Arafat of Fatah had been invited to join them.

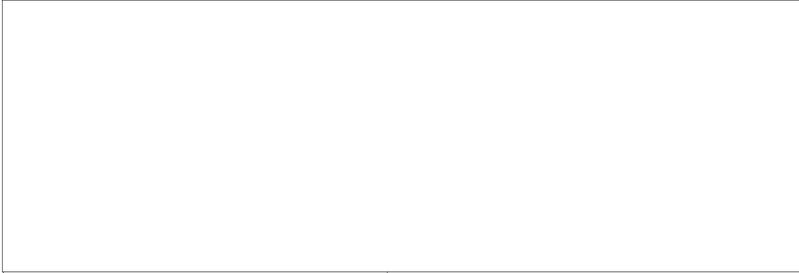
[Redacted]

Fatah, concerned that it was overextending itself, might be willing to come to terms if Lebanon permitted the fedayeen to maintain operational bases in the country. This morning's military action was probably initiated by other, more radical fedayeen groups, who are habitually unresponsive to Fatah's lead and who have no particular interest in reaching an accommodation with the Lebanese.

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SOUTH VIETNAM



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The influx of North Vietnamese regulars into the delta this year probably is aimed at shoring up the Viet Cong, whose position there has been declining since Tet 1968. Maintenance of a strong position in South Vietnam's most populous and richest agricultural region is clearly of crucial importance to the Communists.

Thus far, the new Communist units in the delta have largely avoided combat and seem to be concentrating on improvement of their logistics networks in base areas along the Cambodian border and the Gulf of Siam. They may be preparing to challenge the Vietnamization program by testing the South Vietnamese Army in this area.

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Accumulating evidence



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points to mid-November as the probable opening of the Communists' nationwide "winter-spring" campaign. The current disposition of the enemy's main force combat units, as well as other good indicators, suggests that the new offensive round will be similar to the summer "high points," relatively light shellings and occasional ground attacks. The Saigon government's pacification program will probably be under more pressure than before.

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WEST GERMANY

In his ambitious program for domestic reform, outlined to the Bundestag on 28 October, Brandt characterized German democracy as "at its beginning," and he envisioned a decade of change in German society to improve and deepen it. To engage the people in this effort he proposed, for example, a reduction in the voting age from 21 to 18 and in the age for holding office from 25 to 21.

Brandt also talked at length of the reform of existing institutions. His government will examine the educational and legal systems, government administration, and the defense establishment.

Modernization was another constant theme. Problems such as modern environment, greater resource allocation to basic science to close the technological gap, and longer term financial planning will be tackled.

As a measure of the program's scope and ambition, Brandt has committed the government to issue six major reports in the first half of 1970, and four more in the second half. These reports will cover such topics as the state of the economy, the situation in German agriculture, science, transportation, and health.

The program projected a large increase in expenditures, but the government plans to spread the tax burden more evenly through reforms of the system rather than increase taxes.

Brandt's statement was probably intended less as a realistic program for his vote-shy coalition than as a testament to Socialist ambitions to become the majority party of the future.

Although there is seemingly something in the program for all segments of German society, including economic guarantees for the conservative farmers, the spotlight fell particularly on the urban populace and on youth. It is these groups that the Socialists view as the most promising target for future electoral gains.

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Pankow gave its initial reaction to Brandt's foreign policy statement in a report issued yesterday by the East German news agency. The agency's summary is short and free of polemics. It also fails to mention Brandt's offer to negotiate with the East.

The East Germans doubtless plan to study the statement thoroughly before committing themselves. The basically uninformed East German populace, meanwhile, probably has received the impression that nothing has changed in Bonn.

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SPAIN

Franco has shaken up his cabinet, placing economic specialists in charge of both domestic and foreign affairs. Foreign Minister Castiella is to be replaced by Gregorio Lopez Bravo, who has been the minister of industry.

With these appointments, Franco has shifted the balance toward the technocrats who favor economic liberalization and increased ties with Western Europe, although the government's National Movement (the Falange) and the military are still represented.

As foreign minister, Castiella has been associated with the provocative Gibraltar policy. He is also blamed by the Spanish military for the difficulties which attended the renewal of the present defense agreement with the US. His successor is less combative and more sophisticated; he is not likely to alter Spanish policy on US bases significantly, however.

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CUBA

Castro launched the all-important 1970 sugar harvest with a highly emotional speech on Monday. As in earlier talks, he committed Cuba to an unparalleled 10-million-ton harvest and placed "the honor of the revolution" at stake in attaining the goal.

Castro stated that there is enough cane to produce 10 million tons and that success will depend on the output of the worker in cutting and milling it. His obvious misgivings over the capacity of the Cubans to work efficiently enough was reflected in his frequent allusions to the critical manpower problems that must be overcome. He emphasized that the "question of discipline is basic." He discussed at length the serious harm that could be caused by worker negligence and carelessness.

At the same time Castro promised no relief in economic pressures on the population, at least until the harvest is completed in mid-1970. The Cubans, who have experienced a steady decline in living conditions, apparently will be forced to suffer further.

Despite the mass mobilizations and other special measures, 10 million tons seems an unreachable target; sugar experts in the US and elsewhere consider even eight million tons an optimistic estimate. The recurrent emphasis in Monday's speech on manpower problems suggests that Castro himself may be anticipating a shortfall and may be preparing to shift the blame for it to the workers.

Neither the failure to fulfill the harvest quota nor the added economic burdens which we foresee would greatly weaken the government's hold on the country in the short run.

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