



*The President's Daily Brief*

*7 April 1970*

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*FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY*

THE PRESIDENT'S DAILY BRIEF

7 April 1970

PRINCIPAL DEVELOPMENTS

The situation in Cambodia is discussed on *Page 1*.

There is independent evidence to support Moscow's official statement that several Soviet leaders are ill. (*Page 3*)

Peking is answering Moscow's propaganda attacks by criticizing Soviet leadership, while muting polemics on sensitive bilateral Sino-Soviet issues. (*Page 5*)

There are signs that opposition parties in the Dominican Republic are weakening in their resolve to boycott next month's elections. (*Page 6*)

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### Cambodia: Current Situation



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CAMBODIA

The new government in Phnom Penh is still moving to erode Sihanouk's popular base and to build one of its own. The godhead image of the former ruler is strong, however, especially in the countryside. If Phnom Penh pushes too fast, it may only complicate the security problem in the eastern provinces, where the Vietnamese Communists are maintaining pressure. Currently the main trouble spot is the border province of Svay Rieng.

Sihanouk's calls to "liberate" Cambodia, while perhaps not falling on deaf ears, have yet to produce any concrete results. Hanoi's support of his liberation statement finally has been echoed by Peking.

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[redacted] government leaders apparently are determined to move toward abolishing the monarchy. They have solicited the "advice" of the country on the issue, and the official press agency is reporting the receipt of petitions signed by students, professors, and civil servants, all in favor of a republic.

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On the military side, the government is having its troubles in Svay Rieng Province. An intercepted army message states that on 5 April "many hundreds" of Viet Cong near Chipou had dug up the main highway in order to halt traffic. Phnom Penh is sending additional reinforcements to Svay Rieng. Farther to the northeast of this activity, South Vietnamese troops on 5 April made a raid against Communist bases just across the Cambodian border.

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In the meantime, Sihanouk picked up some important Communist backing when Chou En-lai announced on 5 April that Peking firmly supports Sihanouk's call for a "liberation" movement in Cambodia. It is not yet clear what prompted Peking to abandon its previously cautious approach, or whether the Chinese, like the Vietnamese, will pull their diplomats out of Phnom Penh.

\* \* \*

The idea of taking the Cambodian problem to the UN Security Council has met with an almost uniformly negative reaction. A number of the Council members believe such a session would bog down in acrimonious debate on Southeast Asian issues, including Vietnam, and would involve a credentials fight, in view of Sihanouk's continued claim to legitimacy. The Soviets meanwhile have gone along with Hanoi's position against Cambodia's request to reactivate the ICC.

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USSR

There is some independent evidence to support a Soviet Foreign Ministry statement that four leading Soviet officials are sidelined by illness. The four--President Podgorny, Premier Kosygin, and politburo members Suslov and Shelepin--have recently been absent from official functions. Podgorny canceled a scheduled trip to Japan on short notice; Japanese officials were informed on 3 April that he would not be able to make the visit because of a cold.

Kosygin was publicly active through 30 March, but he was not on hand to see General Secretary Brezhnev off to Hungary on 1 April.

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Shelepin probably has been ill since late February, when he canceled a trip to Sudan at the last moment.

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Another politburo member, First Deputy Premier Polyansky, has also been out of sight for several weeks, possibly for reasons of health. He last appeared in public on 24 March and has missed several important affairs.

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COMMUNIST CHINA - USSR

Peking pointedly denounced the current agricultural program of the Brezhnev leadership in a broadcast on 4 April, charging that its "Hitler-like" policy of guns instead of butter had worsened an already serious food crisis. In particular, it scored what it claimed was Moscow's imitation of the discredited agricultural policies of the Khrushchev regime. In a similar vein, Peking last week attacked the "Brezhnev renegade clique" for selling out hard-fought Soviet interests in Siberia--a reference to the granting of an air route across the USSR--in order to gain favor with the Japanese Government.

*Peking no doubt believes that recent reports of dissatisfaction in the USSR with a number of the regime's current programs have made Moscow vulnerable to this type of attack. The Chinese probably are responding to the recent sharp increase in Soviet propaganda against China's stonewalling in the border talks and "provocative" activity along the Sino-Soviet frontier. While damning the Soviet leadership in general terms, China has in contrast been muting polemics on these sensitive bilateral Sino-Soviet problems. Presumably it hopes to portray itself as the more reasonable party in the dispute and to avoid giving Moscow a convenient excuse to break off or downgrade the discussions in Peking.*

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DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

Opposition parties are weakening in their announced intention to boycott elections on 16 May (see The President's Daily Brief of 3 April). Faced with President Balaguer's refusal to resign and run like any other candidate, the opposition bloc has asked Foreign Minister Amiana Tio to serve as an intermediary in discussions with the President.

President Balaguer has said publicly he will talk to the opposition at any time, either directly or through intermediaries. Balaguer has also created a commission with power to investigate the fairness of the elections, presumably in an attempt to make it easier for the opposition to come around.

*Nevertheless, the trend toward compromise could easily be reversed. There are, for example, continuing rumors of a general strike, and there could be major outbreaks of violence for a variety of other reasons.*

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